

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

# **MAJOR CHANGES AND CRISIS**

## **The impact on women in Latin America and the Caribbean**



UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN  
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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The culmination of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace at the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women (Nairobi, Kenya, 15-26 July 1985) marked the end of a cycle of activities relating to women which were undertaken within the framework of international and regional plans and programmes of action. These activities had been officially launched at the World Conference of the International Women's Year held in Mexico City in 1975.

During the Decade, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) played an active role in promoting women's issues by focusing on the need to integrate women into economic and social development; it gave top priority in this connection to the most vulnerable groups and devoted special attention, at all socio-economic levels, to problems relating to unequal treatment before the law or to sex discrimination. The Commission's activities, which were launched quite early on, in the first years of the 1970s,<sup>1</sup> took the form of technical assistance, project design and implementation, governmental meetings, meetings of experts and specialized seminars on such subjects as women in the popular urban sector, young women, cultural aspects of participation, employment and other issues.<sup>2</sup>

The appraisals made at successive meetings of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, a permanent body of the ECLAC member countries devoted to the discussion and orientation of action in this field, generated fresh information which was duly published for wider dissemination.<sup>3</sup>

The end of the Decade and the fact that future activities are conceived of in terms of "strategies" rather than "plans"<sup>4</sup> has led to a more comprehensive review of the situation, to a more in-depth perspective on the subject and to efforts to devise long-term proposals. The imminent end of the century, coupled with the impact of the crisis and the deterioration in the living conditions of large sectors of the Third World's population, including that of Latin America and the Caribbean, have spawned fresh contradictions and uncertainties which have an influence on women and which must be addressed.

The book being presented here carries forward ECLAC's efforts to analyse the progress made with respect to women's issues on an ongoing basis, but it

also represents a departure from its past work. Firstly, it takes a longer-term view, despite the fact that the studies were prepared for a specific event (the Fourth Regional Conference).<sup>5</sup> It examines the crisis, major changes and new uncertainties over a period of approximately 30 years of Latin American and Caribbean development and considers their impact on the female population.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, it ends a chapter in the analysis of the crisis and moves on to the need to incorporate women into the new ECLAC proposal for changing production patterns with social equity. Within this perspective, the study addresses new issues facing both women and the societies in which they live. It takes a look at what has actually changed and what only appears to have changed but in fact remains the same. It delves into the new roles of women, their implications and the new settings in which they must act. Finally, the book sums up achievements and obstacles with respect to the status of women in the region and the recommendations made by the member countries at the Fourth Regional Conference.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> ECLAC's activities relating to women were initiated in accordance with resolution 321(XV) adopted at the fifteenth session of the Commission (Quito, March 1973).

<sup>2</sup> ECLAC, *La mujer en el sector popular urbano: América Latina y el Caribe* (LC/G.1326), Santiago, Chile, 1984 and *Mujeres jóvenes en América Latina: aportes para una discusión*, Montevideo, ARCA/Foro Juvenil, 1985.

<sup>3</sup> ECLAC, *Mujeres en América Latina. Aportes para una discusión*, Mexico City, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1975; *Five Studies on the Situation of Women in Latin America*, Estudios e Informes de la CEPAL series, No. 16 (E/CEPAL/G.1217; E/CEPAL/CRM.2/L.3/Rev.1), Santiago, Chile, 1983; and *The Decade for Women in Latin America and the Caribbean: Background and Prospects* (LC/G.1372), Santiago, Chile, 1988. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.86.II.G.5.

<sup>4</sup> Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, endorsed by the General Assembly at its fortieth session in resolution 40/108 of 13 December 1985.

<sup>5</sup> The studies included in this book were prepared specifically for presentation to the ECLAC member countries at the Fourth Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, which was held in Guatemala City, Guatemala, in 1988.

<sup>6</sup> Chapter V, on the legal status of women in the region, and chapter VI, on information and communication concerning women, may constitute exceptions in this respect, since, by their very nature, they necessarily relate to the situation as it was at the time they were written, and the situation has undergone a number of changes since that time, especially at the national level. However, they have been retained because they reflect situations which have actually existed in the region and which, in some cases, still do.

**I. THE SOCIAL SITUATION IN THE REGION  
AND THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN  
INTO DEVELOPMENT**

## **I. THE SOCIAL SITUATION IN THE REGION AND THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN INTO DEVELOPMENT**

### **Introduction**

Concern with the integration of women into development is part of a broader awareness which has been developing in the modern world over several generations, although it has acquired greatest importance during the postwar period. The process covers problems of economic, technological, social and cultural changes and has expanded in terms of both scope and depth in recent decades.

The result of the thrust given by the United Nations to activities connected with the advancement of women through the declaration of first the year and then the decade dedicated to the topic was a wealth of studies, research and action which achieved considerable dissemination and established connections with almost all contemporary problems, producing a vast spectrum of perspectives, viewpoints, orientations and objectives.

While the links between certain issues emerged quite naturally and with relative ease, in other cases even today it is difficult to establish connections. In casting our eyes backwards over the decade gone by it is necessary to reflect upon events which have taken place, to systematize the knowledge which has been acquired and to develop a more precise commitment to action and strategies.

At the close of virtually two decades of activity in respect of women it has been possible to sift through our knowledge of the subject and to develop greater clarity regarding certain areas where knowledge is lacking. For its part, ECLAC has maintained a constant concern for the full participation of women in society from the perspective of an integral, equitable form of development, requiring the involvement of all members of society.

Since the beginning of the 1970s the situation of women has been the subject of assessments in the region. Strictly speaking, several years before the adoption of resolution 321(XV), which recommended that the ECLAC secretariat should prepare studies on the participation of women in the development of the



region and the measures to be taken to eliminate discrimination, social and demographic studies had been carried out on the topic and incorporated into a number of documents written for purposes of diagnosis and evaluation. Subsequently, the Regional Seminar for Latin America on the Integration of Women into Development, with Special Reference to Demographic Factors, held in Caracas in 1975, placed stress on the importance of factors such as the family, education, employment, legislation, health, the mass media and political participation for analysing and evaluating the situation of women. Consideration of the progress made in improving the situation of women was incorporated into the regular assessments carried out by ECLAC since 1977, and, following the adoption of the Regional Plan of Action, periodic assessments began through the intermediary of regional and world conferences.

Consequently, as far as specific assessment of the integration of women into development is concerned, the Fourth Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, for which this chapter and the others in this volume were prepared, actually represents a further phase of this process in which the countries of the region meet to consider the changes which have taken place and to propose action for the future. Attention has been repeatedly drawn to the complex nature of this process, both on account of the difficulty of perceiving social changes over short periods and of the lack of reliable information in respect of such short periods. For this reason, on this occasion, as the United Nations Decade for Women has ended and the General Assembly has adopted the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, preference has now been given to providing a longer-term perspective. Consequently, issues and information which have already been the subject of previous analyses have been dealt with together with other unpublished material, in order to gradually supplement and further specify the information available on the actual circumstances and real situation of women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In order to place this approach in its proper perspective, the first study in this volume begins with a brief synthesis of the main objectives and ideals which have served as an inspiration to the United Nations in this sphere and which provide direction for its future tasks. Subsequently, an outline is provided of a number of features which characterize the Latin American setting at the present time and which has been profoundly transformed in recent decades and battered by the crisis of the 1980s, whose impact has been far greater than anticipated. An extremely brief review is made of a period covering virtually three decades and conclusions are drawn as to the orientations and significance of the changes, while the topic of the crisis is tackled from the angle of its impact on specific areas and groups. Consequently, an examination has been made of some of the most significant repercussions of the crisis on the situation of women. This has produced an outline of the impact of the major changes in the situation of women in the region, with emphasis on a number of areas of significance for an analysis

of the sector in both the public sphere (employment, education, legislation, political participation) and the private sphere, through the family. Particular attention has been devoted to particularly vulnerable groups of women. An analysis of the principal achievements and obstacles identified in respect of the major orientations and mandates relating to the topic shows that the process has been extremely multi-faceted and contradictory and that most advances have had to do with the formal aspects of the topic and its recognition at national and international levels.

Finally, a synthesis is provided of a number of observations in respect of policies towards women, which need to be reinforced at the present time in order to prevent the crisis from overturning the progress achieved. From this angle, stress is placed on those actual needs which require a differentiated response in order to further real equality among women in the low-income urban sector, in rural areas, in younger age groups, in charge of households, etc.

The conclusions, after reaffirming the current validity of the topic, lay stress on the need to devote particular attention thereto during this time of crisis and place further emphasis on the importance of political will to achieve the objectives and targets of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. Now that the United Nations Decade for Women has come to an end and a fresh period, marked by greater uncertainty and diminished optimism has begun, a combination of greater creativeness and realism is required in order to prepare programmes to facilitate the revival of development with greater participation by women.

This document, which has been prepared by ECLAC as a contribution to the Fourth Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, deals with only a few topics which have been chosen on grounds of priority and of their significance for an overall assessment. The choice of topics and the analysis have been guided by the urgent question "what is to be done?", already posed in 1975, as well as by the desire to provide responses to the needs of the population, in a region in which distinct, contradictory and frequently superimposed worlds exist in economic and cultural terms and where apparent contradictions in the situations of women in fact constitute different realities.

## **A. THE MAJOR OBJECTIVES**

The ideal of equality among people appears in the preamble to the United Nations Charter, which reaffirms "faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small". The United Nations are committed to the principle of equality of men and women in their dignity and worth as human beings and to equality of their rights, opportunities and responsibilities. Thus, the

issue of equality for women is part of the overall principle of equality and of the quest for a more comprehensive justice.

These commitments came into being within the United Nations partly as a consequence of the widespread reaction to the horrors of the Second World War, an experience which gave birth to the conviction of the need to construct sounder international solidarity to ensure international protection for human rights as an essential requirement for peace and progress. Furthermore, there has been a growing and systematic awareness during the whole of the postwar period of the supreme importance of problems connected with the status of women.

There is no doubt that the role of women in society has undergone changes in the course of this century and has earned increasingly widespread recognition. The processes of industrialization transformed daily life by socializing many tasks which had previously been performed in the home and brought into being a new space for work and social participation by women in public spheres which have continued to expand. It is possible that the Second World War gave a further thrust to the process of incorporation of women, by obliging them to take over and on a huge scale responsibilities which had previously been those of men. A number of processes thus took place simultaneously: women incorporated new tasks into their sphere of activity, they began to take their place in areas allowing greater interaction, both among women and between men and women, their presence outside the home became increasingly visible and they developed an awareness of their own potential and of the importance of their role.

The United Nations took these new circumstances into account and developed a permanent, broader and increasingly specific concern with the status of women, although its initial aim had been to promote equality and combat discrimination.

Initially, the issues dealt with by the United Nations were reflected through the norms embodied both in the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Discrimination against women was considered to constitute a violation of respect for human dignity and constituted an infringement of fundamental human rights. Consequently, a set of political, civil, labour and educational rights to which women were entitled, and which were connected with their role in society and in marriage (the right of a married woman to keep her nationality, to manage property) were recognized. The question of equality for women began to be incorporated into various agreements and conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and a special body was established to deal with the topic: the Commission on the Status of Women.

This first phase was marked by a humanitarian, social and cultural approach, which sought formal recognition by governments of the fundamental principles of the United Nations in respect of women. Simultaneously, this period was characterized by manifold social transformations which changed the

real situation of broad sectors of women, while the nature of the changes was grasped by an increasing number of women who began to express demands for an improvement in their circumstances. It is true to say that in reasserting the need for the advancement of women and for a modernization of their role, it was expected that economic and social development would itself allow such progress to materialize.

The Declaration of International Women's Year and of the United Nations Decade for Women initiated the most systematic study of the actual circumstances of women within society together with a more integrated approach. The issue henceforth became at one and the same time more complex and more realistic and it was realized that declarations on non-discrimination and equality were insufficient. Mandates containing more specific measures for the fulfilment of the declared objectives began to be prepared. It was realized that promoting the participation of women in public life without support in family and private life was an inadequate means of achieving the desired results. Furthermore, the cultural and religious factors which perpetuated traditional models proved far stronger and more persistent than the social and economic changes affecting societies, and the rate of change in the situation of women was far slower.

The issue of women's rights was given a fresh impetus by the issue of their integration into development, peace and international cooperation, together with the quest for progress in their social status. The successive international development strategies (IDS) prepared for the 1960s and 1970s underscored the need for effective participation on the part of the population in development and in the sharing out of its benefits, which was to be one of the main *idées-forces* directing the objectives, mandates and strategies connected with women for the furthering of human dignity.

These objectives have been the main guideline for the issue of women and have developed a more systematic knowledge of the subject together with a more realistic assessment of the stumbling blocks. The experience acquired in the course of the Decade led to the realization that the problems were extremely complex. On the one hand, the notion that there were different models that could be followed was reasserted; greater respect and understanding began to be found for cultural and ethnic diversity and a search was made for feasible solutions and alternatives in other cultures. On the other hand, it was confirmed that economic and social changes are not in themselves sufficient to transform the social role of women.

Turning towards the future, the Nairobi Strategies continue to provide valuable guidelines. They have made it possible to highlight a number of essential points for guiding the commitments made towards the future. In addition to reasserting their adhesion to the principles of the Decade, they stress the interdependence of the objectives of equality, development and peace and the need for them to be fulfilled as a whole. They highlight the main hurdles and propose measures for overcoming them. Beyond any declaration of new ideals,

the Strategies adopt the principles of the Decade which they inspired and focus on their implementation. They do not merely concern themselves with economic and social issues but go so far as to cover specific measures aimed at altering cultural patterns. In addition to promoting the role of women in the public and domestic spheres, they direct their attention to individual features necessary for the advancement of women as individuals in respect of questions such as economic independence, the framing of demands prepared from the angle of women themselves and the reassertion of their role as social actors. Finally, in view of the trying present circumstances, the Strategies put out a warning as to the risks of the crisis leading to a reversal in the effective incorporation of women and of its jeopardizing the principles and the nature of international solidarity which have been so hard to build.

## **B. BETWEEN THE POSTWAR PERIOD AND THE CRISIS: THE LATIN AMERICAN SCENARIO**

### **1. The past thirty years**

There can be no doubt about the significance of the economic and social changes which occurred in Latin America and the Caribbean between the end of the war and the onset of the crisis of the 1980s. Although the rate at which these changes occurred and their profundity varied from country to country, they have a certain amount in common. First of all one is struck by the magnitude of the increase in the population, which by 1985 had grown two and a half times larger since 1950 and came close to four million, with far-reaching consequences for all aspects of the social structure. In addition, the age structure began to change. In all countries but at varying degrees of rapidity, the 0-19 year group has decreased while the 20-59 year group has increased and the over-60 group has increased dramatically. Thus, the persistence of problems associated with a still young population is compounded by the appearance of problems characteristic of an aging population, which are already becoming very significant.

The process of urban growth took the form of a mass migration, which caused the urban population, most of it concentrated in large cities, to grow by 40% to 60%. Although they experienced it in varying degrees of intensity, nearly all the countries passed through phases of the process of transition from agrarian to urban/industrial societies. This spacial mobility of the masses produced gradual cultural interaction between the rural and the urban masses and set into motion the early stages of a process in which the population as a whole is integrated into a system of common values, thereby creating conditions favourable to social interaction, participation and mobilization and increasing the problems stemming from the presence of large socially and politically mobilized population groups.

The extent of the macroeconomic and sectoral changes is evidence of the profound changes which occurred in the countries of the region during this period. Total output increased fivefold in 30 years, and output per capita doubled. Investment levels were very high in some countries, and this brought with it changes in production and technology. The industrial plant in the region expanded and diversified, enabling local production to meet part of the demand for consumer goods and for basic intermediate and capital goods, thereby promoting diversification of exports. Through improved marketing systems and the development of agro-industry, agriculture was transformed, with changes in the orientation of production, use of modern techniques and expansion of infrastructure, particularly in the transport, communications and energy sectors.

The output of manufactured goods increased sixfold between 1950 and 1987. There was also a considerable increase in oil production, major engineering works were executed and large areas of land were developed for agricultural production through the expansion of the agricultural frontier.

At the institutional level, in 1950 the *hacienda* in most countries was one of the characteristics of the system, and the family business and artisanry were the norms in industry; planning and development agencies had just been incorporated into the public sector, the banking system remained undeveloped and, generally speaking, the same was true of the financial markets. Thirty years later, the region had modern enterprises, particularly public ones, and the traditional foreign company that exploited natural resources had been replaced by the transnational corporation and in many cases by State-owned companies. In the agricultural and livestock sector, modern enterprises had emerged, and the 1970s witnessed the development of a financial market which was closely linked to the transnational financial system and which ended up playing a key role in the functioning of economies. During this period the role of governments expanded; policies relating to industrialization, agriculture, road systems and energy were elaborated; reforms were introduced in tax, agrarian and tariff systems; public enterprises were established and expanded and the actions of private national producers were supported and complemented by the State.

In addition to the economic changes mentioned above, the occupational structures of the countries in the region had a very significant impact by, *inter alia*, promoting structural mobility in the society, a fundamental aspect of the social changes that occurred this period. The relative weight of the low-productivity sectors and occupations declined, and, moreover, the modern sectors played a dynamic role in job creation.

The process of social modernization also included demographic changes. For example, fertility and mortality rates were reduced, reaching low and relatively stable levels in the advanced stage of the development of urban-industrial societies. With the exception of those countries which had achieved modernization earlier on, in which these indicators had attained low levels several decades ago, the countries of the region have only in the 1960s and 1970s experienced a drop in fertility rates from high and very high levels. Since

the infant mortality rates also decreased rapidly during this period, the working age population reached its maximum historical growth rates in recent years.

Education has played a key role as a vehicle for social mobility between older and younger generations or age groups. In all the countries of the region, the proportion of active young adults with post-primary education increased sharply in the decades under consideration, doubling in all cases and tripling in some, which had a different effect on the job market in countries in the first phase of transition to modernization and in countries where transition was well under way.

The gains achieved by the economic and social processes during the postwar period should not obscure the failures of those processes. From the social point of view, a number of problems stand out which could not be solved in the region even in the years of greatest economic growth. While these problems do not affect all countries equally seriously, their widespread nature, their intractability and the combination of successes and failures make the ambivalence and contrasts of the process notable.

The most acute social problems include the unequal distribution of income, the large number of people living in conditions of absolute poverty and the large numbers of unemployed and, above all, underemployed. Income in the majority of countries of the region has been concentrated within a very small section of the population, and the considerable economic development achieved was accompanied by an increase in the concentration of income in terms of regional averages.

The improvement that took place during the first half of the 1970s was so slight that income distribution did not even regain the already very uneven patterns of the 1960s; and although all income groups increased their average incomes in the period 1965-1975, the richest benefited much more from the overall increase.

A very limited redistribution was effected as the result not only of the change in the occupation structure, but also of the emergence and consolidation of social movements which pressured governments to secure wage increases and the application of policies of income redistribution. However, this was no indication of a stable participation in the fruits of development for the most disadvantaged majority of the population.

In spite of the achievements and changes, in 1970 there were roughly 112 million chronically undernourished people, many of them illiterate, living in rural shanty towns or in urban slums, virtually without access to medical services and to other important social services; such people represented almost 40% of the population of Latin America.

It is estimated that in 1980 the number of poor people had climbed to 130 million, and there had been a shift in the areas where they lived; the share of the poor in urban populations increased from 42% to 49% between 1970 and 1980, and the proportion of the poor in rural areas continued to represent more than 50% of the rural population.

Although the gross domestic product per capita rose during those years by an average of 3.4% per annum, the percentage of poor people was reduced by only about 3%, and their absolute numbers increased by about 18 million. What is more, regional averages conceal substantial differences in national averages, which vary from country to country, with some countries having less than 10% of their population below the poverty line while there are others where that percentage varies between 37% and 65% of the total population.

The productive absorption of the labour force is the clearest manifestation of economic development. The developments in the region in respect of the employment variable over the three decades preceding the current crisis show the apparent paradox of a considerable increase in the capacity to absorb labour in modern non-agricultural sectors taking place at the same time that underemployment persisted or declined very slowly.

The general factors which explain the problem of the persistence of unemployment and underemployment and which, in most of the countries of the region, acted as a brake to a more dynamic absorption of the labour force into modern sectors of the economy include the change in the occupational structure which took place in the region within the framework of a dramatic increase in the non-agricultural labour force, increases in the rate of participation in the economy and the natural increase in the urban population itself. Thus, the supply of manpower exerted pressure so great that it could not be totally absorbed by the rapid creation of employment in modern sectors. To a large extent, this relative insufficiency of employment explains the development of informal activities in which the majority of the urban unemployed are engaged.

An examination of the historical development of the countries of the region in the postwar period reveals the uneasy coexistence of two opposing trends. On the one hand there are trends towards the concentration of wealth, which seek to maintain the internal economic, social and political inequalities in which they are rooted. On the other hand there are trends that promote technological progress and its benefits. Particular attention should be paid to the more spontaneous of these trends, arising from the changes which the impetus of economic development itself effects in demand, in the structure of the labour force and in its productivity and income levels, and to the more deliberate trends which have been promoted, particularly within the State apparatus, by social movements and groups which seek to share the fruits of development.

The opposition between these two trends, towards the concentration of wealth on the one hand and towards greater homogenization and democratization on the other, explains to a large extent the contrast in the development picture of the region; it also lies at the root of most of the conflicts that have taken place in the region and shows that the social problems exemplified by the distribution of income, poverty and unemployment are the most visible manifestations of deep-seated root causes and that a permanent solution to those problems will only be possible if these root causes are addressed.



## **2. The crisis: Are we moving from utopia to despair?**

The scale of the crisis is apparent in the evolution of aggregate economic indicators after 1981. From this year onwards a decline occurred in the sustained rate of growth which gross domestic product had maintained for almost four decades.

The impact of the crisis on per capita domestic product between 1980 and 1987 is even more striking in that it dropped by slightly more than 5%, falling back to the levels attained in the region in 1978. Since net payments of profit and interest abroad increased sharply during this period, the decline in per capita national income was even sharper, the crisis dragging the population's average income back to levels it had reached a decade previously.

The impact of the downturn in economic activity was particularly strong on capital formation so that the crisis not only affected present living conditions but also jeopardized possibilities for growth and for higher standards of living for the population in the future.

In view of the high rate of growth of the labour force in most of the countries of the region, the shrinkage in economic activity went hand in hand with an increase in rates of open unemployment and a rise in underemployment, and this was aggravated by a very considerable deterioration in real remunerations. In addition, the rate of price increases rose in most of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean during the crisis.

These discouraging trends in the evolution of domestic variables were linked to the adverse developments in the external sector, and in particular to the region's swollen debt, which is the factor which most jeopardizes the future development of Latin America and the Caribbean. The debt rose from less than US\$100 billion at the end of 1976 to over US\$330 billion at the end of 1982. Private creditors represented a growing proportion of the debt, whose financing was marked by floating rates of interest and relatively short repayment periods. This brought about an explosive increase in debt servicing while the debt continued to grow –although at a lower rate– until 1987, when it represented approximately US\$410 billion.

The role played by external factors has been particularly notable in the Caribbean countries, whose small economies are more dependent than ever on relations with the economy of the rest of the world. This situation is in part the result of these countries' historic roots as colonies of their respective mother countries, but due to their small size, it also represents an imperative. Thus, economic events in the outside world have a strong repercussion on the development of the economies of these countries, and an understanding of what occurs in the subregion is necessarily rooted in the flow of economic events in the industrialized countries. A comparison of economic indicators suggests that the Caribbean economies were very much depressed. There was a decline in income, and the fiscal deficit rose as did that in the balance of payments. Around

the middle of the decade, open unemployment expanded; and when export earnings fell, the gradual increase in the external debt began to give rise to problems as to how it was to be serviced in the near future. Perhaps the only aspect of the economy which was not deteriorating was the situation as regards the inflation, the slower growth rate of international problems causing consumer prices to rise at more moderate rates.

The effects of the crisis on the labour market in Latin America and the Caribbean included a slump in the rate of job creation, changes in the type of employment created and a drop in wages. Between 1980 and 1985 non-agricultural employment grew at a cumulative annual rate of 3.3%, which was insufficient to absorb new members of the labour force who enter the market each year, and led to an increase in open unemployment. During the period, the number of unemployed rose at a cumulative annual rate of 8%, signifying a large expansion in the number of unemployed between 1980 and 1985.

As for the changes in the structure of employment, they reflect an increase in the proportion of jobs characterized by the greatest degree of underutilization of labour, as manifested in informalization, tertiarization and an increase in employment in the public sector. The most noteworthy consequence of the deterioration is seen in the rapid expansion of employment in the informal urban sector. This is indicative of a worsening of the employment situation mainly affecting the lowest income sectors of the population.

In most of the countries, the real wage indicators available indicate significant drops in the 1980-1985 period. This is due to the high and increasing rate of inflation which brought down real wages, to the increase in unemployment and in employment in low productivity sectors, which weakened the bargaining power of organized wage-earners, and to the effect of the adjustment policies implemented in the majority of countries in the region.

The decline in real wages during the crisis surpassed the fall in per capita product and was greater in almost all sectors than the decline in gross per capita income. This suggests that the burden of readjustment was mainly borne by workers, particularly those with lower incomes, with a consequent deterioration in income distribution.

The social impact of the crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean has been very diverse. The deep differences between countries prior to the crisis, the varying scales of impact of the debt, the divergent rates of dynamism or stagnation in production together with the various social consequences of the adjustment policies implemented in countries combined to bring about considerable divergences in the social indicators available for countries relating to the early years of the crisis.

As far as the vast majority of countries in the region are concerned, however, the available data indicate, that, as a whole, there has been widespread deterioration in the social conditions of the population and in the social services provided by governments. The share of social services in total expenditure fell in the majority of the countries between 1980 and 1985.

The increase in both unemployment and underemployment and the fall in wages as a consequence of the crisis resulted in even greater inequality in income distribution and an increase in the proportion of the population living in poverty.

In addition, the share of the agricultural population has once again started to grow, as a result of the slump in employment in cities. Moreover, in contrast with the growth of the sector of poor peasants and agricultural labourers, agricultural entrepreneurs seem to have been inordinately successful in appropriating the benefits of the increase in agricultural production. Furthermore, real income corresponding to the characteristic occupations of the urban middle classes fell during the crisis.

In a number of countries, policies and programmes attending the needs of the most vulnerable groups successfully avoided reversals, for example, in the trend towards reduction in the rates of infant mortality. In others, however, the declining historical trend ceased, and this key indicator remained stable during the crisis or even rose.

The evolution of nutrition indicators was extremely complex since the currency crisis severely restricted imports of food, a consequence of which was a drop in the food available in the majority of countries.

Although in a number of countries there seems to have been an overall improvement in the health and food situation in recent years, the most disquieting feature is the worsening of this situation in the poorest sectors, a situation which appears to persist as a result of the greater inequality of access to goods and services meeting these basic needs.

A further phenomenon, which is just as serious as the fall in resources needed for education and the probable deterioration in the quality of education thereby involved, is the increase in the number of drop-outs from primary and secondary school detected in several countries. This phenomenon, which overwhelmingly affects the poorest sectors, is clearly linked to the fact that poor families find it impossible to meet the school costs and that they rely on the economic contribution of minors for the survival of the whole family. This latter feature is reflected in the increases in the rates of economic activity among children and young people of school age.

In short, the crisis of the 1980s has to a large extent been the last manifestation of a deferred social crisis. At present the outlook for the economies of the region remains uncertain. In 1987 the foreign debt continued to grow, and the total interest paid by the region as a percentage of exports tended to stabilize. Also during 1987, the region continued its substantial negative net transfer of resources, and investment continued at levels far below those of the period prior to the crisis.

The implications of the situation and its social consequences support the hypothesis of the existence of a crisis of the social systems in the region, in the sense that it is impossible to restore a social rationale of development identical to that which prevailed from the postwar period up to the end of the 1970s. Thus,

the challenge that faces the region is indeed immense. With fewer resources than in the past, it has to grapple with problems which, apart from having changed in magnitude, have also undergone a change in quality. The current processes, economic, social, demographic and cultural, constitute in their interaction a new dynamic of structural change, which in turn generates new tensions and contradictions.

The crisis of the social system poses a set of new socio-economic problems in the region, in addition to the economic problems. A more favourable socio-economic evolution will depend on the countries' achieving a greater international presence in those spheres in which decisions are adopted concerning the debt and trade, on new economic "motors" of industrialization and export and on the discovery of more effective ways of increasing employment and labour productivity in the marginated sectors and new rules of the game regarding distribution. Additionally, there will be a need for the creation of new forms of material and non-material satisfaction in terms of participation and equity, which will partly replace social mobility and the expansion of consumption as supports for the legitimacy of development models.

### **C. LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN WOMEN: ELEMENTS FOR A DIAGNOSIS**

#### **1. Demographic aspects**

While the changes of recent decades have affected all sectors of the population, their impact has probably been most deeply felt by women and young people. In the case of women, the significance of the changes goes far beyond the economic and social spheres and has made itself felt through far-reaching qualitative and quantitative transformations which have altered cultural behaviour and began to leave their mark on ethical considerations and on values. While the scale and diversity of the changes makes it impossible to precisely indicate their orientation or to measure their impact, it is at least possible to highlight a number of significant phenomena to provide an illustration of the situation.

For example, medical progress and in particular the widespread use of antibiotics has had a profound impact on the perception of childbirth, as the risks associated with giving birth have diminished considerably and the life expectancy of mothers has increased. While the overall life expectancy of the region's population increased from 55 years in the 1950s to over 70 in the 1980s, that of women increased even more significantly.

Subsequently, progress in birth control, occasionally supported by demographic policies involving the distribution of contraceptives, helped to bring about a marked decline in fertility. The social consequences of this decline

represent far more than a mere quantitative phenomenon. The possibility of separating sexuality from a reproduction together with the high level of reliability of birth control is a new phenomenon. While the decline is particularly apparent among middle-income strata where it coincides with high levels of education and is more common in countries where modernization is more advanced, the phenomenon is becoming increasingly widespread throughout all strata in all countries. These demographic changes in Latin America and the Caribbean are even more striking if it is borne in mind that they have taken place within an environment marked by different religious practices and where traditional models of socialization remain deeply rooted.

One of the consequences of urbanization for the situation of women is reflected in a fundamental change in the family with the trend towards smaller households, a trend which affects women in various ways as well as having distinct implications. Generally speaking, and merely by way of example, it can be pointed out that a smaller number of children facilitates entry into work, although at the same time, as a result of the absence of other adults, it places a greater burden of responsibility on the couple for the maintenance of their children than in a household made up by an extended family.

In connection with the above phenomena a rise has been noted in the number of female heads of household, particularly during the last decade; partial figures for 1982 show that the percentage fluctuates between 18% and 23% (Lima and Panama City), which is a fairly high percentage. In the Caribbean countries the figure fluctuates between 24% and 46%.

Urbanization and, in particular, life in large cities facilitates greater anonymity and as a result less social control is exercised over the private lives of women. This does not mean that all spheres of society are slackening their constraints, but those which do exist seem to be somewhat looser than in the past and are marked by fresh contradictions.

Furthermore, in the course of the process of urbanization large numbers of young women migrate to cities and enter, for the most part, domestic service. Many studies have devoted their attention to this phenomenon in recent years and have revealed the specific set of problems which have emerged in this sector.

## **2. Participation in the labour force**

While the characteristics vary in accordance with specific circumstances which are different in the developed countries from those in developing countries, it is undeniable that the incorporation of women into the labour force has occurred on a scale which was unimaginable 30 years ago: in the world today the number of working women has attained 815 million and during the decade between 1975 and 1985 alone, 15 million women joined the labour force each year. The female

the rate fluctuated between 31% in Cuba and 46 to 47% in Barbados, Jamaica and the United States Virgin Islands.

In general no policies to promote economic participation by women have been pursued in the region; their higher participation is rather connected with urbanization, modernization, the educational process and changes of perception in respect of work. Furthermore, caution is necessary in interpreting statistical data, as they are of doubtful comparability. On the one hand, female work is underrecorded and, on the other, the insertion of large numbers of women within the modern area of the economy has been better measured. Nevertheless, it is important to underscore that one of the achievements of recent years has been the improvement in statistics which has made it possible to measure the female labour force with greater accuracy.

Finally, it is impossible to disregard the work carried out by housewives. In the various countries between 30% and 50% of women over 25 performed unpaid domestic tasks. Although no general agreement has been reached as to an appropriate way of tackling this issue, there is now deeper knowledge regarding the use of time, the economic value of the work performed, the change in the intensity of domestic work resulting from the incorporation of new technologies and the changing role of women within the family.

### **3. Education**

In respect of education, it is first of all necessary to stress the huge expansion which has taken place in formal education together with the growing participation of women therein. On the basis of the principles of universal primary education, equal access thereto and as a result of its constant expansion, education has become a mass phenomenon and a considerable increase has taken place in the training received by the economically active population. Primary and secondary levels increased twofold between 1950 and 1960, and again between 1960 and 1970. Tertiary education also increased, although less spectacularly, and during the 15 years between 1970 and 1985 the percentage of women enrolled rose from 35% to 45%. However, there are major differences between countries and between rural and urban areas. In addition, in a number of countries the level of illiteracy among elderly women is 90%, while in the 15- to 19-year-old age group it is below 15%, and similar to that of men.

In Latin America and the Caribbean the greater or lesser coverage provided by the educational systems has partly depended on global development strategies. It has also reflected the different possibilities of distinct social groups gaining access to and remaining in educational systems. Thus, in some cases coverage remains extremely limited, in others it is broad although not complete and finally, there are cases in which access is virtually universal. Whatever the case, even in the most egalitarian systems inequality is to be found on account of

labour force increased threefold in Latin America between 1950 and 1980, and rose from 10 to 32 million.

The characteristics of women's participation in the regional economy reflect the diverse nature of their social and economic insertion as well as the different levels of modernization of countries, although it is possible to pinpoint a number of main trends, one of the most noteworthy of which is the high rate of incorporation observed during the period.

The rates of growth of the female labour force rose faster than those of men, although they remained low. Consequently, overall participation rose from almost 18% in 1950 to slightly over 26% in 1980. The incorporation of women into the labour force was heavily dependent on which phase in their life cycle they had reached. Generally speaking, participation is greater among single women, although at post-secondary levels of education the impact of civil status disappears and the level of participation is high regardless thereof.

The expansion of education, the extension of the social security together with family and reproductive cycles are usually put forward as factors to account for the fact that the age bracket during which most women work ranges from 20 to 29. Moreover, although economic factors are of fundamental importance among low-income sectors, in the case of middle-income sectors a higher educational level and degree of modernization also account for the presence of women on the labour market.

The services sector remains predominant in such economic participation, thereby continuing the process of tertiarization. Towards 1980, the percentages of women involved in this sector fluctuated between 38% and 55% of the total number of active women. Although their makeup varies, personal services remain important, while social services have increased. In most countries, office employees constitute the second most numerous group, and continue their gradual increase.

Information from the household surveys available since 1970 reveals that during the period women's incomes have remained below those of men and occupational segregation has persisted. According to the same source, this is so despite the fact that the average educational levels of women in the economically active population are higher than those of men.

Broadly speaking, in the Caribbean countries, and in particular in the English-speaking Caribbean, there have not been any deeply-rooted social and cultural prejudices against active participation by women in economic activities. Nevertheless, women tend to be confined to a narrow range of economic activities, such as in the clothing industry or in services, or in providing assistance to others, as in nursing, where the level of wages is lower than in other sectors in which men predominate, such as in technical trades and in construction. This has more to do with attitudes, images and conditioning, reflecting the existing social relations in this respect, than with any legal or institutional impediments affecting women. Examination of the female activity rates available in respect of some countries reveals that between 1980 and 1988,

social origin, of the “devaluation of education” which generally goes hand in hand with mass education and of the stratification of educational establishments in qualitative terms, which tends to coincide with social and other forms of stratification.

Despite this, a huge expansion has taken place in education, particularly among the female sector of the population, who have enrolled in vast numbers. Greater equality of opportunity has come about in high-income levels, while the greatest inequality has persisted among poor rural groups and the disparity between “highly educated” women and illiterates has remained. Furthermore, the contents of education for women, particularly higher education, remains connected with skills considered as more suitable in cultural terms for women, although there is no doubt that women are increasingly beginning to educate themselves for work and not merely to perform a social function.

#### **4. Legislation**

The objective of equality, one of the decade’s broad objectives, has already been interpreted by the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, held in Copenhagen in July 1980 as signifying not only legal equality –the elimination of *de jure* discrimination–, but also in terms of all rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women to participate in development as both a beneficiary and active agent. Legislation, which has been considered to be one of the main features affecting discrimination against women in the past, constitutes a fundamental basis for achieving equality. Consequently, both the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights express the concept of equality between the sexes, and explicitly acknowledge the political, civil, labour and educational rights of women and consider that discriminatory measures against them constitute violations of respect for human dignity.

There is no denying that in the region considerable progress has been made in the field of legislation. First of all, more than half the countries in the region have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, thereby expressing their commitment to this issue, and most of them have also adopted domestic legislative measures to comply with the objectives of the Convention.

Towards the 1980s it became clear that in Latin America and the Caribbean no discrimination existed in respect of the political rights inherent to citizenship as long as women remained single. As far as married women are concerned, in several countries their capacity is still affected by marital authority, the system of administration of marital property and by paternal authority. While the trend in this respect has been satisfactory, discrimination still persists in some legislations. Many countries have maintained unequal legal



treatment under penal law, particularly in respect of adultery or parricide. Furthermore, the crimes of infanticide, abortion and rape are still punished differently.

As far as labour law is concerned virtually all national legislations have accepted the principle laid down by Convention 100 of the International Labour Organisation concerning equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value. Distinct regulations concerning women relate to nightshifts and work in unhealthy working conditions as well as to maternity protection.

As the roots of discrimination essentially lie in *de facto* circumstances, in the maintenance of social and cultural stereotypes and in a lack of awareness, in recent years most governments in the region have set up specialized agencies to promote the advancement of women and have adopted plans and policies designed to ensure equal opportunities. These national mechanisms are attached to specific ministries with the status of undersecretariats, general administrations, governmental divisions in the sectors of the family, social welfare, education, culture, work, planning and economic development. In respect of legislative reforms several countries have drawn up projects designed to change those provisions which discriminate against women, particularly with regard to paternal authority and affiliation, reforms to the system of family law, divorce, equal rights and responsibilities within marriage, family rights, etc.

In addition, in a number of countries programmes have been introduced for the advancement of women in the form of training, child care, fostering awareness of women's rights and problems and family participation.

Finally, it is worth drawing attention to the emergence from organized movements and groups of women of new demands in respect of legislation relating to family violence and assistance for abused women, which have already found a certain degree of acceptance in some countries.

In order to carry out a more precise assessment, research should be promoted to provide adequate information on the following topics: ratification and incorporation of international treaties into domestic law; the level of participation of women in international meetings; provisions made to ensure equal rights for men and women and to prohibit gender-based discrimination; discriminatory norms which have been repealed as a result of coordinated action; the incorporation of provisions which were not subject to regulation (e.g., family violence) and the creation of legislative reform commissions. It would also be worthwhile to analyse the agencies responsible for the situation of women: their structure, functions, decision-making power, territorial coverage, insertion within the government structure; mechanisms established to disseminate existing rights and the resources to bring them into effect; the treatment given under national development plans to the problems affecting women; and the efforts made to change social and cultural stereotypes in the fields of education, work, mass media, etc.

In both the government sphere and in that of non-governmental organizations it would be extremely valuable to investigate the political

participation of women at the decision-making levels of the State and of political parties, together with their incorporation into the various levels of education and work.

## **5. Participation**

Full participation by women in all spheres of social activity has been one of the principal objectives of the international community, as can be observed from international and regional mandates resulting from decisions taken by governments. At the beginning of the decade stress was placed on the advancement of women as a basic factor in the development process as well as on the pressing need to bring about changes in the economic and social structures so as to ensure full participation by women.

Throughout the decade the objective of participation has gradually become more specific as a result of the clarification of the different issues which need to be tackled. Thus, the idea of women's participation in development underscores her role as an active agent in the process which subsequently takes the form of a political, economic, social and cultural process.

When examining the social participation of women, reference has traditionally been made to their political participation, their participation in political parties, unions, or in other bodies, and in every case attention has been directed to their presence in organized groups. Consequently, women's participation has been perceived as being extremely low, virtually inexistent in the spheres of leadership or management and in the best of cases they have constituted a minority on committees and at the centre of political parties. However, women have traditionally participated in spheres closer to their day-to-day activities, ranging from organizations of upper-class women providing social assistance and benefit projects, such as charities, or helping in hospitals, old peoples homes and asylums, to for example, active participation by young working class women in sewing groups.

The transformations of recent decades have also brought about changes in the region in the role of women in this area. The process of modernization itself has led to an increase in the presence of women in social movements, and to their forming their own movements, a process regarding which it is as yet hazardous to advance any conclusions. It is possible that the new social movements organized by and for women reflect crises within traditional forms, although they may also point to new nodes of conflict and contradiction. Women, particularly those in the middle-income and to a lesser extent the high-income groups organized themselves during the first half of the century to win the right to suffrage, education and work. Subsequently, they channelled their demands through feminine and feminist organizations, in respect of human rights issues, claims relating to their status as women or in support of grass-roots

organizations sharing their aims. Their centres have gathered qualitative information on the situation of women, and carried out reflections and studies both in respect of their own stratum, and for the benefit of women from the low-income sectors. Their networks have helped to disseminate information and knowledge and exchange ideas on the topic of women and have also developed further knowledge of the topic.

A considerable proportion of the new social movements which have emerged in recent decades in low-income districts of major cities is composed of and led by women from the same sector. They occasionally form mothers' clubs, take part in church assistance programmes, take the lead in movements to demand day-care centres or health installations; they constitute pressure groups to obtain housing or infrastructure services.

These organizations are heterogeneous and difficult to assess. They generally form part of what is known as grass-roots participation and are frequently considered as part of the survival strategies of this sector, complementary to those of men. There is normally no place for them in the political sphere and the most radical groups occasionally consider them to be a new form of conservatism in that they are organized to defend their own interests.

Participation by women in social movements and as a social movement in its own right seems to point towards a broader cultural transformation linked to new forms of political activity, whose framework of reference is necessarily different. Whatever the case, this participation is giving rise to new more or less articulated demands both for an improvement in living conditions and for protection against family violence, as well as for infrastructure support for working women and demands connected with respect for their image and identity.

Women's movements and organizations make necessary a reinterpretation of politics and a reassessment of its social dimension. More than any other issue the emergence of and demands put forward by these groups casts new light on the relationship and interdependence between the family and society, between the private and public spheres.

## **6. The family**

Since systematic studies on the situation of women in Latin America and the Caribbean were first undertaken, the central role of the family, be it that of origin or that which they create, in women's social activity has been repeatedly highlighted and analysed. Stress has also frequently been placed on the persistent *de facto* and indirect discrimination linked in particular to civil or family status. The Nairobi Strategies place special emphasis on the need to repeal those laws which specially discriminate against married women, and stress the need to

develop complementary strategies to ensure that domestic responsibilities are shared by all members of the family, as well as the need to acknowledge the unstructured and invisible economic contribution made by women to society.

While all the instruments adopted by the United Nations since the promulgation of the Charter have essentially sought to expand the social role of women, their position within the family has been the subject of constant concern and an underlying factor whose presence has been felt with varying intensity in the debate, without its having been successfully integrated therein. The link between the family and society, between the private and the public spheres, the role of women in the home and in the social sphere are still new issues seeking to bring new relationships into being and permeating all aspects and strata of present-day societies. In Latin America and the Caribbean, moreover, family units vary from one society to another depending on which socio-economic stratum they belong to; they differ in terms of life strategies, social and organizational models and life cycles, all of which offers women the possibility of leading different lives and of adopting a distinct form of economic and social participation.

In addition to socio-economic and cultural differences, in recent decades families have diversified on account of the process of modernization, particularly connected, in this respect, with urbanization. Families in the region have been faced with changes of contrasting and dual origin. At least theoretically, the family has continued to constitute a hard core of resistance to change, while on the other hand, on account of the overall processes taking place, the family has in actual fact undergone a transformation. While the impact of these changes has been felt differently by the various families, a number of clear common trends could be detected. The first significant phenomenon was the decline in the size of households, which of necessity required a redistribution of roles. Furthermore, the incorporation of vast numbers of women from the rural sector into the urban environment disturbed many family and cultural patterns and moreover incorporated large numbers of women into salaried work. While a conservative and authoritarian attitude towards the family has remained in place, particularly among low-income sectors, the performance of functions different from those laid down by custom gives rise to contradictions and intensifies conflicts. The generalization of education together with the impact of the mass media have weakened the socializing role of the family and altered the relationship between parents and children. The number of female-headed households has grown, owing to the breakdown of marriages, and the networks of solidarity characteristic of more extended and complex families have weakened. The traditional family model exists, and indeed persists, particularly among high-income traditional sectors and in its specific form within indigenous communities, although the prevailing trend is different.

A considerable proportion of what had hitherto been considered as belonging to the private sphere became socialized, especially in urban areas. A large number of functions connected with meal preparation, domestic chores,

education, culture and recreation are nowadays carried on outside the home environment. The family has opened itself up to society and most of its members spend a considerable proportion of their lives outside the home. The new articulation between the family and society is not as yet clear and can be discerned rather through the disorganization and destabilization affecting most family models which previously prevailed in Latin America and the Caribbean. At the same time, a reassessment of the private spheres is taking place among certain sectors, and this trend may continue to develop. There is every likelihood that the new family models emerging as a result of the present changes will become more entrenched in the coming decades. It is to be hoped that they will incorporate the measures proposed by the Nairobi Strategies, by introducing greater flexibility into the relationship between the family and society and greater sharing within the family itself.

## **7. Vulnerable groups**

It is not women alone who are affected by their circumstances and problems, as they reflect the problems of the society within which they live. Consequently, it is necessary to analyse their situation against the global economic and political developments in the region. This approach to the issue provides a basis for pinpointing specific and significant groups of women, either in terms of their particular vulnerability or their real or potential contribution to development efforts.

The economic growth of recent decades has been characterized by an unequal distribution of resources which became more pronounced as a result of the oil crisis in the 1970s and the more global crisis of the 1980s. The deterioration which has taken place in the living conditions of middle-income and low-income sectors in Latin America and the Caribbean on account of the crisis and of the adjustment policies adopted creates a pressing need for measures to provide, in the short term, relief for the situation of the most vulnerable groups.

The most vulnerable groups of women include those in the low-income urban sector, poor rural women, most of whom belong to ethnic minority groups, and young women. Other major groups of women could also be included: housewives, domestic employees, teenage mothers, female heads of household, and others, although it has been decided that these three groups make it possible to illustrate, albeit inadequately, the main problems, alternatives and requirements of the most vulnerable groups of women, taking into account the crisis and their possible contribution as agents of development.

It should be pointed out that tackling the problems of a specific sector of women, either in terms of their social and economic, geographic or ethnic situation or in terms of age in no way prevents them from being considered in

terms of the problems affecting other women; on the contrary, it provides a complementary approach which makes it possible to examine the problems of women from different angles and to put forward policies which are suited thereto.

a) *Women in the low-income urban sector*

The low-income urban sector in the region is extremely heterogeneous, although it is marked by one common denominator: its essential concern is with satisfying its basic needs and with developing survival strategies for the group. Here, too, women perform multiple functions, although in spite of their high level of participation in paid and unpaid work, their position in the family is generally marked by dependence. In addition, their excessive burden of tasks partly or totally restricts their already difficult participation in society. They mainly work within the informal and services sector, particularly in domestic work.

As a number of studies have pointed out, women in this sector are relatively younger in comparison with women as a whole. In addition, female heads of household are more frequently encountered in this stratum, as are unstable marital relationships. The level of education of women in the sector has improved over recent decades, although marked differences remain in terms of access to the educational system, reflected in exclusion or relatively lower levels of enrolment and in the persistence of large numbers of women who fail to reach secondary education.

The level of participation of women from this sector in work is higher than in other strata, a fact which is attributable to force of necessity. The range of occupations is restricted, and the largest contingent is made up of domestic employees, many of whom are rural migrants. Their presence in the informal sector, of which domestic work accounts for a significant share, is also significant. A new type of work which makes intensive use of labour is the *maquila* (inbond assembly industry), covering activities such as clothing, textiles and electronics. Generally speaking, these jobs are extremely low paid and lack social protection. Moreover, organizational difficulties hinder the formulation of claims by workers. In Latin America and the Caribbean the process of urbanization is a relatively recent phenomenon and as a result part of the low-income urban sector is new in the sense that it is largely made up of migrant women. Other occupations are to be found within this group, including that of street trader, which is characteristic of the informal sector. Street traders are usually of rural origin and frequently from indigenous communities. Andean peasant women sell their own products, meals and craft items. In other countries, some groups emerge as a result of the breakdown of their communities, sometimes accompanied by families and sometimes without them. Another type of rural trade more characteristic of the Caribbean involves intermediaries and long absences for women.

The crisis has compelled women and families in low-income urban sectors to alter their life strategies. This change has initially been reflected in an intensification of their work, both paid and domestic. Simultaneously, other members of the family, in general minors, have been obliged to take part in the search for sufficient income for the family to subsist, a fact which is also apparent in the marked rise in mendicity and child prostitution.

Among groups belonging to the low-income urban sector, perception of the social role of women is extremely conventional, notwithstanding their major economic role. However, women, and in particular housewives involved in organizations seeking to improve their living conditions, play an extremely active role. Although their level of participation has always been high, only rarely does it extend beyond the district and immediate community and only recently has its fundamental role in connection with human settlements and grass-roots organizations in general begun to be acknowledged.

b) *Poor rural women*

The situation of rural women remains extremely underprivileged, and has probably worsened on account of the upheaval resulting from the modernization of the structures of family and social life, which sparked the crisis of traditional forms without bringing new ones into being. This is not a homogeneous group, as its members are to be found in sectors of the agricultural economy where capitalist development is advanced, in peasant economies whose population is of Hispanic and early mestizo origin, and in peasant economies whose population is indigenous and established in native communities.

While there is no question that the Latin American and Caribbean region is now predominantly urban, at the present time the female rural population totals 60 million and continues to grow. Within this sector "creole" peasant women in poor households represent approximately 40 million individuals with a percentage of between 20% and 25% of female heads of household, and there are approximately 13 million indigenous peasant women, mainly found in the Andean countries and in Central America.

The economic participation of peasant women is generally mediatized by the family, which is the unit which actually defines the survival strategies. Furthermore, domestic work in this sector is far more extensive than that carried out by urban women, as it includes subsistence agricultural activities and the processing of food in addition to ordinary domestic work. The productive work of women in agriculture largely depends on the cultural tradition, but even more so on the crop pattern. In the case of livestock women are generally involved in dairying and cheese making in the case of large and small livestock and in the care of poultry. Their work in agricultural production is heavily influenced by family factors, the type of farm, whether they are the head of the household, etc. In the case of the Andean agricultural system the complementary roles of men, women and children throughout the whole of the production process is worthy of note.

A further type of paid activity carried out by women is that linked to production for the market. This ranges from caring for small livestock and producing craft products to sporadic employment in services.

The presence of rural women in salaried work became more visible with the onset of agricultural modernization. Changes in agriculture set large numbers of peasant families before two choices: sale of their labour or emigration. Although there is little data on this topic, it is important to draw attention to female agricultural workers or day labourers who are normally unorganized, highly productive, low-paid and in many cases also heads of household.

Another sector which at the present time absorbs a considerable amount of female labour is the export sector marketing flowers, fruits and fresh vegetables. This sector, which requires a large amount of female labour, faces similar problems to the previous one and although it does not seem to have developed on a large scale there is so far no systematic information available on the activity.

Finally, a significant characteristic of rural women, which became particularly marked as from the 1940s is their predominant place in migration. Those women who migrate are generally young single women between the ages of 10 and 24, many of whom are the elder daughters of rural families and large families. Although precise data are not available, it is estimated that migration has slowed down, probably discouraged by the crisis.

Rural women undoubtedly constitute one of the most vulnerable groups in the population on account of the fragile nature of their insertion within society resulting from their dependence on a family system which is breaking down and which used to provide them with protection and define their role in society. In the eyes of national society they possess a different set of skills, which make them unsuitable for salaried work, their level of education is extremely low and their set of codes has little in common with that of society at large.

### c) *Young women*

Concern with young women springs from their vulnerability to the rapid changes which have occurred in the region in recent decades. Within the female sector, the group made up by young women represents from 30% to 40% in the different countries. More than one fifth of women between 15 and 24 have formed a couple and only a slightly lower proportion are or have been married between the ages of 15 and 19. Knowledge of the problems affecting them is particularly scant, despite the fact that Latin America and the Caribbean is a young region: 75 million individuals are between 15 and 24 years of age, approximately half of whom are women.

As mentioned above, women's participation in the labour force, particularly between the ages of 20 and 29, continues to rise and has done so over the last 30 years, while the overall activity rate has declined. The growth of the sector of the labour force made up of young women has mainly taken place



within the tertiary sector, and ranges from women working in domestic service to those employed in the most modern areas of activity.

Unemployment is of growing importance for young female workers. The possibility of providing employment for young people in most countries of the region has reached a critical stage. It is assumed that the problem is even greater than that revealed by the figures, as a large number of young women who declare that they are in charge of the home in fact represent concealed unemployment.

It is changes in education which have the greatest impact on the group of young women. The generalization of secondary education has probably been the most significant feature of the expansion of education, together with a significant rise in the number of women in higher education. Furthermore, women are characterized by extreme polarization in educational levels. On account of the high cost of education in most countries exclusion is more often the case than discrimination, as large numbers of both sexes are unable to gain access to education.

Despite the progress that has been made, young women present problems which although not new, have had a growing impact. These include problems connected with teenage pregnancies and abortions. In the Caribbean countries, abortions late in pregnancy are a serious health risk, especially among young women. Despite better educational opportunities, teenage pregnancy is a widespread phenomenon for many reasons, including ignorance about sex, peer group pressure and high unemployment levels.

The information available makes it possible to assert that young women in Latin America and the Caribbean constitute a culturally heterogeneous group, marked by social and economic inequality, whose common feature is perhaps their acute vulnerability. They frequently withdraw into the private sphere and participate little in social activity.

If being young is taken to mean belonging to a group which is still in the process of formation, either in biological or cultural terms, and which does not as yet bear all the responsibilities of adulthood, clearly not all young women can be considered as forming part of this category. The possibility of their behaving as young people is affected by their ethnic group, cultural formation, social class, economic and social circumstances, the degree of modernization attained by the country, the hold of traditional and religious cultural standards, cultural definitions regarding the role of women in society and their access to education. In most cases motherhood is considered to mark the end of youth.

There is considerable doubt as to what the future holds in store. The deep and lasting economic crisis has given rise to imbalances and uncertainty. In circumstances which require the organization of more egalitarian societies in the future, young women, who have entered society with the expectations characteristic of the 1960s, possess fresh capacities and an innovative potential which confronts society with unfamiliar problems.

## **8. Achievements and hurdles**

During the whole of the postwar period until almost the 1980s, Latin America and the Caribbean experienced significant changes in their societies with major impacts on the situation, living conditions and social role of women. Despite sharp contrasts and differences between socio-economic strata, between countries of different levels of modernization and between women of rural or urban origin, women became increasingly present through their economic activity and shared the generalized impression of upward social mobility. Many of them had fewer children and greater life expectancy. While the predominant pattern of employment was compatible with their traditional role, their autonomy and economic independence increased and began to be positively perceived as values in themselves.

As a result of the popularization of the cinema, television and mass education, a different form of socialization began to spread. New socializing agents came into being in addition to and occasionally in place of the family, opening up new spheres for women's activity. The gap between educated women and uneducated women widened, as did that between older and younger women, thereby constituting truly superimposed worlds.

Little is known of the private sphere and of the changes therein. A number of qualitative studies indicate that changes have taken place in family roles and that the private sphere has become more open to the public sphere, particularly in respect of the socialization of family members. Furthermore, some issues are no longer matters for the private sphere and have become part of the debate within society: domestic work and violence in the family are two of the most prominent. The increase in violence against women within Caribbean society is of concern both to governments and to non-governmental organizations. The measures taken include research into the phenomenon, measures designed to develop an awareness of the acute nature of the problem through meetings, radio and television programmes and the establishment of hostels for the victims of violence, together with legal and other measures. In certain countries and among certain strata these changes may have been more widespread than in others. It would also appear that the value of the private sphere in providing the affection which men, in particular young men, also need is being acknowledged.

Although it is difficult to make any generalizations or predictions in this field, major transformations are apparent. Perhaps the best indication that changes are taking place is to be found in their contradictory and ambiguous nature.

While many features are not yet clear enough to be considered as proof that the objectives in respect of the changing role of women have been achieved, there are several that deserve mention. A growing social consciousness opposed to the persistence of any type of social discrimination based on gender has undoubtedly emerged. Similarly, there is a virtual consensus over the right of

women to play a fuller role in society. In most countries in the region the State has played a key role in the development of mass education and in respect of legislative reforms which have opened up new spheres to women. In addition, within the State bureaucracy and the public sector of teaching significant work opportunities have been provided for women. In recent years, specialized offices for the advancement of women have been established within the State apparatus in most countries.

The role of non-governmental organizations has been decisive in learning more about the situation of women and their needs. They have also provided support for specific projects to allow women to earn income, provide them with training and mobilize them. In some countries they have worked in conjunction with State agencies, while in others they have set up alternative spheres of activity.

The main stumbling blocks to women's participation lie in the persistence of cultural stereotypes regarding the role of women, in the unfavourable economic circumstances affecting large sectors of women, in the maintenance of legal restrictions on their role in the family, in their still inadequate level of education and training and in the lack of sufficient and suitable employment.

These circumstances reflect the ambivalent nature of the region's social development, which is marked both by considerable formal progress and by basic problems which have been heightened by the crisis.

The impact of the crisis on women has begun to be studied in depth in recent years, and while it is difficult to draw any definitive conclusions regarding the phenomenon, a number of factors are worth mentioning. The crisis has undoubtedly not affected all women to the same extent and in the same manner. There is no question that women in low-income sectors form one of the most vulnerable groups. They have had to take on additional domestic work or shift towards begging, delinquency or prostitution. Within the rural sector, large numbers of women have become seasonal wage-earners in agricultural export firms. Generally speaking, there is a further increase in the excess burden of paid and unpaid work borne by women and which constitutes the cornerstone of a variety of collective and solidaristic survival strategies adopted by their groups, such as communal kitchens, craft workshops and bakeries. It is a commonplace to observe that the crisis among low-income sectors has brought women out of the home and has led them to taking over the communal space where the problems of survival and satisfaction of basic needs are solved. In contrast, among the middle-income sectors the crisis is normally tackled "behind closed doors", by cutting back on many factors which provided women with support in their work and by diminishing family consumption.

Although the figures are inadequate, they make it possible to emphasize that unemployment and underemployment have increased more in the case of women than in that of men, and that many women are to be found in underground economies, in new forms of servitude, in very low-paid jobs and with no legal protection.

The crisis has no doubt brought new contradictions into being for women. Recent decades gave rise to expectations of new opportunities, better education, more jobs and greater possibilities for participation which it will be hard to stifle. The crisis may possibly lead to the revival of more conservative and traditional models in an attempt to encourage women to return to the home, in order to ease the demand for employment. Furthering the integration of women into society is both a recent and fragile process. The crisis represents a significant factor which needs to be taken into account in order to adopt the necessary precautions to prevent the process of integration from coming to a halt. The approach adopted by the region in committing itself to the advancement of women was to establish links between the problems of women and those of society at large and to acknowledge their structural nature. Only determined political will and the reassertion of this approach will prevent the status of women in Latin America and the Caribbean from experiencing a reversal. The crisis alone is not capable of setting back or of reversing the progress made by the role of women in society. On the contrary, it may constitute a tool for forging new development models involving more active participation by women. Success in this respect is more connected with the alternative adopted in order to tackle the crisis than with the economic situation itself.

#### **D. GUIDELINES FOR ACTION**

##### **1. Women and development**

The current situation of and prospects for women in Latin America and the Caribbean are closely linked to the development of the countries of the region. The Regional Plan of Action, the official instrument adopted in 1977 to orient the activities of the Decade on this topic, expresses this relationship from two perspectives: the situation of women does not affect exclusively this sector but the society as a whole and the improvement of that situation requires the full integration of women into the process of development in the region.

In various recent documents, ECLAC has drawn attention to the seriousness of the current crisis and to the external and internal factors that constitute obstacles to economic growth, and stressed the need for urgent measures to be adopted, at both the national and international levels, in order to place the societies back on the path of development. These measures include the transformation of the international trade and financial system so that it would stimulate and not impede development, the modernization of the productive structure in order to better satisfy the needs of the population and to achieve a more comprehensive insertion in the international economy, the undertaking of a major domestic programme of capital accumulation, and substantial improvements in the levels of employment, income and, in general, in the living

conditions of the poorest groups in rural and urban areas. This constitutes an enormous task on whose successful outcome the future of the vast majority of men and women in Latin America and the Caribbean depends.

While in this undertaking the least privileged groups require preferential treatment, not only because of their long-standing needs but also because they have been particularly affected by the crisis, within such groups women are the most vulnerable.

Three factors contribute to this vulnerability. The first is the exclusive responsibility of women for work in the home. The burden of such work depends on the number and ages of children and on the material difficulties in performing it. In addition to housework, working class women are generally involved in other activities in order to increase family incomes, and thus often do a double day's work. Secondly, frequent and closely spaced pregnancies, together with poor nutrition and the lack of rest, lead to debilitation, malnutrition and fatigue among working class women. Moreover, this fact, in the case of teenage pregnancies, which show an upward trend, and that of induced abortions, which are very numerous and for the most part clandestine, entails risks to life. Thirdly, working class women in many cases are forced to become heads of households, through emigration or desertion by the husband or partner; in such circumstances the mother in fact bears the entire responsibility for the support and survival of the children.

A different problem is posed by mothers, childless women and single women who live in rural and urban areas. The heaviest burden of work is borne by mothers, whether single, heads of household or mothers with partners, but who at the same time are workers in urban or rural areas.

These situations, which are particularly serious, require the urgent implementation of a set of measures designed to improve the living conditions of mothers and their children. Such measures are particularly concerned with the areas of employment, health and education.

In the field of employment the principal measures are: a) to formalize informal employment, particularly in jobs such as those performed by non-live-in domestics, women who work at home and rural workers, which will require the regulation of contracts and working days, the establishment of a system of payment in which remuneration would be based on each day's work instead of on a piece-work basis, etc.; b) to provide own-account workers with access to social services to cover the risks of illness and to give them the right to retirement benefits; c) in the formal sector, to regularize special situations such as that of live-in domestic employees, with a view to eliminating all features of servile work, through the establishment of maximum working hours, minimum wages, the right to off-duty days, vacation, etc. The working conditions of women employed in assembly plants (*maquilas*) also require similar improvements.

Finally, the burden of the double work day of women must be relieved by the introduction of a community element into some of their activities, particularly those related to the upbringing of children, through the establishment of nurseries, day-care centres and networks of low-cost laundries, the provision of cheap meals in work places, etc., measures which would help to relieve the burden of housework.

In the area of health there are at least four guidelines for action which must be followed and which are concerned with: a) the nutrition of nursing infants and mothers which requires the expansion, or establishment where they do not exist, of programmes to provide milk to pregnant women and wet nurses, milk to nursing infants, school breakfasts or the provision of a glass of milk to pre-school age children living under conditions of extreme poverty, which represent the highest risk categories; b) the protection of women during the pre-delivery and post-delivery periods, provided through the establishment, particularly in rural areas, of health clinics that offer basic gynecological services; c) the type of education which should be given to women and to men on the topic of human fertility and the methods of controlling it to give them the ability to decide on the number of children they will have and to prevent abortions; d) the protection of migrant single women in cities, through the establishment of homes and refuge shelters while they seek employment, particularly so as to prevent them from falling into prostitution. Lastly, young women in particular need to be taught how to avoid pregnancies.

In the field of education, the principal guidelines are concerned with specific training to enable women to enter the job market with some skill, so that they can qualify for better jobs and higher wages. For this purpose, institutes for extension education should be established, offering working-class women a number of different types of courses to enhance their opportunities to become part of the work force. In the rural areas, women should be trained, to fulfil their role as agricultural producers with technical know-how that enables them to undertake more profitable activities; at the same time, it is essential to carry out campaigns to definitively eliminate illiteracy, particular among young indigenous women.

## **2. Women and equality**

Though necessary, economic and social development is not sufficient to eliminate the gender-based differences that exist within society. The search for equality between the sexes requires re-examining and attaching greater importance to the role of women in society as well as urgently devising and implementing specific measures for their benefit which lead to full equality of opportunities and rewards for men and women.

The specificity of the situation of women places them in the apparently paradoxical situation of being a focal group without being a minority. This specificity derives from the peculiar nature of the social insertion of women as producers and reproducers of lives and goods, which poses various types of challenges and makes it necessary to consider women from various points of view: as social actors who demand specific measures; as consumers of goods and services; as workers in the home; as a growing labour force; and as socializers of the new generations.

Much of the difficulty encountered in achieving equality between men and women is due to social, economic and political factors, but particularly to discriminatory stereotypes based on preconceived attitudes and ideas about the role of women in society. A genuine cultural change must be brought about in order to achieve equality, since culture is the area in which the elements that create and recreate the subordinate role of women in society are most persistent and rooted.

Simultaneous measures to change the situation of women in society need to be adopted in three spheres: the regulatory, the cultural and the socio-economic; these aspects have all been covered in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

In terms of *legal norms*, it is essential to eliminate all forms of legislative discrimination, in civil, criminal and labour law. Particular importance should be attached to all legislation concerning married women which discriminates by virtue of nationality, marital rights, *patria potestas*, inheritance, control of property, place of residence, etc. Special attention must also be paid to the rights of women who are heads of households and of unmarried mothers and their children. In the field of labour law it must be ensured that women receive equal pay for work of equal value, and that legislation is adopted to cover all forms of informal work: piece-work, work in the home, *maquila*, etc. Steps must be taken to promulgate laws in areas such as family violence, especially to prevent and punish the ill-treatment of women, and sexual violence, in order to ensure respect for the dignity of women. Such legislation must also establish the mechanisms of assistance and support for the victims of this type of violence. The discriminatory treatment of women in situations of adultery, parricide, infanticide, abortion and rape must be removed from the penal code.

However, as long as the mechanisms to monitor the implementation of such legislation are not established, *de facto* discrimination will continue to exist, which makes it necessary to disseminate information on the legislation in order to acquaint women with their rights as well as with the instances to which they could appeal to ensure compliance.

The greatest difficulties in the way of change are to be found in the *area of culture* in which forms of discrimination against women persist, which then spread to all other areas of social life. In the cultural sphere, many discriminatory

values and stereotypes persist and these contribute to the appearance of new and more subtle forms of discrimination. An end to this situation requires the public dissemination of values aimed at the society as a whole, regardless of sex, but particularly at women, to make them conscious of their dignity and capacity as persons and of the social contribution which they make as workers and mothers. Cultural measures require small outlays of financial resources but may have great impact, and are absolutely essential in order to modify social attitudes.

The stereotypes about the different value of men and women in society are formed on the basis of different types of socialization, and a special effort is thus required to bring about an egalitarian form of socialization which does not subordinate women. Such socialization must be undertaken both in formal education –eliminating discriminatory content– and in informal education, particularly in the programme content and images disseminated by the mass communications media, and must promote the propagation of alternative models of women based on the real roles they play in society.

As regards the *socio-economic field*, as long as there continues to be a differentiation between the productive male world and the reproductive female world, it will be difficult to remove the sources of discrimination. The recognition accorded to women's household work has represented an important step forward in recent years; however, as long as women continue to do a double day's work, they will be facing men on the job market under unequal conditions and there will be a continuation of the segregation of women, who will continue to perform the lesser jobs which are considered feminine. The recognition that both production and procreation are the tasks of men and women –indeed, of the society as a whole– will represent a major step forward along the path to equality. In this regard, there is need to strengthen all the measures designed to socialize domestic work and to encourage the involvement of both men and women in it.

Participation is an essential component of development and equality, since it confers on these processes the indispensable quality of accomplishment and self-sufficiency. In the case of women, whose degree of participation has traditionally been lower, the fact of participating in the making of decisions on their future and in the search for alternative solutions transforms them from objects of altruism into social actors. Indeed, any policy whose implementation does not require the mobilization and effective participation of those for whom it is intended runs the risk of producing consequences which contradict its stated aims.

The full participation of women under conditions of equality cannot be achieved without stable and lasting peace. Consequently, all obstacles to peace at the national and international levels must be removed. This means following the principles and guidelines for strengthening peace recommended by the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.



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**II. WOMEN AND WORK: EFFECTS  
OF SOCIAL CHANGES AND  
THE CRISIS**

## **II. WOMEN AND WORK: EFFECTS OF SOCIAL CHANGES AND THE CRISIS**

### **Introduction**

This study analyses the work carried out by women during two periods of time: the long term, between 1960 and 1980, and during the period of crisis between 1982 and 1985. First of all, an examination is made of the major changes in women's participation on the labour market between 1960 and 1980, in terms of age, civil status and education. Attention is also directed to the forms taken by women's insertion in the labour market by occupational group, branch of activity and occupation. It is also revealed how the work carried out by women has become increasingly polarized between a manual sector, essentially made up of workers providing personal services, and a non-manual and highly-skilled sector, mainly constituted by professionals. This section examines a number of features connected with the domestic work carried out by women and which have a marked incidence on the job opportunities offered by the market.

The final section, dealing with the crisis, attempts to provide an assessment of its repercussions on the female job market: increased unemployment, growing tertiarization and the decline in women's income, all of which, together with the expansion of domestic work, illustrates how women's work burden has markedly increased, particularly in low-income sectors.

Strictly speaking, there is little relationship between the major trends described in the first part and the sphere analysed in the second part, as the sources of data are different; consequently, an attempt has been made in the second part to draw the broadest social implications possible from the scant data available, in order to stimulate further research into the topic. There are two fields in which this is most urgently needed: the informal sector of the economy and the rural areas. In view of the limited information available, this study focuses on an analysis of urban women.

## **A. MAJOR CHANGES AFFECTING WOMEN AND THEIR WORK (1960-1980)<sup>1</sup>**

### **1. Major trends since the 1960s: activity rates**

One of the usual ways of measuring the economic activity of the population is through participation rates, which express the relationship between the economically active population either currently employed or seeking work with the total economically active population. In recent decades, activity rates have fallen and tended to even out among the different countries in the region. This is in part attributable to a more standardized measurement of the phenomenon, although to a greater extent it is the result of two social processes: the increase in educational coverage for young people, which has extended the length of time they spend in school, and the expansion of social security coverage, which has allowed broader sectors of the over-65 population to receive a pension.

These trends hold true for the active population as a whole, although if changes in the activity rates of each sex are examined, it is possible to observe that men and women behave differently in respect of the labour market. Thus, between 1960 and 1980, the rates of male activity fell in all countries in the region, while on the other hand, the participation of women increased in 15 countries, remained stable in two and declined in three.

If the countries of the region are divided into four groups,<sup>2</sup> on the basis of their degree of modernization, two distinct patterns may be observed in group I, made up of relatively modern countries, depending on whether the female activity rate in 1960 was higher or lower than 20%. In some countries (Argentina, Panama and Uruguay), whose activity rates had reached more than 20% in the 1960s, these rates rose by an even greater proportion between 1960 and 1970; the other pattern of behaviour corresponds to the group whose activity rates were initially extremely low in 1960 and increased by a greater proportion between 1970 and 1980 (Costa Rica, Cuba and Venezuela).

In the group of more highly advanced countries, there was a noteworthy rise in female activity rates in Cuba and Venezuela, countries where the number of women incorporated into the economically active population tripled over the 20-year period. In Cuba, the political, economic and social change following the revolution meant an enormous expansion of jobs for women; in Venezuela, the higher rate was due to the dynamism that resulted from the increase in modern government services in the social sector.

In group II, made up of countries whose modernization has been rapid but unbalanced (Brazil, Colombia and Mexico), female activity rates increased markedly, particularly during the 1970s. In this group, Brazil is the most outstanding case in terms of size, for the number of women in the workforce tripled (from about four million in 1960 to 12 million in 1980).

In group III, made up of countries which have experienced partial modernization (Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Paraguay and Peru), female activity rates remained stable in Ecuador and Paraguay, while they rose in Peru and the Dominican Republic. The change in these partially modernized countries had more to do with the way women were incorporated than to an actual rise in activity rates.

Finally, in group IV, made up of countries where modernization is incipient (Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua), in some cases the activity rates of the 1960s were maintained, while in others a sharp decline occurred, essentially as a result of the process of urbanization, which moved the female workforce away from agriculture. This decline was also influenced by the different method of measuring women's activity, since the method by which all activities carried out by women were recorded was replaced by one which recorded instead only the activity which they themselves considered to be their main activity, i.e., in general, domestic work.

To sum up, in most countries in the region, and in particular in those countries in groups I, II and III, women's participation in the labour market increased in proportion to the degree of "modernization" attained.

In contrast with that of men, women's behaviour on the labour market is determined by which phase in their life cycle they have reached, as their participation is generally affected by their civil status and number of children, as well as by their place of residence, level of education, and other features linked to demand for female labour. Consequently, we shall now examine female activity rates in terms of age, civil status and education.

#### a) *Activity and age*

The female activity rates by age increased during the period 1960-1980 in all age groups between 15 and 64. The same did not occur outside this age range, as a result of the expansion of educational coverage for young children (UNESCO, 1987) and social security for the older population. Until 1980, only in Brazil<sup>3</sup> and Mexico was a higher proportion of under-15s recorded in the labour force, a fact which should be taken together with the enormous expansion of their economies' demand for labour.

In all countries, the most numerous female age group on the labour market is that between 20 and 24, with the exceptions of Mexico and Panama, where the highest activity rates are in the age 25-29 group, and Cuba and Venezuela, where they are in the age 30-34 group. The age at which women start work in these countries has been put back on account of the expansion of educational opportunities and because women have not withdrawn from the labour market when they marry and have children. Furthermore, its concomitant is the fact that other women have entered the labour market after having completed the first stage of child rearing, which explains why the highest female activity rates are in



the age 30-34 group, as in Venezuela. A different situation exists in Cuba, where powerful incentives encourage women to join the labour market, and day-care facilities are provided for their children.

If a systematic analysis is made of an age cohort in the two census periods, it is possible to identify the behaviour of a single age group and thus the manner in which activity ratios alter over the various stages of the female life cycle. Thus, the situation varies according to the degree of modernization of countries. In the first group, the predominant trend is towards an increase in female activity rates, from one decade to the next, and as the age of women increases. Only in Argentina is there a withdrawal between ages 30 and 34 followed by a subsequent return between ages 40 and 44.

In those countries which have undergone rapid but unbalanced modernization, there is a slightly downward trend between 1960 and 1970 among women between the ages of 30 and 34, with a rise in the following decade, when these same women are between 40 and 44. This might well be connected to the increase which has taken place over the past decade in posts in industry and services, which are almost exclusively filled by women.

As far as the group of countries whose modernization is partial and incipient is concerned, the predominant trend was towards a diminution of activity rates between 1960 and 1980, as women grew older, in other words, they withdrew from the labour market after the age of 25.

The patterns of female behaviour observed in the first two groups of countries indicate that in the course of modernization more young women enter the labour market and remain there longer, a trend which it is assumed will persist and even grow in the future. Recchini (1983) calls this the "cohort effect" or the process of "succeeding generations": "... women who are more likely to take their place in the world of work when young (on account of social and cultural patterns in their youth), seem to maintain their propensity to work throughout the whole of their lives".

This trend is of greater interest if we examine age as an indirect variable of the stage in the life cycle. From this angle, it may be asserted that most women over 25 are married and have small children, and that their continued presence on the labour market during that stage in their life cycle when most domestic work is required indicates that they will not subsequently withdraw. If we further take into account the impact of the present economic crisis it is possible to draw the conclusion that they will remain on the labour market, as their contribution to the household is of fundamental importance. However, during crises there is a trend towards greater unemployment among women, particularly in the low-income sector, on account of which a considerable proportion of the low-skilled female labour force takes on paid domestic work or carries out various activities in the informal sector which censuses do not adequately record: washing, cleaning, street trading and others.

b) *Activity and education*

Between 1960 and 1980 the most noteworthy fact in the relationship between activity and educational levels was the decline of between 15 and 30 points in the economically active population with less than three years education in all countries as a result of the impact on the labour market of the considerable expansion of education in the 1960s.

In those countries where modernization is advanced and in which education is most developed (Argentina, Chile, Panama and Uruguay), there occurred, on the one hand, a decline in the active population with between four and six years' education, and on the other, an increase in the group with between seven and nine years' education. In all countries the active population with over 10 years' education increased constantly.

The levels of education of the female labour force were significantly higher than those of their male counterparts, both in 1960 and in 1980. Thus, in 1980, in Argentina, Chile and Panama, more than 60% of working women had received over seven years' education, and in the last two countries, 44% had received more than 10 years' education.

The relationship between education and economic participation shows the importance of analysing and breaking down the data by sex. If women and men are taken together as a group, their different or even opposite behaviours, as in the above case, are obscured.

c) *Activity, education and civil status*

One of the fundamental features affecting women's participation on the labour market is the family and children. Civil status constitutes a rough indicator of the life cycle, a variable which censuses take into account but which does not always adequately reflect changes; this is because not all divorces and separations are recorded, while married women, single women and widows are recorded in full.

If civil status, education and activity on the labour market are compared, the activity rates of single women are greater in all countries than those of other women. As recorded, the data fail to reveal two contradictory processes: on the one hand, married women tend to participate less in the labour market than those who are separated, divorced or widowed, although in numerical terms, the latter is an extremely small group. Similarly, as the level of education increases, activity rates rise in the seven countries for which this data is available.

However, if civil status and education are compared, the difference between the activity rates of single and ever-married women tends to decline and virtually disappears, as the level of education increases. In the case of women with more than 13 years education, the relationship is reversed in all countries, and consequently the activity rates of ever-married women are greater than those of single women (except in Brazil).

The group of women with the highest activity rates, regardless of their civil status, is made up of women who have received post-secondary education, with the highest rates in Panama and Brazil. In contrast, the group of women with the lowest participation on the labour market is that of married women with less than three years education (Honduras and Panama).

It is possible to conclude that where low levels of education are concerned, women's civil status exerts considerable influence over their decision to work, and that as the level of education increases, it becomes less important and disappears altogether in the case of post-secondary levels of education. Indeed, higher levels of education make it possible to earn higher family income, and to gain access to the market for the goods and services necessary for the daily reproduction of the family. This makes it possible to employ other women to carry out domestic work and to increase the number of goods and services purchased on the market (laundrettes, child-care centres, semi-processed meals, etc.). Although a woman may thus transfer responsibility for domestic work, this does not entail a delegation of her responsibility, and in certain cases, the higher status of the family may impose a heavier domestic burden, which will make itself felt and sharply interfere with the woman's role as a salaried worker.

To sum up, it is possible to distinguish two clear logics underlying women's participation on the labour market (ECLAC, 1985a): first of all, *a logic of determination*, which compels lower-income women to work, regardless of which stage of their life cycle they have reached, their educational level and the income they are capable of earning. These women are those whom it is most difficult for population censuses to record as their work is carried out within the informal sector of the economy. On the other hand, *a logic of choice*, which corresponds to higher-income women, who carry out salaried work not only in search of an income, but also to achieve personal fulfilment. This group, which belongs to the formal sector of the urban economy, is satisfactorily recorded by censuses and is the most numerous group of female workers in countries at an advanced level of modernization.

It is thus possible to draw the following profile of women present on the labour market in the 1980s:

1. The highest levels of participation of the central age groups (20 to 59) are to be found in those countries in which modernization is advanced as well as in those whose modernization is rapid but unbalanced and which have experienced relatively strong economic growth. These are principally Brazil, Cuba, Panama and to a lesser extent Peru. In countries in which modernization is partial and incipient (Paraguay and Guatemala), the trend is towards the maintenance of the same structure of participation by age groups as in 1960.

2. A major change occurred between 1960 and 1980 in all countries in the educational level of the active population, together with a huge expansion of intermediate levels of education. In other words, secondary education became a mass phenomenon. Countries in which modernization is advanced (Argentina, Chile and Panama) considerably expanded educational coverage, a fact which is

reflected in the size of the active female population with more than 10 years education in 1960, which became even more pronounced towards 1980.

3. Finally, in the relationship between participation and civil status, in both 1960 and in 1980 the impact of civil status on the education variable is cancelled out in the case of women with high levels of education, and consequently the activity rates for women are high, be they married or single.

## **2. Changes in the type of work and female occupational polarization**

The manner in which women take their place in production together with the way in which this role has changed in recent decades make it possible to determine –from the angle of the production system– which branches of activity, sectors of the economy and occupational groups women join.

### **a) *Participation by branch of activity***

During the above period, regardless of the degree of modernization of countries, most women were employed in the services sector. The data available for 1980 indicate that the percentage of women in the services sector ranged from 55% in Panama to 38% in Peru, and between 45% and 55% in all other countries (ECLAC, 1986b).

However, the services sector has evolved irregularly, and, depending on the degree of development of countries, a downward trend could be observed between 1960 and 1980 in those in which modernization was most advanced. This phenomenon is attributable to the diminution in the group made up of personal services, although the decline may have been mitigated by the increase in social services connected with the State bureaucracy; this would seem to be the case in Brazil, where the labour employed in this branch expanded between 1970 and 1980.

In countries where modernization was partial (Ecuador and Paraguay), the proportion of women in this group increased, particularly as a result of the employment of young migrant women in domestic service. In Guatemala, however, where modernization is incipient, women's participation in this sector declined.

As far as women's employment in agriculture is concerned, it declined sharply in all countries, in varying degrees and depending on the level of development reached. Thus, by 1960, countries where modernization was advanced employed less than 8% of active women in this sector, a figure which declined even further in the following two decades. It should also be remembered that the sector most affected by the lack of data on the female labour force is agriculture (Wainerman and Recchini, 1981; León and Arriagada,

1987). In turn, in those countries where modernization is partial (Ecuador, Paraguay and Peru<sup>4</sup>), as in Brazil, the female agricultural workforce remained higher in 1980.

Towards 1980 trade was undoubtedly the sector of greatest importance for female employment. It increased sharply in all countries, becoming second in importance after services. In this connection, it is necessary to distinguish between established trade and street trade, as the latter has proved extremely flexible in absorbing labour during periods of crisis.

Finally, the most modern area of female employment, that of finance (insurance, banking, real estate and business services) has increased in all countries in line with their greater degree of economic development and modernization.

b) *Participation by occupational group*

As has already been indicated, the distribution among the major occupational groups in 1960, 1970 and 1980 reveals that the highest concentration of women was to be found in the occupational group made up of workers providing personal services, with an extremely uneven evolution. Thus, between 1960 and 1970, this group increased in Argentina and Brazil and fell slightly in all other countries; between 1970 and 1980 –in all countries for which data are available– it maintained its predominant position, with between 30% and 20% of the total number of women active on the labour market, although a downward trend could be perceived.

The type of occupation which absorbs the greatest number of women is paid domestic work. It has long served as a source of work for women migrating from rural areas to cities. Domestic work –especially in the case of live-in domestic helpers– has special features which distinguish it from other occupations. Workplace and home are united, labour relations approximate a type of bondage and, unlike in other jobs, “modernization” goes hand in hand with a decline in wages and an increase in the number of independent, “live-out” workers (León and Arriagada, 1987).

The nature of salaried domestic work changed during this period. Towards 1980 the trend in countries whose level of modernization was advanced was towards an increase in “non-resident” or “live-out” domestic labour, although the group made up of “resident” or “live-in” employees remains predominant in almost all countries. For example, in Chile, in 1980 the group of “live-in” employees represented 58% of domestic employees, while “live-out” employees accounted for 42%, while the respective percentages in 1984 were 54% and 46%. In 1980, in Greater Buenos Aires, only 23% of all domestic employees were resident.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, this trend was also affected by the increase in the group of “live-out” domestic employees during periods of crisis, as this is an extremely flexible labour supply which can be joined by young educated women who fail

to find any other form of occupation, heads of household or women with unemployed husbands, as they are able to combine this work with work in their own home. In addition, it may be assumed that as the wages of domestic employees fall, demand increases. This is confirmed by, for example, the case of Chile between 1980 and 1984, as the information available from household surveys reveals that open unemployment among women over 15 of age rose from 10.7% in 1980 to 19.0% in 1984, while the number of domestic employees rose by 16 000 over the same period (3,000 "live-in" and 13,000 "live-out").

In 1980, office employees made up the second largest group in Argentina, Chile and Panama, and the third largest in Brazil and Ecuador. This was in part connected to the levels of development of each country and is reflected in a larger government administration, as in the case of countries at an advanced level of modernization (Argentina, Chile and Panama); however, it is this occupational group which has grown regularly in all countries in recent decades.

Furthermore, the proportion of women in the professional and technical category, in Ecuador has reached second place, and in Argentina, Brazil, Panama and Uruguay, third place, on account of the improvement in levels of education in recent years. Generally speaking, the numbers of professional women and female technicians tend to increase, particularly in the case of teaching, which is a typically female profession and which extends women's private role in socialization to the social sphere.

As has already been pointed out, the numbers of female agricultural workers are declining generally, and in 1980 remained high only in Brazil—where they were the second largest group—and Ecuador. Between 1960 and 1980 a sharp decline (of almost 50%) was recorded on account of internal migration of women to cities in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Ecuador. In Panama their numbers declined somewhat less, while in Uruguay the sector increased between 1963 and 1975, although it remained extremely small.

Women employed in factories, female artisans and workers who were a very large group in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Ecuador, and to a lesser extent in Panama towards 1960, declined markedly in number towards 1970 and 1980, except in Brazil, where their numbers rose, probably on account of the economic boom which took place at that time. The majority of this occupational group is made up of women in the textile and clothing industries.

Saleswomen and shopkeepers are quite numerous, and their numbers rose between 1960 and 1980 in all countries.

Particular attention was devoted to examining whether the increase in certain occupational groups corresponded exclusively to women, in other words, whether it was possible to speak of a segmented "feminization" of certain occupations, or whether on the contrary, the phenomenon involved an expansion of employment affecting both sexes. Similarly, an attempt was made to investigate whether over the last two decades either men or women had been displaced from certain occupations. In this respect, it may be inferred that the most pronounced "feminization", i.e., the highest percentage of women in any

occupational group is to be found in the group of domestic and laundry employees, between 89% and 98% of whom are women. The men employed in this category are waiters in restaurants, hotel employees, etc. An extremely small proportion work in private homes, and those who do so receive considerably higher wages than women.

The other category in which it is possible to discern a trend towards "feminization" is the group of professional women and female technicians; in 1980 more than half of these were women (except in Ecuador), mainly because the activities which make up this group (education and health) are mostly performed by women.

Another occupation group which is extremely "feminized" is that made up of spinners, seamstresses and dressmakers, more than half of whom are women.

No great changes are apparent in female participation by occupational groups between 1960 and 1980 as far as the proportion of women in the various categories are concerned. Generally speaking, the only professions which become somewhat more "feminized" are those of office employees and salespersons, although towards 1980 women were still in a minority in these categories.

To sum up, the labour market has remained highly segmented in so far as there has been no change in those occupations conventionally defined as female, and on the other hand no large number of new occupations have opened up to them. In Mexico it is also possible to observe that the division between female and male occupations accepted and reinforced by society has not undergone any major changes (De Oliveira, Orlandina, 1987).

c) *Manual and non-manual work*

Broadly speaking, it should be pointed out that during these two decades a considerable increase occurred in the non-manual stratum in most countries. In view of the differences in the way the female and male labour markets behave, the contribution of women to the increase in the non-manual stratum has been calculated using the percentage increase in non-manual female employment against the total increase in non-manual employment. In this respect, two features are worthy of note: the contribution of women to the increase in the non-manual group is around 50%, or far higher, depending on the country, and the rates of increase were different in the two decades; hence the greatest increase in the non-manual group attributable to the contribution of women occurred between 1970 and 1980 in all countries. In Uruguay, female employment increased by 105% in the non-manual group, with the consequent decline in the number of men employed in the group, mainly on account of the huge international migration recorded during the 1970s.

While the number of women workers in the non-manual group has increased considerably, even so towards 1980 they only accounted for between 36% and 41% of the group, with the exception of Panama, where they made up almost half of the group.

In the same year, women constituted between 60% and 70% of the group of workers providing personal services, although an extremely slight decline occurred over the two decades in the proportion of women. The proportion of women in the manual, secondary and primary groups was low and on the decline in 1980.

It should nonetheless be recalled that the figures in respect of women employed in manual activities are the most unsatisfactory recorded either by censuses or by household surveys, and it is consequently reasonable to assume that their number was considerably higher than that recorded, particularly in agriculture and in the informal urban sector (services).

The clearest conclusion to be drawn from the available information is that women are taking on non-manual occupations to a greater degree than manual ones, as a result of their access to higher levels of education, although this does not mean that they earn higher income. Data from the Brazilian census, which includes income, clearly reveal that in the 1980s women had a higher level of education and their participation in the economy increased twofold during the decade; however, if the respective Lorenz curves for women and men are compared, they reveal that women's share of income has worsened since 1970 in comparison with that of men.<sup>6</sup> In other words, although women have gained access to non-manual jobs, they continue to receive lower incomes than men for the same jobs, regardless of their level of education. This phenomenon will be analysed in greater detail in the following section, in connection with the examination of the impact of the crisis on female employment.

It may be assumed that the disparity of income and occupations between men and women will be different depending on the degree of modernization of the country. Thus, in countries at an advanced level of modernization, where women traditionally play a greater role on the labour market, it is to be expected that income disparity between the sexes will be lower than in countries which have recently modernized.

Data from two household surveys carried out in Buenos Aires (1980) and São Paulo (1982) (ECLAC, 1985b) reveal that in the former, the average income of women was 68% of that of men; in São Paulo, a highly industrialized city in Brazil where women have made a huge entry into the manufacturing sector, their average income is 57% of that of men, while in the manufacturing sector itself, their income is 44% of that of men.

A more careful scrutiny of the disparity in wages between men and women in the case of Buenos Aires referred to above reveals that if age, civil status, education and occupation are analysed, "most of the income differences between men and women on the labour market may be attributed to *occupational segregation*, to the different manner in which men and women take their place in the occupational structure" (ECLAC, 1985b, p. 117).

To summarize, the information provided by the censuses and surveys makes it possible to conclude that the incorporation of women into production has been sharply polarized: an extremely broad sector of women work in the



manual group, almost exclusively as domestic employees, while the other group predominates in non-manual occupations, professional women, office staff and saleswomen.

During the period under review, it has been clearly demonstrated that female participation has declined in agriculture and in manufacturing industry, thereby continuing the process of tertiarization. Nevertheless, in countries whose modernization has been rapid and is advanced, the internal composition of the services sector has altered; female employment has increased in the social services sector, while it has declined in that of personal services.

Finally, the evolution of the female occupations over the two decades reflected a considerable incorporation of women into the non-manual group, since female employment accounts for more than half the increase in this category. Although this might seem to suggest a trend towards an improvement of the status of women in these occupations, the information which it has been possible to gather for some countries in the region indicates that the improvement in women's level of education together with their employment in non-manual jobs has not led to an improvement in their share of income, since women are still segmented into jobs which are considered as being "for women", and which carry less prestige and offer lower income.

### **3. Domestic work**

Attention has so far been focused on the work carried out by women on the labour market. In order to grasp the nature of work outside the home, it is also necessary to examine the domestic work carried out by women in their homes. Housewives constitute between 30% and 50% of the female population of over 15 years of age in the region.

Any definition of domestic work is problematic. At an overall theoretical level it covers the "set of maintenance activities required for the daily reproduction of the labour force, including the transformation of goods into use values for consumption" (Benerfa, 1984). All societies have distinguished between domestic and non-domestic work and have considered the former to be mainly the preserve of women. However, the actual definition of the forms taken by domestic work is extremely diverse, and varies in accordance with cultural, ecological and circumstances and with the degree of development and modernization, and depends upon the social class concerned as well as being heavily determined by the ideological conceptualization adopted in respect of the role of the woman as mother-spouse-housewife.

Until recently, no quantitative studies had been made to measure the domestic work carried out by women in Latin America.<sup>7</sup> This was attributable to the fact that in addition to being extremely heterogeneous, the unpaid domestic work done by women is not considered to be work in the proper sense of the

word, since it is not bought and sold on the market, and it is consequently not recorded in national accounts. However, ideological changes which occurred at the beginning of the 1970s regarding the role of women in society and the concept held of their work began to stress the importance of unpaid domestic labour for the reproduction of the population. This trend was reinforced by the crisis, as a result of which the value of domestic labour particularly among low-income groups became even more apparent. These groups were obliged to count on female domestic labour to offset the diminution of the goods and services making up their basic "shopping basket". Thus, the significance of domestic labour helps to account for the relatively low participation rates of married women, particularly in low-income strata.

The pioneering study carried out by ILO (1984) reveals that in Latin America the time devoted to domestic tasks is equal or even greater than that devoted to paid activities on the market, and that consequently a high proportion of housewives are in fact "overemployed". In a study carried out in Chile, it was calculated that housewives employed outside the home worked an average of 56.3 hours per week, while those not elsewhere employed worked an average of 39.7 hours per week. Thus, the housewife not elsewhere employed worked an eight-hour working day, seven days a week, while the housewife employed outside the home worked a total of 12 hours per day (Pardo, 1983). In value terms, the calculations indicate that domestic work might represent between one third and a half of the monetary income of families. In the case of poor households, the figure is higher as domestic work is a key factor in the survival strategy. The same study on Chile estimated that the domestic work carried out by women represented 30% of gross national product, a figure only exceeded by that of the manufacturing sector. The contribution of domestic work in other countries is probably the same or similar, in view of the very nature of such work.

In addition, the studies carried out by ILO in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Mexico, Peru, Venezuela and Uruguay have provided confirmation for a number of major hypotheses:

a) The incorporation of women into the labour market does not signify a corresponding diminution of domestic work; in other words, those women who work actually work a double work day.

b) The rise in family income has not meant less domestic labour for the housewife; what has changed is the composition of such work, as the most unpleasant tasks have become the responsibility of others. Housewives still continue to carry out domestic work and have even taken on new tasks connected with their higher social status.

c) Even when housewives possess modern domestic appliances, they still devote almost as much time to domestic tasks as those women who do not possess such appliances. The main difference lies in the intensity of the personal effort required; the development of technology does not, however, modify women's traditional role as a reproducer.

d) As far as the economic crisis is concerned, while domestic work has indeed increased, men have not taken on a greater share thereof. Thus, although men's role as providers has declined, this has not led to any corresponding increase in their share of domestic work. Some of these trends are examined in the section on the repercussions of the crisis on low-income sectors.

## **B. THE CRISIS AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS ON FEMALE EMPLOYMENT**

### **1. The crisis in the 1980s: background**

For three decades since the 1950s, despite some ups and downs, the countries of Latin America experienced sustained economic growth. However, as from 1980 growth fell dramatically.<sup>8</sup> The factors which sparked off the crisis were the drop in net capital inflow, as from 1982, and the increase in payments of profits and interests abroad. In 1982, on account of the cutback in the flow of loans and foreign investment together with the huge capital flight from certain countries in the region, it was necessary to finance more than half the current account deficit by a dramatic reduction of international reserves (ECLAC, 1986c).

In the domestic sphere, these changes were compounded by the huge fall in real wages, and worsened by the rise which affected prices in spite of the fall in wages and the increase in unemployment. Thus, the quickening of inflation was one of the negative domestic features which made the largest contribution to the deterioration in real wages.

All of these discouraging trends in the evolution of domestic variables were closely linked to the external sector, where "the deterioration in the terms of trade, the striking fall in imports, the draining away of international reserves, the frequent and sometimes enormous rises in the exchange rates and, above all, the overwhelming weight of the servicing of the external debt, forced most of the countries of the region to renegotiate their commitments with the international private banks and with their official creditors" (ECLAC, 1985c, pp. 2-3).

A sharp decline occurred in the gross domestic product of the countries of Latin America as a whole. Between 1982 and 1983 GDP fell in absolute terms for the first time in 40 years. Excluding Brazil, which accounts for one third of regional gross domestic product and has a sharp impact on the region as a whole, Latin America's global product rose by a mere 2% between 1980 and 1986.<sup>9</sup> Between 1980 and 1986 the evolution of per capita gross domestic product was particularly negative, as it rose at a lower rate than the population. However, an even more revealing indicator of the drop in the population's standard of living is per capita national income. In Latin America as a whole, it was 14% lower than in 1980, while its 1986 value was similar to that achieved in 1976.

The economic behaviour of the countries during this period was disparate. With the exceptions of Brazil, Colombia, Cuba and Panama, all countries recorded negative rates of growth between 1981 and 1986. The negative repercussions were far greater in the case of petroleum-exporting countries, on account of the slump in the price of crude petroleum. The year in which the crisis was most deeply felt also varied from one country to another. This was not only because nations had achieved extremely diverse levels of development of their productive forces, but also attributable to the different types and degrees of linkage with the international economy. These two factors combined when the governments of the region, to a greater or lesser extent, applied unorthodox adjustment policies, including restrictive monetary and fiscal measures. Among other objectives, governments aimed to reduce fiscal credit by increasing taxation and public-sector tariffs and by reducing current expenditures. In addition, in the course of the adjustment process, the real rate of exchange rose while real wages fell and an effort was made to maintain positive interest rates.

The repercussions of the crisis and of the adjustment policies adopted were reflected in three main ways on the labour market (Tokman, 1986a and 1986b): a) through a decline in the rate of growth of employment; b) through a change in the type of employment created, with an increase in informal and tertiary employment, and c) through a decline in real wages.

Broadly speaking, for the labour force as a whole rates of unemployment rose. Between 1980 and 1985 the number of unemployed in the region grew by 48%. In respect of the change in the types of employment created, three trends should be highlighted: the increase of informal work, of work in the tertiary sector together with variations in the makeup of employment in the public sector in comparison with the private.

The clearest consequence of the crisis was the fall in real wages. Between 1980 and 1985 wage indexes fell by between 12% and 18% in some countries in the region (ECLAC, 1987a, p. 73). This was attributable to spiraling inflation as well as to the increase in unemployment and in underemployment. However, not all sectors were affected equally. The brunt was borne by public employees and workers in the construction sector, while those in manufacturing industry suffered less.

The fall in real wages exceeded the decline in gross income and per capita product. In conjunction with the sharp fall in minimum wages between 1980 and 1985, this implies that the brunt of the crisis was borne by workers, and that income distribution consequently deteriorated.

## **2. Crisis and unemployment by sex**

Unemployment was one of the consequences of the crisis which was felt most dramatically and rapidly on the labour market. Urban unemployment rose

between 1978 and 1984. With the exception of Brazil, where it was cut in half between 1984 and 1986, in all other countries the decline was extremely slight and unemployment remained relatively stable between 1985 and 1986, although its level was higher than those recorded prior to the crisis. In Colombia, it continued to rise until 1986.

In 1985 rates of unemployment in five selected Latin American cities ranged between 5.2% (São Paulo) and 13.6% (Bogotá). The comparison by sex reveals that male rates of unemployment varied considerably less than female rates: while the former ranged from 5 to 10, the latter ranged from 5 to 19. Thus, in the various cities –with the exception of Caracas– rates of female unemployment were higher than rates of male unemployment as were the variations between countries. This may be attributable to the difficulties in measuring female unemployment, which is frequently concealed within the category defined as domestic chores.

In historical terms, female rates of unemployment have been higher than male rates. The information gathered by the Regional Employment Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean (PREALC, 1982) on six countries in the region revealed that between 1970 and 1980 rates of female unemployment were higher than male rates in all major countries. The widest gap was in Panama and the narrowest in Brazil.

In order to account for higher female unemployment it is necessary to bear in mind that in Latin America economies are insufficiently dynamic to absorb the growing labour force available. In addition, there is an excess supply of female labour for the small number of jobs open to women, on account of the high degree of segmentation by sex on the labour market. Furthermore, it is claimed that since in most cases women are not heads of households, they can “afford” to remain unemployed since they are not the main economic support of the family group. This is the traditional argument invoked by employers to justify hiring fewer women or paying lower wages (Ribeiro and de Barbieri, 1978). However, it is in sharp contrast with the fact that in recent years women have grown to represent between one fifth and one third –in the case of the Caribbean– of the total number of heads of households (ECLAC, 1984 and Massiah, 1984).

Economic circumstances in Brazil are an exception from the overall trend recorded in other countries. Until 1986, in comparison with the rest of Latin America, Brazil had successfully solved the problem of its external imbalances with less recessionary cost. As mentioned above, prior to the crisis Brazil made considerable progress with regard to the growth of gross per capita domestic product and the creation of new jobs for both men and women. However, this also went hand in hand with deep inequalities in income distribution and in access to the various sectors of the labour market (ECLAC, 1986d and 1986b). Recent information indicates that the impact of the crisis on this market –both informal and formal– had no repercussions on female activity rates. Quite the contrary, they continued to grow during the worst moments of the Brazilian

economic crisis, although in a more pronounced manner in the formal sector than in the informal (Spindel, 1987).

Between 1982 and 1985, female unemployment multiplied almost fivefold in Bogotá and in Caracas it almost doubled. In São Paulo it rose slightly, while it declined in Panama City and San José. The highest rates of unemployment were those for young people, of between 15 and 19 years of age, which reached 30% in Bogotá and Panama City. In Mexico, between 1984 and 1987 unemployment was higher among the 15- to 19-year-old population, and of those unemployed the percentage of those seeking work for the first time was higher among women than among men (de Oliveira, Orlandina, 1987).

As the rate of female unemployment rose in most cities, a simultaneous increase occurred in the number of jobs available, a trend which is apparent from the behaviour of the rate of employment.<sup>10</sup> This trend is clearly apparent in three of the five cities: Bogotá, Caracas and São Paulo. A similar phenomenon can be observed in Uruguay, where more women joined the labour market, in an irreversible process (Prates, 1987).

These considerations as a whole indicate that while historical trends towards the incorporation of women into the labour market were maintained, there was also an increase in female participation on account of the fall in family income. Thus, female participation on the Latin American labour market during the crisis of the 1980s has moved in the opposite direction to that recorded during the depression of the 1930s in the United States, where women withdrew from the labour market so as to open up greater job opportunities for the male population. In Latin America, as family income fell in the course of the recession, other members of the household, in particular young women, entered the labour market in search of paid work to offset the fall, and their participation in both the formal and informal markets increased (ICRW, 1986). There is no clear explanation for this difference in behaviour; it may be hypothesized that the value attached to female employment has changed, and that consequently women now attach greater importance to work outside the home. However, there is every likelihood that women in the middle- and high-income groups behave in a similar way to American women in the 1930s; in terms of the logic adopted by the latter, they withdraw from the labour market as salaries decline. As far as women in low-income groups are concerned, force of circumstances has compelled them to work outside the home, and to take up all the opportunities offered by the formal and particularly informal labour markets.

The circumstances described above indicate that during the crisis there has been a considerable increase in the level of unemployment; particularly among women and young people, and that the capacity to absorb the labour force has declined. The diversity between countries is attributable to the distinct trends in the evolution of income, the greater or lesser capacity of the economy to generate new jobs, the adjustment policies adopted and public and social investment programmes.

Consequently, it is possible to argue that the trends apparent since the 1950s towards an expansion of the labour market for women have persisted. However, the considerable rise in the rate of growth of the female labour force recorded between 1950 and 1980 found no counterpart capable of ensuring their absorption as a productive force, a shortcoming which had a particular impact on young people who had recently joined the labour market.

The crisis has altered the internal composition of female participation; rates of employment have continued to increase, albeit at a slower rate, while there has been a sharp rise in the rates of unemployment.

### **3. Segmentation of the labour market by sex**

The crisis has also been reflected on the labour market through segmentation, both general and by sex. Consequently, it is worthwhile analysing how those jobs defined as being for women are evolving over time as well as the way in which the crisis has affected this definition.

As far as segmentation of the labour market is concerned, between 1970 and 1980 in six countries –Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Panama and Peru– there was an increase in the number of jobs available in the formal sector for both men and women, although more were available for the latter. However, things were quite different in the informal sector. In the case of men, the number increased in four countries and remained stable in two, while the participation of women fell in every case, and dramatically so in Paraguay, Ecuador and Panama. However, the proportion of women in the domestic sector declined in all cases (León and Arriagada, 1987).

With regard to segmentation of the labour market between 1982 and 1985, no spectacular changes took place. Thus, the proportion of women working in the formal sector fell slightly in Bogotá and San José, remained stable in Caracas and increased in Panama City. This coincides with a relative increase in the informal sector in Bogotá and San José and a decline in Caracas and Panama City. The impact of the crisis becomes even more apparent from an analysis of the trend in domestic service, which increased in most cities in relative terms towards 1985.

The distribution of the female labour force among the various occupations between 1982 and 1985 reveals the changes in their occupational structure. Over the short term, the only group to increase markedly in its proportion of the total number of women employed was that of professional women; the proportion of office employees and saleswomen rose in two cities and fell in two others, while the proportion of own-account traders, in which street traders are mainly found, fell in all cities. Rather than an actual decline in the number of women in the informal sector, this trend would seem to reflect the absence of statistical data on the sector, particularly when street trading is punished by law. Finally, domestic

employees and women providing personal services made up the largest group of women, both in 1982 and in 1985. The sole exception was San José, where the largest occupational group in both of these years was made up of office employees.

The structure of female occupations has remained stable in spite of the crisis and there are no grounds for anticipating, at least in the short term, any significant changes in the segmentation by sex of the labour market. Thus, it is possible to conclude that occupational segmentation by sex has not been sharply affected by economic changes in themselves, but rather that the ideological rigidity which defines jobs as either "for women" or "for men" has remained unshaken.

In order to push the analysis further, it is necessary to review the register of the types of female participation in the informal sector. Much of the qualitative research carried out has revealed that in times of crisis women from the poorest sectors join the labour force without being adequately registered either by population censuses or by household surveys (Raczynski and Serrano, 1985; ECLAC, 1984 and León and Arriagada, 1987).

#### **4. Income distribution by sex**

Income distribution in Latin America has always been unequal, albeit with variations depending on the degree of development of the country and the political and social model concerned. Income concentration among the higher sectors has reflected differentiated access to property and to the use of goods and services.

No studies have been carried out at the regional level on income differentials between men and women. Some studies have been made at the national level, and in all cases they reveal that the income received by women is lower than that of men, although the difference varies from one country to another. In the case of Chile, for example, between 1960 and 1985 average female income was no more than 68% of male income, after adjustment for the level of education. This ratio has not changed over the past quarter of a century (Leiva, 1987).

If average income differentials by age and sex are analysed, it is clear that they are far smaller among the younger sector of the population, and the gap widens with age. This leads to the conclusion that women progress less than men thereby accounting for the wider income disparity between men and women as they grow older (AES, 1987).

In 1985, figures for five metropolitan areas indicate that the female population received between 53% and 84% of average male income, in the following order: São Paulo (52.8%), Caracas (60.8%), Bogotá (66.3%), San José (79.9%), and Panama City (83.5%).



There is reason to wonder whether the income differential between men and women is a consequence of the latter's lack of training. However, in the five cities the average income of working men and women with the same level of education is marked by considerable differences, and in all cases there is a greater difference of income between men and women the higher the level of education. Thus, there is virtually no difference in income between illiterate men and women, and in San José average female income is slightly higher. At the university level (more than 13 years education) income differentials are markedly greater between men and women. The extreme case is to be found in São Paulo, where average male income at this level is twice that of average female income.

If the indexes of average income by occupation for men and women are analysed, in every case male income is higher than female income for the same occupation. Once again, rising through the scale of occupations from manual to non-manual, income disparities increase, and the greatest differences are to be found between average male and female income among professionals and managers, administrators and executives, which are the highest paid jobs for both men and women.

The income of heads of household is far higher than that of the population as a whole, be they men or women. However, the difference between male or female heads of household is far greater than in the population as a whole. This pattern is to be found on a similar scale in all countries, thereby raising the need to devote attention to the group of female heads of household whose living conditions are among the worst in the region.

It is in São Paulo that the greatest income disparity between men and women, both for the population as a whole and for heads of household, is to be found. This city has recorded one of the most spectacular increases in female participation in recent years. However, this has been made possible by the far lower salaries which women have had to accept in comparison with those of men. In this case, as in Uruguay, female employment corresponds to "a stagnant labour reserve" made up of active but irregularly employed workers whose wages fall below the normal working class level (Prates, 1987).

Between 1982 and 1985 the average relative income of women fell in Bogotá and in Caracas; in Panama City it remained stable and rose only in San José, where employment declined sharply, in other words, quite the opposite to the case of São Paulo. As far as levels of education are concerned, those women whose average income fell most were those who had received an intermediate education, i.e., between seven and 12 years' schooling. During the same period, the average income of those with the highest and lowest levels of education tended to draw together, hence the income differential in respect of education was far lower in 1985. Consequently average female wages fell; in other words, the levelling out was the result of a trend towards lower levels of income.

As far as occupations are concerned, the women whose income fell most during the period were office staff, a fact which coincides with the trend in

respect of intermediate levels of education, and own-account traders. The average income of professionals fell only in Caracas. In all the other cities it remained stable and even increased. If the average income of those occupations with lower and higher incomes are compared, it may be observed that income concentration by occupation increased in Bogotá, and the gap between the two extremes widened. In contrast, in Caracas and San José wage differentials declined, while in Panama City they remained stable.

From an initial impression of events it is apparent that income inequality between male and female workers increased. Women's wages declined, leading to greater income concentration, with the result that the differences attributable to different levels of education and types of occupation tended to narrow, bringing about a widespread drop in income, particularly pronounced in the intermediate levels.

To sum up, the crisis has been deeply felt on the labour market and has affected all workers, although its brunt has been borne by women. This has implications for specific social policies towards women, as well as towards those women who have been particularly affected, i.e., female heads of household and young women.

#### **5. The repercussions of the crisis on families in low-income sectors<sup>11</sup>**

The analysis has so far been concerned with the repercussions of the crisis on female workers. An extremely large group of women has yet to be considered: these are those women who work in the home and on whom no quantitative records exist. Consequently, there now follows a presentation of the results of some studies of an essentially qualitative nature providing a picture of events in the domestic sphere of low-income sectors.

As illustrated above, women were particularly affected by the crisis (see also de Barbieri, 1985). The already precarious circumstances of housewives in low-income sectors were further worsened. This was reflected in particular in the difficulty they encountered in finding paid work and in the high rates of unemployment which affected both women and men in low-income sectors. Furthermore, a concomitant of the crisis was its impact on family life, on daily domestic tasks and on the burden of domestic work which fell on women.

A number of data on the region have revealed an increase in the number of extended families, with each dwelling housing several family groups, who are generally related to each other. In most cases, these consist of offspring who may have founded their own families but who have not succeeded in finding an alternative dwelling. Distant relatives or non-relatives who have raised makeshift constructions on the same sites and with whom water, electricity and in some cases meals are shared are also to be found. This phenomenon, designated by the

term "unrelated co-habitational family groups", covers groups sharing the same plot or the same dwelling plus the same plot, and totally integrated family groups. Both in Chile and Brazil, this process of growth of non-related family groups has been described at length. It has also been demonstrated that during the crisis the number of workers or active individuals per family has increased, particularly in low-income sectors where minors are frequently involved in a variety of informal and self-employment activities.

Various studies indicate that prolonged unemployment gives rise to a variety of strategies in respect of family life which are different in the case of men and of women. The strategy adopted by men initially focuses on a search for work in their own field or in a field in which they had previously worked, through contacts with friends and ex-workmates, while subsequently they extend the search to any type of job, be it self-employed or in other cases sporadic low-income activities which generally lead to their swelling the ranks of the informal sector of the economy. Frequently, this constant sense of frustration during prolonged periods of unemployment leads to excessive consumption of alcohol, giving rise to family problems, conflicts and violence within the family.

For their part, women adopt a variety of strategies. Together with men, they seek new sources of income, through part-time, irregular, unstable and extremely low-paid activities, which are also largely an extension of their domestic role: sewing, washing, hourly-paid domestic service, sale of meals, etc. Another quite distinct alternative is their participation in groups of women who combine to face their problems of subsistence, either by earning income or by jointly ensuring supply of the goods necessary for the subsistence of the family group. This type of response is innovative in that women tackle the problem of subsistence collectively rather than individually. At the same time as they provide a more "social" vision of the problem, these solutions widen the horizons of female participation and self-esteem, as what had hitherto usually been considered a domestic task thus becomes work on its own right.

The successive phases in terms of domestic organization are various and directly lead to an increase in the burden of work borne by women.<sup>12</sup> Initially, bills cease to be paid: mortgages, if there are any, gas and electricity bills, and finally, water bills. This means that women are obliged to cook with wood, which in many cases means they also have to gather wood, to fetch water from public standpipes some distance from the home, etc. Subsequently, household possessions are sold off: the refrigerator, the cooker, crockery, clothing, materials to repair the home and others. All of these sales place a further burden on women, as they deprive them of their essential tools for carrying out domestic work. Finally, things which wear out, such as clothing, shoes and household equipment are not replaced. Nor does the family possess the minimum cash necessary to pay for transport in search of work, as all the money gathered is spent on food. In addition, the place of purchase, as well as the amounts spent and the volumes purchased change, as a result of which domestic work becomes excessive. Nor is it possible to plan for the future. "Concern with immediate

problems and the solution of permanent small crises gradually comes to constitute the way of life of low-income sectors" (Jelin and Gogna, 1987, p. 9).

This increase in domestic burdens, with the excessive amount of extra labour resulting from the crisis, in conjunction with the sensation felt by women that they are not adequately fulfilling the reproductive role assigned to them by society, is generally reflected in the large numbers of housewives suffering from deep depression and psychosomatic symptoms.

This raises the question as to how great the actual scale of the crisis would have been if women had not made up for a considerable proportion of the deprivation resulting therefrom at a high cost in terms of personal sacrifice and work.

## **6. Summary of the effects of the crisis**

The statistical and qualitative data presented make it possible to draw the conclusion that the repercussions of the crisis have been felt differently by workers of each sex. The studies reveal that unemployment among women was greater than among men in all the cities analysed, and that the high rates of female unemployment remained stable and even rose proportionally more, particularly among youth. In crisis situations, women have adopted a different behaviour from that of women in developed countries. In response to drastic reductions in household income, they have joined both the formal and informal labour markets at an even faster rate. Thus, activity rates have continued to rise, although their internal breakdown varies, since employment is increasing more slowly while unemployment is rising rapidly, particularly in the 15 to 19 age group.

Segmentation of the labour market by sex has not undergone any major changes attributable to the crisis. The informal sector has increased in size, although household surveys do not provide a totally exhaustive record thereof. Paid domestic work, which had gradually declined between 1970 and 1980, increased during the period from 1982 to 1985. Hence, the structure of those occupations considered to be "for women" remained unchanged in spite of the crisis, and there are no grounds for expecting major changes in the segmentation of the labour market by sex in the short term.

Finally, as far as income distribution by sex is concerned, it may be concluded that it is in this sphere that the disparities between workers of one and the other sex are most clearly apparent. This inequality has been accentuated by the crisis, with the result that average female incomes have in some cases fallen to half that of average male income. This discrepancy is even greater in the case of heads of household. If the data are compared on the basis of level of education and types of occupation, it is apparent that it was the average incomes of women and low-level non-manual occupations which fell most sharply; i.e., those of

own-account traders, office workers and others corresponding to the groups with intermediate levels of education, in other words, from seven to 12 years of schooling.

Moreover, the maintenance and reproduction of the labour force, which is the responsibility of women, particularly in low-income sectors, is becoming increasingly arduous. Thus, women in these sectors are compelled to lengthen and intensify their working day in order to make up for the shortage of goods and services brought about by the crisis.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This section provides a summary of the information set out in the ECLAC (1986b) document on the topic. The information is taken from the 1960, 1970 and 1980 population censuses. Special tabulations were drawn up using census samples from Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama and Uruguay. In the case of Chile, in 1980 the household survey was used, as the census sample for 1982 was not available. Even though censuses inadequately record female labour in rural areas and in the informal sector, they are the sole statistical instrument available to provide a picture of long-term changes.

<sup>2</sup> "For the purposes of classification in terms of modernization, four categories of countries have been defined: a) *countries at an advanced level of modernization* (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Cuba, Panama and Venezuela); b) *large countries whose modernization has been rapid and unbalanced* (Brazil, Colombia and Mexico); c) *medium-sized and small countries in which modernization has been partial* (Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and the Dominican Republic); and d) *countries in which modernization is incipient* (Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua). The classification adopts indicators based on the dominant indicator, which is that for urbanization, as there is a high degree of congruency between this and the set of social indicators –life expectancy, education, occupational structure and social stratification– and in terms of trend, with per capita product" (Rama, 1984, p. 8).

<sup>3</sup> The process in Brazil is of a different nature from those in other countries in the region, as it has been characterized by an increasingly youthful economically active urban population and low levels of education (Reicher Madeira, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> The return of the economically active female population in Peru to the primary sector (1972-1981) is apparently attributable to the lack of jobs in the formal sector of the economy.

<sup>5</sup> The data are taken from the respective household surveys.

<sup>6</sup> See data on income from the 1980 Brazilian Population Census.

<sup>7</sup> For an exhaustive discussion of the methods for measuring domestic work, see Goldschmidt (1987). This article examines the value imputed to domestic work in terms of the cost of a substitute, as well as in terms of wages for an equivalent function on the market, of opportunity cost and of average or minimum market wages.

<sup>8</sup> Information on economic indicators is taken from ECLAC 1987.

<sup>9</sup> Brazilian global product increased by 18% over the same period.

<sup>10</sup> The employment rate is the ratio of the number of persons actually employed to the population of working age. In other words, in contrast with the activity rate it does not include either those who are unemployed or those seeking work for the first time.

<sup>11</sup> This section is based on the following documents: Jelin and Gogna, 1987; de Oliveira, 1987; Raczynski and Serrano, 1985; and Hardy, 1985.

<sup>12</sup> Most of the qualitative studies were done in countries at an advanced level of modernization (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and also Brazil).

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**III. WOMEN IN THE 1980s:  
NEW PROTAGONISTS, NEW  
SOCIAL DEMANDS**

### III. WOMEN IN THE 1980s: NEW PROTAGONISTS, NEW SOCIAL DEMANDS

#### Introduction

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

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

The final document of the Nairobi Conference (United Nations, 1985), whose theme was "Equality, Development and Peace", contains the broadest and clearest declarations on the different situations of discrimination, subordination and inequality to which women are subjected at both the public and private levels. The final document also recognizes that the optimistic thinking of the 1970s, according to which economic growth would automatically lead to improvements in the status of women, was based on assumptions that were too simplistic (United Nations, 1985, para. 103), and that in order to achieve this objective specific policies had to be followed. At the same time, in view of the

recession in the world economy and the unlikelihood of a recovery in the short term, the prospects for women would appear to be worse than had been envisaged a decade ago, since governments are concerned about poverty in general and attach less importance to questions relating to the equality of women. In pursuing their adjustment policies, Latin American governments in general have reduced expenditure in social sectors, and delays are therefore likely to occur in the adoption of measures to prevent discrimination in employment, wages and salaries and conditions of hiring, as well as of steps designed to raise educational standards, find solutions for special health needs and help in areas such as child care and efforts to reduce the double and triple workdays of women.

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

An attempt has also been made to include new behaviours of women, not only in the workforce but also in all areas in which their presence has become noteworthy and relevant, including their participation in occupational associations, in movements and organizations relating to women's issues, in economic solidarity groups and in grass-roots educational efforts. In contrast to such participation, attention is drawn to their scant participation in politics, financial management and the military, which ultimately means their absence from the places where power is held and decisions are taken.

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

## **A. WOMEN IN THE RURAL SECTOR**

### **1. The rural sector**

The sheer breadth of the topic of women's studies makes it necessary to draw some preliminary distinctions so that a fairly clear picture of women in Latin America can gradually emerge. For this reason, and because of the specific nature of the rural sector, that sector may justifiably be given separate treatment. It encompasses situations and social types of women that are markedly different from those of the urban sector, with different levels of development, and certain prejudices and stereotypes are encountered which are peculiar to the peasant environment. The situation of the rural women, moreover, is more difficult to assess from the viewpoint of statistical information, since the latter does not usually distinguish between urban and rural populations,<sup>2</sup> or, where such a distinction is drawn, no differentiation between the sexes is maintained. The cross indexing of variables is thus rendered more difficult, in addition to which the margin of error in estimating the economically active female agricultural population is increased.

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

Postwar economic trends gave a strong boost to industrialization and to the development of the necessary infrastructure for it, and allocated to the rural sector the role of increasing productivity and producing cheap food, in some cases for export. Large-scale changes were thus introduced into the region and these have been the subject of study in various publications. For the purpose of

this study, of special interest is the behaviour of the population, which on the one hand is increasing and on the other migrating. The region's population multiplied two and a half times between 1950 and 1980, and has now become predominantly urban (68%). The rural populations moved to the cities, particularly to the capitals, increasing them to disproportionate sizes and bringing in train a string of new problems. It is estimated that one fourth of the rural population migrated to the cities between 1950 and 1960 (Crumett, 1987), joining the informal and service sectors. The difference between the urban and rural sectors has narrowed, since there have been migratory flows in both directions. Millions of rural dwellers installed themselves on the peripheries of capitals and cities; their values, culture and world view filtered through to the urban working class sectors. The impoverishment of the rural dwellers and their consequent loss of bargaining power, as a product of structural changes in the rural areas, led to their migration (permanent, seasonal, periodic or daily) to the urban labour markets, which has become another element in the spatial link between the rural and urban areas.<sup>3</sup> The reverse flow has been motivated by the installation and improvement of such services as electricity, potable water, rural health outposts, different levels of educational establishments, roads, railway networks, bridges, telephones, television, etc. Communications, education and labour markets have filled in the spaces.

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

Peasant families number approximately 65 million, and about two thirds of these are poor households. Peasants control 36% of arable land and 44% of the land under cultivation. Peasant production covers two fifths of the domestic market and one third of the export sector. Its role in food production is very significant: 51% of maize, 77% of beans, 61% of potatoes and 33% of rice are produced by peasants (Joint ECLAC/FAO Agriculture Division, quoted by Schejtman, 1987). Its significance can best be appreciated if looked at from the standpoint of basic food production by country, which represents approximately 80% of the total in Brazil, 67% in Colombia and 66% in Peru, and accounts for 69% of the total of maize produced in Mexico (Ortega, 1982).

On the other hand, 40% of the farms are small holdings of less than two hectares, which explains peasant poverty and the need to seek income away from

their land and sometimes away from the rural area, within the framework of family "survival strategies". Of those families living in conditions of critical poverty, the rural poor exceed in absolute numbers the urban poor: the percentage is 54% and in five countries it is above 70%.

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

The processes of modernization profoundly transformed the structure of agriculture: the latifundio/minifundio complex disappeared and was replaced by large and medium-sized modern enterprises. This type of enterprise, generally speaking, changed the way in which the factors of production were used: it reduced size, invested in technology and changed the nature of the relationship with labour from permanent employment with residence on the farm to temporary employment with residence away from the farm. Those who previously resided on the farms (lessees, sharecroppers, tenant farmers and others), were excluded from ownership of land and from the *haciendas*, becoming "free", wage-earning workers. The displaced peasants have given rise to new communities in places with no agricultural potential, creating new villages and small towns, or settling on the peripheries of existing towns, villages and cities. These new urban communities provide the seasonal (or temporary) labour force. Between the 1940s and the 1970s (the current trend is not known), migration significantly reduced the rural population and the economically active agricultural population, and had significant effects at the ideological level on union and political movements in the rural sector. Moreover, the least mobilized third of the population that was least endowed with resources remained in the rural sector, comprising an older and less educated economically active population, and a population that began to believe more in individual betterment, through a change in occupation either for themselves or for their children, rather than in mobilization to assert collective grievances (Durstun, 1983). In response to peasant pressures and movements, two processes were set in motion: the expansion of arable area through the opening of the agricultural frontier, and agrarian reforms which to varying degrees allowed the peasant sectors access to land, thus attenuating their political pressure. As a result, in the rural areas, grass-roots protests began to be centered on the cost of living and on public services, rather than on access to land or the conditions of employment (Flora, 1986, p. 248).

What has been said here so far about the current importance of the rural sector is complemented by more recent data. These show a halt to the trend observed in the agricultural economically active population, which has begun to

increase (Schejtman, 1987), and a tendency towards retaining the population instead of driving it away. A fundamental role has also been assigned in the region to the rural population and to the peasant sector in food security. Furthermore, the sector has acquired the capacity to press demands for greater well-being and more resources similar to those of the urban sector, which has helped to reduce the differences between the two sectors. The rural sector has emerged as a new protagonist, hence the interest in more fully exploring it. In this document, the topic of rural women is dealt with in relation to this new role.

## **2. Rural women: ethnic differences**

The term "rural women" covers a diversity of women who have a type and style of residence –i.e., rural– which involves a widely scattered habitat, economic and social links with agriculture, membership in a rural/peasant culture and minimal coverage in terms of services, all of which accentuates their isolation and low levels of education and health.

Women residing in the countryside are businesswomen, daily workers employed in agro-industrial or non-agricultural occupations in the cities, temporary workers and peasants in rural areas, as well as being housewives. Rural women in the region display greater differences than merely occupational ones, as a result of belonging to various ethnic groups, agrarian economies and crop-growing systems, all of which has an impact on the division of labour by gender, the organization of production, integration into the marketplace and the range of occupations to which women have access.

With respect to ethnic groups, a distinction should be drawn between "creole" peasants of hispanic and early mestizo origin, in areas where old inherited lands had been subdivided, and indigenous peasants, living in their original native communities and subject to processes of acculturation of varying intensity. With regard to agricultural systems, advanced capitalist sectors of the agricultural economy should be differentiated from peasant economies. Systems of cultivation can be categorized as to whether they are based on wheat or maize, or whether the land is used for growing root crops for animal grazing. Reference will be made below to ethnic differences and to the peasant sector, and indirectly to the capitalist sector, as related to labour markets and areas of settlement. Since only limited information is available on the third of these topics, it is mentioned only as a source of further study in future.

### **a) *Creole peasants***

Creole peasant women of Ibero-American origin (hereinafter, "creole peasant women") are the syncretic product of four centuries of racial intermixture and processes of transculturation. Like the male members of their

families, they too have inherited both the Spanish and native agricultural tradition, which can be seen from their agricultural systems (crop combinations, tilling techniques, cattle management, irrigation and management of non-renewable physical resources) and from their cultural traditions, reflected in food habits, gender and social roles, culture and world view (Aranda and Olavarria, 1988). There are approximately 40 million rural women living in poor households, since two thirds of all rural households are poor. Female heads of household (with differences according to the region) account for between 20% and 25% of all rural women.

The place of rural women within the social hierarchy and in production, particularly in the cases of the "peasant economies", has been inherited or determined by men. In general, neither middle-school education nor occupation has offered rural women the opportunity to raise their social status. This can still be achieved through a "good marriage", a rare phenomenon, since the members of different social strata tend to marry among themselves. A trend exists, however, for the daughters of small- or medium-scale farmers to attend technical or professional schools in the cities, where they become part of the middle urban strata. Women rarely manage an agricultural farm directly, except in the cases of female heads of household, on account of the absence or migration of the male head of household, or of single women not living in a legal or consensual union with a man.

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

b) *Indigenous peasants*

There are approximately 13 million indigenous rural women, living mainly in Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Guatemala and Mexico, who have not been the subject



of studies which focus particularly on their situation as peasants and their insertion into national life. Nevertheless, at least three different groups may be distinguished: a) indigenous peasant women of the valleys and mountains; b) high plateau shepherdesses and c) indigenous women living in tribal communities. The largest body of information exists on the first group, so that some knowledge is available concerning the division of labour and the relationship between the roles within couples. This relationship appears to be quite egalitarian, since the Andean way of thinking neither compartmentalizes nor establishes hierarchies and conceives of reality as comprising complementary opposites (Condori, Michaux and Montecinos, 1987; Escalante, 1987; Rostoroswsky, undated; Aparicio, 1987; and Montecino, 1984). While less is known about the second group, it would appear that they too conceive of their duties as being complementary to those of the men, a view which is also reflected in sexual roles.

From the above it can be seen that indigenous women are participants in the societies to which they belong and are protected by the community as a whole. Most families in peasant communities are complex and of the extended type, and in the Peruvian Andes women are usually the *de facto* heads of household in view of the high absenteeism (daily, weekly and seasonal) of the men, for reasons of work. In such cases, the community helps to care for the children, and the traditional design of the houses, attached to one another with common adjacent areas, reinforces the image of belonging to an entity greater than the family.

The relationship among women from tribal organizations in tropical zones is one of great equality, which is destroyed when they become inserted into national societies. Contact with the "outside world" is maintained by the men, and the "whites" deal with the men in all economic matters. This isolates and weakens the position of the women, makes them feel inferior to the men and has a very negative impact on their sense of self-worth measured against the external values which contrast so strongly with their ancestral modes of behaviour (Rehnfeldt, 1987). In general, indigenous women resist the opening up of community organizations or "closed communities". Such contact results in a lowering of their self-esteem (Olazar, 1987, and Rehnfeldt, 1987). They feel that they are uncultured, marginalized from the Spanish-speaking world and "de-humanized by maternity" (Anderson, 1982).

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

It should be noted, finally, that significant differences exist among the indigenous groups themselves. Whether in open or closed communities, they

exhibit a great diversity of cultures, roles and degrees of insertion in the wider society. Objective information in this regard is scant, and this subject is considered as being open to future research.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. Peasant survival strategies

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

#### a) *Work in the home*

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

The concept of work in the home covers tasks that include not only the daily preparation of meals, taking care of children and of family members who are ill, raising and socializing children, making and caring for clothing and performing cleaning chores, but also others which, being performed within the home, are considered "housework" as well. The latter include caring for small animals, fetching drinking water and firewood, preparing and maintaining a kitchen garden, cleaning seeds and grains, plaiting bunches of garlic and onions,

plaiting or weaving fibers, and making handicraft items. For the rural sector the proposal has thus been made to use the term "extended domestic work" (Aranda, 1982). The number of working hours required depends on the number and ages of the children, as well as on the eating habits and the degree of self-sufficiency of the family and the kinds of technology available to help carry out the various chores.

b) *Peasant farm production*

i) *The creole peasant woman.* The extent of the participation of women in the agricultural activities of the family enterprise depends not only on the family structure and social class, but also on the cultural tradition in agriculture and on the crop pattern and technology used. For example, in the cultivation of cereals (wheat, rye and barley) in the European tradition, using a plow and draft animals, there is little participation by women: originally, the remoteness and size of the plots cultivated made it more difficult to reconcile their participation in such work with their taking care of small children, and there was less need for their work. This reduced them to performing mainly household tasks, with the result being that household chores –and thus women themselves– gradually lost their social recognition (Mead, 1981, and Blumberg, 1981). In these methods of cultivation, women do not participate in the management of the agricultural enterprises in general nor in decisions concerning planting. Although profound cultural differences rooted in Hispanic or indigenous practices can be perceived at each stage of women's participation in farming activities, these will not be examined in further detail here.

The participation of creole women in farming and other activities generally follows precise patterns, which are often deviated from as a result of poverty, forcing women to participate wherever there is a real need for their help. After planting, the tasks in which women participate most frequently are clearing or weeding, harvesting by hand, "breaking" maize, "cutting" beans, gathering potatoes, etc. (Aranda, 1982); in other words, in manual tasks which require the use of small implements, or in farming of indigenous origin. Women are excluded from the use of large implements and from knowledge of modern machines. Their participation in agriculture varies between 19% and 35% in Latin America and may be as high as 54% in the Caribbean (FAO, December 1983). Extension services and external public and non-governmental agents conceive of women as occupying roles of secondary importance in agriculture and no provision is therefore made for them in the granting of credits, in training programmes and in access to land.

The great influence of culture can be seen in the practice of large-animal husbandry, in which women are excluded from such activities as transhumance, branding, castrating and vaccinating. In cattle-raising, women work in dairy barns producing milk and cheese. They are responsible for tending to small animals and poultry.

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

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

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

c) *Production for marketing and handicraft*

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

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

Among indigenous women in open communities, daily income is obtained from their principal activity as itinerant vendors of eggs, poultry, meals which they themselves prepare or handicraft which they themselves make. In general, they do not sell personal services, unless they migrate to the cities, in which case they may work as domestic servants.

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

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

There is much controversy over whether handicraft should be considered as a source of "alternative income", and over the proliferation of projects of this type generally financed by non-governmental bodies. The difficulties are

compounded when projects are not based on a handicraft tradition, in which the quality and originality of the product has been confirmed over time. The markets at which they are aimed, the organization of work, the provision of regular income and the time devoted to this activity are some of the many aspects which should be taken into account when considering modern handicraft promoted by external agents.

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

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

Changes in agriculture –which brought with them the expulsion of the resident workers, and the impoverishment of peasants on account of the scarcity of land and the low commercial value of their production– have produced two types of reactions in peasant families: the hiring out of their labour, and emigration. Women came to echo these processes, and in due time were forced to either emigrate or proletarianize. The solution first chosen was emigration, since there has always existed a greater demand for females to work as domestic servants in the cities than for female agricultural labour. This situation has changed in recent decades, owing to new forms of export-oriented farm production, creating a growing demand for female labour. This is a reflection of the potential availability that results from the poverty of the rural sectors: women's work is cheaper than that of men; moreover, the handling of fresh, exportable products requires the fine motor skills of women. A distinction can thus be made between the market for female labour in traditional agriculture and the market in modern agriculture, with its new kinds of hiring, wage and labour policies.

The impact on women of this move from being a peasant housewife to being a wage-earner working eight or more hours a day has yet to be revealed by the research, with regard to both domestic organization and relationships among family members, and their life as a whole.

##### **a) *The traditional labour market***

Information available on this topic is limited, since creole women only began to participate in agriculture –at least in the Southern Cone– after the introduction of export crops. For traditional crops, labour needs were seasonal

(clearing, harvesting, cutting), which helped make them invisible in the rural areas, since the relevant information was not recorded in censuses and the contractual relationship was generally informal, between acquaintances or relatives. It appears, however, that in areas with small holdings, there has always been a demand for labour from outside the family at times when the workload was greatest, and women resident in rural areas who worked outside their homes part of the time were contracted. Currently such women are still hired for harvesting traditional commercial crops such as lentils, beans and potatoes in the open fields (in Chile, in the Central Valley). They are also hired for grain cleaning, which is carried out in closed areas. Contracts are verbal agreements which contain no provisions for compliance with labour laws; this is mentioned because of the significance to women, unless they are definitely "wage-earners" and not peasants, of being seen in the fields. The most common form of agreement is by the unit (sacks of an agreed number of kilos, or boxes); it is therefore piecework performed manually. The part-time women employees go to the fields in groups and with their children, who help to increase the number of units harvested. Generally speaking, such work is performed by women who are mothers (single women have other preferences) and it is considered very burdensome. Women have to be in a situation of extreme poverty in order to accept such jobs which, in addition to being performed under hard conditions, deprive them of social recognition.

Similar hiring and labour practices are found in the transplanting of seed beds and in the harvesting of coffee, grains and vegetables in other countries of Latin America.

There have also been rural working-class women, known as "peonas", at harvest time, and itinerant labour that migrates from place to place and from one crop to another. These are women who have lost their status as peasants or rural working-class women, and very little is known about them (the history of rural women has yet to be written). Fragmentary information is available on a type of woman who accompanies the itinerant worker. These are single women, referred to variously as "la compañera" or "el cuervo" or "el perro" (Falabella, 1970), all of which pejorative terms are used by the workers themselves.

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

half of them joined the labour force at age 11, as unpaid family help, or in the coffee growing industry (ECLAC, 1984b).

These characteristics are used here to define a type of female agricultural worker, a "rural working-class woman" in the agricultural sector, who is part of the labour force of the sector and who is needed there either because she can be paid lower wages or because during given periods no male workers are available. This type tends to become the "reserve army" of the farm labour force, and includes women from the poorest sectors of the rural areas (and also from the urban peripheries). They receive lower wages, and their productivity is high in view of the prevailing system of work and the fact that the conditions sometimes permit the non-compliance with labour laws. Another focus for investigation would appear to be the existence of different forms of hiring practices for men and women; in the case of the latter, hiring practices such as piecework, which are being discarded for men, are still used. In many cases the women in question are heads of household; when they are not, they belong to the new type of peasant households in which a wage is not adequate to maintain the family, as is the case in the urban sector.

b) *The labour market in areas of recent colonization: some background information*

One sector of capitalist farming, recently incorporated into agricultural activities and still a relatively unexplored area, is that of farming on land which has been newly settled and where the agricultural frontier is being expanded. This represents a vast area which has not been the subject of qualitative studies in relation to women, probably on account of the difficulties of access. An FAO document (December 1983) termed it a third type of economy, in view of the large expanse of land involved. It is estimated that between 1950 and 1980 more than 200 million hectares were brought into production, which for some countries meant a virtual doubling of agricultural land (Costa Rica and Panama, quoted by Ortega, 1986). It is not known what this means in terms of labour markets, women's jobs or family organization. Little or no progress has been made since the research carried out in 1984 (ECLAC, 1984b). At least three main types of settlements can be distinguished: the first responds to government policies addressing various concerns; the second takes the form of processes of expanding the national or transnational capitalist agriculture; and the third consists of encroachments of landless peasants, or "spontaneous settlements".

The meaning of settlement processes always goes beyond the incorporation of new areas into the agricultural sector. From the social standpoint, these processes involve the displacement of tens of thousands of landless or near-landless peasant families from their areas of origin to the settlement areas, in pursuit of the dream of owning land (Tavares de Santos, 1988).



In cases of settlers who move through agencies or enterprises, conflicts arise between the peasants' expectations and those of the agencies or enterprises. The settlers try to set up family enterprises for food production, stock-raising or production of other goods to allow themselves to support themselves in the peasant society (or reproduce themselves as a class). This ideal runs up against that of the agencies, which seek to settle modern farmers who will use high technology and credits, whose production will be export-oriented, who will live in rural communities and sell their products through cooperatives and channels managed by the agencies. One of the results of this conflict between the various agents of settlement is the "nomadism" of the settlers, since reality does not live up to their expectations. The abandonment of land is a frequent offshoot of settlement programmes (Tavares de Santos, 1988). The lack of confidence of the settlement agencies is compounded by the dissatisfaction of the settlers themselves with the inadequate living conditions (lack of food and high prices in rainy seasons, lack of medicinal products, squatter settlements and improvised educational facilities). As for farming itself, a rapid depletion of soils occurs as a side effect of excessive or improper settlement, and bank debt is accumulated. This set of negative factors forces the settlers to leave the land, feeling frustrated—a feeling that is aggravated by the fact that each move means that they lose their environmental and social reference points.

The situation of women deserves further research in the context of each type of settlement in the region. The situation and problems of the "woman settler" are still unknown, and can only be inferred from what has happened to her husband. It is a requirement of settlers to be married, from which can be deduced that the enterprises responsible for settlement need nuclear families with many children, who are potential workers. This family-related feature combines with the above-mentioned precarious living conditions (poor health care, shortage or lack of food, deficient housing and improvised educational facilities). All this implies that these women are burdened with a great amount of work, little help and numerous problems. This situation makes it desirable to make a special search for women in recently settled areas. Topics for research and systematization in relation to these women abound: the settlement process in which they participate; systems of crop-raising; previous peasant experience; systems of farm labour; types of families settled and family organization (from the perspective of survival strategies); social conflicts in the colonized areas; the role of women; and the significance of being uprooted, to name but a few.

c) *The labour market in the export sector*

Current conditions of transport and the technical advances in cooling and refrigeration systems have opened up new markets for Latin America's export agriculture based on the commercial production of fresh products: flowers, vegetables and fruits. These are high-profit, labour-intensive products which have generated a specific demand for female labour; they have produced in fact

a division of labour based on gender. This is due to certain characteristics which are considered peculiar to women: the first of these aspects is their highly developed fine motor skills for manual activities, which is a gender-based attribute; the second aspect is the very nature of a position of subordination: submissiveness, inability to organize oneself, non-conflictive temperament and willingness to accept low wages.

In some cases, such as in the production of table grapes, it is said that the preference for contracting exclusively women is related to their manual dexterity. Tasks such as cleaning, preparing and packing table grapes are considered strictly for women. The situation is similar for other tasks on fruit farms and for the packing of other fruits of Mediterranean origin, as well as of some other types of fruits and vegetables (Aranda, 1982, Campaña and Lago, 1982, and Roldán, 1982).

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

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

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

The first type of enterprise is found in the fruit production sector of Chile. Wage-earning women employed in agriculture are from both rural and urban areas, but in the latter case, from small and medium-sized towns or from rural villages. The women recruited are young, between the ages of 15 and 24, with an average of five years of schooling, mostly single, or married women whose children are old enough to take care of themselves or who are entrusted to the care of an older sister. These women are from semi-working class homes in rural areas or from working-class homes. In urban areas, workers have more years of

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

i) *Growing crops*

One of the new features of current labour systems is their marked seasonality. This characteristic is particularly important as it relates to the recruitment of women. The tasks in which women participate are generally of short duration (a little over 20 days per year). The same persons work at each of the various tasks, which are staggered over time. The annual average work in the vineyards is three months, five days, which may be compared to the average of from one to two months in the coffee plantations in Brazil and Colombia, working in different degrees of shade. The main tasks are pruning, trimming, and tending the roots, all of which require great care. The work is done in the field, plant by plant, root by root (as in the case of kiwis). The workers also tie vines in the vineyards, although this is not the exclusive task of women.

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

ii) *Working as packers*

As regards the task of selecting and packing products for export, the example has been selected of the women packers in Chile, whose numbers have increased dramatically during the present decade. This is by far the most highly paid job to which women have access in the agricultural sector or outside of it. In the preparation of table grapes, they work in the packing plants which are huge sheds in which they clean, select and pack the fruit. The main female jobs are cleaning, which involves the removal of substandard produce; the selection of the bunch according to its destination (domestic or external market); and packing. The latter involves wrapping each bunch in paper without touching it and fitting the bunches into the boxes. These are tasks that require great manual dexterity. Cleaning and packing have different norms of payment. They are based on the "box" of approximately seven kilos; the minimum norm is between 40 and 50 boxes per day of cleaned and selected bunches. Meeting this requirement earns for the worker approximately US\$3 per day (in 1980 dollars), which is comparable to the payment for a day's work in the agricultural sector in the area. During the harvest, packing proceeds more rapidly; fulfilling the

requirement earns the worker twice what she would earn for cleaning, since 160 boxes per day are packed. The possibility of earning more depends on whether the women themselves choose to work overtime, which enables the fastest of them to earn approximately US\$150 per month on the basis of self-exploitation. They work an average of three months. These are generally the same women who work for three further months in the vineyards. They try to work throughout the year in different activities (sewing, needlework, providing services), but only 27.3% of the women surveyed managed to do so. None of them has permanent employment, which is very scarce and is found mainly in the administrative sector. In addition, they all perform the household chores, without help from their husbands since, in spite of the significant contribution of women to the family income, tradition also imposes on them "their natural functions". In consequence, during the evening they cook and do the washing, and at weekends they sew; the other household chores are performed by the eldest daughter.

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

## **B. DOMESTIC MIGRATION: FEMALE RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRATION AND THE URBAN LABOUR MARKET**

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

The countryside has been virtually emptied by the play of the so-called expulsion factors. These may be "factors of change", arising from the introduction of capitalist production relations in the countryside, which lead to peasant expropriations and the expulsion of non-family dependents, of sharecroppers and of other tenant farmers; they may also be "factors of

stagnation", such as the growing population pressure on areas limited by physical restrictions (Singer, 1975). These have been at the root of the disintegration of peasant subsistence economies and of indigenous communities, and also account for the pressure on the land in areas of minifundio agriculture. They basically correspond to the phenomenon of rural poverty, the impossibility of maintaining the whole of the family group and the need for resources from outside the countryside, which combine to make emigration a necessity.

### **1. Female rural migrants**

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

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

A number of studies have indicated that the fertility patterns of migrants tend to change. Generally speaking, lower fertility rates have been recorded, a factor which has probably helped to account for the lower birth rates (Elizaga, 1970; Castro and others, 1978, quoted by Crumett, 1987; Noordam, 1978; Lee and others, 1986). However, the results of data gathered in Peru are quite the

opposite (Crumett, 1987). In respect of levels of education, it has been observed that female migrants have lower levels of education than women born in cities, and also than male migrants.

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

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

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

The foregoing allows us to assert, together with Warman (1987, p. 10), that "we have much to learn in respect of migration ... only recently have we begun to realize the complexity of the flows of people, money and goods, ideas and professions in all directions". At the very least, it is necessary to update data on domestic migrations within countries, to determine the direction of migratory flows and to identify the trends. In addition to its huge implications in respect of the population, the economy and culture, domestic migration may be viewed as a continuum in space, time and occupations. As women move from a rural to an urban environment, they leave the countryside for medium-sized cities and move from there to capital cities. As far as time and occupations are concerned, daily migrations seem to concern travelling traders; weekly or monthly ones, female seasonal workers while domestic employees or servants migrate on a semi-permanent basis. The most permanent form of migration is found among prostitutes of rural origin, who tend to be swallowed up by the city and to cut all ties with their area of origin, although initially they maintain links by sending sums of money to their families.

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

The forms taken by migration differ from one ethnic group to another. Apparently in the case of the Mazahuas and Otomíes, the whole family group migrates and it is the man who decides what activity the woman is to pursue, in contrast with female migrants who travel alone to cities to take up domestic work and a specific job (Arizpe, 1975). The latter maintain their ties with the

rural sector and place of origin by various means; trips, once or several times a year, for harvests and festivals; remittances of money, and the maintenance of links and strategies based on family ties, thanks to which relatives take in children who are studying in the city but who live in the countryside, who travel to the city to examine the work prospects for their family or simply to visit.

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

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

Urban women in the region have been more thoroughly studied than rural women, and more is therefore known about them. Their economic significance through their numerical presence in the productive sectors, together with their visibility and closeness, have made it easier to study them and collect data on them. Some statistical sources, such as household surveys, primarily describe these women. They are characterized, as are urban men, by extreme heterogeneity. Out of all the current possible situations of urban women, it has been decided to present here that of low-income women or those of the poorest strata in the cities, who represent approximately 40% of the urban population. It is a sector which has the lowest income, cannot meet its basic needs and has little or no access to the general modern conditions which characterize civil society (ECLAC, 1984a, p. 10).

Urban women in low-income groups, like rural women, actively participate in maintaining their homes by organizing survival strategies within the family group (children and non-family residents). As "homemakers", they take responsibility for housework in the broadest sense (preparing meals, socializing their children, sewing clothing, etc.) and generate the necessary income to support the household by doing innumerable small jobs, whether visible or invisible, in the informal sector. They are predominantly engaged in itinerant work or in non-resident domestic service, which falls within the informal sector.

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

providing personal services, child and juvenile prostitutes, "maquiladoras" (workers in subcontracting assembly plants) and in-home workers. Three of these occupations are most likely to be held by recent female migrants to the city, while two are primarily those of urban women who have lived for a longer time in the city.

a) *Street traders*

There would appear to be two types of street traders, one corresponding to a traditional, rural-based activity generally carried out by rural and indigenous women, and the other a more circumstantial activity, resulting from a crisis situation, which is carried out because it does not require any special knowledge or a large amount of capital and is typical of the urban poor. Men, including some from the formal sector, make up a large proportion of this latter type of street trader (PREALC, 1988).

This section discusses female street traders, primarily indigenous and rural-to-urban migrant women.

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

Andean peasant women seem to typify rural traders, whose chief characteristic is mobility. They sell their own products on short daily trips, or act as intermediaries, travelling for longer periods, in fairs or selling from door to door. They sell their own surplus agricultural products, meals prepared at home, poultry, eggs or craft items. Their activities do not necessarily indicate that they are in a process of proletarianization or emigration. Apparently these activities represent stable survival strategies for poor persons living in rural indigenous communities, as opposed to those of female urban traders, which represent a process of more obvious rural "breakdown".

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



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

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

As already observed, towards the 1960s Mazahua and Otomí traders of rural origin emerged in Mexico City, although they had only recently arrived there. The former specialized in the sale of fresh fruit, and are known as "Marías". The Otomíes –known as "Juanas"– sell seeds and pips. Two other groups are made up of peasants from Querétaro and Nahuas; the first sell chewing gum, or they beg, and the second sell either fruit or seeds. They are generally monolingual (Arizpe, 1975). State-sponsored attempts were made to organize the "Marías", and one of the first tasks undertaken was to teach them Spanish, as monolingualism is the main hurdle to their integration into national society.

Another type of rural trade is to be found, carried out through middlemen, and covering the products of local people and small producers in general. It involves distinct strategies, as the women are absent for long periods at a time and leave their home, children and domestic livestock, generally under the responsibility of their eldest daughter. Trade occupies as many as 58.3% of women in the Sierra (Campaña, 1981), while according to Villalobos (1977), the figure fluctuates between 44% and 84.5% in two other sectors of the Sierra. In both cases trade constitutes the main activity of women, and domestic tasks are considered to be of secondary importance. In the households concerned the husbands are also absent on account of seasonal migrations.

In the Caribbean, examples of female intermediaries are to be found in the "Madame Saras" –known as "revendeuses" in Haiti– mentioned by Arizpe (1981). One of these types of trade has been studied specifically in the eastern Caribbean (ECLAC, 1988). Women traders there are primarily involved in two types of trade: first, clothing and light, portable articles, and second, farm products which provide fresh food for Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Saint Martin and Guadeloupe. Traveling from island to island by boat, these women perform many tasks and activities which require managerial skills, and they take from four to seven weeks to complete their trade rounds. They are generally rural women who use the knowledge and contacts acquired in their areas of origin for buying and selling products.

Lastly, there are the traders who are engaged in a more firmly established type of trade, owning stalls in markets or fairs and carrying out larger-scale transactions involving more capital. These include the Aymará traders, the "chola" in Bolivia and "Tehuana" in Mexico. The latter is to be found both in street trading and in formal trade. In addition, the "cholas" are involved in what

has come to be known as "el tráfico de las hormigas" (the ant trade): they move around in frontier zones, selling food or other articles. Nowadays their trade even includes complex electronic items.

b) *Private domestic employees or servants*

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

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

The situation of domestic employees once again confirms the existence of links between the rural and the urban environments. These workers contribute a labour force from rural areas to the city and also communicate and transfer a set of values. They have been responsible for a considerable proportion of the primary socialization of generations of middle- and upper-class children in towns. The flows from the urban to the rural sector are composed of money in the form of remittances or postal transfers, as well as of goods and clothing. According to León (1984), when immigrants live in their employer's house they at one and the same time suffer processes of transculturation and acquire the class values of their employers.

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

A number of difficulties arise in censuses, and also among researchers, as to where to place "resident" domestic employees. To grasp this, it is necessary to recall the characteristics of this occupation, which is based on what is assumed to be a "natural" disposition of women towards domestic tasks; it is also noted that the work is carried out within another home, and involves sharing the life of

an alien family. It is also perceived as a semi-feudal occupation, as it involves the employee's time and person being available without restriction, as this forms part of the service. It is also pointed out that the services produced are not bought and sold on the market, and that living with another family involves the coexistence within the same space of the employers (who are within their own home), and of the employee, for whom the home in question is a place of work (Gálvez and Todaro, 1984). Furthermore, domestic employees are distinct from other wage-earners in that their wage is partly paid in cash and partly in kind (the value of food and lodging is calculated). In actual fact they are subject to special, distinct provisions in the labour codes of different countries.

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

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

c) *Child or juvenile prostitutes*

Little information is available on this occupation. It naturally falls within the informal sector and is one of those occupations which are undeclared in surveys and which have been classified as "visible informal" (ECLAC, 1987). Traditionally, the activity belongs to the lowest social sectors and is carried out by rural migrants. On account of the economic crisis the number of women involved in prostitution has risen, although researchers have not yet directed their attention to the subject. Available statistics are few, and can be found in non-traditional newsletters and publications (ILET, ISIS International and others). A project exists in Chile to investigate the topic. At the beginning of the 1980s,

on account of the crisis, the problem came to the forefront as a result of revelations by members of the Church regarding the number and age of child prostitutes.

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

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

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

It is believed that one of the five international flows of prostitution leaves Latin America through Puerto Rico to the Mediterranean part of Europe and the Middle-East (Barry, 1983). Others exist between the Caribbean and Curaçao, where a camp exists close to military installations. Another current exists in the north of Mexico, connected with a number of transnational tourist firms.

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

i) *The subcontracting plant (maquiladora)*

The convergence of two types of policies, one of which originated in the central countries and the other in the periphery, has helped to promote a new type of occupation, which takes various forms within either the informal or

formal sector. This is the subcontracting assembly plant and its workers. From the angle of transnational corporations, such plants correspond to the "decentralization of production" which involves transferring part of their production to countries offering better terms for their installation, and in particular, lower labour costs. As far as the countries of the region are concerned, the introduction of the *maquiladora* system has been the result of certain policies for industrial production for export, or of efforts to attract foreign capital since the 1960s. Foreign investment in industrial plants is encouraged by an unrestricted supply of cheap unskilled or semi-skilled labour, by high levels of productivity and by a docile labour force, as well as by the reduction or elimination of tariffs or the offering of other facilities. "The trend seems to involve an effort to promote foreign investment by minimizing national frontiers and allowing the market mechanisms to operate unhampered" (Safa, 1982, p. 107). Generally speaking, the industries involved are labour-intensive, such as clothing and textile manufacture, food processing and, more recently, electronics. In the past, female labour has been preferred by these industries, as it is cheaper and considered to be more obedient.

An excellent illustration of this situation is to be found in Mexico. In the 1960s an "industrial border programme" was initiated, with the objective of discouraging the migration of workers to the United States and of creating employment in a region where unemployment was high. Preference was given to the installation of electronic assembly plants, dependent on transnational corporations, in the form of subsidiaries or subcontractors. In 1985, 700 factories were set up and 200,000 jobs created, with 80% of the labour force being women. In Juárez 180 factories were established in 1982. The average level of education of the female workers entering these factories was five years. Seventy-five per cent of them are from other regions; 50% are the sole breadwinner of their family, and 43% are single mothers. They begin to work between the ages of 16 and 25, and one out of three is a head of household. They are under temporary contract and are periodically dismissed so that their employers can avoid granting them the social benefits to which a permanent worker would be entitled. The form of work adopted is piecework (Arizpe, 1978; Fernández, 1982; Safa, 1982 and Yudelman, 1987). This situation has also been studied in Jamaica, and Safa quotes several authors in this respect.

#### ii) *The home worker*

The home worker system, like that of the *maquiladora* firm described above, is reminiscent of pre-capitalist forms of labour organization. It reappears today in a "modern" capitalistic context, but represents the lowest level of the "technological hierarchy" (Jockes, 1987), based on the use of simple tools, whose efficiency depends on specialized labour skills. For light industry, the benefits lie in the small scale of the physical facilities, and the avoidance of paying the benefits which workers in the formal sector have won for themselves. Workers outside the firm, or home workers in all their various permutations, are

in some sense the equivalent, in national industry, of the *maquiladoras* in transnational corporations. The trend towards the decentralization of production is repeated in manufacturing and in national commerce, and may concern independent industries or ones connected to transnational corporations.

In the case of national industries, the woman's own home is her work place, a circumstance which is justified by an excess supply of labour in homes. This form of work has been observed in the footwear industry in Colombia and in Uruguay (Prates, 1984), and in the clothing industry in Costa Rica (Prieto, 1987). In Uruguay, it is also to be found in the clothing, textile and other industries (Arizpe, from Taglioretti), and in Brazil and Chile. It is probably extremely widespread throughout the remainder of the region, although there is a shortage of pertinent studies. This type of employment takes a variety of forms. Generally speaking, the relationship between the firm and the home workers is managed by intermediaries, without the workers themselves, in most cases, being aware of the final destination of their work. The middlemen are themselves subcontracted and also operate using home workers, as part of the system of putting out jobs. They set up small, possibly clandestine, workshops where the workers may work on a part-time basis, working overtime and weekends at home, or alternatively full time. As mentioned above, various forms may be found: Prates (1984) distinguished at least five types of possible combinations between the firm, the workshops and the home workers.

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

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

communal work be established on the basis of the reality of domestic work and its most immediate context, the neighbourhood and the community (Prates, 1984).

### C. THE NEW ROLES AND SOCIAL SCENARIOS

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

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

In response to this situation, measures have been taken on behalf of women by the State and within society at large, the latter being represented by women's organizations. The growing concern of governments with the situation of women has been reflected since the end of the 1970s in the creation of ministries, divisions or units specifically concerned with women's problems, or through legal reforms, particularly in civil codes and in relation to the status of married women. Simultaneously, a vast women's movement came into being, generally made up of middle-class, professional and intellectual women, whose influence made itself felt not only on opinion, but also with respect to knowledge and action. Women from low-income sectors have also joined in this movement. Women are not only to be found in the public sphere: for nearly two decades intellectual and professional women have devoted themselves to studying and advancing theories in respect of gender, its history and determinants, and have devoted themselves to establishing new types of women's organizations. This experience has given rise to an unprecedented body of knowledge on the one hand and, on the other, demands, claims and action on the part of women's organizations. All of this has led to the emergence of new roles for the women

of the region, as part of movements, organizations, research and teaching activities and certain occupational associations.

As far as research is concerned, the document has already emphasized the contribution of female researchers to knowledge of the social and economic roles of women, a contribution which has led to greater transparency in respect of the topic and to an emphasis on woman as a specific actor. In the course of the decade figures were provided regarding the contribution of women in terms of work and income; attention was drawn to deficiencies in censuses and statistics, and measures were proposed to set these right; the social roles of women were highlighted and, in general, attention was drawn to a range of different circumstances affecting women, leading to the development in recent years of a body of knowledge (ECLAC, 1984a; León and Deere, 1986; Wilson, 1986), which has already been incorporated into specialized information systems in four countries.<sup>6</sup>

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

### **1. Income-generating projects and non-governmental organizations**

The activities of non-governmental organizations has had a very special impact on the rural environment, where female participation has traditionally been much lower than in urban areas, both in trade-union organizations and in production.<sup>7</sup> Against the backdrop of a female paradigm based on invisibility –woman as a voiceless homemaker, observing conventional decency– and of a very patriarchal society, the legitimation of female participation outside the home involves making far-reaching changes in the peasant mentality. Women's presence was first of all required by the Church, schools and health services, and later by the State, through clubs and mothers' centres, which needed their support for the tasks and programmes of each institution. (In the case of mothers' centres, these were organized by the women themselves.)

A new type of action specially aimed at poor rural women and which further reinforces the changes in their social roles has been added to the calls to action described above. Its origin lies in a combination of the repercussions of various policies and measures aimed at women. The first of these is the 1973 Percy Amendment in the United States, which stipulates that bilateral assistance programmes should pay special attention to programmes, projects and activities designed to integrate women into the national economies of the developing countries (Flora, 1986; Stewart Carloni, 1987). A second factor is the policy adopted by the United States at the beginning of the 1980s of giving priority to



approaches to development involving extensive participation by the private sector. These policies make possible the use of a considerable number of "alternative" professionals (from outside the established system), who hold a different concept of economics, nearer to those of Schumpeterian utopias (or to those of feminism in the case of women), and who can be hired at low cost. They form centres, groups and associations, and their aims are to carry out tasks in support of low-income sectors. The economic crisis of the 1980s and the high levels of rural and urban poverty precipitated all these events and led to an enormous proliferation of small, income-generating projects to help family groups to survive, and to new forms of organization which generally arose from the need to carry out these projects. Vocational institutions were created to provide technical assistance and to manage project financing, and they generally worked with participatory methods. In most cases, the success of a project depends not only on a suitable design and feasibility study, but also on the strength of the organization created. Similarly important are training and the transfer of responsibilities from the professionals or others in charge of the projects to the rank and file. The results of these activities go beyond material assistance; they contribute to the education of poor families outside the formal system and attenuate social exclusion, creating bridges between them and society, through meetings and workshops and contact with external agents and funding agencies.

A difference exists between projects for rural areas and those for cities. The former are intended to bring in income, while the latter are designed to provide food. Generally speaking, it has been women of urban origin, belonging to alternative organizations, who have helped to set up groups of rural women in connection with agricultural projects or projects to raise poultry or rabbits, to set up organic vegetable gardens, to cultivate flowers or produce craft work, to manufacture cheese, bread and other products. These projects are characterized by their limited scope as well as by the modest funding provided by external donors, through non-governmental organizations (such as foundations, agencies and church organizations). Their implementation involves the establishment of a structure for meetings (when no grass-roots organizations exist), or alternatively the use of already existing organizations, generally linked to the Church. Not only do they provide specific training in connection with the project, but also more general training in management, accountancy and organization. With regard to the last-mentioned, one of the major challenges has been that of incorporating women into spheres of secondary socialization when the sole opportunities for external contact – particularly for creole peasant women – have been school and the Church. Participation in one of these organizations involves leaving the home, reorganizing daily or weekly schedules, meeting with others, interacting, acquiring skills, facing criticism, organizing the family in order to be able to go out, negotiating with husbands in order to obtain the necessary free time, and other similar activities.

Only recently have these projects begun to be evaluated and their impact analysed from various angles. An increasing number of assessments are being made in relation to organizations and types of projects, by sex, rural or urban area or country. These so-called grass-roots or popular organizations and micro-enterprises or self-managed enterprises are of relatively recent origin; but they have all been valuable experiences, whatever their capacity for replication, maintenance and autonomy.

An initial evaluation bearing on 12 years of work with women in the development of the International Development Agency (USAID) (1973-1985) stresses the need to focus on economic participation by women as part of a balanced development strategy. The assessment suggests that, while initially the roles and functions performed by women in the developing countries were tackled on the basis of a concern with equality, it has subsequently been possible to observe that gender differences affected all projects in terms of their long-term achievements and targets. This makes it necessary not only to place each project in its proper context, but also to determine the part to be played by men and women in terms of roles and responsibilities; interest in, and incentives for, participating in project activities; contribution to family income; degree of integration of income; and responsibility for expenditures.

A recent assessment which was based on a review of six experiments involving income-generation projects for women and carried out from three different angles (assistance, cooperation and development), and in three Latin American countries, makes it possible to put forward a number of recommendations so that women will retain control of the project, earn income and improve their general conditions of well-being. It is necessary for the projects to be designed using management criteria and to produce a surplus, as well as maintaining craft forms of production. They must also insert themselves within the existing division of labour in each place on the basis of sex, age and class, and take into account the other activities in which the members of each household are involved, in order to avoid upsetting distinct cultural patterns. If these projects are to effectively lead to autonomy for women and well-being for their families, control over the income produced must be in the hands of women; furthermore, the projects need to be many-sided, and not only to aim at enhancing the status of women and generating income, but also to tackle considerations of well-being. Finally, the study recommends that the characteristics of the informal sector be maintained (i.e., rather than paying wages to the members of the project, generating income through advance payments on work completed or other forms of payment) in order to avoid decapitalizing the project and to ensure that the women do not lose interest in actively participating in the management of their firms (Flora, 1986).

Experience drawn from another income-generation project allows the following recommendations to be added to those made above: the need for a strong organizational structure; for follow-up of the projects once the external

agent has left; for the provision of training for women on specific aspects, such as administration, marketing and entrepreneurial management; and, finally, for democratic forms of administration and management (Aranda and Olavarria, 1988).

Urban poverty has generated different experiences from those in rural areas, in the sense that the former are focused primarily on direct subsistence, providing food for the poor. These activities include children's cafeterias, "soup kitchens" and "cooperative purchasing" organizations. They all involve a parallel organizational efforts, with rank-and-file women taking part in buying, preparing and serving food. The organizational tasks thus include making lists of recipients, establishing schedules, raising money and calculating costs.

Participation in grass-roots organizations in the current decade is not a female prerogative, but it is interesting to note the differences in the way women and men take part. In rural areas, production projects have been directed to both men and women alike. In cities, 90% of the women who participate in grass-roots economic organizations do so in self-help groups, i.e., meeting their needs through direct management. Conversely, 70% of male participants work in trade-union type organizations (Hardy, 1987). This phenomenon shows that, in new situations, the traditional male/female paradigm reappears. The "domestic" woman takes care of daily subsistence, in a world that revolves around the everyday life of the home, while the "assertive" man acts in the realm of social change and the outside world.

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

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

## **2. Women's organizations: centres and networks**

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

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

At the present time, various forms of organization have emerged with different aims, and generally at the initiative of women themselves. During this decade middle- and high-income women, generally professionals, began to create various organizations run by and for women. Some of these consider themselves to be merely women's organizations, while others describe themselves as feminist (as defined in Bangkok in 1979).<sup>8</sup>

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

Feminist groups have given preference to two types of organization: the centres and networks. The main activities of the centres are the provision of

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

Another more informal type of organization which provides more extensive coverage are the "networks". This is a flexible form, which simultaneously preserves the autonomy of groups, allows them to establish links by sharing information, ideas and services. They are devoted to specific activities and constitute themselves around an issue or groups of issues: health, means of communication, work, sexual slavery or prostitution and others (Karl, 1986). They work in conjunction with networks of non-governmental organizations concerned with women's organizations. The most important are: i) the Latin American and Caribbean Women's and Health Network, formed in 1984, which connects more than 300 groups working with poor women; networks in co-ordination with other international health networks such as the Global Network of Women for Reproductive Rights; ii) the Women's Alternative Communications Unit, set up to provide information and to reinforce the alternative media (González and Norero, 1985); and iii) the Grass-roots Education Network among Women of the Council for Popular Adult Education in Latin America. The latter possesses 63 centres and programmes in the region (Isis International, No. 8, 1987b).

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

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

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

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

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

invaders from their property. From the personal angle, the Mapuche women request education and training: to learn Spanish, to read and write, as well as basic training in health.

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

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

Women's participation in organizations has led to their formulating claims and demands, many of which have already been reflected in a number of United Nations documents, particularly on the occasion of the World Conference in Nairobi in 1985. Three documents, the fruit of meetings or open letters, sum up the main claims put forward by urban women.<sup>9</sup> They cover a broad range of concerns, which may be summed up in legal measures to ensure equality and in the claim for rights in respect of reproduction and the family, work, health and education. In respect of reproduction, among other things, demands focus on the right of all women (and men, add Mexican women) to receive full information on family planning, as part of an overall sexual education, which will allow couples to subsequently decide as to the number and timing of their children; for family planning to be a basic medical service within the reach of all women regardless of their civil status, as part of mother and child-care and gynecological programmes, and for the various contraceptive methods to be incorporated into the Social Security System with the status of basic medicines (Platform of Women's Rights, Peru).

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

Demands are put forward for an improvement and increase in the number of nurseries in firms and in municipalities (with laundry, canteen services, etc.); for the effective right to 90 days rest prior to and following childbirth; for the establishment of institutions to assist single mothers and their children. Other

preoccupations expressed concern hygiene and work safety, the adjustment of labour standards to the needs of working women and mothers. As far as health rights are concerned, a request is made for natal, post-natal and gynecological services, mobile health teams, specialized health centres, food subsidies for pregnant and nursing mothers, and others. With regard to education, demands are put forward for coeducation, the eradication of illiteracy, the elimination of images which undermine the dignity of women or contribute towards maintaining inequality, and others. Furthermore, Peruvian women add economic rights (to credit, mortgages and other kinds of loans), rights in respect of participation, as expressed in Nairobi and in the Regional Plan of Action, together with special rights for rural women (credit, land, health, training) and other women suggest that they should be included in agrarian reform plans (Brazil).

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

#### **D. FINAL REMARKS**

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

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

Those women who have remained in the countryside have been frequently obliged to take on the responsibilities of the head of household on account of the absences of their husbands, who migrate between agriculture and wage labour in



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

Their entry into wage labour, their willingness to participate in subsistence projects which help them to mitigate their poverty, and in communal action, in particular by women of middle-income urban strata, make it possible for women to break out of their domestic mould, and thereby to shatter the authoritarian and subordinate models characteristic of the patriarchal family. A change takes place in their role as providers of goods and services within the home, and they become providers of monetary income, frequently equivalent to that provided by the man, or, in the case of women who are heads of household, the family's sole income. This change is compounded by their higher levels of education, and their involvement in training and production workshops as well as in a variety of organizational bodies. This all confirms the magnitude of the change and reveals peasant women as potential counterparts of external agents, and as active participants in more global development strategies, both capable of and under the obligation to express personal demands, preferences and aspirations. While peasant women have indeed felt the harmful repercussions of changes in agriculture, these changes have now in turn compelled them to take on their responsibilities as members of nuclear households, as workers, on the same terms as other women, and as individuals who raise queries of a more general nature. However, it remains to be determined what this signifies in terms of caring for children, of the burden of work, of greater or lesser happiness. However, there is no doubt that it is nowadays appropriate to consider peasant women as social actors with greater and distinct needs, and with an increased capacity to present their demands.

As far as low-income urban women are concerned, it is necessary to devote particular attention to the new categories of workers in the informal sector, who work in circumstances of extreme vulnerability. As is the case of rural women, they take on a double working day; they generally lack social assistance for the care of their children, and are discriminated against at their places of work. In terms of policies, the circumstances of resident domestic employees, of workers in *maquiladora* firms and of home workers seem easier to tackle than those of street traders and of child and adolescent prostitutes. As far as the former are concerned, the problem is to ensure that labour legislation is complied with, or to pass such legislation if it does not exist, and to socialize a number of domestic tasks.

As far as the latter group is concerned, the situation is more complex. Indigenous traders mainly need to feel that they are participants in national

society, a fundamental requirement for which is that they learn Spanish, to read and write and be free from harassment when carrying out their activity. Child and adolescent prostitutes are the most telling social indicator of extreme poverty, and care must be taken to provide these young people with the possibility of leading a life in keeping with their age, with the possibility of receiving an education, of learning a new trade and earning wages therefrom.

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

## NOTES

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

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

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

<sup>4</sup> The indigenous population of Latin America is slightly more than 26 million, 6.7% of the total population and 20.7% of the region's rural population. It is estimated that 1.5 million of these live in tribal settlements, tropical zones and autarkic economies or "closed communities"; 21.2 million are peasant farmers or temporary rural workers closely linked to the national economies, and 5.1 million eke out a marginal existence through informal employment (street traders) and in domestic service within metropolitan cities (figures provided by Mayer and Masferrer, 1979). In five

countries the indigenous population is significant: Mexico, with an indigenous population of over 10%; Ecuador and Peru with over 30%, and Guatemala and Bolivia with over 60%.

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

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

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

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

<sup>5</sup> In the first competition for research on the Latin American Programme for Research and Training concerning Women, organized by FLACSO in 1987, three of the twelve topics selected were related to the study of indigenous women (two in Bolivia and one in Paraguay).

<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, women have preferably adopted other methods of research, a considerable proportion of which fall within the field of qualitative research and which, for the time being, are both its strength and its weakness. While on the one hand these studies produce extremely revealing results in respect of cases, life histories and testimonies, these are not always set in their contexts, and consequently do not provide a basis for generalizations. However, they are a rich source of information. As the number of cases increases, and as they are properly set in their contexts and enhanced by other methodologies, it will be possible to use the results thereof without reservation. Chapter VI of this book describes the huge volume of research produced on women.

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

Two series of activities illustrate the scope which the topic has acquired. The first of these is the inauguration, in 1987, of the first Latin American Research and Training Programme for Women, by the Latin American Social Sciences Council (CLACSO). This provides a fellowship to allow for graduates to conduct research projects concerning women and for the establishment of specialized departments on this topic in university and research centres. No information is available as to how many academic centres possess women's studies units or departments, with the exceptions of CLACSO, FLACSO and the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Buenos Aires, the Colegio de México, the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Rio de Janeiro, the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo, and the University of the West Indies, nor are there any data on the number of universities which possess chairs specialized in women. However, the means of incorporating women's studies into teaching programmes has already been the subject of discussion at the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Seminar on Curricula Development and the Preparation of Teaching Material for Women's Studies in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, sponsored by UNESCO and held in 1986.

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

<sup>7</sup> In 1983, only 12% of all organized women were working within trade unions (Campana and Lago, 1987, citing Díaz, 1984).

<sup>8</sup> International Workshop "Ideology and Feminist Structures During the First Half of the Decade for Women". At this meeting feminism was defined as a perspective or world view with two long-term objectives: 1) the achievement of equality, dignity and freedom of choice for women through the possibility for them to control their lives both within and outside the home (where power does not have the traditional meaning of domination over others, but of internal force and the right to make one's own choice; as well as the ability to influence both social trends and the direction taken by social change); 2) the elimination of all forms of inequality, domination and oppression through the creation of a fairer national and international economic and social order (Carrillo, 1986).

<sup>9</sup> Foro Nacional de Colegios Profesionistas, Mexico City, 1987; Letter from "Mujeres del Consejo Nacional de Derechos de la Mujer" to the National Constituent Assembly of the Congress of Brazil, 1985; and Plataforma en Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer del Perú, 1987 (Mujer/FEMPRESS, 1987).

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#### **IV. WOMEN AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE**

## IV. WOMEN AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

### Introduction

The implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean of the principles set forth in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (1985) represents a major challenge for the societies of the region.

In order for these principles to be put into practice, action must be taken to overcome the obstacles that continue to stand in the way of the genuine fulfilment of the objectives of equality, development and peace that were formulated during the United Nations Decade for Women.

One aspect of the efforts being made to attain this objective is the compilation, upgrading and dissemination of up-to-date and reliable statistics which will contribute to the furtherance of knowledge concerning the status of women.

With this aim in mind, this document will address the subject of demographic statistics and indicators. During its preparation, consideration was given to the fact that such statistics, inasmuch as they reflect the demographic characteristics of the female population, often serve in and of themselves as an indicator of changes in the status of women within society. Moreover, demographic statistics and indicators are also an essential input for development planning and for the design of policies concerning women.

Indeed, demographic statistics and indicators play a vital role in helping to ensure that, in the pursuance of the objective of equality, governments take "the relevant steps to ensure that both men and women enjoy equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities so as to enable women to participate as beneficiaries and active agents in development". Furthermore, if equality is to be *de facto* as well as *de jure*, the infrastructure will have to be created that will permit women to reconcile their participation in all spheres of society with motherhood and their domestic activities.

As was repeatedly stressed during the United Nations Decade for Women, the possibility of achieving equality is closely related to development.

In this connection, the upgrading and dissemination of demographic statistics and indicators can make an important contribution to the achievement

of higher levels of development in the region. As was noted at the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, "forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women at the regional level should be based on a clear appraisal of demographic trends so as to provide a realistic context for their application".

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the above statement is particularly valid at the present time, when the living conditions of women, as well as those of the rest of the population, have been severely affected by an extraordinarily serious and prolonged economic crisis. This crisis has compounded the adverse repercussions of the highly concentrative and exclusive development styles existing in the region, whose most glaring manifestation is the fact that vast sectors of the population continue to live in extreme poverty (ECLAC, 1988a).

Taking these considerations into account, the following document sets forth an analysis, based on a review of existing statistics and indicators, of those demographic changes during the period 1950-1980 which have had the greatest bearing on the status of women.

The first chapter deals with the decline of fertility and changes in its age distribution. The significant impact on the region of fertility rates among adolescent women is emphasized; the available data concerning the dissemination and use of methods of contraception are presented; and a warning is given in regard to the inadequate amount of information currently existing on the almost always hidden problem of abortion.

The second chapter concerns mortality among the female population and underscores the great strides made during the period 1950-1980 in increasing women's life expectancy at birth. Emphasis is also placed, however, on the fact that a great deal could still be done by the governments to further reduce mortality in the region. Reference is made in this section to the main causes of death among women, and a number of examples are given in order to illustrate the extent to which the various causes of death have been an influential factor in changes in the life expectancy at birth of the female population.

The third chapter focuses on changes in the age structure of the female population of the region which are chiefly attributable to the decreases in fertility and mortality, as well as on the implications of these changes for the design of policies concerning women. In this regard, the need for more information concerning the status of older women is stressed.

The fourth chapter contains information concerning migration by women, both within countries and internationally.

Finally, recommendations are put forward in regard to the improvement of statistics and indicators concerning the above-mentioned demographic phenomena.

Another aim of this document is to contribute to the necessary dialogue between producers and users of demographic statistics, which include the planning agencies of the governments of the region as well as the

non-governmental organizations, whose work is of particular importance in relation to activities that will help make it possible to achieve the above-mentioned objectives.

This document is the outcome of a joint effort on the part of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE), and is yet another example of the close cooperation existing among the organizations of the United Nations system as regards the improvement of the status of women in society.

### **A. WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR**

One of the most notable events occurring in the region during the past three decades has been the change observed in the reproductive behaviour of women, one of whose aspects is the decline in fertility.

This decrease has been associated with the sweeping transformations that have taken place during the past 30 years in the economic, political, social, cultural and psycho-social spheres of society in the Latin American and Caribbean countries.

These changes, in turn, have had an influence on the variables regarded as being the proximate determinants of fertility, one of the most important of which is the use of contraceptive methods. In point of fact, during the past three decades women in the region have, generally speaking, had greater access to methods for regulating fertility. Indeed, the discovery of such methods constitutes one of the most important scientific/technological advances of the century, inasmuch as the availability of methods of contraception has made it possible to dissociate sexual relations from procreation, thereby expanding human freedom.

The complex interaction existing among factors relating to reproductive behaviour has had a major impact both on fertility as a social phenomenon and on women's lives as individuals. A part of this effect is due to the fact that during the period between 1950 and 1980, it has been possible for vast sectors of the female population to control their fertility, which, as stated in the Nairobi Strategies, "forms an important basis for the enjoyment of other rights".

Statistics and indicators relating to fertility are also necessary for the design of policies aimed at improving the status of women.

The availability of adequate information concerning women's fertility would facilitate the work of the organizations responsible for formulating policies on employment, health, education, housing and, in general, all policy measures whose objective is the creation of conditions of well-being for women. In addition, fertility statistics and indicators are necessary in order to ascertain

the extent to which the women of the region have an equal ability to exercise their right to freely decide the number and spacing of the children they will have.

Furthermore, the availability of fertility statistics and indicators is an especially important factor in the design of social policies aimed at making it easier for women to reconcile motherhood with their participation in all spheres of society as active agents of development.

The main sources of information on fertility are records of vital statistics, population and housing censuses and specialized surveys.

Vital statistics provide data on fertility levels and on the age structure of this variable, as well as on some socio-economic characteristics of mothers. They have the advantage of being continuous records and therefore provide information on fertility at any given point in time. However, a substantial degree of under-reporting in most of the countries of the region mars the data to be obtained from records of vital statistics.

A second source of information on fertility levels and their age distribution is population censuses. The questions contained in these censuses concerning live-born children and children born during the last year provide an indication of women's past and present fertility levels. This source has the advantage of supplying additional information about the contextual socio-economic characteristics and personal traits of the women in question and thus contributes to an understanding of the differences among women as regards reproductive behaviour. However, the fact that such censuses are taken only once every 10 years limits the possibility of assessing the situation at any given point in time.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the available information on fertility is becoming more and more reliable thanks to the efforts being made by the countries of the region to incorporate the recommendations made by ECLAC and the United Nations in regard to the censuses for the 1980s and 1990s (United Nations, 1980).

In addition, programmes have been undertaken in the region to carry out specialized fertility surveys which constitute a valuable source of information on the subject.

Based on the data provided by vital statistics, population censuses and specialized surveys, fertility indicators may be calculated for specific research, planning or policy-making purposes.

### **1. Declining fertility**

A decrease in fertility has been associated with the course taken by the development process in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. The average number of children per woman thus varies from one country to another in the region, as well as within each country, depending on the level of modernization that has been attained.



One indication of this change is the drop in the average number of children per woman (as measured by the total fertility rate)<sup>1</sup> which is to be observed in the period 1980-1985 as compared to the period 1950-1955.

In the countries classified as being at an advanced stage of modernization<sup>2</sup> (Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Panama, Uruguay and Venezuela), female fertility had dropped to low or medium levels by the end of the period in question.

Two of them –Argentina and Uruguay– already had low levels of fertility at the beginning of the period. In these two countries, the average number of children per woman was around 3 in both periods (1950-1955 and 1980-1985).

In Cuba and Chile, fertility levels at the beginning of the period were in the middle of the spectrum (4 and 5.1 children per woman, respectively), whereas by the end of the period the average number of children per woman was low: 2.0 and 2.8 children per woman, respectively.

The other three countries at an advanced stage of modernization –Costa Rica, Panama and Venezuela– showed a drop in fertility from high levels for the period 1950-1955 (an average of about 6 children per woman) to medium levels in the period 1980-1985, when the average had fallen to around 4.

In the large countries where modernization has been rapid and uneven (Brazil, Colombia, Mexico), as well as in the small, partially-modernized countries (Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru), fertility also dropped from high to medium levels.

In this group of countries as a whole, during the period 1950-1955 the average number of children per woman was over 6.5, whereas in the period 1980-1985, the average was about 4 children per woman and did not exceed 5 in any country in either of the two groups.

In those countries where modernization is still an incipient process (Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua), fertility rates are still high despite the fact that a slight decrease has been recorded. For these countries as a group, the rate stood at over 6.5 children per woman at the beginning of the period in question; by its end, the average remained above 5 in all of these countries and was still over 6 in most of them.

In addition to these differences in fertility levels from one country to another, reproductive behaviour varies markedly among different groups of women within the same country depending on the socio-economic stratum to which they belong, whether they reside in urban or rural areas, and their differing personal traits.

In Honduras, a country where modernization is still an incipient process, the fertility rate as of 1980 was still high. In this country, the total fertility rate in areas defined as being major urban centres dropped from 5.6 to 3.7 children per woman between 1960 and 1980. In the rural areas of Honduras, however, the rate held steady at about 8 children per woman during this period. This means that whereas the total fertility rate for women in rural areas was 1.6 times greater

than the rate for women in major urban centres at the beginning of the period, by the end of the period this gap had widened to 2.2.

A similar situation was observed in regard to the decrease in fertility among women according to the socio-economic strata to which they belong. While the total fertility rate for women in the upper-middle stratum declined between 1960 and 1980 from 6.0 to 3.8 children per woman, the rate for women belonging to the low-income agricultural wage-earning stratum remained above 8 children per woman. In other words, the difference between the rates for women in the low-income agricultural wage-earning stratum and those belonging to the upper-middle stratum rose from 1.3 in 1960 to 2 in 1980.

The persistence as of 1980 of such high fertility rates both in rural areas and in the low-income agricultural wage-earning stratum may either be a reflection of the actual state of affairs or may be due to problems associated with the quality of the data or to the use of invalid assumptions as a basis for the own-children method that was employed in estimating the total fertility rate.

It is interesting to note that even in Costa Rica, a country at an advanced stage of modernization in which, as stated earlier, a sharp decrease in fertility has taken place, differences among the reproductive behaviour of the various sectors of women, although they have tended to lessen, continue to exist (Rosero, 1981).

Between the years 1960 and 1979, the fertility rate for women in urban areas fell from 5.9 to 3 children per woman while, during the same period, the total fertility rate for women in rural areas dropped from 9.0 to 4.0 children per woman. This means that whereas in 1960 the fertility rate for women in rural areas was 1.6 times higher than the rate for women residing in urban areas, in 1979 the average number of children per woman in rural areas was 1.3 times higher than that recorded in urban areas.

Information concerning the differences in the average number of children born to women belonging to the various socio-economic strata is not available for the period 1960-1979 in the case of Costa Rica. None the less, in view of the close relationship between women's educational levels and their membership in given socio-economic groups, it is useful to compare female fertility rates on the basis of educational levels. The fertility rate for women having less than three years of formal education decreased from 9 to 4.8 children between 1960 and 1979, while the rate for women having over seven years of schooling dropped from 4.4 to 2.8 children per woman during the same period. In other words, whereas women at the lowest educational level had 2.1 times more children than more educated women in 1960, in 1979 women with fewer years of schooling had 1.7 times more children than women having a higher educational level.

A number of other studies also indicate that, generally speaking, the differences in this regard within countries at an advanced stage of modernization, although they still exist, have tended to become less marked. On the other hand, such differences have tended to increase in partially-modernized countries. In particular, this appears to be a consequence of the sharp change to be observed in the reproductive patterns of women living in urban areas who belong to the

middle and upper socio-economic strata. This, in its turn, is a reflection of the existence of different cultural patterns and differing degrees of access to health services and methods of contraception.

## **2. The fertility structure**

In all the countries of the region, the decrease in fertility has been associated with an increase in the proportion of births accounted for by young women, with this group being defined as those under 30 years of age.

This phenomenon in Latin America and the Caribbean is unlike that observed in the developed countries, where the decline in fertility has been associated with a postponement of childbearing.

The above-mentioned phenomenon is the most marked in the group of countries classified as being at an advanced stage of modernization. Within this group, in the period 1950-1955 over 60% of births were already accounted for by women under 30. The only exceptions were Chile and Costa Rica, in which the percentages of births corresponding to young women were 55.1% and 58.3%, respectively. In the same group of countries, these proportions had risen to 65% or over by 1980-1985, with the highest level being in Cuba (where 78.2% of total births were accounted for by young women).

In all the other countries of the region except the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Nicaragua, the proportion of births corresponding to women under 30 during the period 1950-1955 was around 50% of the total. In the period 1980-1985, this percentage was higher than in previous years but was still less than 60% of all births.

In view of the fact that, except in Cuba and Venezuela, young women (between 20 and 29 years of age) are the group having the largest proportion of participants in the labour markets of the countries of the region, there would appear to be a need for social policies that would permit women to combine childbearing and motherhood with their right to work on an equal footing with the male population (ECLAC, 1988b).

One of the most notable features of the fertility structure in Latin America and the Caribbean is the high proportion of children born to adolescent women.

It should be pointed out that the information concerning this phenomenon is limited since, in most of the Latin American countries (whose records of vital statistics are relatively inadequate), population censuses, in accordance with the recommendations made by the United Nations, direct fertility-related questions only to the female population over 15 years of age (United Nations, 1980).

This limitation notwithstanding, it should be noted that at the beginning of the period in question the number of births recorded as corresponding to adolescent women represented over 10% of total births in nine countries of the region, while during the period 1980-1985, the number of countries in which this

proportion was over 10% had risen to 13. This increase in the percentage of births occurring within the group of adolescent women is partly attributable to the fact that specific fertility rates for women from 15 to 19 years of age have not decreased as much as have those for women in other age groups or as much as the general fertility rate.

One rather surprising fact is that the percentage of births accounted for by adolescent women was greater than 10% of total births in countries at the opposite extremes as regards the levels of development achieved in the region: a) in all the countries at an advanced stage of modernization (and especially in the case of Cuba, where 17.2% of total births correspond to adolescent women); and b) in four of the six countries where the modernization process is at an incipient stage.

The causes of this phenomenon in Latin America and the Caribbean are not very clear. It comes as somewhat of a surprise that the increase in fertility among adolescents would occur during a period in which, as will be discussed later on, there is a greater awareness and use of contraceptive methods. One hypothesis in this connection might be that the greater proportion of births among adolescent women is associated with earlier marriages or with some aspects of the modernization process which promote more interaction among young people. This, in combination with a changeover from more traditional to more modern cultural patterns whereby there would appear to be a greater tolerance for sexual relations among adolescents, is probably part of the reason for the increase in the proportion of births accounted for by adolescent women.

As has been stated by the World Health Organization (WHO), childbearing by adolescent women represents a serious health hazard. It therefore appears necessary to gain a better understanding of the factors associated with adolescent pregnancies, as well as to adopt the appropriate health policies to ensure that special health care is given in cases of such pregnancies and of high-risk births.

### **3. The control of fertility**

At the Nairobi Conference in 1985, as well as at the International Conference on Population, the need was underscored for governments –regardless of the nature of their population policies– to promote access to family planning services.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, most of the information concerning awareness and use of methods of contraception has been supplied by the World Fertility Survey, specific surveys dealing with contraceptive use and the surveys conducted by Westinghouse Health Systems (Rosero, 1981). Nevertheless, this information is not complete. Data are not available for all the countries, and total agreement has not been reached as to which methods should be included in the definition of contraceptives, with the major point of disagreement being whether traditional methods should be included or not. The information used in this

report refers to all contraceptive methods except the prolongation of breastfeeding and postpartum abstinence.

There are grounds for stating that there is a widespread awareness of the existence of contraceptive methods in Latin America and the Caribbean. In most of the countries of the region for which information was gathered by the World Fertility Survey, nearly 100% of women who had ever been married or who had participated in consensual unions had heard of the existence of methods for controlling fertility. This awareness was lower only in Haiti (85%), Mexico (88%) and Peru (83%).

None the less, actual access to methods for controlling fertility is not equally widespread and appears to differ markedly depending on the degree of development achieved by the country in question (United Nations, 1984).

In the countries at an advanced stage of modernization for which information was available, the proportion of the women who were married or were participating in consensual unions who were using some type of contraceptive method at the time the surveys were taken (around 1980) ranged between 50% and 64%. In the large countries where modernization has been rapid and uneven, this proportion averaged 37%. In the small, partially-modernized countries, the level was around 30%. Finally, in countries where the modernization process is incipient, the level was only about 20%.

In addition, in all the countries of the region for which data could be obtained, marked differences were observed between urban and rural areas as regards the use of contraceptive methods, and these differences were even greater in countries where modernization has been a more recent process.

It might well be argued that the differences existing both between and within countries as regards the proportion of the women who are either married or participating in consensual unions who use methods of contraception should not come as a surprise, it being assumed that this divergence is simply associated with differences in prevailing reproductive patterns. Nevertheless, in attempting to assess the extent to which women in the region are able to avail themselves of their rights, it is important to try to find out whether women, as participants in the human partnership, have access to the necessary means for freely taking a decision as to the number of children they will have.

One way of learning more about this phenomenon is to compare the proportion of women stating that they have had at least as many children as they desire with the proportion of married women or women in consensual unions who use some type of contraceptive method. Since the women using contraceptive methods include not only those who do not want their family to grow any more, but also those who wish to space out the births of their children, it is to be expected that the proportion of women using some type of method of contraception will be greater than the proportion stating that they have had at least as many children as they desire.

However, among the countries for which information was available, this proved to be the case in Costa Rica, Panama and Venezuela belonging to the group described as being at an advanced stage of modernization and in one country where modernization has been rapid (Paraguay).

The difference between the proportion of married women or women in consensual unions who use some type of contraceptive method and the proportion stating that they have had at least as many children as they desire was seen to be greater within countries according to the women's place of residence.

In most of the countries, this difference was positive in the large cities, which would indicate a greater degree of access to methods of contraception. The only exceptions in this regard were Peru and Haiti.

The situation was just the opposite, however, in rural areas. Only in Costa Rica was the proportion of women using some type of contraceptive method larger than the proportion stating that they have already had the number of children they desire.

#### **4. Abortion in Latin America and the Caribbean**

A discussion of women's reproductive behaviour in the region would not be complete without mentioning the incidence of abortion. One of the consequences of limited degree of access to the use of methods of contraception (i.e., women's sociocultural, economic and geographic possibilities of using contraceptive methods) is the existence in the region of what is almost always a hidden problem: the practice of an undetermined number of abortions, many of which are carried out under conditions that place the life of the woman in question at risk.

Induced abortions are legal only in Cuba. In all the other countries of the region, such abortions constitute an offence which is punishable under the corresponding country's legislation.

For this reason, it is extremely difficult to ascertain the actual frequency of abortion. There is, however, general agreement as to the fact that the number of induced abortions which take place is high. The various studies conducted on this subject all indicate that a large number of induced abortions are carried out in the region using primitive, dangerous and septic procedures and that the death rate in this connection is four times greater than that associated with pregnancies carried to full term (Weisner, 1986).

Abortions practised under such conditions frequently endanger the life of the mother and usually have a severe emotional impact and serious physical repercussions on the women concerned, along with the resulting family-related and social consequences.

Despite the constraints affecting efforts to ascertain the actual incidence of abortion in Latin American society, there are a number of studies which shed some light on the phenomenon.

Various sources provide information concerning abortion in which no distinction is made between spontaneous and induced abortions. In view of the legal penalties for induced abortion existing within the Latin American societies, it appears reasonable to employ the expression used by Rosero, who refers to "apparent abortion rates", taking into account the fact that many women tend not to report induced abortions.

Bearing the above considerations in mind, the results of surveys on the subject conducted by CELADE around 1970 in four Latin American capital cities will be discussed below (CELADE, 1973).

According to the CELADE surveys, between 10% and 22.5% of all pregnancies ended in abortion in these cities. In Bogotá, 11.5% of the pregnancies of women between 15 and 49 years of age ended in abortion, while the proportion was 22.5% in Lima, 19.7% in Panama City and 21.9% in Buenos Aires. In Costa Rica, a number of research projects on abortion in San José have indicated that the proportion of aborted pregnancies ranges between 8.7% and 11.9%. A survey taken in Managua in 1968 indicated that 10% of all pregnancies ended in abortion (Rosero, 1976; Pérez, 1970).

According to the information gathered in these same surveys, the proportion of pregnancies ending in abortion increases substantially in the case of women aged 30 years and over. In Lima, for example, 40% of the pregnancies of women between 40 and 44 years of age were aborted. The proportion was 50% in Panama City and Bogotá, while in Buenos Aires, 75% of the pregnancies of women of between 40 and 44 years of age were aborted.

The proportion of aborted pregnancies is a useful measurement because it provides information on the frequency of abortions among pregnant women. However, since this is a measurement of the risk of abortion in terms of the number of pregnancies and therefore depends upon the frequency of the latter, it does not provide a measurement of the real incidence of abortion.

In order to ascertain the actual incidence of this phenomenon, the ratio of abortions to women of childbearing age should be examined. Based on the above, by analysing the proportion of abortions among women of childbearing age, it may be seen that, in absolute terms, the incidence of abortion is greater during the prime years of the reproductive period (i.e., among women between 20 and 34 years of age), which is the age group in which the frequency of pregnancy is the highest.

The lack of information on this subject and the importance of the problem in view of the consequences of abortion for the women in question, their families and society suggest that an examination of this subject needs to be incorporated in research projects concerning the reproductive behaviour of women.

## **B. FEMALE MORTALITY**

The prolongation and the improvement of the quality of the lives of men and women have always figured among mankind's objectives.

During the United Nations Decade for Women, an awareness of the need to improve health conditions for women led to the incorporation of this subject as one of the priority issues to be addressed in relation to women's participation in development.

As a result of the corresponding discussions, the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women called for "the creation and strengthening of basic services for the delivery of health care, with due regard to levels of fertility and infant and maternal mortality and the needs of the most vulnerable groups and the need to control locally prevalent endemic and epidemic diseases". Furthermore, governments which had not already done so were urged to "undertake, in cooperation with the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, plans of action relating to women in health and development in order to identify and reduce risks to women's health and to promote the positive health of women at all stages of life".

Efforts to achieve this objective can and should be furthered by upgrading demographic statistics and indicators relating to mortality and by expanding the group of users of such data to include not only government agencies whose job it is to provide health services to the population, but also women themselves, who, as noted in the same document, "must be involved in the formulation and planning of their health education needs".

By providing statistics on mortality, the field of demography can make a genuine contribution to the achievement of the above-mentioned objectives.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, records of vital statistics are the most direct source of information on mortality. They provide a means of ascertaining mortality levels, trends and differences as well as the causes of the deaths which occur.

The shortcomings of records of vital statistics in the region are well known. In most of the countries, over 20% of deaths are not reported and in many cases the figure is over 40%. Under-reporting is less than 10% only in the group of countries at an advanced stage of modernization and, even in this group, the level is above that figure in some of the countries (Chackiel, 1987).

Because of these problems, population censuses are used as an alternative source of data for estimating death rates; the application of indirect techniques to these data make it possible to estimate infant and adult mortality.



### **1. The decrease in female mortality in the region**

During the period between 1950 and 1980, a significant decrease in female mortality was recorded in the region, along with a consequent increase in longevity. This decline in mortality can be detected by means of an analysis of life expectancy at birth.

Two of the countries at an advanced stage of modernization –Argentina and Uruguay– had low female mortality rates at the beginning of the period, with a life expectancy at birth of over 65 years. The decrease in mortality observed during the period in question in these countries resulted in an increase in life expectancy at birth of 9 and 4 years, respectively.

The rest of the countries in this group (Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Panama and Venezuela) had moderately low female mortality rates at the beginning of the period, with life expectancies at birth of over 56 years. A relatively large decrease in mortality was recorded in these countries during the period concerned and, as a result, by the end of the period the life expectancies had risen to over 72 years.

The large countries in which an uneven modernization process has taken place (Brazil, Colombia and Mexico) had moderately high mortality rates at the beginning of the period, with a life expectancy at birth in 1950-1955 of around 52 years. By the end of the period, the life expectancy of the female population had risen to over 66 years, for a gain of more than 14 years in the life expectancy at birth.

The small, partially-modernized countries and those in which the modernization process is incipient had a high female mortality rate at the beginning of the period (with the exception of Paraguay, where the life expectancy at birth for women in 1950-1955 was 64.6 years), with life expectancies at birth of about 45 years. Mortality showed a major decrease in these countries, with gains of over 15 years in the life expectancy at birth. In most of these countries, women's life expectancies at birth are now over 61 years. The only exceptions are Bolivia and Haiti, where the life expectancies at birth for women are 53.0 and 54.4 years, respectively.

The data referred to above indicate that women's life expectancy at birth has increased more in the countries where mortality rates were very high at the beginning of the period. This increase was made possible by the application of low-cost measures which succeeded in raising the life expectancy of the female population substantially. However, an analysis of female mortality by cause of death provides a number of examples which indicate that many women still die as a result of diseases that could have been prevented. Governments could still accomplish a great deal, therefore, by implementing health policies designed to further reduce female mortality and thereby increase the life expectancy of women in the region.

In designing policies aimed at creating healthful conditions for women, it is important to consider the fact that the increase in the life expectancy of the female population has been accompanied by a broadening of the gap between the life expectancies of men and women. This gap, which during the period 1950-1955 was approximately three years in most of the countries, is currently about six years.

As will be discussed below, there is some debate as to the reasons why women have a greater life expectancy at birth than men.

On the basis of these differences, it might be mistakenly concluded that women are in a better situation than the male population as regards matters pertaining to their health. However, although women probably do have a genetic advantage in this respect, there are indications that this advantage is not fully manifested, as will be seen later on, due to sex discrimination against women in the field of health care.

## **2. Causes of death among the female population**

As noted above, in designing health policies for the female population it is particularly important to have access to adequate statistics on causes of death.

Information concerning the distribution of causes of death can help guide the efforts of health organizations in the most appropriate direction; furthermore, if these data are available at an appropriate level of disaggregation by age according to area of residence as well as other characteristics which help identify the women belonging to certain socio-economic groups, then the efforts of such organizations could also be directed towards the most vulnerable groups within the female population.

However, the information available in the region concerning causes of death suffers from severe limitations which hamper its widespread use.

Indeed, in addition to the under-reporting of deaths referred to earlier, in most of the countries many death certificates either define the cause of death poorly or erroneously or fail to provide any information at all as to the cause of death.

The data compiled on causes of death can be described as "very good" in only five of the countries of the region and as "fair" in only three others. In the rest of the countries, the information available in this respect is considered to be unreliable or of poor quality.<sup>3</sup>

If the available information is examined with due caution, however, the differences existing among the distributions of causes of death in the various countries of the region as of about 1980 can be detected.

Among the countries at an advanced stage of modernization, the top-ranking causes of death for both women and men are those diseases whose decline is associated with scientific progress, such as malignant tumors. Given

the fact that the populations in these countries are older, other main causes of death include degenerative diseases, cerebro-vascular ailments and heart disease.

In contrast, in countries in which the modernization process is not as advanced, the major causes of death include diseases whose decrease is associated with the adoption of environmental health measures or the expansion of basic health care services. Some of these causes are enteritis and other diarrhoeic diseases, measles and other ailments.

### **3. Causes of death and their relation to changes in women's life expectancy**

If adequate information were available on the causes of death among the female population, it would be possible to gain a more in-depth understanding of the impact of each of such causes in terms of changes in life expectancies between any two given periods or between different populations.<sup>4</sup>

Purely for purposes of illustration, some of the most significant results obtained by applying the Pollard method in Guatemala City, São Paulo and Mexico City will be discussed below. These findings provide a more detailed picture of how female mortality has changed and point up some aspects of these changes which should be studied more extensively (Pollard, 1986).

In Guatemala City, the life expectancy of women rose by 7.6 years during the period 1969-1979. By applying the Pollard procedure, it can be seen that the most important factor in this increase was the decline recorded in some of the causes of death which are classified as being preventable. For both sexes, the greatest contribution to this increase in the life expectancy at birth was made by the decrease in the incidence of causes considered to be "preventable by environmental sanitation measures" (with the decrease in such causes of death resulting in an increase of 3.4 years in the life expectancy of women at birth); the second most important factor was the reduction in causes of death regarded as being "preventable by vaccination", which accounted for 0.3 years of the increase in women's life expectancy at birth (Díaz, 1987).

On the other hand, however, within the category of preventable causes of death, those considered to be "preventable by early diagnosis" (e.g., breast and uterine cancer, whose frequency increased during the period in question) had an adverse impact on women's life expectancy, as did those diseases described as "preventable by means of a combination of measures".

In contrast to the situation in Guatemala City, the application of the same procedure in São Paulo showed that all preventable causes of death had had a positive impact as regards the change in the life expectancy of women recorded during the period 1975-1983. These same data indicated that, in this case as well, the greatest contribution to the lengthening of women's life expectancy -1.6

years— was made by the reduction in deaths that were preventable by means of environmental sanitation measures (Yasaki, 1986).

In the case of Mexico, the life expectancy of women increased by 7.3 years<sup>5</sup> during the period 1969-1982, with four years of this increase being due to the reduction in deaths attributable to preventable causes. Among these, the factor having the greatest positive impact was the decrease in deaths that could be prevented by the adoption of environmental sanitation measures and by means of a combination of measures designed to reduce the incidence of diseases associated with respiratory infections and pneumonia (Rodríguez, 1988).

In contrast, deaths that could have been prevented by means of a combination of measures during early infancy and deaths by violence had a negative effect as regards the change in the life expectancy of women.

As the above examples indicate, in all three cases the adoption of environmental sanitation measures and the implementation of mass vaccination programmes have helped to reduce mortality among the female population.

Despite the progress made in increasing the life expectancy of women, it is clear that much could still be done to improve the health conditions of the female population and thereby further increase women's life expectancy. This was clearly shown by a hypothetical exercise carried out in Guatemala City in which estimates were prepared of how much the life expectancy of women would increase if certain types of preventable causes of death were to be entirely eliminated. It was calculated that women's life expectancy at birth would rise by 1.53 years if all deaths attributable to diseases that could be prevented by vaccination and preventive treatment were to be eliminated, by 0.44 years if all those that could be prevented by early diagnosis and treatment were to be eradicated, by 4.2 years if all deaths that could be prevented by environmental sanitation measures were avoided, and by 4.8 years if all the causes of death that could be prevented by a combination of measures were eliminated.

#### **4. Differences between the causes of death among men and women**

As remarked earlier, women are known to have a greater life expectancy than men.

Even though the experts are not in complete agreement as to the reason for this phenomenon, one major school of thought relates this fact to genetic differences associated with women's reproductive functions.

It is important to be aware of the fact, however, that the lower level of mortality observed among women is not systematic in all age groups and that differences between male and female mortality are not similar with respect to all causes of death.

When the Pollard method was applied in the case of Mexico City to compare the differences between men and women as regards the impact of the

various causes of death, it was found that in some age groups female mortality attributable to preventable causes was higher than that of men. This fact points up the negative impact of cultural factors associated with the ways in which women are discriminated against in society.

While it is true that during the period 1980-1981 women in Mexico City had a life expectancy at birth that was 7.2 years greater than that of men, mortality among girls aged 1 to 4 years was higher than among boys of the same ages as a result of the deaths occasioned by all the preventable causes. If it is assumed that preventive vaccination drives, the available means of early diagnosis, environmental sanitation measures and the possibility of avoiding death by accident or violence are the same for both sexes, then the possibility must be considered that the prevailing cultural patterns within the society are such that families may tend to devote greater attention to male than to female children.

In addition, higher female mortality was also observed from the age of 25 years onward in the case of Mexico City as a result of deaths that could have been prevented by early diagnosis. Unlike the difference observed in the 1-4 year age group, this was due to the impact of diseases that affect only women, such as breast and uterine cancer.

Finally, the causes of death having a negative influence on women's life expectancy as compared to that of men –apart from those particular to women– include one high-incidence disease –diabetes– which systematically reduces the life expectancy of women in relation to that of men and which figures among the 10 main causes of death in all the countries of the region.

## **5. Maternal mortality**

Among the causes of death affecting the female population, maternal mortality warrants special attention. This term is understood as designating the death of women during pregnancy or within 42 days after the termination of the pregnancy, regardless of its duration or site, due to any cause related to or aggravated by either the pregnancy itself or the medical care given in connection with it, but not those deaths due to accidental or incidental causes (PAHO, 1986a).

It is difficult to arrive at a clear idea of the frequency of maternal mortality due to the under-reporting which plagues vital statistics record-keeping systems and the limitations referred to earlier as regards the data on causes of death. In the case of maternal mortality, the problem is made more serious by the fact that under-reporting is greatest precisely in those areas where maternal mortality is the highest.

It is generally agreed that most of the deaths associated with pregnancy are preventable. As remarked in a document issued by PAHO, a maternity-related

death in the world of today is as anachronistic and illogical as deaths by freezing (PAHO, 1986b).

None the less, high levels of maternal mortality still exist in Latin America and the Caribbean. In fact, for women in their childbearing years, complications during pregnancy, the birth process and the puerperium are in many cases one of the five main causes of death of women in this age group.

Although maternal mortality did decrease during the period 1950-1980, even the lowest rates of maternal mortality existing in the region as of the period 1980-1984 were substantially higher than those found in the developed countries.

In many Latin American and Caribbean countries, the proportion of such deaths is currently over 30 per 10 000 live births, whereas in Canada and the United States the figure is 0.5 and 0.8 per 10 000 live births, respectively.

The striking differences in the incidence of maternal mortality within the region correspond to the level of modernization achieved by the various countries. Maternal mortality in the region is highest in: 1) countries having high levels of fertility, due to the high proportion of births occurring in high-risk age groups; 2) countries in which relatively few births take place in health care facilities; and 3) countries having high rates of abortion, which, from a clinical standpoint, is regarded as one of the main causes of maternal mortality. Whereas maternal mortality rates in most of the countries that are at an advanced stage of modernization range between 3 and 6 per 10 000 live births, in countries where the modernization process is still incipient these levels vary between 20 and 50 per 10 000 live births.

The greatest decrease in maternal mortality has been seen in three countries belonging to the group classified as being at an advanced stage of social modernization (Chile, Costa Rica and Cuba), where the rate is now one-half of what it was two decades ago.

The refinement of statistics on maternal mortality and related factors can definitely help to facilitate the formulation of appropriate guidelines for institutional policies aimed at expanding health service coverage and to promote the adoption of measures designed to provide greater access, in sociocultural and economic as well as geographical terms, to health care services in connection with pregnancy and the puerperium.

### **C. CHANGES IN THE FEMALE POPULATION'S AGE STRUCTURE: THE STATUS OF OLDER WOMEN**

As a result of the decline in fertility, in particular, and, to a lesser extent, of the drop in mortality and the type of international migration which has taken place, Latin America and the Caribbean, which has traditionally been regarded as a

society. Indeed, the final years of older women's lives are frequently marked by loneliness, abandonment and a failure to fully satisfy their basic needs. It is therefore necessary to compile an adequate pool of information on the living conditions of this sector of the female population so that social policies aimed at improving their living conditions may be formulated.

### **1. The increase in the older female population**

In 1980, 11 998 574 of the 175 784 156 women living in Latin America and the Caribbean were over 60 years old.

According to CELADE data (1987), in the 1950s this group of women accounted for 5.6% of the total female population. Currently they represent 6.8% of that population and are expected to make up 8.4% of the total by the year 2000.

Moreover, the female population in this age group is growing and will grow faster in the future than the total female population and all the other age groups taken together. Between 1980 and 1985, the female population aged 60 years and over grew at an average annual rate of 3.19% while the total female population grew by 2.3%. For the period 2000-2005, the growth rates are expected to be 2.9% and 1.6% respectively.

The increase in absolute terms in the number of women aged over 60 from 4 403 285 in 1950 to 11 998 574 in 1980 and projections of a further increase to 22 148 736 by the year 2000, forcefully underscores the growing importance of women in that age group in the region.

As noted above, only in four countries of the region (Argentina, Cuba, Chile and Uruguay) does the female population over 60 years old represent close to or more than 10% of the total female population. However, in future, the proportion of the female population over 60 years old will become relatively important in the countries with the continent's largest populations (Brazil, Colombia and Mexico) as it becomes more like that of the countries of the world's most developed regions.

However, there are differences in the relative size of the over 60 year old female population in the region as a result of the varying rates at which the process of demographic transition has proceeded in each of the countries.

### **2. Where women over 60 years old reside**

In most of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean older women, unlike older men, live mainly in urban areas. The information available indicates that only five countries of the region –Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti and

Honduras had less than half of the 60 year old female population living in the urban areas in 1980. According to population growth projections for the urban and rural areas, by the year 2000 only in two countries –Guatemala and Haiti– will less than 50% of the female population over 60 years old live in urban areas (CELADE, Demographic Bulletin No. 28).

Although figures are not available on all the countries of the region, there is evidence that shows that elderly women who live in the urban areas tend to cluster together in certain neighbourhoods of the cities; this phenomenon is particularly striking in the metropolitan areas. Thus, in Chile for instance, the female population over 60 years old represented 14% of the total population of the central communes of the metropolitan area, Santiago Centro and Providencia, in 1980; this contrasts sharply with the 5.9% of the elderly female population living in the peripheral areas (Domínguez, 1987).

According to the same study, it is precisely in the communes with large populations of elderly people where a greater proportion of people living alone can be found; more elderly women live alone than men. Thus, for example, in the case of Chile, 8% of women over 60 live alone; this proportion is higher in the communes with bigger proportions of elderly people.

### **3. Marital situation**

One of the most significant changes that occurs at this stage of a woman's life has to do with her conjugal situation.

In most countries of the region, close to or over 50% of the women aged 60 and above live without their spouses. Although living without a husband does not necessarily mean living alone, in Latin American societies one situation tends to be mistaken for the other since most of the women have developed their lives in terms of their role as wives.

This situation is more common in the urban areas than in the rural areas. Moreover, in all the countries of the region a greater proportion of women over 60 years old live without a spouse than do men and this makes them more vulnerable.

In seven countries studied (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Uruguay), nearly a third or more of the women aged between 65 and 69 were widows.

### **4. Income**

Economic insecurity is another reason why women aged over 60 are in a vulnerable situation.

Latin American countries have still got a long way to go in implementing the principles established with respect to the participation of elderly people,



particularly women, in economic activity. Both the International Plan of Action on Aging arising out of the World Assembly on Aging (1982), the 1985 Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women as well as many other international instruments of which one of the most important is Recommendation 162 of the International Labour Organization, have stressed the need for national societies to establish appropriate mechanisms to reconcile the right of elderly people to work with their legitimate right to rest.

It is worth noting that in most of the countries of Latin America, the proportion of elderly women who work is higher than that of women who have retirement benefits or a pension. This fact is particularly striking in the relatively less developed countries and suggests that elderly women who work do so more out of absolute need to earn some income than to do something creative.

It should be noted that in the case of Latin America's total female population over 12 years old, the participation of women in economic activity is in the urban areas. The opposite occurs in the case of women aged over 60 who engage in economic activities in the rural areas until they are much older.

An analysis of the same phenomenon in each of the countries of the region confirms that only in 10 of them are the participation rates of over 60 year old urban women higher than those of their rural counterparts. However, given the limitations of instruments of measurement in assessing the economic activity of women in rural areas, it could be assumed that if the information problems were overcome, the trend would be the same in the other countries.

On the other hand, only a small proportion of women over 60 have retirement benefits. In the majority of the countries of the region retirement benefits are associated with work done earlier on in life. This situation is attributable to the relatively low participation of women throughout their lives in economic activity which is moreover characterized by breaks and a high proportion of activities in the informal sector that do not enjoy social insurance benefits.

A look at the retirement benefit payments in three Latin American countries with different levels of relative development: Argentina, Ecuador and Honduras (INSTRAW figures) confirms the foregoing statement. In the three countries, the retirement benefits for women over 60 are lower than those for men. Moreover, a comparison of the retirement benefits of women depending on whether they reside in urban or rural areas shows that a substantially smaller proportion of rural women get retirement benefits or pensions.

## **D. FEMALE MIGRATION**

### **1. Internal migration**

In Latin America and the Caribbean, millions of women who are now residing in the cities have migrated there from rural areas.

Most of them have little schooling, are subject to substandard living conditions upon their arrival and face serious problems in adapting due to separation from their original family units and often from their own children, as well as to the fact that the prevailing cultural patterns in their new environment differ from those they incorporated during their socialization process.

These countries therefore have a societal duty to regard the women involved in internal migration as a group within the female population which deserves special attention. The relevant policies therefore need to be developed in order to help these large sectors of the female population to adapt to their new environment, to enter the labour market, to deal with the housing problems they face and thereby to improve their living conditions.

Between 1950 and 1970, mass migration took place in Latin America and the Caribbean from rural areas to urban centres. This process was the result of the structural transformation occurring in the region during that period, which took the form of changes in both the agrarian system and the urban productive structure.

Indeed, the intensification of capitalist production relations in rural areas and the resulting breakdown of the more traditional forms of population settlement, especially in the case of large landholdings, figured among the factors giving rise to mass migration from the countryside to the cities.

Another factor which contributed to this large-scale population shift from rural to urban areas was the diversification of the urban production structure associated with the import substitution process, as the initial stage of industrialization opened up greater opportunities to the rural population for entering the urban labour market. In the case of women, the development of the textile and services industries played a particularly important role in such migration.

It is generally agreed that there were more women than men among the 29 million Latin Americans who migrated from the countryside to the cities during the period 1950-1970. This numerical predominance of women over men was even greater in the migratory flows towards the larger urban centres (Gatica, 1980).

Migration from rural to urban areas has slowed during the past decade. This overall change in the trend has been much less marked, however, in the case of women.

It is difficult to ascertain the actual status of the women who have participated in internal migration, however, due to the limited statistical information existing in this connection.

Apart from specific surveys on the subject, population censuses ought to be the most complete source of information concerning this phenomenon, which involves millions of women in the region. United Nations agencies have recommended that population censuses, in addition to providing information on place of birth, should be used to collect data on the place of residence at a specified date in the past; in this regard, it is felt that it would be particularly useful to include a question on the place of residence five years before the date of the census. Few countries in the region include such a question in their censuses, however, which makes it more difficult to collect data on internal migration and, hence, on the status of migrant women. None the less, despite the lack of the necessary statistical data, it is possible to obtain a reasonable idea of the past and present extent of this phenomenon based on an analysis of the sex ratios existing in rural and urban areas.

One indication that the female population continues to migrate from the countryside to the cities is provided by the extremely high sex ratios existing in rural areas, according to the information furnished by censuses taken around the year 1980. In point of fact, the ratios of men to women within all age groups in the rural areas of the countries of the region are far higher than what would be expected in a population not subject to migration.

For example, the sex ratios in the rural areas of countries at an advanced stage of modernization around the year 1980 were, except in Costa Rica, over 110, with the highest level being in Uruguay (132).

In the other countries of the region, the sex ratios in rural areas are also over 100.

An examination of this ratio by age group in rural areas shows that higher ratios exist in the older age groups. This could be an indicator of the migratory flows of earlier decades, but the fact that the male population is far larger than the female population in the younger age groups in rural areas as well lends greater plausibility to the hypothesis that women continue to emigrate to the cities.

In addition, rural-rural migration has become a particularly important phenomenon in the case of women during recent decades. This type of predominantly temporary migration involved men almost exclusively in the past. Now, however, women constitute a very sizeable proportion of temporary agricultural workers.

## **2. International migration by women**

While women who migrate from one location to another within their own countries find it difficult to adjust to their new environment, the adaptation

process is much more complex in the case of women who move from one country to another.

The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women stressed the need to devote special attention to migrant women, who are often the victims of discrimination on two counts: as women and as migrants. In this connection, emphasis is placed on the need to take the necessary steps to safeguard and maintain family unity and to ensure that such women will have access to employment opportunities, health services and social security benefits in general on an equal footing with the rest of the population in the host country.

The formulation of policies for protecting the rights of migrant women is deemed necessary in view of the fact that these women are faced with especially serious problems due, firstly, to the often difficult process of assimilating the way of life prevailing in the host country and, secondly, to the loss of their customary environment when they leave their countries of origin.

The available information on international migration is limited. Population censuses are the most complete source of information on this phenomenon, but they nonetheless have a number of major shortcomings. Firstly, it has been found that there are more omissions in the case of the resident foreign population than is the case for the total population. Obviously, this problem is all the more serious in countries where the number of illegal immigrants is large. Secondly, the fact that censuses record only those migrants who are present at the precise moment that the census is taken represents a major limitation in the case of countries where border crossings by seasonal migrants take place on a large scale.

The analysis of the most prominent features of international migration by women which is presented below is based on the information collected by the IMILA research project on international migration in Latin America conducted by CELADE. As part of this project, the data recorded in each country's census concerning the aliens present at the time of the census has been compiled.

This information indicates that during recent decades there has been both an intensification of intra-regional international migration in Latin America and the Caribbean and an increase in the number of Latin Americans in the United States, Canada, Australia and the European countries.

During the period 1970-1980, increases were recorded in the presence of foreign-born persons in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay and Venezuela; in the number of Argentines, Colombians, Chileans, Paraguayans and Uruguayans who emigrated from their countries; and in population shifts within Central America.

As part of these international population movements, there was a noticeable growth in international migration by women. Indeed, unlike the international migratory flows of earlier periods, which were made up primarily of men, in the 1970s and 1980s women have been a majority in many migrant groups.

The most noteworthy examples in this respect include the predominance of women in virtually all the groups of Latin Americans currently residing in the United States and Canada, as well as two groups of migrants between neighbouring countries in which women are in the majority: Paraguayans in Argentina and Colombians in Venezuela.

Although the above-mentioned cases are the most significant ones in terms of the size of the sectors of the female population involved it should also be noted that women are in the majority among Bolivian migrants in all countries, as well as in a number of other migratory flows.

This increase in international migration by women is associated with various types of quite different factors. In some cases, an important factor is the growth in demand in the labour markets of neighbouring countries for people to perform what are often thought of as "women's" work (one prime example being employment in the personal services sector), while in other cases such increases have been the result of adjustment policies which have motivated women (and often highly qualified ones) to seek better job opportunities in more developed countries. Finally, during the past few decades international migration has been strongly influenced by the existence of armed conflicts and emergency situations in various areas of the region.

One example of the first of these situations is, as mentioned above, that of Colombian women residing in Venezuela. In 1980, according to the census data, 261 519 Colombian women were living in Venezuela, and this figure would probably be substantially higher if it were not for census omissions. This group's activity ratio (44.0%) was considerably higher than that of Colombian women in their home country and that of Venezuelan women. Of this group, 56.3% were working in the personal services sector and 65.9% of the women in this group over 20 years of age had had less than six years of schooling.

A similar situation exists with regard to the 139 769 Paraguayan women who were residing in Argentina as of 1980.

The second factor mentioned above is illustrated by the case of the 1 951 742 Latin American women (mostly Mexicans, Cubans and Dominicans) who were residing in the United States in 1980. As of the time of census, all the various groups of Latin American women residing in that country had high labour force participation ratios (with activity ratios of over 50% in most cases) and, with the exception of the female population from Mexico, were highly educated as well, with most of them having over 12 years of schooling.

The women who have had to leave their countries as a consequence of armed conflicts or emergency situations represent a different case altogether. As stated in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, "the international community recognizes a humanitarian responsibility to protect and assist ... refugee and displaced women" who, as is noted in the same document, "are exposed to a variety of difficult situations affecting their physical and legal protection as well as their psychological and material well-being".

While acknowledging that a lasting solution for the problems of refugee women should be sought in the elimination of the causes of their displacement, the above document also underscores the need for programmes aimed at providing legal, educational, social, humanitarian and moral assistance to women in this situation.

Although these factors gave rise to migratory flows in the past as well, in some areas of the region such migration began to take place on a much larger scale in the 1970s and 1980s.

One example of this is pointed up by an analysis of the composition of immigrant women in Costa Rica, where the resident alien population as of 1984 was 93% larger than it had been in 1973. Obviously, this increase coincided with the intensification of armed conflicts in Central America: in 1984, 43 559 alien women were living in Costa Rica, of whom 22 533 were Nicaraguans and 4 674 were Salvadorians. The difference between the status of these women and those described in preceding paragraphs is reflected in the corresponding labour force participation ratios. Thus, for example, in 1984 the activity ratio for immigrant Nicaraguan women in Costa Rica was 18.2%, which was far lower than that of the migrant women discussed earlier (Pellegrino, 1988).

The above-mentioned situations attest to the fact that international migration by women of the region is far from being a marginal phenomenon; appropriate statistics on such migration therefore need to be compiled with a view to facilitating the design of policies to safeguard these women's rights.

## **E. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This document has presented a brief discussion of the statistics and indicators which reflect the demographic changes most relevant to a study of the situation of women. This examination has brought out the importance of the changes that have occurred during the period 1950-1980, thereby attesting to the fact, as observed in the opening paragraphs of this document, that demographic data and analyses are of proven usefulness in studying the conditions to which women are subject, as well as being essential for the design of policies aimed at improving their status in society.

The information and analyses available in Latin America and the Caribbean indicate that, despite the magnitude of these changes, improvements in the status of women within society are still both slow and limited.

Furthermore, an examination of the available demographic statistics demonstrates that in many cases they suffer from severe shortcomings which hinder their extensive utilization as a means of gaining an understanding of the situation of women within society and as a basis for designing policies aimed at allowing them to participate fully, on an equal footing, in all spheres of society.

In view of the above, the following recommendations are made:

1. It is suggested that the governments take the necessary steps to upgrade the statistics and indicators relating to the status of women. In this connection, it is recommended that they:

- a) Incorporate, as part of the countries' regular statistical programmes, the compilation and publication of demographic statistics for each sex at an appropriate level of disaggregation by age, area of residence and other characteristics that will permit the identification of those sectors of women requiring priority attention;
- b) Take the necessary action to make effective use of demographic statistics and indicators in the policy planning process as it relates to women.

2. It is proposed that, in order to achieve the above objectives, the following steps be taken:

- a) The adoption of appropriate measures for improving statistics and indicators relating to fertility. In this respect, it is suggested that:
  - i) Special emphasis be placed on the collection of appropriate data on the fertility of women throughout their reproductive years, including adolescents under 15 years of age;
  - ii) Steps be taken to ensure that statistics on fertility will include information on abortion, as well as on live-born children, stillbirths and children born during the past year;
- b) The promotion of action aimed at upgrading demographic statistics and indicators on female mortality as regards:
  - i) Expanding the coverage of records of vital statistics concerning deaths;
  - ii) Improving the data on causes of death;
- c) The adoption of the relevant measures in order to learn more about internal and international migration by women. To this end, it is suggested that the countries implement the United Nations recommendations concerning the incorporation into population censuses of questions on place of birth and place of residence at a stipulated date prior to the census (preferably, five years before the taking of the census).

3. It is recommended that action be taken in the countries of the region to promote research projects concerning:

- a) The fertility of adolescent women and related factors;
- b) The possibility of gaining access to family planning methods and their use;
- c) The incidence of abortion in the region;
- d) The possible existence of patterns of sex discrimination as regards health care for women;
- e) Maternal mortality and related factors;
- f) The living conditions of the older female population;
- g) The status of migrant women.

4. It is suggested that the ongoing dialogue between producers and users of demographic statistics and indicators should continue to be promoted and that the statistical and planning agencies of the region, as well as non-governmental organizations, should take part in this debate.

5. It is recommended that co-operation among United Nations agencies, governments and non-governmental organizations be continued with a view to facilitating the implementation of the above recommendations.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> "The average number of children that would be born per woman if all women lived to the end of their childbearing years and bore children according to a given set of 'age-specific fertility rates'; also referred to as total fertility. It is frequently used to compute the consequence of childbearing at the rates currently observed", *Manual X. Indirect techniques for demographic estimation* (ST/ESA/SER.A/81), published by the United Nations in English and Spanish in 1983, Sales No. E.83.XIII.2.

<sup>2</sup> This classification of countries according to their level of modernization is based on Germán Rama, "La evolución social de América Latina (1950-1980): transición y cambio estructural", a paper presented at the Seminar on Development Options in Latin America, Bogotá, 1984. The classification includes four categories:

a) Countries at an advanced stage of modernization: Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Cuba, Panama and Venezuela.

b) Large countries where modernization has been rapid and uneven: Brazil, Colombia and Mexico.

c) Medium-sized and small partially-modernized countries: Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and the Dominican Republic.

d) Countries where the modernization process is incipient: Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua.

<sup>3</sup> The system of classification proposed by J. Chackiel (1987) establishes the following ratings based on the proportion of death certificates lacking information in the cause of death:

Under 15% = very good

15%-24% = fair

25%-39% = unreliable

Over 40% = poor

<sup>4</sup> John Pollard (1986) determined the ratios needed in order to calculate the impact of each cause of death in terms of changes in life expectancy.

<sup>5</sup> These are preliminary findings based on unadjusted data.

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**V. LEGAL STATUS OF WOMEN  
IN THE REGION**

## **V. LEGAL STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE REGION**

### **Introduction**

The constant world-wide concern with the need to acknowledge the equal rights of men and women was expressed in the United Nations Charter itself and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These instruments initially provided the bases for most of the resolutions adopted by the various organs of the United Nations system, as it was considered that measures discriminating against women violated the principle of respect for human dignity and consequently constituted violations of fundamental human rights.

Subsequently, from the 1970s onwards, the issue of women's rights entered a new phase of development, in the form of concern with their integration into development and into the struggles for international peace and cooperation, with the consequent progress over the achievements of the previous period. This was reflected through the promotion of effective participation in politics and in work; through the recognition of the rights of single women and of their children, as well as in the attention devoted to groups of women in critical circumstances resulting from political, social and economic events, and through the concern shown with problems affecting the family such as family planning, domestic violence and others.

Nevertheless, while most of the rights proclaimed during this period did not materialize in the form of conventions which were legally binding on States, but rather in the form of resolutions containing guidelines for specific action, the legislative measures adopted for the purposes of ratifying and perfecting already recognized rights were complemented by planned and integrative strategies designed to promote the organization of women so as to facilitate their effective and dynamic participation as well as their actual insertion into the national and international community.

Of all the conventions adopted during the period which began in the 1970s, it is undoubtedly the "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women", adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, which most accurately reflects the characteristics mentioned above, since it develops the principles which had been contemplated in the 1967

Declaration of the same name, incorporates universally recognized rights into a legally binding document and proposes specific measures to allow women to achieve fair treatment, as a means of putting an end to discrimination against them in all spheres and at the legislative level.

As mentioned above, during the phase which began in the 1970s, co-ordinated steps were taken at the international level to contribute towards eliminating the obstacles to the improvement of the status of women at the national, regional and international levels.

Noteworthy among these are the following: a) the declaration by the General Assembly, in resolution 3010(XXVII), of 1975 as International Women's Year, in order to strengthen measures designed to promote equality between men and women, to ensure the full integration of women in the total development effort and to enhance their contribution to strengthening world peace; b) the formulation of the World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year, adopted at the World Conference of the International Women's Year held in Mexico City in 1975 and backed by the General Assembly through resolution 3520(XXX), which also proclaimed the period from 1976 to 1985 "United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace"; and c) the organization of the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, held in Copenhagen in 1980, at which the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women (approved by the General Assembly in resolution 35/136) was agreed upon, and which examined the obstacles encountered and the existing international consensus on the measures required to achieve the established objectives.

Because of their continued validity and relevance, these measures, plans and programmes constitute the basis for the strategies and measures set down in the report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, held in Nairobi in July 1985. These strategies were approved without a vote by the General Assembly in resolution 40/108 of 13 December 1985.

Broadly speaking, and as is mentioned in paragraph 6 of the above document, "the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women during the Period from 1986 to the Year 2000 set forth... concrete measures to overcome the obstacles to the Decade's goals and objectives for the advancement of women... reaffirm the international concern regarding the status of women and provide a framework for renewed commitment by the international community to the advancement of women and the elimination of gender-based discrimination".

The fundamental significance of the Nairobi Strategies lies in the fact that, by reaffirming the unity and interdependence of the objectives of the Decade—equality, development and peace—, they lay stress on the principle that the advancement of women and their full integration into economic, political, social and cultural development will be possible only if these objectives are achieved

jointly. Consequently, in formulating basic strategies, it is necessary to bear in mind existing fundamental obstacles as well as those which are emerging, to propose measures designed to overcome such obstacles and to devote attention to special circumstances, which as a whole provides a practical and effective guide to the action required in all spheres of international and national life.

Following is a description of legislation in force as of 1980 in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, in light of these Strategies and of the objectives of the Decade, together with the projects drawn up by some of them with a view to adjusting their domestic norms in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the Nairobi Strategies.

## **A. LEGAL STATUS OF WOMEN UNDER CURRENT LEGISLATION**

The process of recognizing equality of rights and opportunities between men and women consists not only of refining, supplementing and enforcing existing legislation. It also undoubtedly requires changes in attitudes, forms of behaviour, ways of life and social structures that curtail the free personal development of women and their active participation in national life. However, in the search for solutions to the problems affecting women, the topic of legislation takes on great importance, since legal measures can help to eliminate the barriers that prevent women from attaining equal status, and can come to represent a means of effecting change when they are understood as such and when they are drawn up by authorities aware of this social welfare objective.

In this respect, a summary will be presented of the legal status of Latin American women under legislation in force in the early 1980s, as a means of ascertaining the situation in the spheres of political, civil, criminal and labour rights at a time when there was no question of coordinated action at the international level, since this makes it possible to define the tasks which lie ahead.

Subsequently, and in the same connection, observations will be made regarding those aspects of the relevant legislation which are most significant for the purposes of this paper.

### **1. Political rights**

In order to analyse the status of women in respect of political rights, it is necessary to determine what requirements are laid down by Latin American legal systems in order for citizens to exercise such rights. In other words, it is necessary to analyse the manner in which women are granted equality before the

law and how they acquire and exercise the right to nationality, citizenship, suffrage, election to public office and participation in political organizations.

Generally speaking, it must be acknowledged that existing statute law does not embody any norms which discriminate against women in so far as the exercise of political rights is concerned or which prevent them from actively participating in public office, provided they satisfy the pertinent requirements.

a) *Equality before the law*

The principle of equality of the sexes before the law has been expressly or implicitly established by national constitutions themselves, a fact which is implicitly of vital importance, since the provisions of the constitution define the framework to which legal and regulatory norms must be subordinated and consequently prohibit any regulations incorporating gender-based discrimination.

Express declaration of equality has taken various forms, such as: a norm prohibiting discrimination (Dominica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama and Venezuela); a stipulation asserting equality, either among other properties (Bolivia and Brazil) or in a special article relating thereto (Mexico and Paraguay); and a rule combining the prohibition against discrimination with the reassertion of the equality of men and women (Ecuador and Peru).

Moreover, implicit recognition of this principle may be inferred from the expressions used in certain constitutions: "all men", "all individuals" or even a mention of nationality. Although such terms may give rise to misunderstandings, it is unlikely that in the present social and cultural context anyone interpreting the law will do so in a manner restrictive to only one of the two sexes. This group includes the constitutions of Argentina, Barbados, Chile, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Uruguay.

b) *Nationality and citizenship*

Both nationality, meaning the legal bond between an individual and the nation, and citizenship, which allows for the exercise of political rights, have been equally granted to women and men by Latin American legislations.

As far as law regarding nationality and its transmission to offspring born abroad is concerned, most national constitutions and laws relating thereto adopt generic terms which make no distinction as to sex, with the sole exception of those of Dominica and Jamaica, which do make a distinction, though only in the case of extremely special circumstances or the existence or absence of a marital bond, respectively.

What does exist is a difference in the manner in which the effect of marriage on nationality has been dealt with, as only the constitutions of Dominica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru grant both spouses the possibility of transmitting their nationality. In contrast, all other countries make a distinction, either by guaranteeing women who marry foreigners the right to



keep their original nationality (Bolivia) or by granting them the right to choose the nationality of their husband (Venezuela), with no provision for the possibility that a woman might transmit her nationality to her foreign husband.

As far as citizenship is concerned, gender-based distinctions formerly found in legislation concerning the requirements which women have to meet in order to possess citizenship have now been overcome; consequently, either by expressly recognizing the right of both men and women to acquire and exercise citizenship, or by using language relating to citizenship requirements which implicitly includes women, all countries now recognize the right thereto of all nationals over a given age.

The absence of discrimination against women in these areas entails recognition of their equal right to the full exercise of the political rights inherent to the status of citizen, to stand for election and to vote, and to take part in all spheres of national life, as well as their right to stand for public office, employment or functions and to join political parties.

## **2. Civil law**

It has been shown how Latin American legislations have recognized equality of rights before the law and the full capacity of women to exercise political rights. This equality extends to the field of civil rights, where women's capacity is unaffected provided they meet the age requirements and remain single.

A mere change in marital status still entails a series of consequences restricting a woman's capacity or placing her at a disadvantage to men, and even though certain cases are attributable to unpleasant carryovers from customary norms or social conventions (such as use of family name or choice of family home), they none the less constitute discriminatory factors. However, the fields in which the capacity of married women is most affected are those connected with marital authority, the system of administration of property within marriage and parental authority.

The implications of marital authority, meaning the set of rights exercised by the husband over the person and goods of his wife, are undoubtedly detrimental to the legal equality of spouses within marriage. Such equality, which is reflected in regulations relating to mutual faithfulness and reciprocal assistance and protection, has been recognized by most Latin American legislations and has thus been incorporated into the law of countries such as Colombia, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

However, those systems which maintain provisions such as those of Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador and Haiti, under which a wife owes obedience to her husband in exchange for his protection (the primary characteristic of marital authority), may come to incorporate other restrictions on the capacity of women. Thus, in Chile, marital authority entails the relative incapacity of married

women, who consequently may not appear in court alone, enter into contracts involving property or be appointed tutor or curator, as they are legally represented by their husband.

It should be mentioned that even the institution of separate property for married women, as provided for in the Chilean Civil Code, is inadequate to compensate for the diminished position of women. Although this provision considers a woman to have separate ownership of property acquired with the earnings from a job, office, profession or industry, thereby endeavouring to offset the excessive power of the husband under joint ownership of property by husband and wife, the duty of obedience is maintained, as the husband is simultaneously authorized to request the court to prohibit his wife from carrying out any activity of her own.

With regard to the system of administration of property within marriage, some legislations introduce inequality before the law between spouses by authorizing the husband alone to administer the goods which make up jointly owned marital property (Chile, Ecuador, Haiti and Peru). In others, the parties are allowed to choose between the different systems and to reach agreement, by marriage articles, on the system to be adopted in respect of property and the administration thereof (Brazil, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras). Finally, other systems are based on equality of the spouses, and grant them similar powers over the administration of goods, in certain cases with a restriction on the right to dispose of real estate, under which the express agreement of both parties is required (Bolivia, Colombia and Uruguay).

The final significant form of discrimination against married women concerns the exercise of parental authority. Although a satisfactory trend may be discerned (since most legislations, with one variant or another in the case of conflict between the spouses or dissolution of the marriage, attribute rights and obligations over the person and goods of minors to both spouses), there are still systems in which it is the father who exercises such rights, while the mother only does so subsidiarily (Chile and Panama).

### **3. Penal law**

It is in penal law more than in any other area that the unequal legal treatment given to men and women is apparent, a circumstance which is not solely attributable to the fact that penal codes or the laws complementing them have for the most part undergone no essential changes in recent years. What is rather more the case is that the persistent inequality in matters such as adultery or parricide is attributable to the existence of enormous social and cultural pressure, which discourages the revision of norms which are clearly out of date and discriminatory.

In so far as crimes against life are concerned, and specifically in the case of parricide, i.e., the murder of an ascendant, descendant or spouse, the murder of a spouse caught in the act of adultery by the other spouse is considered to have grounds for impunity (Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Panama and Uruguay) or is punishable by the penalty corresponding to mitigated homicide (Mexico and Nicaragua); in Venezuela, this penalty only extends to the male spouse and to parents or grandparents who find their single daughters or granddaughters committing adultery.

In the above circumstances, there are also some legislations which to a certain extent justify the crime on the grounds that it constitutes a defence of marital fidelity; the extreme situation is represented by legislations which deem that homicide committed by a husband who finds his wife in the act of adultery is not punishable by law, as in Haiti, Honduras and Paraguay.

Furthermore, regarding infanticide, i.e., the murder of a newborn child, it is noteworthy that the penal statutes of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Peru only consider the crime in respect of the mother. Most legislations take into account considerations in respect of the author, such as fear, questions of honour, psychological disturbance, etc., which affect the application of the penalty and reduce it if certain other circumstances are present. In some countries, this reduction of the penalty can even be extended to close relatives.

The other crime against life considered herein is abortion, which is defined as criminal conduct consisting of intentionally causing the death of a foetus while it is still in the mother's womb, or by its untimely expulsion.

The penalty applied in respect of an abortion is lighter than that laid down for the crimes of parricide and infanticide, a circumstance which some commentators have justified on the grounds that in this case there is only "the promise of life ... and less social disapproval of the act". Almost without exception, Latin American legal codes punish abortion as a crime against the legal possession of life, except in Chile where it appears among the "crimes and offences against the family order and public morality".

Furthermore, if the act is committed without the consent of the pregnant woman or if she suffers serious injury or death, the crime is aggravated. The "question of honour" is invoked as a mitigating circumstance in Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico, and extends to third parties if they act with the consent of the woman in Bolivia, Costa Rica and Nicaragua. In turn, the Uruguayan Penal Code even authorizes the judge to remit the penalty in specific cases, and considers certain circumstances such as rape, serious health reasons, economic distress and the fact of acting without the consent of the woman as grounds for a diminution of the penalty.

Finally, most legislations authorize therapeutic abortion, i.e., an abortion carried out to avoid a threat to the health or life of the mother, as well as the termination of pregnancies resulting from rape.

As far as the sexual crime of rape is concerned, in all legislations the penalty depends on the age of the victim and on any relationship of authority existing between the author of the act and the victim. Generally speaking, the law extends its protection to "virtuous women" when the author has resorted to seduction and the promise of marriage, and when his victim is of a given age (Brazil) or when he has resorted to seduction, promise of marriage or deceit and when the victim is a virgin (Chile).

Attention has been drawn to the term "virtuous", as it is difficult to understand that in some countries (Colombia, El Salvador, Paraguay and Venezuela), it is invoked as grounds for reduction of the penalty in cases involving prostitutes, who are considered to deserve less protection against this type of crime. If it is assumed that rape is a crime against sexual freedom, such a distinction undermines the principle, i.e., the right of a person not to be forced into the sexual act.

The crime of adultery has yet to be considered. Even though some countries do not classify it as a crime (Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba and Uruguay), the general trend is to treat it either as a crime against the family (Brazil, Chile and Guatemala) or as a sexual offence (Argentina, Ecuador and Honduras).

It is important to stress that for this type of crime, whatever the nature of the legal possession protected may be, all legislations make a distinction as to the seriousness of the act, depending on whether it is perpetrated by the husband or wife. The sole exceptions to this rule are the penal codes of Brazil and the Dominican Republic, under which the penal category merely corresponds to that for an act of sexual infidelity, without distinction, and the same penalty applies to both spouses.

Those legislations which do make a distinction generally require that concubinage, i.e., public knowledge of his behaviour, be established, in order for a man to be guilty of adultery, whereas in the case of a woman a single act of infidelity is sufficient to constitute the crime. There is a further difference: the unequal application of the penalty, which is always lighter in the case of a man.

#### **4. Labour law**

Traditionally, labour law has placed women on the same footing as children, and humanitarian reasons, based on physiological aspects as well as the moral, family and cultural order, have been invoked to justify the need for protective legislation. Consequently, by means of a series of public norms, regulations have been laid down covering, *inter alia*, questions such as the length of the working day, working conditions (with a view to preventing health risks) and a prohibition against women performing certain activities.

Assuming that the right to work is a fundamental individual right recognized as such by constitutions, and that, as has been shown, the constitutions themselves have prohibited gender-based discrimination, attention needs to be directed towards ensuring that regulations resulting from this desire to protect do not lead to unequal treatment which hampers effective participation by women in the economic and social life of their country.

Outlined below are some of the main provisions in respect of working women under the labour law of the countries of the region.

In so far as remuneration is concerned, in practice the conventions adopted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) regarding the ban on night work and on heavy or unhealthy work have led to diminished job opportunities for women and to their relegation to poorly-paid jobs.

However, the principle laid down in ILO Convention No. 100 concerning equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value (equal pay for equal work) has been agreed upon, accepted and expressly included in almost all national legislations, except those of Barbados and Guatemala, where, in any case, non-discrimination may be inferred from their legislation. Only in Trinidad and Tobago are women on an unequal footing in this respect, since they are subject to the regulation of the minimum wage as a consequence of their position on the lowest rungs of the wage ladder.

A further factor which needs to be taken into account in the labour relationship is the establishment of the working day, which is defined as the time during which the worker is at the disposal of his employer and which he is consequently unable to use for his own benefit, and which has almost unanimously and in accordance with ILO proposals been set at eight hours per day or 48 hours per week (Argentina, Brazil, Haiti, Mexico, Nicaragua and Uruguay). A different limitation of the working day is in force in Bolivia (40 hours per week of daytime work), Honduras (eight hours per day or 44 hours per week, equivalent to 48 hours' wages) and the Dominican Republic.

It should be mentioned that these general regulations in respect of the working day have been imposed without distinction on both men and women, without prejudice to the reduction of these periods in the case of night work or work in unhealthy environments, or to restrictions in respect of the length of overtime. While these also affect both sexes, in certain cases (Brazil) women are only authorized to extend the normal working day by a maximum of two hours.

However, in spite of the recognition of equality before the law, there is no doubt as to the existence of grounds, which have given rise to a set of regulations specifically concerning female workers. Of these, two will be mentioned here: those relating to night work and work which is harmful to health, and those relating to maternity protection.

In respect of night work, there is in principle, and in accordance with the International Labour Code, a prohibition on women working during the night. In practice, while it is nowadays possible to find greater flexibility on account of the changes which have taken place as a result of economic and technological

development and of the awareness which has developed as to women's role in society, this prohibition still remains in force, except in respect of certain jobs (nursing, communications, domestic work and others) or in the case of management or supervisory positions.

As part of the regulations designed to protect women's health, legislations have also imposed prohibitions on their working in unhealthy environments or performing particularly heavy or arduous jobs, either by specifying the type of job prohibited (Bolivia and Haiti), by defining it (El Salvador), or by incorporating, in addition, a residual regulation in respect of work "in dangerous or unhealthy jobs, or in those requiring great effort" (Colombia).

With regard to maternity protection, it should first be mentioned that even though the number of ratifications is not very high, most national legislations in this sphere are based on the provisions contained in ILO Convention No. 3 of 1919, which, *inter alia*, prohibit pregnant women from working during the period between six weeks prior to and six weeks following childbirth, and establish their right to some form of economic compensation from the State or the social security system.

This convention was superseded in 1952 by Convention No. 103, which extended its coverage not only to women working in industrial firms, but also to women carrying out "non-industrial work", a more generic term than the previous one ("commercial"). Consequently, both salaried domestic workers and women working in agricultural enterprises are also covered.

It is important to mention that in defining the terms "woman" and "child", these conventions state that they cover any person of the female sex, whatever her age, nationality or marital status, and any child, whether legitimate or not.

However, the aspects generally dealt with by national legislations concern maternity leave, maternity allowances and wages during the period of leave, a prohibition on dismissal, and the nursing period.

Maternity leave is generally granted providing certain conditions have been satisfied regarding the calculation of the expected date of birth, in order to establish the periods of leave prior to and following the birth. In certain countries, provision is also made for extending the leave on the grounds of illness resulting from childbirth (Argentina, Barbados, Chile and Panama).

As far as the right itself is concerned, some legislations deal with it as part of labour law, as a responsibility of the employer, while others include it within social security legislation. This latter solution is unsatisfactory, since in some countries the social security system does not cover certain sectors of the active population, such as domestic employees, who represent the highest percentages of the female labour force in Latin America and the Caribbean.

However, maternity leave has been incorporated by all countries as an inalienable right of women, with certain variations in respect of the total duration of the leave (90 days in Argentina and Peru; 12 weeks in Chile and Mexico), or its compulsory nature during the pre- and post-childbirth periods.

Another feature in respect of which legal protection is provided for pregnant women concerns the maternity allowance, which, whether it is provided by the social security system or under labour law, enables a pregnant woman to receive a supplementary sum of money as a contribution towards the expenditure involved in caring for and maintaining her child (Chile). Other systems have established a form of maternity wage, which generally requires the payment of full wages equal to those of a worker on the job, or, as in Bolivia and El Salvador, equivalent to a percentage thereof.

Recognition of these rights would be without effect if legislations had failed to establish norms to protect the fundamental right of pregnant female workers to job stability. As a result, it has been necessary to provide for compensation to be paid by employers who infringe the prohibition against dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy.

Argentine and Colombian legislation, among others, establish a period during which it is presumed that the dismissal was on the grounds of pregnancy, thereby making it impossible to claim other grounds, and establish heavy compensation payable by the employer, which may represent the equivalent of one year's wages, in addition to compensation for unjustified dismissal (Argentina) or the equivalent of 60 days' wages plus eight weeks' paid maternity leave, if the woman has not taken this previously (Colombia).

The other right which is generally established by national legislations as part of maternity protection concerns the granting of special rest periods to mothers so that they may nurse their child, and which obviously provides implicit protection for both mother and child.

The duration of these rest periods varies, although they are generally one hour long, divided into two periods, as in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. The rest is granted for a period which varies from the first six months of the child's life (Brazil and Colombia) to nine months (Ecuador) and one year (Argentina).

Finally, an examination will be made of systems regulating two activities generally performed by women: domestic service and home work (seamstresses, dressmakers), and which, on account of the nature of the labour relation, make it difficult to exercise generally recognized labour rights. It is in this type of activity that the greatest deficiencies in respect of control over the length of the working day, the system of compensation, wages and coverage in case of work accidents, illness, maternity, etc., are to be found, while in addition it may prove more difficult for the worker to undertake action to claim his legitimate rights when they have been undermined.

This area has been dealt with by the different legislations within their labour codes (Costa Rica), in specific laws (Argentina), in general laws (Mexico) or in special laws which refer to the labour code as a suppletory norm (Colombia), thereby guaranteeing the same rights as those enjoyed by other workers.

As far as the benefits provided are concerned, it should be mentioned that they include, *inter alia*, the following rights: limitation of the length of the working day, whether this is inferred from the time established for rest (Argentina and Venezuela) or expressly established (Costa Rica); sick or maternity leave; annual vacation, either depending on the length of time worked (Argentina) or of a given length (Brazil and Costa Rica); remuneration which is either set by special bodies (Mexico), based on the area in which the service is provided (Argentina) or equivalent to that of other workers in respect of the minimum wage to be paid, partly in money and partly in the form of food and lodging (Colombia).

## **B. ACTIONS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL**

Among the main hurdles detected in respect of the objective of "equality" of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women are the existence of discriminatory legislative provisions, the ineffective application of anti-discrimination provisions and *de facto* discrimination, which results in unequal responsibilities and opportunities for participating actively in development processes. Given this situation, the Nairobi document set forth proposals for measures to implement basic strategies at the national level in the legal and constitutional spheres, in respect of social and political participation and, finally, through the adoption of decisions.

In this connection, it should first of all be mentioned that the analysis in section A hereof leads to the conclusion that, generally speaking, no provisions are found in the legal field which constitute pronounced *de jure* discrimination against women, and that, in any case, there are sufficient constitutional grounds for making legislation more egalitarian.

National constitutions guarantee equal rights to men and women and prohibit gender-based discrimination, and make similar provisions in the field of political rights; in addition, most countries have incorporated the principles of equal opportunity and of equal pay for equal work into their labour laws, and have guaranteed non-discriminatory access to all levels of education.

However, with few exceptions, as mentioned in section A, considerable inequalities still persist in the area of civil and penal law and have been institutionalized, on the one hand, through regulations relating to the administration of property within marriage, parental authority, the transmission of nationality to children born within or outside wedlock, the choice of domicile of the married couple and a wife's option to adopt her husband's surname or to keep her own; and, on the other hand, through the definition of certain crimes or the failure to draw up laws in respect of others which particularly affect women, and through the different penalties imposed for crimes, depending on whether the author is a man or a woman.



Without discounting the importance of revising discriminatory legal provisions, it must be borne in mind that law merely provides a legitimate basis for initiating or pursuing action designed to eliminate the barriers obstructing women's access to equality. It should be recalled that there are also social, economic, political and cultural factors which have been used in the countries of the region to justify de facto discrimination and which represent the main hurdle on the path to effective participation by women in society and fair recognition of their abilities.

It would be beyond the scope of this paper to carry out an exhaustive analysis of these factors. In sum, the causal factors which have helped maintain this state of discrimination essentially spring from sociocultural stereotypes and from a lack of awareness and understanding of the nature and significance of issues relating to women, with the result that they are not given the necessary priority at certain levels.

However, it must be acknowledged that in spite of these difficulties, Governments have devoted greater attention to the problems of women in recent years, and have adopted plans and policies which they have translated into measures to ensure equal opportunity, in accordance with their international commitments.

Following is an outline of the most significant actions carried out in Argentina, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Peru and Venezuela, as they have yielded concrete results at the administrative and legislative levels. The cases of these countries have been included because information on them was readily available; it should be clarified, however, that other countries in the region have also made efforts in this direction.

### **1. Creation of a national mechanism**

Among the objectives proposed in the Strategies, the establishment of a national mechanism responsible for the advancement of women has been one of the most widely accepted in the countries of Latin America. In fact, as of 1980, most had set up or adapted a government agency to formulate national plans and policies, to ascertain the progress made, to carry out research on the situation of women and evaluate the data gathered, to promote programmes designed to achieve effective participation by women in the social, economic, cultural and political life of the country, to further their rights, etc.

With respect to their place within the State administrative apparatus, in most cases such offices are assigned to specific ministries as under-secretariats, departments, divisions, etc., generally in the family, health and welfare, planning and economic development and justice sectors.

Thus, in Argentina this mechanism has been categorized as an under-secretariat within the Ministry of Health and Welfare; Costa Rica's

National Centre for the Development of Women and the Family operates under the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports; Guatemala has set up an Office of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security; Peru has created a mechanism under the Ministry of Justice; and Venezuela has included one as a department within the organizational structure of the Ministry of the Family.

Recognizing the need for these national mechanisms to reach out to the regional and local spheres so that policies may be designed in accordance with actual needs, some countries have created or strengthened offices at the local level, thereby making it possible to promote throughout the country programmes for the advancement of women, and to incorporate properly coordinated regional plans into national plans.

Nevertheless, the impact and efficiency of these specialized agencies depend on the extent of their authority and decision-making power, as well as on the scope of their responsibilities and an adequate allocation of funds to allow them to fulfil their basic objectives. It is therefore encouraging that they have become so widespread, that in many countries they are the principal body involved in the formulation of plans and policies in respect of women, and that in others they have begun to participate in the coordination of programmes and national budgets.

## **2. Legislative reforms**

While this study has demonstrated the continued existence of features discriminating against women in national legislations, it has also indicated a growing interest, which has emerged at all levels in recent years, in the adoption of measures to overcome this state of affairs. To this end, legislative reform committees have been set up under the terms proposed in the Strategies, and drafts have been drawn up for the purpose of promulgating, or amending provisions which undermine, women's rights in various spheres. Whether these laws are actually in force or still in the form of bills under discussion or awaiting approval, they are of equal significance in terms of the concrete results obtained, provided they reflect efforts and coordinated action undertaken in the areas discussed herein.

### **a) *Laws promulgated***

As far as laws which have been promulgated are concerned, attention will be drawn, first of all, to those in force in Argentina, Peru and Venezuela in the field of civil and family law, and subsequently to those of Peru in the field of labour law.

#### **i) *Civil and family law***

The following areas have been covered by legislation in *Argentina*:

- Parental authority and filiation (Law 23264 of 1985), by virtue of which both father and mother are given equal rights and responsibilities in respect of the person and property of their minor children, while at the same time the equality of children before the law is established, whether they have been born within or out of wedlock, and both paternal and maternal responsibility are promoted by the provisions established by the law. Regulations are laid down in respect of, *inter alia*: procedures to obtain paternal recognition in respect of children registered as being of father unknown; presumption of paternity, in the absence of proof to the contrary, in the case of children conceived during cohabitation; and the hierarchization of biological proofs establishing filiation.
- Reform of the system of family law and the introduction of divorce (Law 23515 of 1987). As far as marriage is concerned, the law establishes the equal rights and responsibilities of husband and wife and the principle of joint choice of conjugal domicile; it also allows a wife not to use her husband's family name and permits either spouse to request the separation of jointly owned property should the other be guilty of maladministration. In respect of separation and divorce, it incorporates the grounds of prolonged de facto separation and affections causing behavioural disturbances which make it impossible for a couple to continue living together (alcoholism, drug addiction, serious mental illness).
- The right of a common law wife or concubine to a pension (Law 23226 of 1985). This recognizes the right to a pension provided administrative or judicial proof is given that the couple lived as husband and wife for a minimum period of five years immediately prior to the death of the partner; this period is reduced to two years if recognized offspring are alive or if the constituent is single, widowed, legally separated or divorced.

In *Peru*, amendments to the Constitution of 1980 contain both reaffirmations of essential principles regarding equality of the sexes and recognition of equality with respect to the rights of offspring. In addition, for specific purposes, the existence of de facto unions is recognized, in the assignment of constitutional hierarchy for the protection of so-called family property.

Subsequently, on 14 November 1984, the new Civil Code entered into force, introducing substantive reforms of the previous code, which had been in force since 1936. These reforms answered the need to adjust regulations in accordance with the aforementioned provisions of the 1980 Constitution or to fill certain gaps.

The principal reforms which resulted in an improvement in the situation of women relate to personal relations between spouses, the system of property ownership in marriage, the exercise of parental authority and de facto unions.

With regard to personal relations between spouses and the effects of marriage in terms of the rights and duties it entails, the Code establishes, as a primary joint responsibility required of both spouses, the obligation to feed and educate children (art. 287). Reciprocal obligations of spouses towards each other are also set forth, such as the duty of fidelity, assistance and cohabitation (arts. 288 and 289), which apply equally to both spouses.

The most significant changes, however, are found in the areas relating to so-called marital authority, in accordance with the egalitarian standards proclaimed in the Constitution. Married women are neither forbidden nor obligated to add their husband's surname to their own (art. 24), and it is expressly asserted that "both spouses have the duty and the right to participate in governing the home, to determine and change the conjugal domicile and to take decisions on matters concerning the household economy" (art. 290). They are also jointly endowed with "the legal representation of the conjugal partnership"; moreover, for the "ordinary needs of the household, the partnership shall be represented without distinction by either the husband or the wife" (art. 292).

With regard to the system of property ownership in marriage, the most important innovations concern, first, the introduction of a system under which contracting parties and spouses can choose freely between the regime of conjugal partnership and that of separation of property (art. 295) and can switch from one to the other, one or more times, during the marriage (art. 296); second, the elimination of the woman's subordination to the man within the conjugal partnership regime through a provision stating that both spouses are responsible for administering their joint property (art. 313); and third, the elimination of the category of reserved estate, as favouring the wife over the husband.

Lastly, and once again in accordance with the constitutional principle of equality, article 419 provides for the exercise of joint parental authority by both husband and wife during the marriage, meaning that both are legal representatives of their children; in case of dispute, the matter is resolved by a judge of the juvenile court. With respect to children born out of wedlock, authority is exercised by whichever parent has recognized them; if both have done so, the determination of authority is made by a judge, who must take account of the circumstances enumerated in article 421.

The constitutional reforms recall the fact that the Basic Charter recognizes the existence of unions constituting *de facto* households. The Peruvian Civil Code makes provision for this in its article 326, whose effects relating strictly to property are contingent on the requirements that the union be voluntary, of at least two consecutive years' standing and between a man and woman free of matrimonial impediments.

On 26 July 1982 the Congress of the Republic of *Venezuela* adopted a set of reforms to the Civil Code in order to guarantee the principle of equal rights and obligations within marriage. As a result of these changes, women are now able to share responsibility for the management of jointly owned property, to

share parental authority and to decide with their husband as to the conjugal domicile, with effects similar to those indicated above in respect of the Peruvian Civil Code.

ii) *Labour law*

Following is a description of the main provisions promulgated in Peru which have resulted in an improvement in the situation of working women.

Law No. 24508 of 29 May 1986 incorporates the approval of Convention No. 153 on equality of opportunity and treatment between male and female workers with family responsibilities, adopted by ILO at its 67th meeting, held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 3 June 1981. This law also incorporates the approval of Recommendation 165 on the same subject, adopted at the aforementioned meeting of ILO, with express reservations to paragraphs 18; 22, subparagraph 1; and 23, subparagraph 2.

It should be pointed out that these texts recognize the principle that household and family responsibilities should be shared equitably by all family members, and that maternity leave should therefore be granted to both the father and the mother, if for any reason the mother does not nurse the child. In formulating the aforementioned reservations, Peru rejected the part of the text referring to paternity leave as being inconsistent with the reality and social conditions of that country.

Law No. 24705 of 25 June 1987 recognizes homemakers, whether or not they are mothers, as self-employed workers. Under the norms contained in this law, they are given the right to participate in the health benefits and pension regimes of the social security system and, at their option, to participate in either or both of these benefit schemes. If they elect to take out only medical insurance, without entitlement to pension benefits, they contribute 5% of the corresponding reimbursement amount.

There is no age limit for enrolment in health plans.

Legal Directive No. 03-87-SP-FTCCLL of 10 July 1987 provides that the benefits granted under Law 4239 shall be calculated using the total amount of the last ordinary monthly remuneration collected at the time the beneficiary stopped working, and that these benefits shall equal two months' salary for salaried workers and 60 days' wages for wage earners. The law invoked in this directive grants to women and to minors who have been dismissed from their jobs without justifiable cause the benefit of receiving, in addition, the equivalent of two months' remuneration, without distinction as to its components and without provision for a duration other than the calendar period for these cases. A clarification was therefore agreed upon to the effect that the calculation must include all income ordinarily received by the worker during this period, without excluding any supplementary income.

b) *Draft laws*

As far as draft laws relating to the legal equality of women are concerned, proposals have been made in respect of the areas of family, labour and penal law. Also mentioned is the draft on the effective equality of women, formulated in Costa Rica.

i) *Family law:*

- Maternal leave for an adoption (Argentina).
- Establishment of the Family Forum within the judiciary, to operate in two distinct areas: mediation and family advice and family tribunals (Argentina).
- Fund to provide security for the payment of alimony. The purpose of this fund would be to guarantee receipt of fixed alimony payments or those established by court judgment, for the benefit of minor and/or handicapped children and the spouse (Argentina).
- The introduction of compulsory pre-marital courses as a requirement for marriage, covering legal, psychological and social aspects of marriage, with a stress on the concept of family democracy, the correction of stereotyped roles and the rights and obligations of matrimony and parenthood (Argentina).
- Establishment of family courts and tribunals in the various judicial districts (Peru).

ii) *Labour law:*

- The inclusion of domestic service within the law on work accidents (Argentina).
- A change in the system of social security health benefits to grant subsidies to nursing mothers for eight months following the birth of a child (Peru). The per diem amount of the subsidy is calculated as 25% of one-thirtieth of the minimum insurable remuneration for the health benefits scheme of the Peruvian Social Security Institute.
- The preparation of a preliminary draft reform of the current Labour Code (Guatemala). With regard to the status of women's rights, changes have been proposed in the following areas: formalizing agricultural, livestock-raising and domestic work so that contracts for such work may include the rights granted to workers in general; expressly recognizing the rights of concubines and adoptive mothers; establishing the right of workers with family responsibilities to take their vacations at the same time as their children's vacations according to the school calendar; not curtailing the free choice of employment on the grounds of the prohibition against performing work considered unhealthy or dangerous; prohibiting employers from requiring female employees or job candidates to undergo medical examinations to detect pregnancy;

establishing the right of pregnant women to decide how to distribute their pre- and post-natal leave; and creating institutions for the preschool children of workers with family responsibilities, financed jointly by the State, the employers and the workers.

- Proposed reforms to the Labour Law (Venezuela). This draft incorporates a number of articles designed to eliminate or prohibit the types of discrimination against women which restrict their access to employment. Specifically, these include existing prohibitions against certain types of work and against night work, as well as maternity protection. The aim is to give working women the freedom to enter different spheres of work; to increase the duration of the period of pre- and post-natal leave for both natural and adoptive mothers; to prohibit the dismissal of pregnant women; and to promote the provision of a broader range of integral child care services.

iii) *Penal law:*

- The decriminalization of adultery (Argentina).
- Draft national legislation on domestic violence (Argentina).

This bill provides for a flexible, accessible resource for victims of various types of domestic violence who suffer minor injury or physical or psychological abuse at the hands of a family member. The possibility of initiating ordinary penal procedures remains, but victims may, by opting for the mechanism proposed in the bill, report such acts to a civil or family court judge (once such authorities are created) by means of a procedure which is not subject to legal formalities; i.e., a summary oral procedure with an ample time-frame in which to authenticate the facts and to evaluate the evidence. Under this system, the judge in charge of the case is empowered to apply temporary measures in respect of the situation complained of and to verify the results of this and any other sanctions applied.

One of the basic features of this bill is its express mention of the need to establish a system of assistance and support for victims of this type of violence, and its consequent provision for a regulation allowing judges to request the collaboration of public and private agencies for the protection of minors, women and the family, "for the purpose of providing assistance to the persons affected by the acts reported".

- Draft Penal Code, elaborated by the Advisory Commission of the Ministry of Justice, published in *El Peruano*, the official newspaper, on 31 March 1986 (Peru).

Generally speaking, Peru's current Penal Code, which has been in force since 1924, contains regulations which discriminate against women and which are similar to those found in legislation in this area in other Latin American countries. Thus, offences such as rape, abortion and adultery are characterized as punishable acts: against life, against social mores or against the family.

This draft introduces no changes to existing regulations on abortion, as the latter is still considered a punishable act, with the sole exception of therapeutic abortion under the conditions provided for in article 122.

Conversely, the draft includes a significant change regarding so-called crimes against proper behaviour: its Title I, on offences against sexual freedom and honour, includes the crime of rape. From the regulation contained in article 143, it can be inferred that the crime of rape is considered an infringement of sexual freedom, meaning that the definition of the offence includes such acts perpetrated within marriage "by violence or serious threat". This description does not appear in the current Code in these terms, since the fact of a husband's obliging his wife, against her will, to have sexual relations is not recognized as rape.

Lastly, it is noteworthy that adultery, currently punishable as a crime against the family, is not listed as an offence in the draft Code.

- Reform of the Penal Code in respect of the family and women (Venezuela).

These proposals for reform are designed to adapt the provisions of the Penal Code to the problems facing women and the family at the present time, and concern the following points: abuse of punishment, excessive discipline and cruelty in the family (maltreatment); crimes against the person (abortion); crimes against decency and proper behaviour (rape, seduction); crimes against public decency (incest) and crimes against the family (adultery).

#### iv) *Draft law on the effective equality of women (Costa Rica)*

The draft "Law on Effective Equality", proposed in March 1988 in Costa Rica, deserves to be mentioned in its own right. In its preambular paragraphs, it invokes the "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women" and the National Development Plan 1986-1990, the latter of which asserts the need to "overcome existing economic, legal and political inequality and to pursue action in the fields of culture and education to promote changes in discriminatory patterns of behaviour, on the grounds of the equality of the sexes and of joint responsibility in the home".

Consequently, in accordance with the principle of the equality of men and women, contained in article 33 of the Constitution, a proposal has been made to process the above law, which reformulates those issues considered urgent in order to facilitate the desired change.

Thus, with regard to political rights and the exercise of public functions, the law provides for mechanisms to bring about a mandatory increase in the number of women in the administration, in positions filled by popular suffrage and in the internal organization of political parties; in respect of social and economic rights, it makes provision for the constitution of family property with respect to any real property granted under social development programmes, stipulating that such property shall, in the event of marriage, be in the name of



both spouses, and in the woman's name in other cases; it promotes the right of women with minor children to work through the establishment of child care centres financed by the State, the parents and the enterprises, and operated and administered with the participation of parents and the community; it contemplates the establishment of legal and institutional mechanisms to guarantee women improved legal processing of accusations of sexual crimes, as well as better protection and counselling for victims of domestic aggression; in the educational field, it establishes the imperative need to eliminate, at all levels, stereotyped conceptions of male and female roles; and finally, it envisages the creation of an Office of the Defence Attorney for Women, attached to the Ministry of Justice, whose prime functions would be to protect women's rights, to promote equality of the sexes and to encourage actions aimed at improving the situation of women.

To complement these measures and to put them into practice, article 2 of the draft law on the effective equality of women provides for a series of proposed reforms of the Penal, Penal Procedure, Family, Civil and Labour Codes.

In penal matters, along with the disallowance of pardons for the crimes of rape and maltreatment of women and minors and the establishment of preventive measures in cases involving injury caused by domestic violence, the draft contains regulations designed to protect women's privacy in sex crime cases by stipulating that evidence shall be taken privately and that, in courts of appeal, the tribunal shall include at least one woman.

In the area of family law, the proposed reform of the code governing this branch would give fathers and mothers equal rights and obligations in the exercise of parental authority over children born within wedlock, and would assign responsibility for the administration of the property of children to the spouse designated by mutual agreement or by court order. The reform also seeks to protect women's property rights by amending article 42 of the Family Code to require the consent of both spouses, or of the woman if the partners are not married, to transfer or encumber the building used as a family residence, if it is recorded as such in the public registry office.

Also of considerable significance is the recognition of the legitimate heir of property acquired during the union, which the provision amending article 572 of the Civil Code assigns to the "partner in the de facto union" if the conditions it stipulates are met, i.e., if the union consists of a man and a woman, legally competent to marry, who have maintained a public, monogamous and stable relation for at least one year.

Lastly, in the area of labour law, the reforms concern the following aspects: guaranteeing women job stability during pregnancy and the nursing period, prohibiting their dismissal except in case of the total forced closing of the enterprise; extending leave entitlements to female workers who adopt a minor; and prohibiting the hiring of women and minors under the age of 18 for jobs

which are deemed physically or morally unhealthy, arduous or dangerous under the regulations governing such matters.

### C. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of analysing in this document, through an objective study of existing law, the legal status of women under the domestic legislation of countries of Latin America and the Caribbean has been, on the one hand, to endeavour to stress those aspects which still entail inequalities in the areas identified by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and which the Convention aims to do away with; and, on the other, to indicate how these inequalities are being dealt with through concrete actions.

In relation to this second purpose, attention is drawn once again to the unquestionable importance of creating national mechanisms to formulate policies, plans and programmes in respect of women's problems, aimed at overcoming those factors inherent in women's specific circumstances which hamper the progress made in recent years in the legislative field.

The challenge facing such mechanisms at this stage of reformulating women's role in society involves the proposal of effective measures adapted to women's needs and the implementation of appropriate actions, encompassing the whole of society, to guarantee the full equality of women and their incorporation into development processes in all sectors and at all levels of activity.

Clearly, this process of recognizing equality of rights and opportunities between men and women must translate into legislative measures to refine, or to fill gaps in, the current regulations. In any case, it must be acknowledged that, regardless of whether the domestic law of the countries of the region is responding to social changes or, conversely, has prompted those changes, the results observed are encouraging.

Thus, many of these countries have promulgated new laws or have presented proposals for amending current ones along the lines mentioned previously. These efforts seek to guarantee women equality of political rights and equality of rights in civil, labour and penal law, without prejudice to the successes achieved in what are usually low-priority areas, such as recognition of de facto unions in family law and improved access to justice and more concern for victims of domestic violence.

The foregoing necessarily leads to the conclusion that, if substantial progress is to be made towards eliminating discriminatory factors, it is essential that advances in the legal area be closely linked to actions aimed at overcoming the obstacles identified in the current situation of each individual country.

The commitments entered into by Governments, either as a consequence of international mandates or in the design of their domestic policies, cannot be

reflected in concrete, effective measures unless organized mechanisms are established at all levels to determine, on an ongoing basis, which actions are urgent and necessary and to see that legal provisions are observed.

The challenge of the future, then, will consist of consolidating the progress made to date and accelerating its pace, in order to avoid weakening or reversing the significant advances made in recent years.

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**VI. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS  
AT THE SERVICE OF WOMEN IN  
LATIN AMERICA AND  
THE CARIBBEAN**

## **VI. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS AT THE SERVICE OF WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

### **Introduction**

This study has been prepared as a contribution to the discussions of the Fourth Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, which was held in Guatemala City, in September 1988.

Within the framework of the Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latin American Economic and Social Development<sup>1</sup> and of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>2</sup> and covering the period between the third and fourth Regional Conference,<sup>3</sup> this document seeks to:

1. Identify, select and classify the principal activities undertaken by the different agents in the region, with a view to enhancing the status of women and eliminating all forms of discrimination.
2. Report on the principal measures adopted and the changes that have taken place in the conduct of information, documentation and communications activities concerning women, at the national, regional and global levels. To draw attention to the principal successes and failures of the various agents that have participated in these activities.
3. To select, analyse and classify a sampling of the publications about women in the region, in some of the areas that are considered priority within the framework of the United Nations Decade for Women and of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies in order to make certain projections and provide more information on the changes that have taken place in publications about women and also to identify lacunae.
4. To propose general guidelines for future action, as regards the strengthening of the relevant mechanisms for the compilation, processing, systematization and the exchange and dissemination of information on the subject.

In order to carry out this study, the main institutions working in this area in the region were requested to provide information on programmes concerning women and on activities which have been undertaken in the field of information and communications.

The regional and international information was obtained from ECLAC, the Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE), the Regional Centre for Information on Women (CRIM), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the Latin American Institute for Transnational Studies (ILET), the Joint Integrated Unit of Academic Information Systems, the International Labour Office (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). National centres were requested to provide relevant information and replies were obtained from the following institutions: Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, the Centro de Estudios de la Mujer de Chile, the Programa Nacional de la Mujer de Costa Rica, the Centro de la Mujer "Flora Tristán" of Peru and the Centro de Informaciones y Estudios del Uruguay (CIESU).

The document contains three chapters, the first of which proposes a number of guidelines to orient activities designed to improve the flow, transmission and dissemination of information and communications required by the process of changes in the status of women aimed at achieving a status equal to that enjoyed by men. These activities are conducted within the policy framework adopted by two international forums, namely: the Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latin American Economic and Social Development and the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.

Based on the information obtained, the second chapter contains a panoramic overview of the principal programmes and activities undertaken by the different organizations and by women themselves with a view to progressively eliminating the various forms of discrimination to which women are subjected, and to progressively improving their status. This review covers both those activities which have been undertaken by formal institutions involved in this process and by those which constitute alternative forms of solution to the specific problems that affect women.

It includes an assessment of the situation and of the progress achieved in the field of information and communications at different levels. It also discusses those information systems which treat the problem of women as just another development issue and those others in which the development of women constitutes the principal subject of concern.

The third chapter contains a description of the methodology used and of the results of the research on the publications on this subject.



This study was based principally on the review of secondary sources of information, compiled from various types of agencies in the region and from existing documents in four information systems, namely: the bibliographic information system of ECLAC, which comprises the Latin American Centre for Economic and Social Documentation (CLADES), the Latin American Population Documentation System (DOCPAL) and its library; the Bibliographic Information System of the Women's International Information Communication Service (ISIS); the Information Referral System (INRES) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); and the national institutions of academic information which are devoted to teaching and research.

Since this systematization covers only a sampling of documents, the results obtained represent only a partial, though useful, data base in the sense that they will permit projections to be made which provide guidelines on the principal trends observed in these publications and which contribute to the task of defining the thrust of future work for the various agencies involved in dealing with these problems.

Having regard to this background, it is necessary to strengthen interinstitutional coordination in order to increase the installed capacity for the compilation, processing, systematization and dissemination of information on this topic. Towards this end, a network or system of information and communications could be established in which a key role could be played by the most important institutions in this field which have conceived and directed these programmes, and which would comprise relevant institutions, that would contribute information in their respective areas of specialization.

## **A. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS AS DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN**

### **1. Policy framework**

Information has been a key element in the conduct of activities aimed at integrating women in development and at eliminating all forms of discrimination. Its economic, social and political value has been recognized by the different agents participating in this process –governments through their established institutional mechanisms; national and international non-governmental organizations that support groups at the grass-roots level; academic and research institutions; specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system, financing agencies, etc.–, who have expressed and reaffirmed this view in the different forums that have been organized to discuss the situation of women during the Decade declared by the United Nations and subsequent to it.

A review of the policy framework proposed by some of these mechanisms makes it possible to define the most significant aspects and the measures that have been recommended to enhance information and communications activities in this area. It also provides an analytic framework within which to review the main tasks accomplished in this field, which permits an evaluation of the progress made, as well as the identification of those areas in which deficiencies still remain and in which there is need for increased effort.

The Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latin American Economic and Social Development makes special reference to information and documentation activities on the subject. It points out, in this regard, that the minimal functional structure of the national mechanisms<sup>4</sup> must cover, *inter alia*, the areas of documentation and information, public relations and dissemination. It also calls upon the governments to promote the regional and international exchange of information and experiences through the organization of international meetings and seminars.

With regard to ECLAC, the Regional Plan of Action provides for the holding of United Nations regional conferences on the integration of women into Latin American development, whose functions will be to, *inter alia*, periodically review the activities of ECLAC and other United Nations agencies. At the same time, they should provide a forum for the exchange of information which will facilitate the mutual coordination and support of the programmes for the integration of women into economic and social development at various levels and permit the countries in the region to share the corresponding experience.

The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women stress that, in view of the vital role played by communications in changing the image of women and their access to information, a high priority should be attached to the participation of women at all levels of policy formulation and decision-making in the field of communications, as well as in the design, implementation and monitoring of programmes.

Women should be fully incorporated into the process of making decisions on the selection and development of new forms of communication and should have the same right to decide on the content of all public information activities. Cultural media, such as rituals, theater, dialogue, oral literature and music should be incorporated into all development efforts aimed at improving communications. Support should be provided to those organizations dedicated to promoting the role of women as agents and beneficiaries of development, in their efforts to establish efficient communications and information networks.

As regards research and policy analysis, the Nairobi Strategies highlight the need to promote regional cooperation in carrying out these activities which facilitate the incorporation of new issues that are of concern to women. The absence of reliable data makes it difficult to assess the relative improvements in the status of women in the various sectors. It is therefore vital for the United Nations Statistical Commission, the Commission on the Status of Women and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of

Women (INSTRAW) to cooperate, at the institutional level, in the compilation, analysis, utilization and dissemination of statistical data on women.

The United Nations system must expand its data base on the role of women in national, regional and international economic activities in cooperation with governments, specialized agencies and regional commissions. It must also adopt measures to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations Secretariat to provide assistance to governments and other international organizations and agencies that are working towards the integration of women in the formulation of policies and in the tasks of assessing the impact of development policies on women.

The Branch for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations should act as a centre for coordinating the exchange of information, for providing advice on questions related to the advancement of women and for monitoring and reviewing the progress achieved in this area by other agencies. The United Nations should formulate guidelines in this regard based on comparative analyses of experiences worldwide.

The regional commissions should carry out new research on the status of women in their regions for the year 2000 by preparing data bases and obtaining the necessary indicators, making use of both national and local contributions, including prospective studies on women undertaken by grass-roots women's organizations.

Special importance is attached to the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), which plays an important role in the fields of research, training, information and communications. Furthermore, it is recommended that the States and organizations of the United Nations system should be requested to continue their collaboration with the Institute in its efforts to improve the status of women.

Finally, the United Nations system and other intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organizations are urged to encourage women, women's organizations and all the relevant government agencies of the different countries to discuss and study the various aspects of the promotion of peace and other related questions, with a view to increasing knowledge, promoting understanding and developing relations of friendship among countries and peoples. In this regard, exchange visits among women from different countries are being promoted as well as meetings and seminars with the full participation of women.

The policy framework described above stresses the information and communications needs which the process of integrating women requires. It also identifies the agencies that are called upon to work towards this end and the possible responsibilities that each of them is required to assume.

The aim of this study is, *inter alia*, to present a brief overview of the current situation as regards these activities, within the framework of the Regional Plan of Action, two years after the formulation of the Nairobi Strategies.

## **2. Information and communications: concepts and definitions**

### **a) *Information: definition, impact and modalities in relation to the status of women***

In order to effect the necessary changes to the situation of discrimination that affects women, and to implement measures that promote their full integration in the social, economic and cultural processes of their countries, there is need for an information base that provides support for the planning and implementation of such activities.

This information base must encompass in a comprehensive manner the following aspects: information on institutions; statistical or numerical information; and bibliographic or documentary information.

#### **i) *Information on institutions***

– *Characteristics, functions and modalities.* Information on action programmes, institutional and administrative mechanisms and human resources are the instruments being employed to improve the status of women in Latin America and the Caribbean and to fully incorporate them into the process of development.

The large number of institutions, organizations and groups involved in activities related to this subject, as well as their changing nature –new groups emerge, new experiments are conducted, the human resources participating in such experiments, upon the latter's completion, are integrated into other projects, etc.– render the management of this information difficult.

This information is useful for all phases of the process of changing the status of women, and particularly for the functions of planning, coordination and evaluation of the activities of these programmes. It facilitates planning, because it permits the incorporation into that process of data on the results of past experiments and the avoidance of unnecessary errors or duplications as well as the channelling of resources towards those sectors in which they are most needed. It helps to improve the coordination of activities among the different institutions and groups working in this field, and consequently permits a more rational use to be made of resources. It is of vital importance for evaluations, since it provides a clear picture of successes and failures, possibilities of repeating successful experiences as well as of the obstacles that have presented themselves and the adjustments that need to be introduced in order to advance towards the projected goals.

Such information is of particular value for horizontal cooperation activities, which require the participation of countries that share similar needs and face similar obstacles in finding solutions to their problems. Indeed, the dissemination of this information has made it possible to learn from the

invaluable experiences in the region on the subject of women, which both governmental and non-governmental organizations have had.

The international organizations have established specialized systems at the regional and international levels and both national and international institutions have compiled directories, inventories and registers of projects, and of human and institutional resources. This will be taken up again later on.

– *Information-generating sources.* Of the wide range of institutional mechanisms that deal with the problem of women, the following were selected for an analysis of their activities. This selection was based on various criteria, including those related to the changes that have occurred both in the policies and in the functioning of many of these institutions.

The following information-generating systems exist: national mechanisms; non-governmental organizations which were viewed from the twin perspective of centres for studies on the subject of women and of subsistence organizations; academic and research organizations; and international organizations, including financing agencies.

The definition of *national mechanisms* encompasses centralized national stable organizational structures whose purpose is to promote the advancement of women and the elimination of discrimination against them, in any form and by any name. Such a mechanism may be governmental or non-governmental or may consist of an umbrella body comprising various institutions. An essential requirement is that it should be recognized by the government as the national mechanism for the advancement of women.

Special importance has been attached to this topic by the various international fora that have been convoked by the United Nations and the Commission on the Status of Women. In October 1987, the Seminar on National Machinery for Monitoring and Improving the Status of Women<sup>5</sup> was conducted under the auspices of the Branch for the Advancement of Women of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, with headquarters in Vienna.

One of the conclusions reached by this Seminar is that national mechanisms should ensure the full and equal participation of women in all spheres of society, and should act as catalysts or executors of programmes. It also concluded that the principal and general function of such mechanisms is to promote, plan, coordinate, supervise and review the policies and programmes related to the status of women and, where necessary, to implement such programmes.

Other conclusions reaffirm the need for these mechanisms to maintain links, at different levels, with other institutions such as, non-governmental organizations and the mass communications media in order to achieve their objectives.

The development of an appropriate information and documentation system that covers women's affairs, including relations with specialized research institutes, constitutes a special recommendation. The establishment of information systems for data compiled and analysed by sex and the systematic

organization of training programmes were also urged. The experiences of the national mechanisms in some countries of the region are reviewed later on in this document.<sup>6</sup>

In general terms, the concept of *non-governmental organizations* (NGOs) refers to organizations that are separate from the State apparatus, which operate on a voluntary basis and seek to achieve various objectives.

The concept of non-governmental organizations is very broad and includes research centres, political parties, professional and trade union associations, religious institutions and, among others, those organizations that work with certain social sectors, particularly grass-roots sectors, and help in finding solutions to their problems or promote the development of their organic structure in order to increase their participation in the process of development.<sup>7</sup>

The last decade in Latin America and the Caribbean has witnessed the emergence and development of a large variety of forms of organization which, while pursuing different goals, have established close relations with non-governmental organizations. In some cases these new organizations address sociopolitical conditions (such as the lack of freedom) and the economic crisis, while in others they address different issues (ethnic revival, feminism, environment, appropriate technologies, local self-management, etc.).

The concerns of these new forms of social organization are varied and dynamic. For example, economic organizations exist which, in view of their basically working-class composition, either include questions close to the women's movement among their areas of interest or are established to address such questions, while organizations that were set up for this purpose, in practice have been forced to deal with problems related to daily survival.

For this type of association, the action of non-governmental organizations was important, both in their establishment and in the conduct of their activities. NGOs have channelled material resources into them by providing training and consultancy services, promoting cultural activities and discussion sessions and supporting productive projects.

With respect to the women's movement, non-governmental organizations are engaged in a broad programme of activities. These are characterized by their marked dynamism, unlike government-sponsored programmes. The role, function and cooperation of the public and private sectors on questions related to women have been debated in various international forums.

The need to seek some form of relationship between the State and the society, represented by non-governmental organizations, is a task which is currently being undertaken by different forums of the international community.<sup>8</sup>

Of the wide range of non-governmental entities, women's centers reflect, from different perspectives, the contribution made by women's organizations to the achievement of the goals for improving their status.

Women's centers are entities that are designed to respond to the problems and needs of women, using different approaches from those usually adopted, and

in which the fundamental principles of the women's movement are put into practice.

The women's encounters that have so far been held have provided suitable opportunities for the women from different centers to analyse their strategies and programmes and coordinate their projected activities.<sup>9</sup>

In Latin America, these centres are different in terms of ideology, modalities employed, women's political awareness, the scope of their activities as they affect different sectors of women, size, internal structure, available resources, etc. However, it is possible to find in them similar services and programmes: political activity, legal support and assistance, health and information services for family planning and rights related to child-bearing, organization at the level of working-class women, psychological counselling, training programmes in various areas, training of women's leaders, information services, etc.

Among their achievements is the creation of opportunities for women to develop strategies and promote activities for change. At the same time, they have contributed to the dissemination of information about experiences and, in this way, to strengthening the women's movement through networks established for this purpose.<sup>10</sup>

*Academic and research bodies* are study centres that seek to identify the specific characteristics of women through the analysis of the historical context in which they exist and the reality around them.

Studies on women in Latin America and the Caribbean, for political, economic and cultural reasons, have been produced at a comparatively slow rate up to 1980 when a sustained increase in research activities, training programmes and action programmes was noted in the region. These activities have been conducted in both governmental and non-governmental centres and universities. In addition, regional seminars have been held on this subject, which have enabled evaluations of experiences to be made and guidelines to be established for future activities.

At the Regional Seminar on Curriculum Development and the Preparation of Teaching Materials in Studies of Women in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Buenos Aires in 1986, under the auspices of UNESCO, a question that provoked widespread debate was how to define the form of institutional insertion of the problem of women in teaching programmes. Consideration was given to the advantages and disadvantages of including studies on women in the courses for university students studying for their first university degrees and for postgraduate students and to designing multidisciplinary courses or courses in this specific discipline. In this regard, attention was drawn to the obstacles of the scarcity of economic resources, the difficulty of securing trained teaching personnel and specialized bibliographic material, the resistance of the academic institutions and of the scientific milieu to incorporating these topics, the institutional instability existing in some of these centres and the potential students demand for these courses.

Consideration was also given to the question of which methodologies would be most appropriate. The participants recommended favouring a vigorous theoretical and methodological approach in this field and taking advantage of the non-academic experiments conducted with women in order to identify new problems and to take them into account in the analysis.<sup>11</sup>

With respect to *international organizations*, an increasingly larger number of specialized bodies and of other organizations of the United Nations system are undertaking programmes and activities related to the status of women.

With a view to institutionalizing the exchange of information and cooperation among organizations in this field, several United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, and regional bodies heeded the recommendations made during the Decade and established centres and coordinating units for activities related to women.

The organization of seminars and meetings of a political and technical nature which helped to define the conceptual and policy framework for women's programmes, as well as technical cooperation, training and advisory services provided at the international, interregional and regional levels, including cooperation among developing countries, are the principal activities carried out by these organizations –from their different areas of interest– with a view to improving the status of women. Section B of this document contains more detailed information on these programmes.

#### ii) *Statistical and numerical information*

The United Nations Decade for Women has highlighted the need for information on the contribution of women to development. Statistical information makes it possible to quantify the scale and scope of this contribution. It has, however, been recognized that existing statistical systems do not permit an accurate assessment of the productive role of women in society.

The international demand for better statistics and indicators on women to facilitate the task of countries in planning for the full integration of women in social and economic development, arose prior to the Decade. During the Decade efforts were begun in this direction by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) of the United Nations and the United Nations Statistical Office, through the holding of seminars<sup>12</sup> and the preparation of two specialized publications. The first of these, entitled *Compiling Social Indicators on the Situation of Women*, deals mainly with the effective utilization of the statistics currently available in many countries (in censuses, household surveys and registration system) to prepare reliable indicators on the situation of women. It suggests means of obtaining basic indicators on women from such data, by applying various concepts and data-gathering methods in use.<sup>13</sup>

The second of the publications, *Improving Concepts and Methods for Statistics and Indicators on the Situation of Women*, critically reviews the concepts and methods most generally used in gathering data in current national



programmes. It suggests possible strategies for modifying the current international recommendations for these programmes with a view to collecting more appropriate and less distorted statistics on the role of women in development.<sup>14</sup>

– *Principal sources of national data.* The principal sources of national data are: censuses, sample surveys and administrative registers.

i) National population censuses are important sources of information on women, provided that the data for both sexes are separately tabulated.

Since the censuses cover the population as a whole, census statistics may also be reliably compiled for relatively small geographic areas and for specific population sub-groups. See section B for the procedure used by CELADE in this respect.

Population censuses are usually conducted every 10 years so that in the period between censuses the information becomes gradually outdated.

ii) The sample surveys are an alternative, both for obtaining data between censuses and for securing more detailed and updated information on specific topics. However, their geographical coverage is limited.

iii) Ministries and other governmental organizations, private companies, universities and research institutes maintain administrative registers. These are usually important sources of data, provided that separate registers are kept for each sex.

Studies are also carried out which employ anthropological and non-traditional methods for compiling data to supplement the information obtained from the three principal sources.

The principal sources present certain disadvantages for obtaining information on women.

The gathering, processing, compilation and tabulation of data give rise to distortions, particularly as regards the participation of women in the labour force. In this respect, at the international level, efforts are being made to more accurately define certain concepts such as, for example, that of head of household and that of economic activity.

Another aspect with which the international organizations have been greatly concerned is the need to maintain interaction between the producers and users of statistics and indicators on women. The producers should take the initiative of disseminating survey results extensively and rapidly and users should be more aware of the factors that affect the availability of statistics in the relevant national offices, such as the latter's limited resources and the need for users to take the initiative of requesting data.<sup>15</sup>

### iii) *Bibliographic and documentary information*

This comprises the information generated from the different activities undertaken in the field of women: research and studies, activity projects, texts, manuals or guides, theses and papers presented at conferences and meetings, bibliographies, directories, etc.

Its main value lies in the accumulation of knowledge which it represents and, consequently, such information should be analysed and systematized to facilitate access to it.

Its universal nature and its usefulness in time give it other characteristics which are of particular interest. Thus, the different forms which it takes are also related to the interests involved and the ways in which the various users and specialists approach the topic.

These characteristics have resulted in the different institutions, at the national, regional and international levels, maintaining information systems and networks and incorporating into them modern techniques for processing and disseminating information. The adoption of common methodologies and instruments for processing this information is another of the aspects which give rise to concern, and a trend towards improvement has been observed in this area.

Section B outlines the principal systems operating in the region in this field, as well as some national experiences. A more detailed examination of these questions is contained in section C.

b) *Communications: definition, impact and modalities in relation to the status of women*

It is generally agreed that the main value of communications is to encourage reflection, dialogue and analyses of the current situation, as well as to promote the exchange of experiences and the development and organization of certain social groups.

Although there still persist in the society laws or bureaucratic and administrative structures that discriminate against women, which have to be changed, the main problem lies rather in the persistence of prejudices related to their status and of deep-rooted beliefs surrounding the role which has been traditionally assigned to women. In this regard, it has been recognized that one way of changing this situation is through an effort of providing examples and by persuasion, in which information and communications should play a key role.

i) *Modalities of communication*

– *The mass communications media.* These are powerful instruments in the creation and transmission of culture, attitudes, values and social aspirations.<sup>16</sup> However, in Latin America and the Caribbean, they are under the influence of the models that prevail internationally in the communication systems, which decisively impose their life styles, social aspirations and their manner of perceiving the world on other societies. In the case of women, specific trends have been observed towards the promotion of a model in which an attempt is made to include all women, without distinctions of any kind.

Numerous studies have concluded that such systems of communications may constitute a negative influence and a powerful brake on changing the situation of women while promoting values and behaviour patterns that help to

strengthen discriminatory practices and influence women themselves to accept these practices as something natural.<sup>17</sup>

The United Nations has adopted numerous decisions on the mass media and on the status of women. The policy framework described in the preceding section may be cited as a concrete example of this concern. In this respect, research has been conducted, reports prepared and a large number of seminars and meetings held. Nevertheless, this situation still persists and the communications media continue to present a distorted picture of women.<sup>18</sup>

In the face of this situation, and as an incipient method of countering this image, women from different parts of the world have established their own media and communications network to tackle the problem of the distortion of and misinformation about their own reality.

The period since 1980 has witnessed the emergence of several forms of response, three of which deserve special mention on account of their importance: the alternative communications media; the creation of women's news and information networks; and the increase in publishing houses and bookshops that cater to women.

– *The alternative communications media.* Alternative communications centered on women have been developed, by and for women, on account of the latter's growing awareness of the importance of communications as a vehicle for change.

Alternative communications as such are the sum of the expressive and symbolic experiences which provide information on the actors, projects and creations of broad social sectors that are excluded from the prevailing information systems.<sup>19</sup>

This exclusion has been increasingly criticized at the national and international levels in recent years, constituting one of the ways in which the less developed countries have sought to deal with the problem of the concentration of international power. Attention was first drawn to it in 1973 in the position adopted by the non-aligned countries in the face of the imbalance of information, the existing colonial legacy in the sphere of culture, and the concentration of transnational power possessed by the international communications structures as well as by a considerable number of the national media.

The countries of the third world and various institutions of the industrialized countries agreed on the need for a change in the information systems. This search gave rise to the thesis of alternative systems, interpreted as a framework for information and communications established on bases of solidarity and mutual support in order to develop cultural autonomy in the field of global communications.<sup>20</sup>

For the women's movement this is a very special period. The 1980s have witnessed significant progress of this movement in Latin America. The restoration of democracy in some countries had repercussions on the grass-roots movements which also recovered their freedoms. Feminism was recognized as

an important agent of social change. In some countries women organized themselves on a collective basis and began to develop their identity through services that were controlled mainly by women.<sup>21</sup>

This type of communications not only found expression in written forms. Other modalities were also employed which have widened the dissemination of information and the exchange of experiences on the status of women. Among these, audiovisual methods seem to have great potential for communications.

Their ability to recreate reality makes them particularly attractive; they facilitate group work and permit access to broad sectors of society, particularly to those with a low educational level. They are instruments that help to promote participation by encouraging the expression of other points of view and of new proposals, thus enriching, through this exchange, the content presented.<sup>22</sup>

– *Development of news and information networks.* The emergence of these networks gives new impetus to the women's movement and other types of organizations, particularly non-governmental. Their establishment has been a logical consequence of the various needs existing within women's organizations which operate both at the local and national levels, and has been partly due to the need of groups to break out of their isolation and to share ideas, information and various work experiences through organization and action. Another factor was the need for women to meet and to define concerted actions aimed at changing the current situation, at different levels. Through the establishment of networks, the groups that comprised them retain their autonomy and specificity while at the same time uniting their efforts.

At the same time, the establishment of networks reduces the incidence of the duplication of efforts, thus permitting a more efficient use of resources.<sup>23</sup>

Numerous networks have been created around a given theme or set of themes: health, communications media, transnational corporations involved in consumer goods, violence against women, employment, etc. Other networks aim to fulfil a specific objective such as, for example, to promote information and communications. Networks also exist for geographic regions and some of them pursue various of these objectives at the same time.

Women's networks have acted as catalysts in the formation of new networks and operate in conjunction with others that are sponsored by non-governmental organizations which support movements pursuing different aims: pacifists, educational development, consumer protection, etc.

– *Increase in the number of women's publishing houses and bookshops.* In view of the prevailing trend in the publishing industry, which has traditionally been male-dominated, women's publishing houses have sprung up in many industrialized countries and, more recently, in developing countries. This has resulted in a significant increase in women's literature, as studies on this subject have shown.<sup>24</sup>

– *Conferences, meetings and seminars.* Meetings make it possible to establish new contacts and to strengthen existing ones, as well as to exchange experiences and disseminate the results of studies. They also serve to systematize

discussions and debates, which constitute a key element for orienting policies and programmes. They also contribute to the strengthening of the relationships among institutions and persons, and represent a contribution to knowledge on the subject.

*ii) Impact of the new information technologies*

The new information technologies have had a great impact on the development of information and communications.

While the networks of computer communications, video cassettes, electronic mail, line and satellite services, for example, do not replace books, magazines, periodicals and films, they do facilitate access to their contents.<sup>25</sup>

The design of networks has shown that some countries of Latin America and the Caribbean already have a high-quality and relatively low-cost international communications infrastructure but that it will be some time before such advantages are reflected in the design of networks and in the supply of services in each country.<sup>26</sup> None the less, these communications networks will gradually expand and this trend will also be reflected in the information and communications activities related to the status of women.

**B. OVERVIEW OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS  
ACTIVITIES IN RESPECT OF THE TOPIC: INSTITUTIONAL  
MECHANISMS AND PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES CARRIED  
OUT AT THE NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND  
INTERNATIONAL LEVELS**

This section provides a description of the principal activities of a number of institutions involved in programmes for women, and in particular of those involved in activities connected with information and communications relating to the topic at the national, regional and global levels.

A number of significant programmes and actions have been selected in the field of women, defined on the basis of various criteria: by virtue of their significance as pilot experiments, of the fact that they illustrate alternative means of tackling a problem, they represent an ongoing and systematic measure or on account of the achievements made and their expected impact.

**1. Information activities**

Three areas have been identified within information activities: those which constitute institutional information and which concern the measures undertaken by the various bodies involved in women's affairs; aspects connected with statistical information and the agencies working in this field, and aspects bearing

on bibliographic information and the description of the main programmes and actions in this area.

a) *Information on institutions*

i) *At the national level*

As mentioned in the previous section, the following institutions have been selected for the purposes of this analysis from among the broad range of those involved in programmes concerning women: national mechanisms, non-governmental agencies and academic and research bodies.

*National mechanisms.* According to data provided by the Directory of National Machinery for the Advancement of Women,<sup>27</sup> 13 Latin American and Caribbean countries possessed this type of organization in 1988. The structural framework and statute governing these bodies vary from one country to another, depending on political, economic and social circumstances. However, their fundamental characteristic is their ability to exercise authority and to obtain access to the decision-making levels of the government.<sup>28</sup> Other official governmental bodies may be found, although only those listed in the directory have been mentioned by way of example.

In 10 countries in the region these bodies are represented by governmental agencies; one corresponds to a non-governmental organization and two possess a mixed organizational structure. In the case of government agencies, the bodies concerned are various ministries: labour, social welfare, education and culture, justice, etc.

Generally speaking, these are of a pluralist structure with a variety of organizational forms, and are entrusted by governments with responsibility for coordinating and implementing measures designed to ensure the advancement of women. Table 1 shows some data relating to these bodies: country, name of the institution representing it, its nature and position within the administration.

*Non-governmental organizations.* A review of the work carried out by non-governmental organizations leads to the conclusion that in Latin America and the Caribbean it has gained both strength and prominence among the measures aimed to bring about change. Women play a key role in this area either as protagonists or participants in the experiments carried out by these organizations.

The action of the *vaso de leche* (glass of milk) committees in Lima, the tireless work of the communal kitchens in Santiago, the therapeutic potential of herbs and plants –together with the social and symbolic relations which accompany and give meaning to their use– or action aimed at the adoption of appropriate technology by communities, are just some of the responses provided by women or by the community in general to specific situations, and represent one approach to political action. By way of example, three experiences of work in support of these organizations, either with groups of women or another type of organization have been chosen:

Table 1

**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (1988):  
NATIONAL MECHANISMS INVOLVED IN  
PROGRAMMES CONCERNING WOMEN**

| Country             | Name of institution   | Nature   | Depends on   |
|---------------------|---|--|--|
| Argentina           | Dirección General de la Mujer   | Governmental   | Ministry of Foreign and Religious Affairs                          |
| Barbados            | Bureau of Women's Affairs   | Governmental   | Ministry of Employment, Labour Relations and Community Development |
| Belize              | Department of Women's Affairs   | Governmental   | Ministry of Labour and Social Services                             |
| Brazil              | Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher (National Council for the Rights of Women) | Governmental   | Ministry of Justice  |
| Chile               | Secretaría Nacional de la Mujer   | Governmental   | Government   |
| Cuba                | Federación de Mujeres Cubanas   | Non-governmental                                     |  |
| Ecuador             | Dirección Nacional  | Governmental   | Ministry of Social Welfare   |
| Jamaica             | Bureau of Women's Affairs   | Governmental   | Ministry of Social Security and Consumer Affairs                   |
| Mexico              | Comisión Nacional Mujer   | Governmental   | National Population Council  |
| Saint Lucia         | Women's Affairs Division  | Governmental   | Ministry of Community Development                                  |
| Trinidad and Tobago | Women's Bureau  | Governmental   | Ministry of Community Development, Welfare and the Status of Women |
| Uruguay             | Instituto de la Mujer   | Interinstitutional (Governmental / Non-governmental) | Ministry of Education and Culture                                  |
| Venezuela           | Dirección General Sectorial de Promoción de la Mujer                                | Governmental   | Ministry of the Family   |
|                     | Dirección de Mujer y Menores  | Governmental   | Ministry of Labour   |
|                     | Coordinadora de Organizaciones No Gubernamentales de Mujeres                        | Non-governmental                                     |  |

**Source:** United Nations, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, *Directory of National Machinery for the Advancement of Women*, Commission on the Status of Women, thirty-second session (ST/CSDMA/BAW/BP.5), Vienna, 1988.

*Experiment based on the constitution of medicine chests made up of medicinal plants*

In its quest to disseminate the culture within which rural women live, the Study and Training Programme for Peasant and Indigenous Women (PEMCI) in Chile, developed a health project based on a programme of research and action. This experiment involved assisting in the development of medicine chests made up of medicinal plants, as a complementary health aid for the group and the community and in gathering information on the methods of use and significance associated with the herbs, involving two groups of rural women: one group made up of *mapuches* from the communities of Picuta and Coigüe, in the ninth region and a group of women from the area of Lo Ermita, Calera de Tango in the Metropolitan Region. In order to make up these medicine chests, the groups gathered, dried and packaged the most frequently used medicinal plants in their localities and at the same time began to exchange them. The information gathered as to the methods of use of these plants reveals an approach to illness and furthermore provides an essential tool for using the medicine chest. This experiment involved the women organizing themselves to share out their tasks and carrying out an ongoing group assessment of the progress of the experiment and of its results.<sup>29</sup>

*Experiment based on the prevention and detection of cancer of the uterus in a district of Lima*

This idea arose from a course on women and health, sponsored by the "Flora Tristán" Centre for Peruvian Women. The group carried out a campaign of prevention and detection of cancer of the uterus in its district and in other neighbouring areas.<sup>30</sup>

*Experiments carried out on communal sayañas\**

The Multi-services Appropriate Technologies Centre (SEMTA) in La Paz, Bolivia, is working to increase the agricultural potential of the province of Pajales, considered to be a transition zone between the Northern Altiplano and the Central, through its Programme of Intensive Cultivation and Livestock Raising. The purpose of the programme is to expand the region's agriculture potential, by tackling two fundamental problems: the lack of water and the considerable vulnerability of the crops to frost.

For this purpose, in addition to producing monetary income and supplementing the local diet by the production of new foods, SEMTA is introducing certain technological progress to the communal *sayañas* which are particularly suitable plots for crops.

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\*Small arable plots.



The system is made up of a well, a windmill to pump water and a storage tank. For the purposes of this project, SEMTA channels, through the revolving funds system, material which is not to be found in the locality and which is an essential input for the project. By means of this project, these areas have succeeded in expanding their agricultural potential.

*Study and research centres.* A large number of experiments are underway in countries in respect of this type of centre or programme. They include the following: the Centre for Women's Studies, in Chile; the Paraguayan Women's Study Group of the Paraguayan Centre for Sociological Studies; the "Flora Tristán" Women's Centre, in Peru; the Centre for Studies into the State and Society (CEDES) in Argentina; the Study Group into the Status of Women (GRECMU) in Uruguay; the Centre for Population Studies (CENEP) and the Centre for Women's Studies in Argentina; the Centre for Women's Studies in Brazil, etc. Some of these centres have established links with academic centres or possess specific chairs in women's studies. Table 2 shows the experience acquired by these programmes and summarizes some of their results.

ii) *At the regional and international level*

– *ECLAC Unit for the Integration of Women into Development.* Action in respect of the integration of women into the development of Latin America and the Caribbean falls within the regular programmes of work of the ECLAC system.

The activities pursue the following lines of work: research and study into the topic; training; technical assistance; organization of meetings and seminars of the Secretariat of ECLAC and coordination activities with other organizations within the United Nations system and other bodies.

More than 70 studies, studies and assessments of specific situations of women in the region have been carried out as part of the research and study activities. Most of these have been published in publications or presentations at ECLAC meetings.

In respect of training and in connection with the project on women and development planning, fellowships were awarded to women planners from countries in the region to attend courses run by the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) and two course-workshops were run at ECLAC headquarters in Santiago, in 1986 and in Quito, Ecuador, for the Andean area.

Furthermore, technical assistance was provided to several countries in the region, in particular to national institutions responsible for the integration of women into development.

At governmental and technical meetings and seminars organized by ECLAC, special attention was devoted to the examination of three major topics: the diversity in the status and living conditions of women and families in the low-income urban sectors, and specifically, their insertion within the labour market; the usefulness of household surveys for obtaining adequate statistical

Table 2

## ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH CENTRES WITH PROGRAMMES CONCERNING WOMEN

| Country   | Institution   | Year set up | Programme  | Impact/results   |
|-----------|---|-------------|--|--|
| ARGENTINA | Centre for Women's Study<br>Seminar "Women and Mental Health"                       | 1979        | <p><i>Objectives</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To investigate current theoretical concepts in the traditional training given in the psychology course in Argentina to provide a grasp of health-mental illness among women</li> <li>- To train non-sexist mental health professionals, capable of taking into account sexually marked values and cultural patterns</li> </ul>   | The assessment of this seminar highlights a clear change in both the theoretical and technical attitudes and outlook of the pupils. As most of them work in hospitals, the training given has been disseminated to other spheres |
| BRAZIL    | Pontificia Universidad Católica de Rio de Janeiro. Centre for Women's Studies (NEM) | 1981        | <p><i>Activities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Offers subjects in which credits may be earned in the academic programme of several departments for the award of a university diploma. Some of the courses offered are: women and society; women and psychology; women and law</li> <li>b) Edits teaching-aid texts used by other study centres in Brazil</li> <li>c) Organizes conferences, seminars, film festivals, photographic exhibition, etc. and edits a widely distributed broadsheet</li> </ul> | The greatest impact of NEM within the university has been in the legitimization of the status of women as the subject for academic study   |

Table 2 (cont. 1)

| Country            | Institution   | Year set up | Programme  | Impact/results   |
|--------------------|---|-------------|--|--|
| MEXICO             | Colegio de México. Research and Study Programme into Women (PIEM)                                     | 1983        | <p>a) Funding programme for research and scholarships. Set up in 1986</p> <p><i>Objectives:</i> to stimulate research into women as agents in the process of social transformation, both in the past and in the present and to stimulate studies from a historical angle to highlight the participation of women in the various spheres of political, economic and social life</p> <p>b) Training workshops. These have covered a whole range of topics and have been attended both by researchers from the Colegio, and from other academic institutions as well as by women from other areas interested in the subjects covered</p> <p>c) Documentation centre</p> | The PIEM is as yet only temporary. In order for it to become permanent it has proposed to raise the theoretical level of its work and to incorporate researchers of both sexes from the Colegio itself and from other institutions, into debate and research   |
| DOMINICAN REPUBLIC | Research Centre for Action in respect of Women (CIPAF)/ Autonomous University of Santo Domingo (UASD) | 1983        | <p>Women's Studies Programme (PEM)</p> <p><i>Activities:</i> a summer course held in conjunction with the Postgraduate Division of UASD and which represents the first National Seminar on Methods and Research Techniques in respect of Rural Women. Since 1986, through a convention between CIPAF and UASD, an extracurricular chair on women has existed with the Faculty of Political Science</p>   | <p>The postgraduate course represented a step forward in the study of rural women as its impact allowed CIPAF to carry out research at the national level into this topic with the participation of pupils</p> <p>This was completed by a cycle of lectures open to the general public and publications in the press ensured national coverage</p> |

Table 2 (cont. 2)

| Country   | Institution   | Year set up | Programme   | Impact/results  |
|-----------|---|-------------|---|---|
| ARGENTINA | National University of Buenos Aires. Faculty of Psychology          | 1985        | <p>Course "Introduction to the Psycho-social problematics of Women". Represents the first teaching experiment by this Faculty in women's studies</p> <p><i>Objectives:</i> To provide historical and conceptual information making it possible to prepare instruments for analysing the classic treatment of femininity as well as other options which gradually emerge within women's studies. The topics were: maternity, sexuality and women's work.</p> | <p>The course had an impact within the Faculty and outside. It provided a basis on which changes began to take place in the attitudes of some teachers who began to show an interest in the topic of women and to acknowledge their academic level</p>  |
| ARGENTINA | FLACSO. Master's in Social Sciences. Specialized in Women's Studies | 1985        | <p><i>Objectives:</i> To provide systematic information to young researchers involved in research projects into women in various research centres in the country and to offer courses to master's students in other subjects within FLACSO</p> <p>The following courses have been offered:<br/>         "Development of the social conscience of women and of their identity as a sex" and<br/>         "Daily life, women and the family"</p>              | <p>As a result of the courses held the existing theoretical output was revised. The pedagogical approach adopted encouraged students to draw on their personal experience; simultaneously, cross-references with other social actors and scientific output made it possible to shift from the individual to the social sphere</p> |

Table 2 (concluded)

| Country   | Institution                                     | Year set up                            | Programme   | Impact/results   |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| BARBADOS,<br>JAMAICA,<br>TRINIDAD<br>AND TOBAGO | University of the West Indies                   | 1985 (preliminary action as from 1977) | Project for Women's studies in the University<br>a) Preparation of material and training for personnel<br>b) Initiation of the teaching of the programmes   | The preliminary measures reached their objectives and the project is now under way. The project makes use of participative techniques in teaching a multidisciplinary approach and a grasp of the mutual relations between subjective and objective experience in the analysis of human behaviour. |
| ARGENTINA                                       | Latin American Social Sciences Council (CLACSO) |  | The working group on the status of women has not drawn up a specific programme, but has established study groups, in accordance with the needs of pupils of both sexes. This group has adopted the strategy of incorporating both women and men and holding brief intensive training sessions for scholars on the state of the discipline in which they propose to carry out research | Progress with knowledge of the topic from an integrated approach   |

Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Centre for Women's Studies and University of Buenos Aires, *Regional Latin American and Caribbean Seminar, "Desarrollo de Currícula y Preparación de Materiales de Enseñanza en Estudios de la Mujer para la Educación Superior en América Latina y el Caribe", Final Report*, Buenos Aires, 4 to 7 June 1986.

data on women and the regional heterogeneity and diversity of circumstances of young women within their countries.

The work of the Unit was permanently coordinated with the Branch for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (CSDHA). In addition, close contact was maintained with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and with the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), as part of its coordination and cooperation with other bodies in the United Nations system.

The overall thrust of its action will be to strive to integrate the topic within the theoretical work of ECLAC, and establish links with other social issues.

– *The United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)*. This Institute, whose headquarters are in the Dominican Republic, is an autonomous body within the United Nations system whose mandate is to promote and support, by means of research, training and the collection and exchange of information, all efforts undertaken by intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental agencies designed to achieve the advancement of women in the economic, social and political spheres throughout the world.

INSTRAW is implementing a variety of programmes within its research and training activities. These include a programme for the improvement of statistics, indicators and data on women, which constitutes a significant contribution to the study of the status of women. In connection with this programme, progress has been made with respect to the improvement of alternative methodological approaches for compiling statistics and indicators in respect of the status of women, particularly through training activities.

This activity has been carried out in close cooperation with the United Nations Statistical Office, the regional economic commissions, national focal points and academic and non-governmental agencies concerned with the topic.

Up to the time this document went to press, four training workshops have been held in countries as well as a subregional workshop for producers and users of statistics on women, based on the methodology and training manual jointly prepared by INSTRAW and the United Nations Statistical Office.

The Institute's activities in the sphere of information, documentation and communication pursue the following objectives: to establish a mechanism in order to systematically organize any information produced in respect of women and to make it available to the various users; to provide support for the development of awareness and education by means of the dissemination of information and to promote the development of cooperation in the sphere of information on women between systems throughout the world. For 1988-1989, special priority will be given to activities connected with this programme.

In the sphere of communication, INSTRAW collaborates directly and at the personal level with a network of institutions, researchers and consultants. Its international status enhances its role as a network, and allows it to establish links

with institutions and individuals within and outside the United Nations system who are capable of directly contributing to the Institute's programme.

In addition, INSTRAW possesses considerable experience of the production of material for disseminating and promoting knowledge of women's issues. In this connection it has undertaken an extensive programme of activities, noteworthy among which is the publication of a half-yearly broadsheet entitled "INSTRAW Noticias" which seeks to inform governments, non-governmental organizations, groups of women and individuals of the most recent events and results of the Institute's activities in the sphere of women and development. Of particular significance among the activities carried out by the Institute in this sphere are the organization of seminars and workshops, the production of posters and other outreach material.<sup>31</sup>

– *The participatory action programme for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)*. The Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women was set up in 1976 by a mandate from the General Assembly. In 1985 it became, in autonomous association with the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Its purpose is to act as a catalyst to facilitate adequate participation by women in the principal activities of development. To this end it provides support for innovative and experimental activities which are for the benefit of women.

The Participatory Action Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean (PAPLAC) run by UNIFEM with assistance from ECLAC, has adopted an innovative and dynamic criterion for its activities, by means of which the region's women take part in defining their needs and priorities as well as the strategies to allow them to bring about changes in their circumstances.

PAPLAC focuses its activities on four priority areas: women in rural areas in agricultural production, fishing and agricultural industries; women in the informal urban sector, in particular domestic service, domestic industries and independent or family trade; violence against women and communications systems.

The major projects carried out by UNIFEM in support of poor women in urban and rural zones include the following: four subprojects in Peru in support of economic management and knowledge of nutrition among the country's poorest communities together with a project co-sponsored with the "Flora Tristán" Centre for Peruvian Women, which provides legal, economic and occupational health and safety advice to industrial workers in the electronics, food, textile and chemical industries in Lima.

In Colombia, more than one thousand peasant women from the Andean and Coastal regions benefit from a project to provide administrative and technical training to small-scale farmers, as well as training to agricultural outreach and health personnel.

In Saint Lucia, a project sponsored by ECLAC is designed to establish the percentage of the national social services budget allocated to women. The

long-term objective is to involve women in all phases of social planning, from the very beginning.

In the Caribbean, in connection with a project sponsored by ECLAC, a study is being made of the economic activities of hagglers and hucksters in order to improve data collection and identify priority areas for programming.

In the Dominican Republic, a survey was carried out in more than two thousand rural households in connection with a project carried out by the Research Centre for Action in Respect of Women (CIPAF), in order to obtain detailed data on the following areas: paid and unpaid activities of women; the link between productive and reproductive activities and women's organizations. The results of the survey were published in two books and several videos have been produced on the circumstances of these women.

In Brazil, a project was implemented to set up an information and documentation centre within the National Council for Women's Rights in order to gather information on the situation of women in the country. Its central objective is to develop public awareness of the status of women and to provide support for the development of policies designed to eliminate all forms of discrimination against them.

Finally, a project sponsored by the International Labour Organization (ILO) helps to change female stereotypes and to enhance the role of women, through short-length television documentaries.<sup>32</sup>

- *UNESCO Programme "The status of women"*. The major programme "The status of women" is of a horizontal nature. It has been realized that women's affairs involve all aspects of society, and it is consequently desirable to examine them in terms of their relations with the whole. The second Medium-Term Plan (1984-1989) adopted a twin strategy to improve the status of women. On the one hand, activities are carried out in connection with the various major programmes in order to improve the status of women while on the other, measures are adopted and efforts made to integrate the female dimension into all of the Organization's Programmes and Activities.

Specific activities designed to improve the status of women fall within the context of the various major programmes, although generally speaking, they focus on the following main topics:

First of all, the promotion of research and information activities in respect of the status of women. These activities include strengthening the research and teaching infrastructures, preparing and disseminating fresh theoretical methods and approaches, the provision of information and documentation services as well as the creation of national, regional and international networks of specialists in matters relating to the status of women. In this connection, regional meetings of researchers and university lecturers have been organized with the support of UNESCO. These have included: the Latin American Seminar on Study Programmes on Women, held in 1981, and sponsored by the Pontificia Universidad Católica of Rio de Janeiro; the homonymous seminar, sponsored by the Colegio de México in 1985 and the Latin American and Regional Seminar



"Curricula Development and Preparation of Teaching Material in Women's Studies for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean", held in Buenos Aires in 1986 and sponsored by the University of Buenos Aires and the Centre for Women's Studies.

These activities also include studies and research into the following topics: foreseeable changes in the status of women to the year 2000, the basic rights of women and the elimination of gender-based discrimination, violence against women; the role of women in the transmission of historical memory and cultural values; the new roles of women and men within the family and in public life, together with the image of women projected by the mass media and its impact.

Another topic of interest has been the improvement of access by young people and women to education and training and the strengthening of the educational role of women in society.

In order to examine these issues, the Regional Technical Meeting on Educational Inequality Among Young People and Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, sponsored by the UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, was held in Panama in 1983, and its conclusions made a valuable contribution to research and future measures in this field.

Other activities along the same lines are designed to reveal stereotyped portrayals of women in teaching manuals and material in order to eliminate them and to incorporate themes representing the contribution of women to development.

A third topic of interest is the enhancement of women's role in development and their participation in political, economic, social and cultural life. The activities include research and projects designed to increase such participation.<sup>33 34</sup>

– *The UNICEF Regional Programme for the Participation of Women in Development.* As a child's development is intimately linked to its mother's state of health, UNICEF altered the orientation of its programmes for women in order to consider them both as mothers and as individuals. Thus, the emphasis on assistance which originally underlay the programmes was replaced by a focus on development. The regional programme for the participation of women in development sprang from this new orientation. "The programme cooperates with government and a number of non-governmental bodies in order to provide support for projects and activities dealing with the specific needs of women at each stage in their life cycle (young girls, adolescents, adults and the elderly). The areas in which support are provided are advocacy, basic services, economic activities, organization and institutionalization."\*

\*See UNICEF, "El Programa Regional, Participación de la Mujer en el Desarrollo" *Un paso con la mujer, un salto en el desarrollo*, Bogotá, Colombia, Editora Guadalupe Limitada, 1987, p. 7, footnote 1, which states: "as there is no word in Spanish which corresponds exactly to the meaning of 'Advocacy' this is to be understood as meaning advocating, insisting on, promoting, defending the cause of women".

The aim of the activities carried out within *Advocacy* is to attempt to develop an awareness among governmental and non-governmental agencies, women, their families and communities regarding the needs of women and the role which they play in society.

*Basic services* seek to provide for the specific needs of poor women in terms of health, nutrition, sanitation and hygiene, education and literacy.

The objectives pursued by the area of *Economic activities* are to provide training, technical and administrative assistance as well as credit to provide employment and income.

The area of *Organization* provides support for the establishment of women's organizations and for their ongoing development.

By means of the area of *Institutionalization*, UNICEF endeavours to ensure that governments adopt and expand methodologies and strategies which have proved successful and devote budgetary funds and resources in support thereof.

At the present time this programme provides support for 57 projects in 20 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Certain successful small projects have made it possible to develop models which, with support from UNICEF and government and non-governmental agencies, have been institutionalized, providing support and services for women at the national level. Furthermore, these experiences have been shared and transferred to other countries.

As illustrations of other projects undertaken by UNICEF, mention may be made, in the area of basic services, of one carried out in Bolivia in connection with the National Settlement Policy. This project provides support for an integral programme of basic services including projects and activities in the spheres of health, nutrition, education and literacy.

In the sphere of Economic Activities, credit is provided for itinerant vendors in the south-western area of Cartagena, Colombia, through a project to generate income. In 1984 the project entered a phase of consolidation in respect of which UNICEF and the National Training Service (CENA) signed an agreement in order to systematize methodology and train human resources to repeat and extend the experiment at the national level. At present the project has been institutionalized and is under way in other cities in Colombia.<sup>35</sup>

– *Programme for the participation and integration of women into agricultural and rural development of FAO.* At the institutional level, women's problems find their place within this institution's Rural Development Programme. Specifically, the issue is given full coverage by the action of an Interdivisional Working Party.

Action designed to bring about the integration of women into rural development aims at achieving recognition for the vital role played by women in economic and social life and for their role in both agricultural and non-agricultural activities. Both of these constitute essential requirements for successful rural development planning and for the implementation of programmes.

The programme for the participation and integration of women into agricultural and rural development for 1986-1987,<sup>36</sup> planned activities at the national and subregional levels, including the following: organization of a survey into the situation of women in agricultural production, marketing and agroindustries in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, including fishing and forestry; the organization of training activities and activities for the exchange of technical cooperation in the field; technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) in the form of national training courses for groups, the exchange of technicians to assist governments in planning programmes and activities in this sector; the organization of studies in specific countries relating to the methodologies adopted for projects to provide income for women and the preparation and dissemination of publications and audiovisual material on the topic.

An illustration of the activities carried out in the region is provided by the preparation of publications and studies on the theme of women, such as the one carried out in connection with the project "the incorporation of peasant women into the process of production and consolidation of groups in the reformed sector" (Project HON/82/007 of UNDP, the National Agrarian Institute (INA) and FAO) involving the systematization of experience and methodologies and an assessment of the project's impact on selected groups of peasants. It is also worthwhile mentioning the case studies connected with income-generating projects to evaluate the applicability of a Project Assessment Manual, drawn up by the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.

In the sphere of horizontal cooperation, support was provided for the exchange of technicians among countries in the region and to allow a number of officials to attend workshops and training courses held in certain countries. These include the workshops and courses held in Chile and Costa Rica.

Another significant sphere in which FAO was actively involved was in meetings organized by the Regional Office or in conjunction with other bodies. Examples are two meetings held recently: the Subregional Round Table on "The Participation and Integration of Women into Agriculture and Rural Development in the Caribbean" held in Saint Lucia in July 1987, and sponsored by the country's Ministry of Agriculture and the Training Workshop on "Assessment of Income-Generating Projects for Peasant Women", held in Santiago, Chile, in April 1988.

In the sphere of training, the Regional Office provided technical and financial assistance for the organization of training courses. These include the training courses held in Belize, Honduras and Santiago, Chile.

– *Information Referral System (INRES)*. This system has been developed by UNDP since 1975 and seeks to contribute towards horizontal cooperation by providing the necessary information for the voluntary sharing or exchange of technical resources, knowledge and capacity between two or more developing countries to achieve their individual or mutual growth.

At the present time, a computerized data bank, began in 1982, is available. It contains multisectoral information relating to the capacity of institutions in the developing countries to provide education and training courses, research and technological development services, consultancy and expert services as well as scientific and technical information. It also contains information relating to these institutions in respect of TCDC projects.<sup>37</sup>

b) *Statistical or numerical data*

i) *At the national level*

In order to improve knowledge of the economic activities carried out by women, who are classified as inactive by censuses, demographic surveys or employment surveys –in accordance with conventional criteria– experimental studies have been carried out in four Latin American countries (Honduras, Costa Rica, Bolivia and Uruguay) in order to improve these data.

These studies on the activity carried out, which have received collaboration from CELADE, have involved the introduction of a module, applicable to women above a certain age, containing specific questions on the activity carried out. As some of these studies are extremely recent, no data are yet available regarding the results of some of them.

Experiments carried out in Honduras in 1983 as well as in Costa Rica, together with the definitive results of the National Retrospective Demographic Survey of Honduras (EDENH-II), which ended in 1984, made use of the data already collected and prepared. Use of the module referred to above made it possible to obtain tabulations revealing considerable differences in the female activity ratios.<sup>38</sup>

Table 3 shows the applications made in the countries mentioned.

ii) *At the regional and international levels*

Various regional and international organizations possess statistical data bases which they have made particular efforts to analyse and improve as far as the status of women is concerned. These include: the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW); the Statistics and Projections Division of ECLAC; and the Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE).

– *International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)*. This institute's activities are described in section B.

– *Statistics and Projections Division of ECLAC*. This division's data base contains information, broken down on the basis of sex, from census samples, population censuses, ongoing statistics and household surveys. This information has facilitated the preparation of studies<sup>39</sup> relating to statistical analysis in respect of women on the labour market (see table 4).

Table 3

**EXPERIMENTAL STUDIES DESIGNED TO GATHER INFORMATION  
ON THE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OF WOMEN**

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Honduras   | Pilot survey for EDENH-II, Municipal Councils of Choluteca and El Corpus; May 1983. Female population over 10.  |
| Costa Rica | Experimental Population Census in San Juan, San Ramón Canton; May 1983. Female population over 12.  |
| Honduras   | National Demographic Survey of Honduras (EDENH-II); July 1984. Female population over 10.   |
| Bolivia    | Experimental Population Census in the Cliza Canton, Department of Cochabamba; December 1985. Female population over 7.<br>Experimental Population Census in the Comanche Canton, Department of La Paz; January 1986. Female population over 7.  |
| Uruguay    | Pilot survey for the National Fertility and Health Survey. Departments of Montevideo and Salto; April 1986. Female population between 15 and 49.<br>National Fertility and Health Survey (ENFS); June-October 1986. Population between 15 and 49.<br>In neither case was a special module introduced, but rather incorporated into the survey itself, while maintaining its specific character. |

**Source:** Guillermo Macció, *La actividad de las inactivas*. Document presented at the Seminar on "Economic Characteristics in the 1990 Population Censuses", Buenos Aires, 28 to 31 October 1986.

Table 4

**HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS INCORPORATED INTO THE  
DATA BANK OF THE STATISTICS AND  
PROJECTIONS DIVISION OF ECLAC<sup>a</sup>**

| Countries  | Geographical coverage |          |       | Year of survey    |          |             |
|------------|-----------------------|----------|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------|
|            | Number of surveys     | National | Urban | Metropolitan area | Earliest | Most recent |
| Argentina  | 7                     |          | 1     | 6                 | 1970     | 1982        |
| Bolivia    | 8                     |          | 5     | 3                 | 1978     | 1985        |
| Brazil     | 4                     | 4        |       |                   | 1977     | 1985        |
| Colombia   | 14                    | 4        | 9     | 1                 | 1971     | 1985        |
| Costa Rica | 7                     | 6        | 1     |                   | 1967     | 1985        |
| Chile      | 6                     | 6        |       |                   | 1971     | 1984        |
| Panama     | 4                     | 2        |       | 2                 | 1970     | 1985        |
| Peru       | 6                     | 1        | 2     | 3                 | 1974     | 1982        |
| Uruguay    | 3                     |          | 2     | 1                 | 1980     | 1985        |
| Venezuela  | 10                    | 9        |       | 1                 | 1971     | 1985        |

**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Las mujeres en el sector informal en América Latina: aspectos metodológicos* (LC/R.562) Santiago, Chile, 1987, p. 73.

<sup>a</sup> Figures up-dated to May 1988.

– *Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE)*. Since 1969, this Centre has possessed a Data Processing Unit which retrieves data from the censuses and surveys carried out in the different countries in the region and processes them for its own use as well as to provide assistance and services to national institutions.

In respect of women, CELADE has initiated activities designed to intensify study of the relations between the status of women and demographic variables and in this connection it has planned to resort to more specific data sources than those so far utilized.

In connection with these activities, and in order to disseminate the quantitative data available in the centre, an issue of its Demographic Bulletin was devoted to the analysis of the social and demographic situation of women in Latin America.

A number of selected tables, taken from the population censuses, together with analysis thereof by a number of the Centre's specialists was used to provide an overall demographic profile of the female population, taking into account the following factors: fertility, mortality, education, international migration and employment. In all of these spheres, the data revealed both the differences in comparison with the male population and the prevailing conditions in the different countries in the region.<sup>40</sup>

A further activity undertaken by this institution, and which has applications in studies relating to women, is the REDATAM system, Recovery of Census Data for Small Areas by Microcomputer. By means of this system, users are able to choose any area they desire, down to the size of a block or any area made up of smaller units, in order to produce tabulations from original or retrieved variables. This system has now been installed in the National Statistical Offices of Saint Lucia, Chile and Costa Rica.<sup>41</sup>

c) *Bibliographic and documentary information*

i) *At the national level*

The institutions, organizations and groups of different kinds working in countries on matters related to women have been concerned with establishing or obtaining access to centres or systems containing specialized information in this field.

The level of organization achieved varies and, in general, is related to the support received from international organizations and financing agencies in the form of resources or technical assistance.

Various experiments are currently underway in different countries of the region; in Uruguay, the Study Group on the Status of Women (GRECMU); in Peru, the Documentation Centre (CENDOC), which serves four institutions; in the Dominican Republic, the Research Centre for Women's Activities (CIPAF); in Costa Rica, where there is a National Information Programme, to cite a few examples. Some of these, such as DOCPAL and INFOPLAN, are focal points of regional information systems and have adopted the working methodologies of

these systems, maintaining a continuous exchange with them. Other centres carry out their activities using methodologies which they themselves developed. The question of methodology has been discussed at various meetings and there has been a general consensus on the need for institutions to reach agreement, as far as possible, on the standardization of procedures, in order to facilitate and render more efficient the transfer of information.

Among the experiments mentioned above, that of Costa Rica differs from the others in that it is a National Information Network for Women and constitutes a subsystem of the National Information Planning Network (NAPLAN), an agency of the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy. It began its work in 1985, with the preparation of a diagnostic study on the current status of women and a proposal for an information system on women in Costa Rica.

The establishment of this Network was promoted by the Programme of Information for Women of Costa Rica and is supported financially by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). This Network is currently composed of 23 information units belonging to ministries, universities, international organizations and non-governmental bodies.

So far, a number of activities have been carried out with the participation of the institutions that comprise the Network such as training courses for the personnel of these units and publication of the Bulletin of New Bibliographic Entries which contains the lists of documents already entered into the computerized data base, and the preparation of a Document Selection Manual.<sup>42</sup>

*ii) At the regional and international level*

Various specialized agencies and other organs of the United Nations system are concerned with the analysis and dissemination of information on the status of women, from different perspectives. There are a number of reference centres or data banks in which information is deposited: UNESCO has a centre for the distribution of documents on women and girls; the ILO maintains a computerized data base which compiles the output of information on this subject generated by the institution and that of other organizations that are concerned with the subject of the employment of women; the units of the bibliographic system of ECLAC (CLADES, DOCPAL and the Library) maintain data bases that cover the subject of women; the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (ICM) maintains a regional bibliographic information system on migration, which contains documentation on migrant and refugee women. There are also specialized information systems in this area, such as those of INSTRAW, the Branch for the Advancement of Women, in Vienna, Isis International, etc., which are devoted to in-depth analyses of information and documentation in order to highlight the differences that exist in this area.

A brief description is given below of the work being done by these systems.

– *Branch for the Advancement of Women of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs.* As a leading protagonist in women's issues at the international level, within the framework of the United Nations system, this body has prepared proposals and is putting into operation a Women's Information System (WIS). The latter is a computerized data base on the information and documentation generated by the agencies of the United Nations system, which facilitates a more active participation by agencies in evaluations and promotes a more rational procedure for compiling information on the subject. At the same time, it provides comprehensive coverage of the information needs of the United Nations system and other organizations at the national and international levels.

In order to examine the procedures and possible forms of organization, in January 1988, the Seminar on Information Systems for the Advancement of Women for the National Machinery Report was organized in Vienna by the Branch for the Advancement of Women and the Commission on the Status of Women.<sup>43</sup>

The conclusions of this Seminar confirm the need for information systems in the countries, preferably as part of the national machinery, and the need to coordinate these matters through the organization of information networks, as far as possible making use of modern information and communication technology.

These national systems would facilitate sectoral coordination and general planning for the advancement of women. As far as possible, they should use methodologies that are compatible with those of international systems and seek forms of attracting funds which would permit the establishment of connections at the subregional, regional and international levels.

In this regard, the national machinery could evaluate the results obtained by the Branch for the Advancement of Women in implementing the Women's Information System (WIS). Moreover, the work being carried out by the WIS must be pursued and the current system of experimentation strengthened under the auspices of the Commission on the Status of Women.

The agencies of the United Nations system, particularly the Branch for the Advancement of Women and other intergovernmental and non-governmental bodies, should provide consultancy, technical assistance and training services to the national machinery, in order to improve their information activities.

– *The Latin American Centre for Economic and Social Documentation (CLADES)* was established in 1971, at the request of the governments of the region, which were members of ECLAC.

Their activities have been geared towards the establishment of interinstitutional information networks specialized in different aspects of development and in the design and promotion of standardized systems of information processing.

The Centre has a broad information base on the regional situation as regards the national information and documentation infrastructures, the result of



diagnostic studies which have been carried out and of the technical assistance missions which it undertakes.

It is responsible for coordinating the Planning Information System for Latin America and the Caribbean (INFOPLAN), which requires the maintenance of a data base with information in this area to supply the various focal points of the NAPLAN networks and containing approximately 11 000 entries.<sup>44</sup>

The following publications are part of the output of CLADES: PLANINDEX, which contains the information on planning entered in the data base; Informativo INFOPLAN, which reports on new features of the system; Informativo Terminológico, which seeks to standardize the terminology used in information processing; Serie INFOPLAN: Temas Especiales del Desarrollo; and national and development bibliographies, using the information of their data base.

At the same time, as part of its training activities, it has produced training kits which facilitate the organization of networks and information centres in a standardized manner.

The services of CLADES include the provision of technical advice in the field of information and systems and in the introduction of computerized systems for handling bibliographic information. It also offers training in project formulation in the area of economic and social development.<sup>45</sup>

In this regard special mention must be made of INFOLAC, the Regional Programme to Strengthen Cooperation among National Information Networks and Systems for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. The overall objective of the programme is to enhance the individual and joint autonomy and capacity of the national institutions of the region. Its main areas of activity are: the management of information projects; the evaluation of modern technologies for information management, compatibilization, systematization and interconnection of non-numerical automated data bases; the promotion of the use of information services, units, systems and networks; and finally, the training of human resources specialized in information. The technical secretariat of INFOLAC is composed of ECLAC/CLADES together with the Department of Scientific Affairs of the OAS and the General Information Programme of UNESCO.

– *The Latin American Population Documentation System (DOCPAL)*<sup>46</sup> was established in 1976 as a permanent regional bibliographic information service which maintains a computerized information data base consisting of approximately 30 000 entries, to which between 1 800 and 2 000 new entries are added each year. It maintains the following regional services: publication of twice yearly review (June and December), which contains summaries of the most recent publications on the subject; specialized bibliographies upon request, which are obtained from interactive searches within the data base, at no cost to the user; a document delivery service that provides, upon the request of interested persons, photocopies and, in the near future, microfiches of the documents contained in the data base: partial exchanges on the basis of

agreements, under which microfilmed documents are sent to participating centres such as the Data Analysis System of the State of São Paulo (SEADE) of Brazil and CONAPO of Mexico, which have benefited from this new modality of information exchange, and bibliographic information from the participating centre is received in the same manner.

CLADES and DOCPAL together with the ECLAC Library, constitute the bibliographic system of ECLAC, which currently has more than 66 000 entries in its data base.

– *Isis International* (Women's International Information and Communication Service) is a non-governmental organization which, since 1984, has maintained an office in Santiago, Chile, that coordinates its services and publications for Latin America and the Caribbean in order to promote the exchange of information and experiences among the women of the continent and between the latter and groups of women from other parts of the world. It currently comprises a network of more than 10 000 contacts in 150 countries.

In performing this function, the Centre uses a computerized data base on the subject of women, at a worldwide level, with special emphasis on Latin America and the Caribbean. The data base currently contains approximately 1 500 entries, grouped into 28 thematic categories such as the identity of women, reproductive health, the economy and labour.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, it coordinates the Health Network of Latin American and Caribbean Women, whose objectives are to identify and promote interaction among the groups, organizations and institutions concerned with women's health and to compile and disseminate the material produced by such bodies through the publication of a bimonthly bulletin by the Network. It also produces and publishes the Women's Review of the Women's International Information and Communication Service, in collaboration with one or more groups of women from the third world. In addition, it publishes *Women in Action*, a supplement to the Women's Review of the Women's International Information and Communication Service and prepares and distributes information guides in which it provides systematized information of use to women and groups interested in this subject. These guides include: *Women in Development* – a guide to resources for organizing and for overcoming stereotypes; a guide to audiovisual resources for women. In addition, it maintains an information and documentation centre which provides support at the domestic level for the work of the institution as well as services to groups and institutions that request them.

– *Latin American Information Centre on Migration (CIMAL)*. This Centre was established by the ICM in Santiago, Chile in 1983, and has a computerized data base that contains approximately 3 500 entries on migration and on qualified human resources, including information on the subject of women. In maintaining this data base, the ICM coordinates its activities with the bibliographic system of ECLAC.

The Centre carries out research, technical assistance and information dissemination activities. Its research is mainly aimed at identifying the most significant activities undertaken in the region in the field of migration. Through technical assistance, it collaborates in the establishment or strengthening of information units concerned with the issue of migration. Information is disseminated through the publication of the ICM Review on migrations in Latin America, in a Spanish-English bilingual edition. To supplement this service, computerized bibliographies are prepared and photocopies are provided on request.

## **2. Communication activities**

### **a) *Analysis at the national level***

At the national level, a study sponsored by UNESCO, with the collaboration of the Branch for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations,<sup>47</sup> reviews the broad situation in this field in the different countries and, more particularly, the way in which governments perceived change in the content, use and policies of the communications media, with regard to women during the course of the Decade.

The conclusions of the study are not sufficiently encouraging. Although the replies of governments indicate that the United Nations Decade for Women has coincided with a period of activity in promoting equality and participation of women in the sector of communications, women's rights in the field of the communications media are still very far from being consolidated. In fact, only a small minority of countries have designed careful strategies to implement policies in this regard, even where such policies already exist.<sup>48</sup>

As regards the image of women projected by the mass communications media, the information provided by this study and by others that have been conducted in this field confirm that, with a few exceptions, this image continues to conform to a traditional stereotype. The situation is hardly any better as regards the roles assigned to women in the news and in leisure programmes, and even the educational communications media leave much to be desired in this regard.

A number of more recent studies show that a change is taking place which, although slight, suggests that the communications media do not necessarily have to conform to a given form of presentation.

This is the case in countries such as Venezuela, Mexico and Ecuador, where the traditional information media include special sections on the situation of women from different perspectives. In this regard, the example may be

mentioned of the newspapers *El Nacional* of Venezuela, *El Día* of Mexico and *Hoy* of Ecuador. Several cultural differences have been noted and it has been observed that the programmes broadcast are more positive in those countries in which there is a firm commitment to improving the status of women at the different levels.

In the case of Cuba, the study indicates that since the triumph of the revolution in 1959, the image of women projected by the Cuban communications media has undergone a radical change. The image currently presented is that of the female worker (student, militant, professional), who is an active participant in all areas of the daily life of the country.<sup>49</sup>

As regards the professional participation of women in the communications media, the studies show that women are under-represented at the higher levels of the communications organizations with no account being taken of their academic qualifications, years of service and the scope of their experience. Women continue to be excluded from key decision-making positions and their earnings continue to be lower than those of their male counterparts.<sup>50</sup>

In so far as the distinction between newspapers for women and the feminist press is concerned, most countries have a press catering to women, which is not necessarily feminist. Women's organizations publish periodicals and bulletins and have access, although not on a regular and priority basis, to the traditional communications media.<sup>51</sup>

The situation as regards experiments in alternative forms of communication is different. The potential to counter the image of women which is put forward by the traditional media by using other types of publications represents a positive contribution to the women's movement. None the less, there are still limitations arising mainly from the insufficient awareness, within the women's organizations themselves, of the importance of communications; or from the compartmentalization and isolation in which the various experiments in alternative communication are conducted.<sup>52</sup>

By way of example, a number of experiments in this field are described below. These take the form of publications whose role in influencing women's groups and promoting discussion of and changes in the situation of broad sectors of the society is recognized within the country.

This is so in the case of *Fem*, an analytic review published in Mexico since 1976; of *Viva* published in Peru by the Peruvian Centre for Women "Flora Tristán", whose objective is to engage in political reflection on the country from a feminist perspective; *Mulherio* in Brazil, published by the Publications group of the same name, which is characterized by an approach to the problem of women that takes into account the problems of men thus permitting the incorporation of the specific view of women on the various areas of interest in the society. *Quehaceres*, a publication in the Dominican Republic, prepared by the Research Centre for Women's Activities (CIPAF).

*La Cacerola*, of the Study Group on the Status of Women in Uruguay (GRECMU), which promotes dialogue between researchers and women in Uruguay.<sup>53</sup> In addition, regional publications such as *Mujer-Fempres* play an important role in the countries since they fulfil needs or stimulate local groups into initiating new experiments.

Other noteworthy forms of alternative communication are those that use audiovisual media. Two of these deserve particular mention; the application of audiovisual material in basic education, which is being carried out by CIDHAL (Communication, Exchange and Human Development in Latin America) in Mexico and whose principal function is to work with women from working class urban sectors, and to pay particular attention to the situation of women in families, in work places and in the community.

In the field of health, CIDHAL also provides a number of services and organizes women's health groups. It utilizes audiovisual material in all of these activities.

Another experiment is that carried out by the Amauta Association of Cuzco, in Peru, which promoted a programme to organize and train the women of three districts of that city: Pueblo Joven Barrio de Dios, Pueblo Joven Primero de Enero, and Asociación Pro-vivienda Manawanonga. After being organized, the women from these districts felt the need to exchange their experiences and to promote a discussion of their own problems, within their communities. They selected the audiovisual method as their medium of communication since they felt that this medium would enable them to communicate with a large number of women, including with those who were unable to read.<sup>54</sup>

b) *Regional studies*

Of those institutions working at the regional level in the field of communications, four of them deserve special mention on account of the work which they perform in different areas related to the problem, as well as for the influence which they have had on the women's movement in Latin America: the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) (its activities are described in section B); the Women's International Information and Communication Service, whose activities are described in section B; the International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC); and the Women's Alternative Communications Unit.

*The International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC)*, with headquarters in New York, has been working since its establishment in 1976 with women and groups of women from the third world. Its programme is geared towards the following areas: technical assistance and training; information adaptation and distribution services; and support for communications networks. Through these activities, IWTC compiles and disseminates information from and about women and groups of women; produces and distributes material such as manuals, books,

folders, audiovisual material, etc., in collaboration with groups or at the latter's request; it facilitates and supports the establishment of new networks, and the strengthening of existing ones.

It publishes the bulletin *La Tribuna*, which contains varied information on different topics: projects, resources, events, and activities in which women participate and which affect their lives and status. The manuals entitled "My project: how to finance it" and "Mobilizing women" have proved to be particularly useful to women.<sup>55</sup>

The *Unit of Alternative Communication for Women* was created in 1981 in the Latin American Institute for Transnational Studies (ILET). The needs of women themselves have defined the scope of the project, whose principal objective is to identify and compile information about the situation of women in Latin America and to disseminate such information to a broad range of users, in the different countries and sectors of the population.

The information handled by the Unit is obtained mainly from magazines and newspapers from the different countries of Latin America and from alternative women's publications obtained from different parts of the world. It also receives information directly from a network of correspondents in 13 countries of the region. In addition, it maintains contact with other action and research centres, which constitutes a direct source of communication with organizations and groups. On the basis of this information, the Unit prepares its monthly bulletin entitled *Mujer*, which is divided into two sections: the first of these reproduces articles and news on women, which are published in each country while the second is devoted to articles especially written by the assigned correspondents, which provide information and gives the women's viewpoint on local affairs.

The bulletin *Mujer* supplies the communications media with alternative information on women; currently, more than 40 press media and more than 20 radio services use or reproduce articles taken from this bulletin. In this regard, since April 1988, a new service, the FEMPRESS press service, aimed at the publishers of the traditional information media, has been providing such publishers articles on the status of women, from the perspective of women.

Each quarter, the Unit prepares dossiers on specific issues, and also publishes the Alternative Communications Series, a series of booklets describing significant experiments in this field.

Another activity that is carried out by the Centre is to emphasize the gender role of women journalists and the importance of the use of the mass communications media for women's associations and groups, through workshops, debates and seminars. These activities are organized by the staff of the Unit and the correspondents of FEMPRESS.

## **C. REVIEW AND SYSTEMATIZATION OF A SELECTION OF DOCUMENTS ON WOMEN IN PRIORITY AREAS OF STUDY: SOME CONSIDERATIONS**

### **1. Objectives**

Based on a selection of documents concerned with women in areas defined as having priority for the study of this subject, which are included in bibliographic information systems in the region, this section seeks to fulfil the following objectives:

- a) To identify the areas of greatest interest as regards the production of publications on subjects related to the status of women in Latin America and the Caribbean, from 1975 onwards highlighting those aspects which have been of particular importance in these areas;
- b) To identify the new areas of study that have resulted from the concern about this topic; and
- c) To systematize research, projects and studies produced in two areas, namely: women and employment and the identity of women.

These objectives were set taking into consideration the areas defined by the policy-setting instruments for the review of the status of women, namely, the United Nations Decade for Women, the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the Regional Programme of Action, as well as the development that has taken place in this field over the period covered by this study.

The study arose out of the concern of organizations at both the national and international levels, as well as of financing agencies, for information, which has led to the establishment and maintenance of bibliographic systems. These systems are either specifically devoted to the subject of women or the latter constitutes one of the fields with which it is concerned.

The methodologies used by these systems and the in-depth analyses which they conduct of the publications included in their collections, facilitated the review of the information that had been collected.

Moreover, the study was facilitated by technological advances in information processing. The computerization of these systems made it possible to retrieve the data on the basis of the elements that were considered important for this review, and to carry out the corresponding cross indexing.

### **2. Methodology**

#### **a) *Information gathering***

The methodology employed in this study was based on the selection of the areas that would be included, using, for this purpose, the recommendations of the policy-setting instruments already referred to. At the same time, new areas of

concern in respect of this subject were identified on the basis of the conclusions of meetings and of a review of the activities of academic and research bodies.

As part of the programme of activities, the major institutions working in this field in the region were asked to submit information on programmes concerning women and activities that had been carried out in the field of information and communications. The information on the programmes carried out by these institutions is contained in section B.

At the regional and international level, the following bodies were consulted: the Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE), the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (ICM), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the Organization of American States (OAS), the Latin American Institute for Transnational Studies (ILET), the Women's International Information and Communication Service, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). At the national level, centres in various countries were contacted and replies obtained from the following institutions: the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile and the Centro de Estudios de la Mujer de Chile, el Programa de la Mujer de Costa Rica, the Centro de la Mujer "Flora Tristán" of Peru and the Centro de Formación y Estudios del Uruguay (CIESU).

The universe of this study comprises the existing documents in the data bases of two systems, namely: the Bibliographic System of ECLAC (consisting of CLADES, DOCPAL and the Library), which is specialized in the field of economic and social development, one of whose subjects of interest is that of women and the information system of the Women's International Information and Communication Service, which is based on this subject.

For this purpose, the research areas of interest (women and employment, violence against women, feminine identity, etc.) were transposed to the terminology included in the vocabularies used by these systems (*Multilingual Thesaurus on Population*,<sup>56</sup> *Macrothesaurus for the processing of information on economic and social development*,<sup>57</sup> *The UNESCO Thesaurus on Education: OIE*,<sup>58</sup> and the "List of descriptors on the subject of women",<sup>59</sup>) and the bibliographies were obtained through interactive searches. The analysis of these bibliographies made it possible to identify the type and volume of information contained in these systems.

For the purposes of the research on the thesis produced on this subject, the information was supplemented by other information from a number of academic centres in countries of the region and in the United States and by the review of secondary sources specialized in this type of document.<sup>60</sup>

In order to obtain the information on projects concerning women, a search was requested of the Information Retrieval System of UNDP, whose entries constitute a support for horizontal cooperation.



The volume of information obtained from bibliographies made it necessary to focus the research on two areas: employment and the identity of women. Female employment was selected because it represents an area considered as priority for the study of their status and identity and because it constitutes a subject of more recent interest which promotes awareness of the specific characteristics of women.

The selection comprises 364 documents, of which 270 relate to the employment of women and 94 to their identity. If account is taken of the fact that the two systems taken together contain 4 265 documents on the subject of women, this selection constitutes approximately 8% of the two collections taken together.

b) *Analysis*

The information contained in the bibliographies was analysed to determine: which the topics of the study are, who studies them, to what purpose, when these studies are undertaken, what form they take, where this production is concentrated (countries, regions), etc.

With this aim in mind, the information was grouped into categories both on the basis of content (thematic areas, thrust of the study, groups or sectors studied, etc.), and on the way in which the information is generated (quantitative or qualitative methodologies, nature of the documents, types of documents produced, i.e., theses, papers presented at conferences, etc.).

### 3. Results

a) *Traditional topics of study*

The study of the state of information on a number of topics covered by the United Nations Decade for Women, affords a general picture of the existence of such information and its processing in the information systems selected for this study.

Of these topics, those which were considered as fundamental to the study of the status of women were selected: employment, education, health, organization and social participation, legislation and planning.

The review of the available documentation on these topics in the selected information systems revealed that most of the information generated was concerned with those topics. The employment of women constitutes a field of special interest which has been the focus of a broad range of studies.

The organization of women and their social participation are subjects that have also received special attention in both systems. In the case of the Women's International Information and Communication Service, information tends to focus on the different types of women's organizations (political, community, trade unions, cooperatives, etc.) and on the activities which such organizations are carrying out in different areas.

The living conditions of the different groups, the effects of the economic crisis, the forms of mobilization and social participation, subsistence strategies, solidarity networks, the effects of authoritarian régimes, the struggle for democracy, and the activity of social movements, are the aspects of this subject which receive most attention.

The concern about the area of health is also significant in that it constitutes a priority area for the Women's International Information and Communication Service, as the coordinating institution of the Health Network of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. Aspects such as health as it relates to reproduction, primary health care, preventive medicine, mental health, traditional medicine and health education, are the focus of attention in this system. In the ECLAC system, the subject of health is treated in few of the documents from the selection examined and the system is concerned mainly with aspects of health related to maternal and child welfare and with access to health and family planning services.

In both systems women's education is treated together with topics such as access to education, levels of teaching, discrimination in education, professional training, illiteracy and general education. As regards the latter element, considered as an alternative mechanism of education, the Women's International Information and Communication Service has valuable material in the form of guides and manuals for working with base groups.

On the subject of planning, a large body of information is available, especially in the ECLAC system, within which CLADES has responsibility for the Planning Information System for Latin America and the Caribbean (INFOPLAN). In general, the material highlights the absence of government policies on women and the lack of adequate information in this field.

In this regard, the interinstitutional effort of the ECLAC system –coordinated by its Unit for the Integration of Women in Development, through a project entitled “Women and Planning”– has produced a conceptual framework and undertaken several workshops for planners. At the same time progress has been made towards the systematization of policy-supportive information.

There is little documentation on the subject of legislation. Such information as is available relates mainly to the rights of women, discrimination between the sexes, conventions and resolutions of international organizations, etc. It is useful to note here, however, the efforts being made in this direction by the Inter-American Commission on Women of the OAS and the activities carried out by the Instituto de la Mujer in Spain.

#### b) *New areas of study*

These areas of study emerged with the establishment of the so-called women's programmes and study centres, comprised of researchers from different disciplines, connected in some instances to feminist or women's movements.

These programmes cover a broad range of subjects, old and new, not so much with the aim of developing a “science of women”, but in an effort to

situate the particularities of women within the framework of the social sciences and of the realities of the countries in the region. Among these, mention should be made of those which examine the ideological positions *vis-à-vis* the role of women in society, the social role of maternity, sexuality, the identity of women, life cycles, with special emphasis on the elderly and on adolescents, consumption, relations of power, violence against women, etc.

The international agencies of the United Nations have also influenced this concern by drawing attention to trends and aspects which affect women and which need to be addressed. One particular case, in this regard, is related to violence against women. This is an area of particular concern to many women and women's organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean. Studies on this subject reveal that the incidence of domestic and sexual violence is showing an upward trend against the background of the economic crisis affecting many countries of the region. Despite this, legislation on the subject is still in its infancy and the mechanisms for its implementation are even less available.

A number of women's organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean have contributed to a greater awareness of the situation and are providing legal, psychological and information advisory services.

Most of the information on this subject is to be found in the Women's International Information and Communication Service and covers aspects such as domestic violence, prostitution, sexual violence, torture and sexual harassment on the job.

c) *Systematization of the subject areas "women and labour" and "women's identity"*

i) *Women and labour*

The participation of women in the labour force and discrimination against them in employment appear to be the two main focuses of the publications dealing with the subject of *women and labour* which were reviewed in both of the bibliographic systems. These concerns are reflected in the treatment of such topics as that of the economically active population, in relation to which primarily quantitative data are given, and that of the various forms of labour discrimination, which include wage differentials and women's relatively more restricted access to decision-making levels, even in cases where the women in question have educational backgrounds similar or superior to those of the men concerned.

More specific subjects are also addressed, including paid domestic work, work in the home, the various forms taken by the informal sector, income-earning projects or productive workshops, unemployment, etc. Attention is also devoted to forms of labour by women which are not reflected in the traditional measurements of productive activity (e.g., the work performed by housewives, the informal sector, underemployment, work in the agricultural sector).

In the Isis International system, the publications evidence the presence of an interest in delving more deeply into specific labour-related women's issues: the implications of working days double the normal length, occupational health, ways of coping with economic crisis conditions, and the responses of women's organizations to the crisis.

In most of the studies, the above-mentioned topics are examined within the context of broader economic, social and political processes: development styles, economic systems, specific phenomena such as modernization, class structures, etc.

In the case of the ECLAC system, some studies stress the family as the unit of analysis to be used in examining the interrelationship between individual and societal processes, while others focus on the analysis of census and household survey data.

Both institutional and individual *generators of information* were studied in an effort to identify the sources of the data and to determine the type of information they generate. An attempt was also made to ascertain the extent to which this subject matter appears to be of interest to both sexes.

It was noted that within the ECLAC system the main generators of information concerning the subject area of women and labour are academic or research institutions, followed by international agencies. In the case of Isis International, it was observed that non-governmental organizations figure slightly more prominently than academic institutions, with these two types of bodies supplying almost all the information compiled by the system. This may be accounted for by the nature of the contacts established by Isis, inasmuch as it forms part of a network of non-governmental organizations, and by the emergence during the past few years of alternative analytical and action-oriented forums in various countries of the region.

In regard to individual authors, although it was noted that the subject is of greater interest to women, the participation of men is not insignificant.

In so far as the *groups or sectors studied* are concerned, nearly half of the documents are of a general nature, either setting forth methodologies or analysing situations experienced by women working inside and outside the home.

Rural women, poor urban women and migrant or refugee women are the social sectors which have been studied the most. Analyses of the first of these groups focus chiefly on the difficult living conditions of these women and the lack of recognition of the productive work they perform, which, in the vast majority of cases, constitutes an extension of their domestic work. The studies on poor urban women stress the emergence of alternative types of organizations for coping with poverty and daily problems of subsistence. Women figure as key actors in this connection. The attention devoted to migrant women centres on the processes by which they adapt to different living conditions and on the additional obstacles they face when they attempt to take part in productive activities. In some societies, ethnic problems are another factor.

Although most of the documents in both information systems are of a theoretical/analytical slant, documents whose main purpose is the presentation of demands are not entirely unrepresented, especially in the Isis International system.

As regards the *type of document*, monographs and books predominate, along with, to a lesser degree, articles from periodicals. It should be noted that a considerable number of papers presented at meetings and conferences are also included. This type of documentation, which can only be obtained through regional information systems, provides material that can make a valuable contribution to the advancement of knowledge and to action and policy proposals (see annex 1).

Theses constitute an important part of the output of regional academic institutions, although this was not reflected in the sample of documents which was reviewed. This may be partly due to the fact that in order to gain access to these documents within the region it is necessary to go to the sources that produce them, which requires both time and resources. No specialized system yet exists in Latin America and the Caribbean which is concerned with systematizing and disseminating this type of document.

As regards the *temporal distribution* of the information, a concentration of material towards the end of the Decade was observed, probably as a result of the appraisals of the action taken within its framework.

The distribution of documents by *countries* may be attributable, on the one hand, to the existence of a larger number of centres dealing with social and economic research, population and women's issues in some of them (e.g., Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, etc.) and, on the other hand, to the importance assigned to the systematization and dissemination of such information, which, in many cases, is reflected in the creation of national systems.

A large number of documents of a *regional* character are also present, indicating the availability of joint analyses of differing sets of conditions.

## ii) *Women's identity*

The term *women's identity* has come into use in the past few years in connection with the interest shown by women in exploring the characteristics of their gender more fully.

Accordingly, in the Isis International system material is to be found which deals with such dimensions as the public world/private world, daily life, power relations, ideologies and value systems, socialization and sex roles, sexuality and the abuse of women, motherhood and reproductive health.

Within the ECLAC system, the institution's policy as regards women's issues has been to incorporate them into its regular programmes. Hence, this subject is dealt with in connection with the various areas of development, and this is also reflected in the documentation that was analysed.

Material pertaining to the subject of women's identity can thus be found by referring to such aspects as the roles of women, the family and socialization, sexuality and reproductive behaviour, sex discrimination and the emancipation of women.

In respect of the *generators of information* in this area, the chief sources are, as was to be expected, academic and research institutions and, secondarily, governmental organizations. This also appears to be a subject of special interest to women.

As regards the groups or sectors studied, as in the case of the subject of women and labour, it was noted that there is a special interest in the subject when it is dealt with at a general level from a theoretical/analytical approach. This would appear to be a consequence of the fact that this subject has only recently become an object of study. Efforts are being made, however, to delimit the exploration of this topic through the analyses of a number of specific groups.

Thus, for example, one subject that has been analysed is the implications for urban women of productive workshops which combine income-earning activities with the use of participatory methodologies that provide them with opportunities for reflection and an exchange of thoughts about their daily lives. These workshops also help to promote social organization and, in a sense, to integrate the women's public and private worlds. In regard to the subject of young people, the existing studies focus on such aspects as young people's world view as compared to that of their parents; the mother-daughter relationship, which is explored in an attempt to define the identities of the women in question; the ways in which younger generations see the relationships of couples and their relationships with their children, etc.

The concern with ethnic groups is reflected in an interest in studying traditional social practices and the role they play in shaping the identity of women.

The main *types of documents* to be found are monographs or books, conference papers and magazine articles. A marked interest was observed among younger generations of professionals in such subjects as ethnic groups and their cultural traits, the production of literature relating to women, and other topics. This interest is reflected in their choice of subjects for their dissertations.

In relation to the *geographical distribution* of the studies, the researchers noted a phenomenon similar to that seen in the case of the subject of women and labour as regards the existence of study centres and documentation systems. Conferences have also generated a significant volume of material on this topic of a regional nature (turn to annex 1 again).

In respect of the *temporal distribution* of the documents, a marked increase in the number of studies dealing with the identity of women since the early 1980s is to be observed. This may be due both to the emergence of a greater interest in the subject and to the establishment of democracies in some countries of the region, such as Brazil, where the women's movement has come to be involved in some spheres of government.

## NOTES

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>52</sup> Viviana Erazo, op. cit.

<sup>53</sup> Isis International, "Mujeres y medios de comunicación. Asia y el Pacífico", *Ediciones Isis Internacional de las Mujeres*, No. 2, Santiago, Chile, December 1984.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., International Women's Tribune Centre and the "Flora Tristán" Women's Centre of Peru, op. cit.

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## **ANNEX**

## **Annex**

### **CONFERENCES WHOSE DOCUMENTATION FIGURES IN THE ECLAC BIBLIOGRAPHIC SYSTEM AND IN ISIS INTERNATIONAL / CONFERENCIAS SOBRE LAS CUALES EXISTE DOCUMENTACION INGRESADA AL SISTEMA BIBLIOGRAFICO DE LA CEPAL E ISIS INTERNACIONAL**

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National Workshop of Women in Development Planning. Kingston, 9 December 1985.

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Taller sobre Feminismo y Educación Popular en América Latina. Montevideo, 1-6 de diciembre de 1986.

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Seminario "La Mujer en el Proceso de Redemocratización". Santiago de Chile, 12-13 de diciembre de 1986.

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Interregional Workshop on Career Development of Managerial Women. Bangkok, 23-27 January 1987.

Safe Motherhood International Conference. Nairobi, 10-13 February 1987.

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Training Seminar for Research on Violence Against Women. Roseau, 23-27 March 1987.

Taller Seminario "Participación de la Mujer en el Desarrollo". Montevideo, 28-29 de mayo de 1987.

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**Appendix**  
**EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**  
**OF THE FOURTH CONFERENCE**

## **WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: EVALUATION AND PROPOSALS FOR ACTION**

1. In assessing the progress made and the obstacles encountered with regard to the status of women in Latin America and the Caribbean, the fourth Regional Conference has taken into consideration and ratified the mandates and recommendations emanating from the instruments adopted in the past on this subject. These instruments include the World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year (Mexico City, 1975), the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women (Copenhagen, 1980) and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. At the regional level, consideration was given in particular to the Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latin American Economic and Social Development (Havana, 1977) and to the resolutions of the second Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America (Caracas, 12-16 November 1979), the third Regional Conference on the Integration of women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (Mexico City, 8-10 August 1983) and the Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean in Preparation for the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (Havana, 19-23 November 1984). Consideration was also given to the resolutions adopted on this subject by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). In addition, consideration was given to the concepts contained in the declaration emanating from the Regional Conference on Poverty held in Cartagena, Colombia, from 29 August to 1 September 1988.

### **EVALUATION**

2. Latin America and the Caribbean are currently experiencing the most severe economic and social crisis of the past 50 years. This has left most of the countries of the region in a precarious position, and its causes have been both



external and internal. Since the final years of the United Nations Decade for Women, the general economic situation in the region has perceptibly worsened. The financial, economic and social crisis in the developing world has caused the situation of broad sectors of the population to deteriorate steadily, the effect on women being proportionally greater than that on men. In particular, the decline in economic activity is having an adverse impact on the already unequitable distribution of income and on the high rates of unemployment which prevail in the region and has affected women more than men. This is especially true of the countries of the Caribbean on account of the structure and size of their economies.

3. The impact of the crisis in the region is reflected in the drop in the prices of the commodities it exports, in the manifestation of protectionism in a number of developed countries, in the prevalence of high nominal and real interest rates, in the instability of the foreign currency markets and in the scarcity of fresh financial resources. It has become essential to remedy these conditions. Adjustment programmes have become counterproductive in so far as the economies of some countries of the region are concerned, and the policies that flowed from many of the external debt agreements that were negotiated have not yielded the expected positive results.\*

4. The adjustment programmes adopted contained short- and medium-term conditionalities which have hindered development and, in the final analysis, have stood in the way of efforts to eliminate poverty. The external debt cannot be repaid in the conditions which now obtain and in the absence of sustained economic development. While the principles of co-responsibility and of the right to development have now been widely accepted by the international community, they could find expression in more concrete policies. The meeting of the need for a political dialogue between creditors and debtors and for the establishment of a new international economic order can no longer be postponed. There can be no development without peace and no peace without development. There can be no stability without dialogue or rules of the game that are accepted by the society. The development and stability to which the region aspires cannot be achieved without negotiated agreements between the North and Latin America and the Caribbean on the mutual understanding that these objectives are advantageous to both sides.\*\*

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\*The Government of the United States did not accept this paragraph, considering it to be inaccurate and extraneous to the issue of the incorporation of women into the economy.

\*\*Ibid.

5. One of the effects of the crisis and of the debt has been an accelerating decline in the quality of life of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean, which has had a particularly dramatic effect on the living conditions of women. There has in fact been a sharp drop in the funds earmarked for meeting the expenses required for the implementation of social policies, particularly those relating to education, health and housing, and the social well being of the population as a whole has been strongly affected.

6. As suggested in the Regional Plan of Action, the problems which keep women from participating in the economic, political, social and cultural life of a country are closely related to the conditions generally characteristic of underdevelopment. Thus, it is essential to make the alterations needed in the socio-economic structures while at the same time taking action designed specifically to change the situation of the women of Latin America and the Caribbean to enable them to play an active role in the transformation of the existing structures and to be decisive agents in the achievement of full equality between men and women.

7. As regards *participation in the labour force*, although the situation varies in accordance with the specific circumstances in each country, it is a fact that the incorporation of women into the labour force has occurred on a scale which was unimaginable 30 years ago. The number of women in the labour force of Latin America and the Caribbean increased threefold between 1950 and 1980, rising from 10 million to 32 million. Account must also be taken of the fact that, although statistics have improved, a large number of jobs, both paid and unpaid, performed by women are still not quantified nor the principle of equal pay for equal work yet being observed throughout the region.

8. Although they have been brought into the labour market, the deterioration of the employment situation brought on by the crisis severely affects women, who form a majority of the unemployed and of those in the informal sector. This situation is compounded by the fact that in many countries they are paid less than men owing to discrimination.

9. The services sector remains predominant in the economic participation of women and the process of tertiarization continues. Towards 1980, the percentages corresponding to this sector fluctuated between 38% and 55% of the total number of active women. Although their makeup varies, personal services remain important, while the role played by social services is increasing. In most countries, office employees constitute the second most numerous group, and that group is steadily increasing.

10. The work performed by housewives cannot be ignored. In the various countries between 30% and 50% of women over 25 are performing unpaid domestic tasks.

11. It may be concluded that in the field of employment, a pattern has prevailed that is in keeping with the traditional role. However, the autonomy and economic independence of women have increased and have begun to be perceived positively by a part of society and by a growing number of women as having intrinsic value.

12. With respect to *education*, attention should be drawn first of all to the tremendous expansion which has taken place in formal education and to the growing number of women enrolled in it. However, there are major differences between countries, between rural and urban areas and between native, indigenous and black populations. In some countries the illiteracy rates are as high as 90% for elderly women, while in the 15-19 year age group, they do not exceed 15% and are the same for both sexes. In addition, in some countries, particularly those with high illiteracy rates, women still represent a minority of school enrollments and a majority of school drop-outs, which increases the difficulties they encounter in terms of access to employment.

13. Opportunities were now nearly equal at high-income levels, while the most notable instances of discrimination have persisted among the rural poor and different ethnic and racial groups. The disparity between "highly educated" and illiterate women has also persisted. The school texts used for basic education still portray women in their traditional roles. Higher education for women still relates to skills considered as being most appropriate for women in cultural terms, although there is no doubt that women are increasingly beginning to educate themselves for work and not merely to perform a traditional social role.

14. In the area of *health*, the majority of countries still fail to provide adequate free public services for a large percentage of the population, and curative medicine predominates. Health services tend to be concentrated in the urban areas. Since many of them are offered on a private basis, access to them is difficult for the majority of the population. Women's capacity for gestation created specific health requirements. Very frequent pregnancies combined with poor nutrition and lack of rest lead to debilitation, malnutrition and fatigue, resulting in high indices of mortality in childbirth. Adolescent pregnancies, which are on the rise, and induced abortions, which are very numerous and for the most part carried out clandestinely, may constitute a threat to life. All this is often compounded by cultural factors which invite discrimination against girls with regard to medical attention and nutrition. Despite the gravity of the situation, no progress has been made in the area of health and sex education for the population in general and for young people in particular.

15. Where *legislation* is concerned, the region shows substantial progress. In the first place, over half the countries have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, thereby expressing

their commitment to combat discrimination. The majority of them have also adopted domestic measures in the legal field in order to meet the objectives of the Convention. In addition, in recent years most of the governments in the region have set up specialized agencies to help to raise the status of women and have adopted plans and policies designed to ensure equality of opportunity. These national mechanisms are attached to specific ministries as government departments, divisions or offices in the family, social welfare, education, cultural, labour, planning and economic development sectors. However, most of these do not have enough resources to implement their programmes. In respect of legislative reforms, several countries have drawn up projects to amend provisions which discriminate against women, particularly provisions in their civil code (*patria potestad*, co-ownership, divorce, etc.), their labour code (maternity privileges) and their penal code (rape, abuse). However, *de facto* discrimination still exists because of failure to comply with the law or provisions relating to concordats.

16. With regard to the *family*, the sharp deterioration of the current economic situation in Latin America and the Caribbean has resulted in serious problems, which affect women more than men. The crisis has caused traditions to deteriorate, the result often being instability and violence detrimental to women and children. In some countries migration from the countryside to the city has increased as has the number of households headed by women. In addition, the traditional allocation of roles, in which housework and the raising of children are regarded as the responsibility of women and not of men still persists.

17. As regards *political participation*, women, who represent half the population and in many countries more than 50% of the electorate, still participate minimally in the executive and legislative organs of their countries. The structure of their political participation is eminently pyramidal in that the majority of them are to be crowded among the lower party echelons and the higher the level of leadership, the fewer the women in it. While the political awareness of women in the region has increased, significant obstacles to their participation in political life remain.

18. The *social participation* of women in development shows how they serve as active agents in the political, economic, social and cultural process. In recent decades in low-income districts of major cities, new social movements have emerged which are comprised of and led by women. Women form mothers' clubs, take part in social welfare programmes run by churches, take the lead in movements to obtain day-care centres or health facilities, participate in voluntary and vocational associations, establish organizations to design survival strategies to deal with the grave situation that they face or form pressure groups to obtain housing or infrastructure services. They also take part in associations of professionals and producers, federations of women employed in different branches of production and federations of peasant women.

19. Participation by women in social movements and their participation as a social movement in and of itself are phenomena which seem to suggest that a broad cultural transformation linked to new approaches to policy-making is taking place. They have played a basic role in the articulation of grievances and demands that they be settled. In this process, non-governmental agencies have made a decisive contribution to the design of projects for mobilizing and assisting women from the low-income sector in particular.

### **PROPOSALS FOR ACTION**

20. Considering the contents of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and bearing in mind in particular the crisis situation which the Latin American and Caribbean region is now experiencing, the fourth Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean makes the following recommendations:

#### *At national level:*

21. In the economic and social field consideration should be given first to the effects of the crisis and second to the need to rethink what seem to be the most important aspects of the development process. In an analysis of this kind, the socio-economic considerations should be viewed from an ethical and cultural perspective of society. Thus, development should be envisaged as an integral process characterized by the achievement of economic and social objectives and goals which ensure that the population actually participates in the development process and in its benefits. To this end it becomes necessary to effect thoroughgoing structural changes as a prerequisite for a process of integrated development of the kind desired and to ensure the full participation of women on a plane of economic, political and cultural equality. During the next few years at least, efforts must be made to attain certain closely related objectives, including the following: acceleration of economic and social development and of the structural transformation of national economies; more rapid development of the scientific and technological capacity of the countries of the region; the promotion of an equitable distribution of national income and the eradication of pockets of absolute poverty in the shortest possible time, in particular through the application of an integral strategy aimed at the elimination of hunger and malnutrition; the structuring of an appropriate economic policy designed with a view to the establishment of conditions in which inflation can be brought under control or avoided without measures of a recessive nature which cause unemployment and exacerbate social tensions, or for adjustment processes which

may further the deterioration of the socio-economic conditions of low-income sectors, particularly of the women within them, and the promotion of real economic, social and political participation by women as an effective means of securing their incorporation into the process of economic, social and cultural development and into the decision-making process as the equals of men.

22. It is essential to consider the special conditions which exist in the small economies of the region, which are characterized primarily by their limited scope and openness to the exterior and by the vulnerability to which these two factors give rise and therefore find the burden of external restrictions more oppressive than do other economies. These small economies urgently require assistance in order to overcome the obstacles to their sustained development. To this end, it is necessary to resort to mechanisms designed to remove artificial barriers which hamper their trade and impede their access to external financial resources granted on concessionary and non-concessionary terms.

23. In the circumstances described above, the solution lies in a change of perspective. Debt, trade and protectionism must be studied not as phenomena in and of themselves but rather as obstacles to development. Development is an objective shared by both the North and the South. It does not bear only on the welfare of the Latin American and Caribbean countries but on the peace and stability of the whole world.

24. Attention may be drawn to some of the principal measures that need to be taken *in the field of employment*. First, there is need to devise employment-generating programmes which give preference to the employment of female labour. It would be well to explore the possibility of establishing mutual benefit societies, cooperatives or other forms of producer or service associations that promote the employment of women and facilitate the access of female heads of household to the means of production. Secondly, there is a need to formalize informal employment, particularly in occupations performed by live-out domestics, women who work at home, rural workers and traders; in order to meet this need, it will be necessary to adopt regulations governing contracts and the work day and to establish a system of payment in which remuneration would be based on one day's work (as a minimum) instead of on piecework. Thirdly, all benefits of social security must be extended to women working on their own account. Fourthly, special situations in the formal sector, such as those which apply to domestic employees and to women working in industrial free zones must be regulated with a view to the establishment of maximum working hours, minimum wages, the right to days off and vacations, etc., and hence to the elimination of all aspects of servility. Similar measures should be taken to improve the working conditions of women employed in sub-contracting plants. Fifthly, as regards the rural sector, it is essential to recognize the status of women farmers, peasant women working on *minifundios*

and indigenous and creole women with small land holdings. The right of such women to have access to credit, agricultural training and technological advances and to own land must be supported. They must also be included in land reform programmes and development projects. Moreover, action is needed to promote regional development of a kind which guards against the phenomenon of increasing urbanization since the migration of young women to cities makes them highly subject to risk. A solution to this situation may be found in the elaboration of programmes to prevent the evils inherent in it and to promote the welfare of and provide training for young women who migrate.

25. All measures aimed at socializing housework and promoting its performance by both men as well as by women must be strengthened. Since it is recognized that both production and reproduction are the responsibility of both men and women, this will be a major step forward along the path to genuine equality. The first step to be taken in furtherance of this objective must be the socialization of those activities that are associated with the raising of children, through the establishment or expansion of nurseries and day-care centers, networks of laundries, and the provision of low-cost or free meals at the places where women work or in centres near their homes. These and other measures will help initially to relieve and subsequently to eliminate the burden of household tasks, which at the present time are performed almost exclusively by women.

26. In the field of *education*, measures ensuring that girls and women have access to primary, secondary and technical/professional education must be strengthened. In addition, the taking of measures to eliminate educational differences between rural and urban areas should be encouraged. Indigenous women are in a special situation in that their mother tongue is not the official language and this puts them at a disadvantage. Full consideration must be given to the identity of each people on the basis of its cultural, religious and linguistic characteristics, through bilingual and bicultural programmes. In addition, in order to ensure that each people is integrated into the rest of society on equal terms, recourse must be had to radio, monitors, itinerant teachers and other means in order to offset the effects of isolation and distance. Emphasis must also be placed on the role of informal education as a tool of growth and development and as a means of enabling people to find their place in society.

27. At all levels of formal education efforts must be continued to eliminate materials and practices which discriminate against women and help to perpetuate stereotypes of their role in society. For this purpose, it is recommended that schoolbooks be revised and that encouragement be given to the participation of women in non-traditional areas of education and especially in the sciences in order to reduce their dependency at the level of technology.

28. The main lines of action in the field of education, related to training for women in specific subjects to enable them to enter the job market with some qualifications and a chance at better jobs and higher wages or, in the case of rural women, to play their role as agricultural producers armed with the technological and marketing know-how they need in order to earn more profits. It is also essential to conduct campaigns to definitively eradicate illiteracy, particularly among young indigenous women.

29. In the area of *health*, women must be assured of having easy access to free or reasonably priced services at all stages of the life cycle. For this purpose there is need to design comprehensive health-care programmes for women, which include special plans for elderly women and for mother and child care: a) the nutrition of nursing infants and mothers by making milk available to pregnant women and nursing mothers and infants and by supplying school breakfasts or a glass of milk to pre-school-age children living under conditions of extreme poverty, these representing the categories of highest risk; b) protection for women during the pre-delivery and post-delivery periods through the establishment, particularly in rural areas, of clinics offering basic gynecological services; c) education and services for women and men in connection with human fertility and methods of controlling it in order to enable them to decide how many children to have, how long to wait between pregnancies, which family planning methods are most appropriate for them and how to prevent abortion; d) special programmes for the prevention of certain chronic, high-risk diseases, such as AIDS, cancer and stress-related maladies and of drug-use and e) the prevention of mortality in childbirth.

30. In the *legislative field*, all forms of discrimination in civil, trade, criminal, labour and agrarian law must be eliminated. All matters relating to legislation concerning married women and women living in relationships equivalent to marriage, which is characterized by discrimination in respect of nationality, marital rights, *patria potestad*, inheritance, control of property, place of residence, etc., are of particular importance. Special attention should be paid to the rights of women who are heads of household and of unmarried mothers and their children. In the field of labour law, there is need to ensure that women receive the same pay as men for work of equal value and that legislation is adopted in respect of all forms of informal work, including piecework, work in the home and subcontracting work. Special attention must also be paid to the rights of women who are heads of household and of unmarried mothers and their children. In the field of labour law it must be ensured that women receive equal pay for equal work, and that legislation is adopted to cover all forms of informal work –piece-work, work in the home, subcontracting work, etc. Government control mechanisms must be strengthened in line with labour regulations. In addition, steps should be taken to promulgate laws in areas such as family violence, with emphasis on the prevention and punishment of the abusive



treatment of women, sexual harassment of women on the job and sexual violence. Such legislation must also establish mechanisms for providing assistance and support to victims of this type of violence. Laws providing for the discriminatory treatment of women in cases of adultery, parricide, infanticide, abortion and rape must be removed from the penal code. Control mechanisms must be set up and existing mechanisms strengthened in order to ensure compliance with the legislation and to disseminate information about it so that women know what their rights are and to what authorities they may appeal to ensure that their rights are respected.

31. With respect to *political participation*, must be made in respect of the participation of women in decision-making within political parties, social movements, economic associations and the different branches of government. The national mechanisms established for the advancement of women must serve as a meeting ground for women from different political parties and organizations in accordance with the guidelines laid down in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

32. After a decade of formulating and implementing projects pertaining specifically to women, an integrated approach to such activities is recommended for the future. However, it is of vital importance to establish appropriate methods and mechanisms to ensure that the needs of women are adequately addressed and that women participate on an equal basis in all development activities.

33. It is becoming essential to strengthen governmental and non-governmental women's organizations that promote *social participation* by women in all spheres of national life under conditions that are equal to those enjoyed by men.

34. Adequate links, respect and coordination should be sought between governmental and non-governmental bodies. Greater progress can be made in the participation and promotion of women if channels can be created for transmitting information and common strategies between the two types of organization. Training programmes should also be continued to increase the participation of women so that they may become the formulators and beneficiaries of public policies, thus initiating a new form of interaction between institutions and the society.

35. National mechanisms for the promotion of women must be established and existing ones strengthened, and they must be provided with budgets large enough to enable them to fulfil their functions effectively.

36. The major difficulties relating to change arise in the *cultural sphere*, where forms of discrimination against women are still to be found, and these are transmitted to all other areas of social life. In the area of culture, many discriminatory values and stereotypes persist and are responsible for the emergence of new and more subtle forms of discrimination. In order to remedy

this situation, there is need for the public dissemination of values to all members of society without distinction as to sex but with a special effort made to reach women. The objective of these efforts should be to create awareness in women of their own dignity and capacity as persons and of the contribution which they make to society as workers and mothers. Measures in the field of culture require a limited amount of financial resources and may have a tremendous impact.

37. Since the stereotypes responsible for the difference in the value attached to men and that attached to women in society are formed on the basis of differences in the socialization of the two sexes, a special effort must be made to promote an egalitarian form of socialization which does not cast women in a subordinate role. Egalitarian socialization must be pursued both in formal education (by eliminating discriminatory practices and materials) and in informal education (primarily by monitoring the written and pictorial content of material disseminated through the mass communications media. Steps should also be taken to disseminate alternative models of women based on the tasks which they actually perform in the society.

38. Full participation of women under conditions of equality cannot be achieved without stable and lasting peace. Consequently, all obstacles to peace at the national and international levels must be removed. This means that those principles and guidelines recommended in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women for the purpose of strengthening peace must be put into practice. The personal commitment of every woman to the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies is bound to yield fruit, and Latin America and the Caribbean will be able to operate as a single family held together by ties of solidarity. In this regard, it is recommended that regional and subregional women's organizations working for peace, equality and solidarity should be supported and that assistance programmes should be created for all women who are victims of political violence or other forms of armed conflict, which turn them into widows or refugees or subject them to displacement or repatriation.

*At the regional and international levels:*

39. Commitment to the goals of the Nairobi Strategies should be reaffirmed on the understanding that unity exists in the objectives of equality, development and peace.

40. The institutional linkages between the Commission on the Status of Women, the regional commissions, the specialized agencies and all other United Nations bodies should be maintained in order to facilitate efforts to integrate women into the development process at the international level.

41. Economic, scientific and technical cooperation and social and cultural exchanges between countries of the region and other developing countries should

be promoted in such a way that the region's capacity is strengthened and emphasis is placed on the need to ensure the full participation of women in such cooperation and exchange.

42. Research and studies aimed at increasing and improving the statistical data produced on women should be encouraged, particularly with regard to the recognition of the value of work done at home, the real economic contribution of women working in the informal sector, demographic changes, migration and the work done by rural women living in rural areas. In view of the profound changes which have occurred in the region as a result of the crisis, studies should also be carried out on the situation of families in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the question of extent to which they play a socializing role should be examined more closely. It is also recommended that the status of young women in present day society be examined in greater depth and that ECLAC be requested to incorporate into its periodic reports information about the social status of women in Latin America and the Caribbean. In short, studies on the status of women in the region should be systematized in so far as the technical aspects of the progress now being made or the difficulties encountered are concerned, and qualitative and political analysis should continue to be used in the elaboration of future proposals.

43. To follow up on some of the activities already initiated by Governments and non-governmental organizations to address problems related to the use of violence against women, research and technical cooperation methods and techniques which are appropriate for dealing with such a sensitive subject should be devised, and the situation of women should be systematically assessed in terms of the violence inflicted upon them in the private and public spheres, through such acts as rape, battering, incest and abuse. ECLAC should be requested to try to acquire the funds needed in this connection.

44. Action taken to reach negotiated political settlement of the conflicts in Central America should be supported. Support should be given to the peace moves being made by the Contadora Group and the Support Group and to the Esquipulas II agreements, as the most viable alternatives for the solution of the crisis in Central America.

45. The recommendation that the Committee of High-Level Government Experts (CEGAN) should include matters relating to the incorporation of women in economic, social and cultural development in its periodic appraisals should be reiterated.

46. In view of the importance of the women's issue, an enormous effort should be made to strengthen the ECLAC programme for women, and the United Nations should be urged (in so far as available resources permit) to provide the Commission with adequate staff and means to carry out its programmes. ECLAC

should also be asked to continue approaching the General Assembly and other organizations within and outside of the United Nations with a view to obtaining the financial resources it needs in order to meet the requests of governments more fully.

47. ECLAC should be asked to act as soon as possible in filling the post of Subregional Coordinator of the Programme for Women in its Mexico Office so that it can contribute more effectively to the achievement of the objectives of the Regional Plan of Action as agreed at the third Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (Mexico City, 1983).

48. The ECLAC secretariat should be urged to support the participation of non-Spanish-speaking member countries in matters relating to training, research and other projects, which are in accordance with the activities being carried out in those countries.

49. ECLAC should be asked to increase the participation of women specialists in aspects of the work of the Commission, with a view to raising the number of women in decision-making positions as agreed to by the General Assembly.

50. In recognition of the contribution made by United Nations bodies, such as INSTRAW and UNIFEM, created during the United Nations Decade for Women and in view of what they are doing to raise the status of women, governments should be advised to continue and increase their financial support of those bodies in their research, training, information dissemination and technical and financial assistance activities to enable them to extend their coverage to all the countries of the region. Also, in view of the valuable contribution made by United Nations bodies, such as UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR and UNDP, and specialized agencies such as the ILO and FAO, which are designing programmes which promote the advancement of women, governments (particularly those of donor countries) and international and non-governmental organizations should be urged to allocate greater resources to those bodies and agencies.

51. The governments of the countries of the region, donor countries and international technical cooperation agencies should be asked to allocate resources for the implementation of strategies for the advancement of women in both their integration and their specific programmes and projects.

52. In 1988, half-way to the year 2000, if the International Women's Year (1975) is taken as the point of departure, everybody agrees that the advancement of women is a matter not only for women but for the entire society. It has been accepted that equality is a right and that in real and concrete terms it is a necessity for the progress of all. That conviction must be maintained, and one of the goals set for the year 2000 must be to act on it resolutely with a view to building a world of equality, development and peace.



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