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Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

RURAL WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA: A SOCIAL ACTOR IN THE PAST DECADE (1975-1984) */

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/SUMMARY

SUMMARY

The review of the official documents of the United Nations, studies by ECLAC and results of research in the Region has enabled us to assess what progress has been made in the knowledge of rural women in these 10 years, which subjects seem to be sufficiently covered and which not, and what new situations are arising in the world of women as a result of the changes that have occurred in the global setting and in the agricultural sector in particular. As observations of a general nature it may be remarked that: 1) in the official documents on rural women a qualitative change has occurred in the assignment of roles, and instead of being the "preparer, storer and marketer of food", which was her initial characterization (1975), the woman is now recognized as playing a notable part in the production of food; 2) the effects of the modernization of agriculture have been viewed through global indicators: changes in the composition of the labour force, participation in agriculture, urbanization of the population and others, or through processes observed from a masculine angle, such as loss of land, proletarianization and sale of labour, coupled with the rural exodus, without considering that these have an equal effect on women; 3) the subjects treated in the researches have a strong economist bias, in a desire to validate the productive woman, "the economic woman"; 4) there are few results (in terms of publication) of the researches conducted with new methodologies referring to rural women as integral persons: action-type research; participative research; personal histories; workshops for training and reflection, etc.

The results obtained have been divided into five chapters: 1) the background and contexts of the decade for women; 2) rural women in Latin America; 3) the rural family; 4) women's demands and organizations; and 5) some policy recommendations. The treatment of these subjects is unequal, the aim being to emphasize the most important aspects of the material reviewed.

1. An obvious but nonetheless important finding has been the variety and hence the types of rural women that can be distinguished. A first attempt at classification, going from the general to the particular, has been made around the most characteristic areas of economy in the Region: the areas of traditional economy, modernization and settlement. They have received unequal treatment, the greatest attention having been given to the peasant economies, because of

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their varied significance in terms of food production and target population, since they represent the sector of the rural poor, apart from other considerations. A second type of classification has centred on the position occupied by women within the peasant strata and on their predominant activities as craftswomen, traders or "indigenous vendors", etc.

2. With regard to the subject of "Rural Women" the attempts at typification are noted: the women of the peasant units are visualized through their multiple roles: housework, reproductive work, and "own-account activities"; wage-earning women and the amount and allocation of their income.

It can be claimed that at the time of writing several aspects have been sufficiently studied and clarified, such as: a) the domestic role or that of the daily and generational reproduction of the labour force; b) the generic (or sexual) division of labour; c) the use of methodologies of "Time Budgeting" or currently, of "Pattern of Activities"; d) the role of agricultural production and the variations according to social insertion; e) the "other" activities performed by women in pursuance of income; f) the measurement of the EAP, propounded basically as a methodological problem; g) their participation in the survival strategies of the peasant groups; h) the occurrence of the vital cycle as a conditioner of the volume and type of women's activities.

Some aspects have only recently been included in the studies, such as: a) the destination women assign to their earnings, which are very special and important for their family group; b) the social and cultural role they perform in the communities and areas of smallholdings; c) the proletarianization of women and their condition as wage-earners.

This last point, despite its importance, has not yet had the treatment it deserves. There are no measurements of the incorporation of female labour into the modern sector of agriculture, which is partly due to the seasonality of employment. Nor do we know much about the changes this implies in the organization of housework, in consumption, in family relations and roles and in cultural patterns in general.

3. The effects of the modernization of agriculture have been considered with special reference to the rural family: the situations of female heads of households through the emigration or desertion of the head of the family (or

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through the non-formation of families, as in the case of the English-speaking Caribbean); the aspects of sale of labour; the decomposition and changes in the family structure (the increasing prevalence of one-person families, incomplete families, the non-constitution of families, the predominance of nuclear over extended families), the deferment of the age of marriage and the marked fall in fertility rates. Differences can be seen in family types according to peasant strata and regions in the same country: the nuclear family seems to occur when there is greater paucity of agricultural resources and hence less need for labour; the extended family, for its part, is linked with a greater area of farmland and greater demands for labour. Similarly, a change from labour-intensive crops to others of low manpower requirements affects the types of families and the forms of hiring labour. It has also been suggested that the extended family should be regarded as a phase in the family cycle.

4. Respecting women's demands and women's organizations, information is scarce and that which is available approaches the subject from the standpoint of other problems. Nonetheless, some apparently contradictory impressions have emerged. One is that of the silent woman, who does not express herself, who does not make public demands, who is ashamed of her lack of education and feels "stultified by maternity"; while others see her as capable of taking decisions in ther own home, and having opinions which are transmitted by her husband to the community. In other words, she is a "homebody" projected by the man into the outside world.

As regards participation in organizations, here there is a manifest prejudice in favour of "keeping women out of productive affairs". Indeed, at first sight, women do appear to be excluded from organizations. But they are only excluded from organizations which regulate the use of physical productive resources (Irrigation Boards, Association of Canal Owners, Management of Pastures) and from productive organizations in general (small farmers' co-operatives, Agrarian Reform co-operatives, etc.). On the other hand, they are active participants in all those organizations or activities which are concerned with the general welfare, the Pro-Committees, religious festivals and activities, community services, reciprocity of labour and barter of goods.

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It is suggested that their participation has not been recognized owing to a problem of viewpoint, since attention has been focused on what seems more important in the eyes of an external agent: participation in productive, sindical and political orgnizations.

5. Regarding recommendations and policies, the basic aspects have been covered, including some in detail. (A good example is the document of the Round Table on Survival Strategies and the Role of Women, Bogotá, 1983.) What seems to be needed is: first, to find out in each situation (areas of economy, types of women) what it is that characterizes poor rural women in comparison with poor rural men or children; second, to harmonize objectives. In the case of peasant women, this refers to increased food production, household tasks, "other activities", training, participation in meetings. In the case of the female agricultural wage-earner, it refers to her daily labour, plus the house work, plus participation in syndicates or other organizations; third, to review the distinction made by policies between the public and private spheres. Further discussion on this would contribute to the satisfaction of the "human needs" of women.

- The recommendations relate to the need to create mechanisms which will enable women to be "heard", so that the policies will respond to needs that are felt and the beneficiaries in their turn will feel that the policies are their own. It is considered that no action can prosper without the active support of the presumptive beneficiaries.

There is a further proposal for packets of simple technological options, both in the productive and the domestic fields, which must be of low cost in view of the Region's lack of resources.

- There is a presssing need to assess the numerous action projects carried out by non-governmental agencies, in order to assimilate experiences, and either amplify or reject them. The assessment should go beyond an appraisal of the specific activity, in a conceptual context of integral development.

- It is essential to learn the results and support, if recommendable, the new methodologies of social investigation with reference to Participative Research and Popular Education.

/I. BACKGROUND

I. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXTS OF THE DECADE FOR WOMEN

1. The background to concern for women and the areas of emphasis

The world concern for women in general, and more particularly for urban and rural women, is subsequent to the Second World War. The emergence of feminist movements in the developed countries, whose sopkeswomen were urban residents of medium- and high-income strata, created an awareness that something was happening with regard to women.

But it was certain situations that arose in the decades of the 1960s and 1970s and created a framework of world concern that brought women to the fore as a subject worthy of attention and concern.

The succession of certain natural and prolonged catastrophies -the droughts that brought famine to Bangladesh and Sahel; the nutritional difficulties detected by FAO in 1962 and reaffirmed at the meeting of 1974; the controversies on the Green Revolution, which later was to be expanded into the "modernization" of agriculture as a whole, including the failure, apparent or real, of most of the Agrarian Reform experiments; the stagnation of what had been for 23 years an ever-increasing cereal production; and, finally, the oil crisis that took on the appearance of a major upheaval- diminished the optimism that had persisted up to the decade of the 1970s.

This sequence of events brought women and their situation into prominence as a matter of world concern, a distinction that was later to be transferred to rural women. Beginning with the recognition that women constitute half the population and that as such they had been a presumably inadequately used resource, it was thought that their participation might help to solve some of the problems that plague underdeveloped societies, via "incorporation for development". Once before their conscious collaboration had been needed when society as a whole was faced with the problem of "demographic explosion", and they were made the main target of the birth-control programmes directed particularly to the urban and rural low-income groups, and above all to the latter, which had the highest indexes of fertility.

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In this context the first World Conference on the Equality of Women and their Contribution to Development and Peace was held in Mexico in 1975, at which was declared the International Women's Year, later to be proclaimed the Decade for Women.

At the Mexico Conference the main considerations on women related to the discrimination and inequalities they had suffered in the past and their margination from active life both economic and social. Reference was made to "the loss implied in the underutilization of the possibilities of approximately 50% of the world adult population", in view of which it was recommended that measures should be intensified to ensure the full integration of women into the global effort in favour of development, and that support should be given to projects designed "to utilize the maximum potential and develop the self-reliance of women throughout the world".1/

Respecting rural women it was recognized that in many countries they form a large part of the agricultural labour force, and play an important role in the preparation, processing and marketing of food, so that "they constitute a substantial economic resource". It was also acknowledged that their situation was "doubly disadvantaged through the rural worker's lack of equipment, education and technical training".2/ At the same time it would seem to have been agreed that industrial development had not been sufficiently dynamic to absorb this migrant labour force.

In the Regional Plan of Action of 1977 the considerations, recommendations and general resolutions adopted at the Mexico Conference were made precise. As regards rural women the new element was the concern to seek ways of improving their situation, so as to restrain their emigration to the cities with its resultant aggravation of urban problems.3/ In other words, the problems caused by rural-urban migration came to be of great concern.

This was the background to the plan for dealing with the special problems of rural women.

In 1977 a workshop was held in Mexico City on the Impact on Women of the Modernization of Agriculture.

The workshop was based on the resolutions of the Regional Plan of Action (RPA) and of the United Nations Assembly (especially resolution 31/133) which gave priority to the situation of impoverished rural women, and those of FAO

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at its XIX Conference, which recommended that attention should be given to the question of how to achieve "the full participation of women in the adoption of decisions and the planning and execution of the Agrarian Reform and rural development". It was prepared and organized with two aims in view. The first was to see how the modernization of agriculture had affected the situation of poor rural women in the different contexts of family and local circumstances.

The second, after ascertaining and assessing the basic needs and problems of women in rural families with meagre incomes, was to identify the lines of action which would incorporate women into development. As an instrument, an attempt was made to distinguish different productive situations that affected women: a traditional peasant subsistence sector; a transitional sector under the impact of modernization policies; and the Agrarian Reform experiments. Similarly a classification of families was attempted according to whether the head of the family migrated owing to his being hired as a wage-earning worker.

The second World Conference on Women in Copenhagen (1980) revealed great progress in the knowledge of rural problems, particularly those of women.

Among the questions to which a reply was attempted in the document preparatory to the Conference the following seemed particularly important: What is the situation of women in rural society and what new factors and circumstances tend to accentuate their special disadvantages? The answers were on the following lines: a) two-thirds of the women in developing countries live in rural areas; b) rural development has been neglected in terms of low capital investment and few employment opportunities; investment in agriculture has been aimed at export and not at food production; there is little access to health, education and information; there is an obvious adverse effect of agricultural technology and an increase of peasants without land owing to its unequal distribution and the increasing pressure on the land; c) poverty and the slow and unequal development of rural areas are factors which aggravate the particular disadvantages of women; d) poverty and rural underdevelopment have a further negative effect in that they reinforce male domination, since in these circumstances what is involved is the unequal burden of poverty as between women and men. It is concluded that what is needed is a strategy that deals with the special problems of women inserted in the wider problems of rural poverty, which are the underdevelopment and apathy caused by the lack of political power.

/The resolutions

The resolutions of the Copenhagen Conference took up the contents of the preparatory document. The importance of women in food production was recognized, and at the same time emphasis was laid on the need to increase food production at family level.

Hence it was recommended that women should be provided with the resources required for them to increase their productivity and thus ensure the supply of food for the family and community. From this same standpoint it was recommended that women should have access to other resources, such as instruction in appropriate technology, in marketing practices, food processing, access to credit and to financial mechanisms on an equal footing with men, and that they should be encouraged to take part in rural community organizations, co-operatives, etc.

At the Conference held in Mexico in August 1983,4/ organized with a view to the forthcoming World Conference to assess the Decade for Women, persistent reference was made to the violence prevailing in the region and the threat it represented to peace, as well as to the economic crisis which the Latin American countries were experiencing and how this was affecting women, mainly through unemployment. It was proposed that the situation of women should be examined in this context, since its improvement was closely related to the overcoming of the existing recession.

2. The Latin American context. The processes of the last three decades

It will be useful to take a backward look at the situation of the region and the most outstanding events of the last thirty years.

Industrialization, as a response to the policy of import substitution, was one of the most important processes initiated in the 1950s. The fact of the growth of the manufacturing industry, whose share in the GDP ranged from 18 to 24%, is eloquent; likewise the increase and variation of exports: in 1950 95% of these represented primary products; in 1960, only 20%.5/

After this stage there was another of intensification of trade prices which lasted until 1974, in which the Region raised its imports owing to the extraordinary facilities for external indebtedness, which led to the present situation of decreased production and serious external strangulation (ECLAC/FAO, 1983).

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Meanwhile the population has grown from 158 million to 352 million between 1950 and 1980, at a rate of 2.7% per year, one of the highest in the world. Coupled with this growth there are the phenomena known as urbanization and metropolitanization and the change from rural predominance, 57% in 1950, to urban predominance in 1980, with 63% of the population living in urban areas. In 1950 only four countries were predominantly urban (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Venezuela); now this applies to 11 countries.6/

This urbanization is reflected in the localization of labour, with a major transfer from agricultural to non-agricultural activities. The agricultural EAP has decreased from 54% of the total EAP in 1950 to 30%, according to estimates, in 1980. Since 1960 industry has not had the capacity to absorb rural migration, which explains the dimension of urban poverty. The labour force has become concentrated in informal activities of low productivity. Thus there is a manifest narrowing of the gap between the less skilled urban activities and agricultural wages, which might be termed "a slow but sustained transfer of rural poverty to the urban habitat".7/

Another of the changes that has caused important transformations in Latin American agriculture is the progressive physical or spatial integration. This greater integration, resulting from the construction of a highway network, has permitted the linkage of territories previously isolated or with communication difficulties.

To the positive results of the industrial stage must be added the advances in basic services: electricity, gas, water, sanitation services and transport. In 1982 the weight of the total services had risen to close on 57% of the gross domestic product. The changes that have occurred in society as a whole, including metropolitanization and urbanization, industrialization, transnationalization, the development of the financial markets and the expansion of the market economy and the consumer society, present a very different picture in the rural areas and the agrarian structures.

The modernization of agriculture is part of the process of import substitution and its role was to provide cheap food and, as it were, subsidize industrial growth.8/ The effects of this transformation are felt at multiple levels. One of the most conspicuous is the disappearance of the binomium latifundium-minifundium, the former being replaced by more modern enterprises.

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In order to be more productive and efficient, and in other cases in face of the threat implicit in their mode of production in contrast to the Agrarian Reforms, the haciendas made changes, involving the expulsion of the resident labour force and its replacement by temporary manpower living outside. On the other hand, the pressure on the land, the fall in price of peasant products and the lack of permanent employment created an increase in the poverty of the peasantry and a growing incapacity to maintain the family on the basis of the farm produce of the family unit. Solutions were sought in two ways, through emigration or the sale of temporary labour.

Bearing in mind that the aim is to know how these changes affect the rural units and especially the women, various attempts have been made to typify agricultural producer families. The most interesting of these have been those of the Mexico workshop (1977), those of Borsotti (1982) and that of Arriagada (1982).

3. Predominant types of agricultural economies

It would seem more profitable for the present, as a more general way of tackling the problem, to distinguish between areas of economy and then to try to distinguish types of families within these.

Broadly speaking, one can distinguish for the region and the aforesaid purpose three economic areas: the traditional, the modern, and that of colonization. This categorization follows that proposed at the FAO Meeting in Bogotá in November 1983.9/

a) The area of traditional economy

Despite the fact that, as a result of the transformation in the agricultural sector, there have now arisen other nuclei of minifundistas, semi-proletarianized peasants or families of migrant peasants, we refer under this heading to the traditional minifundia and indigenous communities. Here one finds the different peasant strata, the internal processes of differentiation and the peasant economies.

In the first place, the focusing of concern on the peasant units is not new. In 1962 Thorner officially proposed the use of the concept "peasant economies", which was formalized in Latin America at a Congress on Sociology in Costa Rica.

/The adoption

The adoption of this concept, validated in particular by Chayanov, was in response to a new approach to that which in a less comprehensive term was commonly known as family units. Under this concept more meaning is given to their functioning and rationality, but it especially underscores their existing vitality as against the currents of thought that considered the peasantry to be in process of extinction as an inevitable law of rural capitalism.

Without embarking on the polemic of their future fate, it can be assumed that the peasants will continue to exist for a long time still, under other forms, and assuredly in the guise of rural semi-proletarians. At all events, and in terms of rural poverty and the concern for rural women and families, they continue to be a focal point of concern in policies.

There exists, then, a revaluation of what is implied by peasant economies, particularly because of their ample presence in respect of: number of units, food production, commercial production for the domestic and external market; employed labour force and volume of population involved as landholders.

It has been established that more than half the rural population (55%) in the decade of the 1970s was composed of peasant families, that is, between 60 and 65 million persons. Sixty-two per cent of rural households were poor households; 4.9 million families had units of under two hectares. Even so their production supplied two-fifths of the domestic market of the region and one-third of the export market and they received 35% of the total agricultural revenue of the Region.

For purposes of comparison it should be mentioned that the medium-sized farmers represented 28% of the agricultural population and obtained 43% of the agricultural income. The large landowners represented 2% of the rural population and received 22% of the income of the sector. According to PREALC data 35% of the regional labour force was employed by entrepreneurial agriculture and 65% by that of the peasant economies.10/

Nevertheless, this peasant sector is developing in conditions of increasing poverty. Standardized estimates have been obtained for 12 countries around 1980, which distinguish between rural households in conditions of indigence and poverty. In two countries poverty extends to almost the whole of the rural population (Bolivia and Haiti), in another five (Brazil, Colombia, Honduras, Paraguay and Venezuela) it affects around two-thirds of rural households, in four it extends

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to close on half the families in the rural area (Chile, Ecuador, Jamaica and Panama) and in only one (Grenada), to a quarter of the population. The conditions of indigence are more serious in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia and Panama than in the rest of the countries.11/

Poverty has induced the families to devise what some call survival strategies and others, reproduction strategies (FAO: Round Table for the first, Magaly Pineda for the second). This expression indicates the way in which the family organizes and mobilizes its resources to satisfy its basic needs and ensure the reproduction of its conditions of life. In pursuing this objective the peasant unit forms itself around the family as a unit of production and reproduction and in this the woman plays a central role. All the members of the family are involved and the activities of one are related to those of the rest. Its internal functioning has been conceptualized and it has been shown how it acquires a rationality in face of the external changes. It is affirmed that in order to accomplish their aims the peasant units apply certain reproductive patterns (age of the unions, number and spacing of the children, etc.); they develop norms on the handling of the income; they distribute the daily time among the members; they develop norms as to who, how and why in the disposal of the family income, etc.

It is explained how the peasant unit functions on the basis of a generic division (or sexual, as it has been called hitherto) of labour. The examples of a working day and its generic division are numerous and many researchers have used them for their areas of study.

Prominence has been given to the role of the peasant economies in food production and the part played by this production in the proportion of cheap foods which have made possible urban and rural growth. Nonetheless, the deterioration caused by the imbalance in the interchange of resources has provoked an economic crisis and the disintegration of the peasant economies.12/

This same deterioration has compelled the various members of the family unit "to link themselves increasingly with the labour market as semi-proletarians and proletarians, which implies on the one hand a subsidy to the costs of reproduction of the manpower employed by the capitalist sector both agricultural

/and industrial

and industrial and, on the other hand, the weakening of the negotiating power of this sector in face of the demands made on the State by other sectors of the population".

This very fact would explain in part the persistence of the peasant economies because they are functional to the productive logic of the capitalist enterprises. This form of functioning has been extensively analysed in different cases of agrarian structures in the Region. The following statement gives an example of what happens in semi-proletarianization: "In social terms, this phenomenon leads to the establishment of peasant semi-proletarianization as the specific mode adopted by labour exploitation for this stage of capitalist agrarian development.

"The capitalists and large landowners do not want the final de-peasantization of their potential manpower, both for economic and political reasons".13/

This has also enabled Margulis (1979) to affirm that "the peasant is not in a state of transition nor is he marginated from the system".

Emphasis has been laid on the importance of land for the traditional peasant economies; "hence the increasing trends towards the reconcentration of farms into great latifundia and in contrast towards the atomization of the parcelas, imply the destruction of the traditional peasant way of life, with the disintegration of the forms of reciprocity in production and in community social organization".14/

It is likewise necessary to consider the particular stage at which the peasant economies find themselves within the dynamic processes of change, since it is this that determines the way in which they are articulated into the market.

The articulation of the peasant economies into commercial export agriculture has worsened the situation of the food-producing peasant woman and has attracted young female labour of peasant origin into the agro-industrial modern sector and into contracts of working conditions and social insurance which are generally unfavourable. The mechanization of agriculture has reduced the requirements for manpower in general and for male labour in particular, but has also reduced the employment opportunities of women in some situations.

/The pressure

The pressure on the land, the exhaustion of productive resources, and the lack of employment opportunities, local or regional, force the population to migrate either temporarily or permanently. The young women are the first to migrate; the cohorts of 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 years of age predominate among the age groups. Their departure is in line with family strategies in which the first to leave is the eldest daughter, who sends home contributions to the upkeep of the younger children until it becomes necessary for a second or third child to leave. This process has been studied by Arizpe (1980), in a study which has become a classic in Latin America.15/ The higher proportion of female migration is shown by the figures of 100 women to every 85 men observed in the rural-urban emigration in the region during the past three decades.16/ The intensity of the rural exodus, provoked by the lack of paid and permanent labour, the violence in the countryside and the lack or insufficiency of basic services, has detached the young peasant women from their communities without offering them adequate conditions of social and economic integration, especially in the large cities.

The growth of poverty in the traditional peasant economies has prevented the families from continuing to maintain female members, for example, elderly women, widows, and single or separated women. This situation is acknowledged in all the countries where poverty exists. In an ILO document of 1981 this fact is pointed out in similar terms.

"The stereotyped concept of family solidarity is another dangerous myth. Poverty increasingly compels large families to abandon women in difficulties (widowed or separated, and women with children) who have to seek employment outside the home",17/ or be reduced to begging.

b) The areas of modern economy

In Latin America the development of capitalist agriculture is concentrated in the productive branches associated with the export markets or the domestic markets favoured in general by State action.

i) The most outstanding features of modernization

The transformation of the hacienda into a modernized agricultural enterprise brusquely expelled the peasant units from access to the land, breaking the traditional ties, uprooting them and casting them into an imperfect labour

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market. The social cost of this process has been expressed in phenomena of violence, disintegration and migration.

Generally speaking, capitalist agriculture is specialized, highly capitalized, and operates with complete technical packets aimed at raising labour productivity. In this type of agriculture, in addition to private investment, the benefits of public investment are concentrated.18/

Capitalist agriculture generates little permanent employment, this having been replaced by temporary labour. This demand is confined to special periods of the year and generates employment for short periods, the rest of the year being "dead time" as regards the demand for labour.

The modern sector employs a packet of machinery and very high levels of industrial inputs, whereby the technological gaps between these and the peasant economies widen, producing very marked differences between both the yields and the incomes of the two types of economic organization. Further, the technological pattern followed has increased external dependence in respect of agricultural machinery and inputs.

ii) The rural villages, new areas of localization of agricultural manpower

The modernization of agriculture has produced as a side effect, but one which makes its mark in space, the emergence of small human groups of a precarious nature, whether in the beds of rivers, at the side of roads, in small naturally sheltered places or "nooks" in valleys, at the side of gullies, on the slopes of hills, etc. They comprise on the one hand the population contingents expelled from the haciendas or latifundia by the processes of agricultural modernization whereby the "inquilinos", "huasipungueros", "colonos" and others are banished. Also included in these groups are the poor of the countryside, the landless peasants, recently uprooted from areas of the long-standing minifundium.

This type of habitat includes the communities of forest women, who constitute a very particular human group in areas of timber exploitation or forestry plantations. Since the places of employment are very distant the women and children are preferably kept in places near communicating roads or rural and urban centres, since the men remain away for several months. These same landless peasants or recent proletarians are also settling on the periphery of villages

/and towns

and towns where there is a demand for agricultural manpower, generally in agro-industrial establishments. This is where the most unstable segment of the agricultural labour force has established itself, i.e., the "boias frias" of Brazil, as well as the manpower of Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and other nations. At times, the Andean towns have come to serve as bedroom communities for the labour force.

c) The areas of expansion on the agricultural frontier

It has been established that some countries are still continuing with the policies of agricultural frontier expansion, whether in the form of directed settlement or spontaneous. It is a system that has been used as a means of diminishing pressure on land in specific areas, and in others as a form of capitalist expansion in rural areas through concessions to national or transnational enterprises. The most notable examples of current colonization are found in Brazil (Amazonia), Paraguay, the east of Bolivia, mountain-slopes in Peru and the coast in Ecuador, and also in Central America (Guatemala). Colonization as a form of modernization with strong seasonal incentives is the usual type found in Brazil, particularly in the zone of Amazonia. This area has witnessed a growing penetration of large transnational and national conglomerates and access to land is controlled by a minority. Colonization has sharpened the contrasts where "exploitation and progress, semi-slavery and large-scale capital, violence and economic growth do not separate like water and oil, but blend together to make possible the 'cleaning-up' of the frontier".19/

In conditions of this type, when there are no major towns since the area involved is one of penetration, special forms of hiring labour are employed. On the one hand, there are systems of a "settler" type used in other epochs, for example, on the coffee plantations (in the middle of the nineteenth century) in Colombia, where as a means of attaching the workers to the land they are granted a piece of land for their subsistence. In this way the poor smallholder produces his own sustenance, enabling the enterprise to use his labour at a very reduced cost.

In other situations, the workers are hired as seasonal labour. The hiring is done by intermediaries such as "gatoes" or contractors who include the whole family work force in the deals, including women and children. Data from the

/agricultural and

agricultural and livestock census of the year 1970 in Brazil showed that there were 2 900 000 children under 14 working in the agricultural establishments and representing 30% of the population aged between 10 and 14 years.20/

On the other hand, the mass settlement of Amazonia, which almost tripled its population in three decades (from 1940 to 1970), this rising from 1 400 000 to 3 600 000 inhabitants, makes one think of the numerous problems raised at family level, ranging from the cultural change in relation to technologies used, type of environment, type of crop, responsibilities and type of work to the situation both inside and outside the family unit.

In the spontaneous settlements the peasants occupy the land on their own account, which produces a type of settlement with the haphazard features of a nacent "community".

"As regards the peasant subsistence strategies in their relation to domestic tasks, common patterns were found in the peasant economies existing in both types of colonization in respect of the time spent by women on these tasks, which is highly significant (care of the household, preparation of food, etc.)."21/

The different types of colonization create different forms of peasant economies: "the spontaneous settlements tend to generate traditional peasant economies which are highly precarious and of a subsistence type; in the directed settlements, the peasant economy is of a less precarious structure and is more dynamic in development".

As regards productive tasks there are noticeable differences. In the areas of directed colonization, there is a tendency for the women to take a greater part in the productive labour because of the presence of more profitable crops which demand intensive use of family labour and consequently of female labour. This will depend on the technology used. In the spontaneous settlements it is manual, in the directed, machinery is used.

The factors that influence female labour have to do with the physical conditions of the area of settlement. For example, if it is wooded, they have to

/reclaim the

reclaim the land and use the system of "clear, prune and burn", which is strongly labour-intensive, and there the women play a very important part in the productive tasks.

Owing to the fact that the colonies generally consist of young married or consensual couples the women have a greater part to play in the productive work. This arduous situation continues until the moment when the children begin to assume part of the burden.

The insecurity accompanying the process of installation of spontaneous settlements gives rise in some cases to disorganized family units (incomplete families). In this type of situation the productive work of the women is very intense.

A greater supply of background data on the subject of colonization would be needed to indicate the most outstanding problems for the future. It is undoubtedly a very important aspect on which there is insufficient information, and systematization is called for in connection with various aspects: conditions of work and contracts; the problems and types of families that occur, the reproductive patterns, the manpower requirements and the effects on labour of the tendency to turn extensive areas over to livestock; the effects in some zones (in Paraguay, for example) of a rapid subdivision of the plots in projects which attempted to form a sector of medium-sized farmers; the depredation of agricultural resources with the application of systems of cropping which require great experience and care such as the system "clear, prune and burn" which is generally practised as a form of itinerant cultivation to permit the regeneration of the soil; the effects of mass deforestation, especially in Amazonia, which is the "green lung" of the world.

II. RURAL WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA

1. Some generalities on the knowledge acquired

The review of official documents: World and Regional Conferences, Meetings, Workshops and Round Tables (which in their turn are based on the collection and interpretation of secondary data, government documents, researches and studies conducted by the Women's Unit, official and otherwise),22/ along with the review of results of researches carried out in the region, of the debates and conclusions of symposia and seminars on specific aspects of Rural Women, give us a broad view of the road travelled in the study of this subject, and also of the gaps and errors that still persist in this field of knowledge.

It can be affirmed that at the time of writing several aspects have been sufficiently studied and clarified: a) the domestic role, or the role of women in the daily and generational reproduction of the labour force, which can be characterized, evaluated, etc.; b) the generic (or sexual) difference in work; c) the use of methodologies of "Time Allotment" or, currently, of "Pattern of Activities"; d) the agricultural productive role and the variations according to their social insertion; e) the "other" activities carried out by women in the earning of income; f) the measurement of the EAP, basically propounded as a methodological problem; g) the sale of labour; h) the role of women in the survival strategies of the peasant groups; i) within the determinants of the volume and type of women's activities, stress is laid on the moment of the vital cycle; j) the role they play in the socio-cultural aspects of their communities.

The knowledge accumulated prompts certain observations of a general nature: 1) women have been conceptualized as a "group of individuals defined by their class situation and by the social roles assigned to them, based on the biological fact of sex"; 2) the unit of analysis at present in use is the family unit, which implies a conceptual clarity and position-taking after a variety of attempt; 3) it has become necessary at this stage to disaggregate the members of the peasant units according to gender,*/ position and age in the family nucleus, in order to understand their specific contributions, needs and problems; 4) the topics developed up

*/ It is now customary to speak of difference of gender rather than of sex. The first has a social significance, the second, biological.

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to the present in the researches show a strong economic bias. They conform to the need to validate the productive woman, "the economic woman", and represent the stage of demonstrating the participation of women, since it was assumed in several documents that they were marginated; 5) there has been a qualitative change in the interpretation of the roles assigned to rural women in recent years from being the "preparer, storer and seller of food", which was the characterization of 1975, she has become recognized as playing a most important role in food production.

Despite the economic emphasis and having treated women separately, there has not been sufficient stress on the effects produced on the woman and the family of the phenomena extensively studied at the producer level, such as that of male proletarianization and the migratory process. It has not been shown how the proletarianization of the men generally leads to that of the women and that the emigration of the husband or father produces serious effects on the wife and family such as: a female head of household; family disintegration; the increase of nuclear families and the decline of extensive families; the increase of one-person households, the decrease in the fertility indexes, the deferment of the age of union or marriage, the failure to form families.

There is another type of research, distinct from the traditional one analysed, which comprises workshops for promoting awareness; the use of case histories, or of testimonies and participant-research, which conduce to a knowledge of woman as a Person; her conflicts, her perception of herself, of her roles, of her environment, of society; her needs and aspirations, etc. There are only a few results which will be analysed in due course, but it seems an interesting line to pursue and complements the findings of the familiar or "traditional" type of research.

2. Attempts to typify rural women

The researches on rural women are greatly concerned to study them in specific situations, owing to the fact that these are defined in the first place by the head of the family, whether husband, father or brother. These attempts at typification have been observed since 1978, and continue in the studies up to 1983. The first attempts date from the Modernization Workshop, Mexico, 1978, already cited. There attention is drawn to the different situations in families characterized by: subsistence status, temporary migration, wage-earning wife, and female heads of households through the migration of the husband.

/In 1979

In 1979 23/ evidence is presented on how poor rural women are affected by agricultural modernization in different cases (structural, productive, and others). An account is given of women in the following situations: in closed peasant communities and open mestizo communities (both in Central America); in contexts linked with export production; in cases of urban-rural migration; in capitalist agriculture; in agrarian reform; in a capitalist framework and in a socialist framework (Cuba).

In 1982 and 1983 various studies appeared on the same subject revealing more systematic attempts to differentiate peasant strata. In one from the year 1982 the behaviour of different material indicators is analysed, i.e., on education and health, migratory patterns, family activity and composition by age groups and strata or classes. Three classes of women are established: the wives of agricultural wage-earners; those of small agricultural producers and those of medium-sized agricultural producers. Similarly an attempt is made to penetrate the cultural patterns through family relationships: those of the couple and of mother and child (Borsotti, 1982).24/

In a study of the same year, a similar attempt at typification is made at family level (both rural and urban). Not only is the situation of class identified but also that deriving from different locations. Thus a distinction is made between rural families, those of small agricultural producers, those of seasonal wage-earners in the plantation sector, and those of the Bolivian Altiplano and the Caribbean (Borsotti, ECLAC, 1982).

There is also another classification designed for use on the basis of censual data to typify poor women through the crossing of the residence variable (urban or rural) with that of insertion in the labour market according to the economic sector (not incorporated, agricultural, secondary and tertiary). Eight categories are distinguished among rural and urban women. The rural women are classified as peasant housewife, farm worker and two of rural origin but urban employment: the indigenous vendor and the domestic servant (Arriagada, 1977).

To these might be added: the women of the areas of settlement, spontaneous or directed, who embark on family enterprises or install themselves as labour for the large haciendas or commercial units; the forest women, the indigenous vendors, the artisans and others not yet sufficiently determined. In other words, the women are distinguished according to predominant types of economy, systems of crop

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cultivation, activities, and also within the great geographical differences of the countries such as the women of the Altiplano, those of the Sierra and of the Coast in the Andean countries; those of the rain-fed and irrigated sectors in Chile, and those of the Coastal Cordillera and the Central Valley.

What has become clear is that there is not one type of rural woman, and that it is necessary to know the different types in the concrete situations of countries and regions.

The classifications that will be followed are: i) those corresponding to women of peasant economies, considering the internal social stratification; ii) those categorized according to their predominant activities such as artisans, vendors and others, and the agricultural wage-earners as a special case. To these must be added those who are in particular situations in each country.

3. Women in peasant units

a) The role of women in the peasant economies: the reproduction of the labour force

Of the multiple roles performed by women the most obvious is that of household tasks, or the daily and generational reproduction of the labour force.

Progress has been made both in the conceptualization of this and in its description. It has been underlined in the first place that the family or family unit is not only "the generating and transmitting nucleus of the values, norms and attitudes that orient the individual and collective conduct of the members of a society" and the "mediating institution between the individual and the social group",25/ but that as particular units they have the responsibility of the daily and generational reproduction of their members. In other words, this means neither more nor less than that the reproduction of the global population is the responsibility of the family unit and of the women through their daily domestic work.

It has also been pointed out that housework is a social fact and that as such it is a contradiction that on the one hand it is undervalued, and on the other, not socialized in any of its aspects.

It is evident that, according to class, different strategies are brought into play with different aspects in the division of labour by sex and age and in the participation of the members in paid economic activity. In the lowest strata this

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is expressed in seasonal or permanent migration and in the early incorporation of the children into remunerated work.

It has been said that female labour is a dynamic process with numerous tasks carried out during the day, some overlapping others, which explains why sometimes the daily work lasts for as long as 16 to 18 hours. The jobs are done in difficult material conditions, often without piped water or electricity and in complex topographical localities. The variety of work done by women is not appreciated owing to the undervaluing of occupations which do not bring in income. This is corroborated by the woman herself who, when asked if she works, invariably replies in the negative.

Borsotti draws attention (op. cit., 1982) to the fact that "society assigns to domestic units the responsibility of producing, reproducing and maintaining the life of the population and to the women the responsibility of operating these units, while at the same time belittling their social importance".

It has also been stated that the work of the peasant women is indivisible since it is considered that "the total family income is the product of the work of all the family members, and this includes the productive and reproductive sphere. Hence work should be regarded as productive even though it does not directly generate income but enables the unit to reproduce itself".26/

b) The problem of the measurement of female labour

It is now recognized that the participation of women is very important in agricultural production, but it is difficult to evaluate it. FAO (1983) indicates that, according to the most conservative statistics taken from the agricultural censuses, 19% of women participate in the agricultural labour force in Latin America and 54% in the Caribbean. Both figures give the method by which the data were taken. In the Caribbean, the statistics refer to a period of from one year to six months, while in the rest of the region they usually refer to the week before.

Censual and survey information

The problem of the underestimation of female participation was detected as long ago as 1958 by Gertrud Bancroft. The study by C. Wainerman and Recchini de Lattes (1981) sets out to evaluate the quality of the censual information.

The causes of the underestimation are various: there are difficulties in the form of asking the questions, the stimulus given by the inquirer and the stereotypes concerning work that he possesses. But the most important problem is the period to

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which the inquiry refers. Frequently the question relates to the week before the census, which does not include the seasonality of agricultural work. The period should be that of 12 months. Some countries use longer periods, e.g., Haiti uses six months, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and Barbados, one year.

Another problem is the minimum time considered for regarding a person as active or inactive. Each country adopts different criteria concerning the minimum time.

There are two other types of surveys, household and demographic, made on the basis of population samples which give better and more precise information on the number of women belonging to the EAP. This is because the aims are different; they seek greater precision and the inquirers are specially trained. Comparisons made between the results of the census measurements and the household surveys show the following: in Panama the conceptual definitions of the EAP are the same but the census inquired only once about the alternatives of economic activity and collected information for a single day. The household survey made repeated inquiries about the activities through the course of the year. The difference found between the rates of female participation exceeds 10% and even reaches 40%. In São Paulo the household survey shows that the census underenumerated women by between 14 and 33%, and the men by between 2 and 6%. In Bolivia the survey found between 33 and 48% more active women than the census. For rural women aged between 20 and 39, these percentages exceeded 50% (Wainerman and Recchini, op. cit.).

The more exact measurements are needed in the first place to visualize the participation of women correctly. If their present productive role is not adequately assessed they may suffer, for example, serious disadvantages in the agricultural programmes. Clearly, with the technologies both domestic and agricultural at their disposal, it would be impossible for women to produce more, as they are fully occupied by their share in the household tasks and in the farming, plus the other activities to which reference will be made further on. Hence we join Marshall Wolfe in affirming that "in this context, the exhortations to play a greater part in the labour force border on the ironical".27/

c) The contribution of women to agricultural productive work

It is now known that women take part in most of the agricultural tasks of the peasant unit, preferably those which are done manually or which require only small tools. They work mainly in clearance or weeding and in the harvests: they

/"break" maize,

"break" maize, they "cut" peas and beans, they "dig" potatoes, they "reap" corn. They also sow, plant nurseries, transplant and water ... "It is evident that women are not excluded from any type of cultivation for reasons of a cultural nature ... and their collaboration is determined by the real need that exists on the farm for their labour".28/

Women are marginated from the use of machinery and the larger tools. In this there are cultural factors reinforced by government and international agencies who regard agricultural projects as directed solely to men. They are also excluded from the use of modern aids such as insecticides and fertilizers. They are also ignorant of specific farming techniques such as pruning, grafting and others.

i) Participation in cultivation according to headship of household and peasant stratification

It is evident that when women are heads of household -15% on average in Latin America, 20% in Central America, with great variations within and between the countries, e.g., 37% in a settlement area in Paraguay (Ojopoi). This condition increases the weight of the agricultural work they have to do, which is dedicated mainly to subsistence crops. In Colombia women are generally in charge of the coffee plantations of less than one hectare, since the men emigrate in search of employment and the women do all the work; in the plantations of between 1 and 5 ha, the women take part in the selection and harvest. In the plantations of over 5 ha belonging to "rich" peasants, the housewife does not work on the coffee crop since labour is hired to do it.29/

In the Peruvian North Sierra (Cajamarca) Carmen Deere observed the following:

Table 1

PARTICIPATION OF THE FAMILY LABOUR FORCE BY SEX AND SIZE-OF-LAND STRATUM ACCORDING TO THE NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Type of peasants	Percentage of units	Manpower (%)		Total
		Female	Male	
-0.25 ha				
Landless peasants	0.3	35.0	65.0	100
Small holders (0.25 to 3.50 ha)	71.3	26.9	73.1	100
Medium-sized (3.51 to 30.0 and more ha)	18.5	20.8	79.2	100

Source: In C.D. Deere (1978), p. 9.

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In the low strata Campaña (1981) found that 84.3% of the women worked directly on the land. Deere links volume of work with types of crops and use of tools. The greater the poverty the greater the participation in tasks which require the hoe (71.0%) and in the growing of potatoes (63%), while in the higher strata only 50% of the women farmers use the hoe and 39% grow potatoes. In Mexico (Oaxaca), Kate Young notes that, in a currently coffee community, there exists at present a marked difference between the work done by the poor women (up to 1 ha), those of the medium strata (less than 5 ha) and the rich (more than 5 ha). The poor women work on the family farm and sell their labour, often to pay debts for food bought on credit in the famine periods, which the men obtained in exchange for a promise of the wife's work in the coffee harvest at the time of peak demand. In the case of the medium-sized peasants, coffee growers, their wives constitute "unpaid family labour", in the harvesting of the coffee; they also work on the farms of relatives in systems of "exchange" of labour. The women of the rich strata do not do farm work. At harvest-time they organize the labour and work in small family businesses (shop, mill, restaurant and others).

During the harvest, which lasts three months, the medium-sized peasant women work up to 17 hours a day, gathering coffee for 8 hours, doing the housework and helping to wash, depulp, dry and classify the grains.

In Chile (Aranda, 1982; Lago and Olavarría, and Campaña and Lago, 1982), it is also noted that their participation in farming activities increases in the higher strata, through a greater diversification of crops and tasks and the larger size of the surface. In the livestock area work also increases because the number of poultry is greater and the cows have to be milked.

In the medium and higher strata they also play a part in the preparation of meals when they have wage workers, family workers or those repaying labour or doing overtime or other forms of reciprocity. Carmen D. Deere noted that kitchen work raises women's share in the total number of days worked in agricultural activities by 38%. At all events, the time of peak demand for women in all the strata is the harvest time, whether because they work in the family unit or because they sell their labour.

ii) Participation in stock-raising

In stock-raising the women are generally excluded from the care of the larger cattle, the shifting of these animals, the branding, castrating, inoculating, etc., tasks which are the preserve of men.

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In stock-raising, the women have the care of the smaller animals (poultry, pigs, sheep, goats). The type of animal varies according to the region and the economic strata. In Chile, for example, the poor sectors of the north and centre of the country raise goats; in the south, the Mapuche communities breed sheep. In Central Chile, the peasant women raise pigs and poultry, and the higher strata, cows. In the Andean regions of Chile, Peru and Bolivia the women herd sheep and llamas. It is their job to feed or pasture the animals, and in the case of goats, to milk them and make cheeses; in the case of sheep and llamas, to spin and weave; and in the case of cows, to milk them and make cheese and butter.

d) Other activities

In order to supplement the family income the women engage in a large number of activities in addition to their household and farming tasks. The chief of these are trade, handicrafts and sale of services.

Women usually perform two or three different activities, and this has been termed "female multi-employment".

i) The female traders

Female trading has many forms and includes many lines. The most usual type is that of street selling, although they may also have fixed posts in street and other markets. It is so common in the Andean region, Mexico and some countries of Central America that it has been proposed as a special category of poor rural women (Arriagada, 1982). The products sold are small surpluses of the farm production, generally garden produce or harvest surpluses; prepared meals, chicha, eggs, poultry, meat, clothing, handicrafts, etc. 61.4% of the women devote themselves to trade in the Central Sierra of Peru (Campaña, 1981). Villalobos,30/ finds that the main activity varies in four regions studied in Peru: in one part of the Sierra trade is the main activity of 44% of the women; in another part of the Sierra it rises to 84.5%. They attribute surprisingly little value to household tasks which they declare to be the second or third activity in importance. These are cases where the men are temporary emigrants, which would indicate that for the women housework can easily give way to another activity according to their needs and family structure.

ii) The female artisans

In the greater part of the rural sectors of Mexico and Central America and in the Andean countries, handicrafts play a large part in supplementing family

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income. It has been said that in Mexico, in practically all the rural towns of less than 10 000 inhabitants, three quarters of the population work in handicrafts: the making of cotton cloth, the weaving of fibre hammocks, the embroidering of blouses and suits and the making of baskets are the main crafts practised by the women in Mexico, Central America, Colombia and Ecuador. In the Andean region of Peru and Bolivia the most usual crafts are the spinning of wool, the weaving of clothing, blankets and rugs, and the making of hats and other articles. In the Southern Cone and Atlantic coast of Latin America handicrafts are less important: the woolen textiles of the Mapuches and crochet work in Central Chile, textiles in Uruguay ("Hands of Uruguay"), embroidery in Paraguay, embroidery and crochet work in Brazil are the best known.

There have been opposite developments in the case of handicrafts. On the one hand it is said that the need to produce for the market has made traditional craft work disappear in some cases (in Peru, mentioned by Villalobos, op. cit.). On the other hand, the introduction of some modern elements has given the women more time, which they have devoted to handicrafts (for example, with the introduction of grain mills for maize). In the maize-growing region of Yucatán around 70% of the women and children devote themselves to these crafts.

In many cases, through the use of a system of intermediaries for their marketing, the production of handicrafts has become a home industry which is paid by piece work. The earnings are minimal. It has been calculated that a craftswoman receives for the work of a week the same as a day's pay for a man working outside the town. It should also be noted that the incorporation of women and children into the work of earning a money income has increased the dependence of the domestic economy on the market.

The intervention of the State in various products in order to avoid intermediation and to improve prices has failed "through lack of financial and commercial capacity for regulating the supply of finished products and acquiring a significant proportion of the product in the locality" (Warman, 1983).

There are two practices in relation to the origin and marketing of handicrafts: traditional craftwork carried on as a supplement to the family income and performed along with other domestic tasks; and modern craftwork, whose production becomes the primary activity and which is sold to intermediaries who convert it into a home industry paid by piece work, with the disadvantages pointed out by Warman.

/An experiment

An experiment that is being conducted in Chile (Aranda, 1983) suggests that the most recommendable procedure is the following: that the craftswoman should work in her genuinely free periods and continue to regard handicrafts as a secondary activity; that any project of the State or non-governmental agencies should include handicrafts in integral projects relating to women; and that the problem of marketing should be taken over by external agents. Conceived in this way they may become projects of "growth" for women which enable them to incorporate a different type of knowledge and training (from accounting to health). They enable the women at the same time to form their own organizations, to have different spatial areas, and to link themselves with the exterior through exhibitions and markets, to refer only to a few aspects.

e) Determinants of participation by women

The participation and intensity of women's work in each of the activities mentioned is conditioned by a series of factors that have already been extensively described (e.g., FAO, 1983). These are access to land and the size of the unit (which was seen to some extent in the crops); the stage of the family cycle, which is mainly influenced by the number, sex and age of the children; the composition of the family, which refers to those who are most involved in the family; the technology used and the cultural conditioners, which have to do with what the woman "can" or "should" do.

4. The proletarianization of rural women

The modernization of agriculture with the expulsion of peasants from old-established haciendas, the changes in some sectors to less labour-intensive crops, the decomposition of the peasantry in areas of small holdings and/or communities, have had two basic effects: emigration and proletarianization. Formerly this had been a more visible process in the case of men, but now it is recognized that it has an equal effect on women in the lower peasant strata and on female agricultural labourers.

In general, women's labour has always been present in the different forms adopted by capital to attach labour: "inquilinaje" in Chile, "concertaje" or "compañía" in Colombia, "colonato" in Brazil, "huasipungaje" in Ecuador, etc., as also in the share-cropping contracts or in labour by agreement. The man is hired, but it is assumed that he will include his wife and children,31/ especially in the crops that require a high seasonal intensity of labour such as coffee, tobacco, tea and cotton.

/Reference had

Reference had already been made in the FAO document of 1983 to the effects on women of the emigration and/or potential sale of the labour of the men. Special emphasis was placed on the situations that can arise if the woman is semi-proletarianized in her home ("the other activities"); if she sells her labour locally, as in the case of agroindustries; if she becomes proletarianized and emigrates; and if it is the men who become semi-proletarianized, proletarianized, and emigrate. Attention was directed to the effects of the double working day, the greater participation in agriculture, the headship of the household and the possibility of female emigration.

In this paper we wish to refer to the ways in which women can receive a wage in agriculture, which are as follows: through the sale of occasional labour in the countryside and in traditional or commercial crops or in agroindustry in ad hoc establishments.

a) Semi-proletarianization at farm level

Labour can be hired for crops that belong to the higher strata of the peasant sector and this generally takes place in ambiguous circumstances in which the wage (lower than the legal) is combined with family relationships. The women are accompanied by their children or whole family groups are involved. The condition of rural wage-earner is one of the most difficult for women to accept owing to the negative connotation in which she finds herself involved in an assumed environment of peers or equals. Equality is implied by the condition of peasant.

b) Proletarianization in the commercial crops and packing stations

The incorporation of women into agroindustrial employment depends not only on the internal factors of the family economy but also on the capacity of the system to create jobs and absorb the oversupply of rural labour. Male labour has frequently been replaced by female labour in times of crisis or as seasonal labour because women accept less pay for equal work, since both society and women have always considered women's wages as complementary to those of the man.

In commercial agricultures male labour is replaced by female. In the long run, however, there is still a decline in employment for both sexes. The greater capitalization and technification of agriculture causes a reduction in manpower, and in such cases male participation takes precedence over female. Nonetheless, in certain activities preference is given to female labour, and here there is

/undoubtedly a

undoubtedly a genuine sexual division of labour. This generally occurs in the handling of fruit -selection, packaging, binding, trimming and other jobs- together with work with flowers and vegetables for export.

It is of interest to make some practical comments on the female wage-earners with regard to: the places of residence, in which are found on the one hand the semi-proletarians with rural residence, and the purely agricultural proletarians with urban residence, on the periphery of towns, etc. It is also of interest to note their marital status and whether or not they are mothers, and finally or conjointly, the differences between the work in the countryside and that in packing and processing plants.

Sale of labour in crop cultivation

Generally, there is a demand for female labour to work with export crops. The women hired are very young, between 14 and 24 years of age, or of middle age, over 35 years, e.g., in the flower industry in Colombia, fruit-growing in Chile, and the vegetable crops in Mexico. The mothers join the wage-earning labour when they have at least one child old enough to take care of the rest. The criteria as to the ages when children are capable of fulfilling this function are variable: they range from 6 years (Colombia) to 12 (Chile).

Farm work is hard but the women dislike it mainly because of the problem of image; to be a farm labourer constitutes the lowest grade in the peasant scale, only surpassed by the condition of domestic servant.

The various jobs range in duration from 2 to 6 months. In Chile the tasks of fruit cultivation take up little time, from 20 days to slightly more than a month a year. Several jobs are given to the same person to increase the periods, so that an average of three months and five days is obtained. Coffee gathering can last from one to two months. If it is a sun variety the period can be still shorter. In other cases such as the harvesting of industrial crops in Paraguay and Brazil, the whole family may relocate to the farms for several months. Generally the jobs are done by piece-work, by tasks, which makes it a time of exhausting work.

The most complete example of a female agricultural wage-worker is that of the "volantes" in Brazil, near to São Paulo. They are urban residents, and live on the periphery of the small towns in the interior of São Paulo.32/ Seventy-five per cent of them are familiar with rural life and their first experience of work

/was in

was in the unpaid labour force in agriculture, generally in coffee-growing. More than half (60%) began to work at the age of 12. They move from place to place in response to labour requirements. In the periods when there is no agricultural work they hire themselves out as domestic servants in the city. In other words, they combine agricultural and urban work to give continuity to their wage throughout the year. Another type of female agricultural wage-worker is the "moradora". These are still peasant women living on haciendas, and more than half entered the labour force at the age of 11 as an unpaid family worker on a coffee plantation.

In the last 30 years the use of contractors to mobilize labour has become general. The existence of these intermediaries weakens the employment link with the employer, exempting him from social contributions. Moreover, the labour force becomes very sensitive to wage variations; in the city it comes to form part of the urban labour market and its wages have to absorb the cost of survival in cities, which is higher than that of rural residents. At the present time children are also hired, but with a minimum age limit of 14 years.

The various connotations of the ages of the women hired

The enterprises hire women who are very young or of mature age. In the latter case, it is assumed that the reproductive cycle has ended, with the idea of reducing the costs that would have to be paid for the social benefits of maternity. Similarly, they prefer to hire women who either have no children or who say they have none, so as to avoid having to pay for "family dependents".

This would therefore appear to combine two strategies: that of the enterprises, which prefer women without risk of maternity and apparently without children, and that of the mothers, who wait for one of their children to be old enough to enable them to be left alone.

c) Relation between incorporation in wage-earning work and reduction in the number of children

It has been postulated that the number of children and likewise their ages created incompatibilities between the role of mother and that of worker, this being reflected in the reduced number of children. In the FAO document of 1983 (Round Table, p. 52), although this affirmation is not denied, it is suggested that there are activities compatible with the role of mother.

In the study conducted in Chile (Aranda, 1982), an attempt was made to observe how this theory functioned. To verify it a separate analysis was made of the

/situation of

situation of mothers and that of women without children. The data obtained show that neither of these two variables affects the incorporation of the mothers into the labour market. Some 75.1% of the mothers are between 21 and 40 years of age; they have an average of three children with ages ranging from 2 to 16.5 years. These households show high levels of fertility with 4.9 children born alive and a high percentage of permanence in their homes: 89%.

The data show that these households are not affected because the mother may work outside, in terms of a diminution in the birth of children or in the children finding themselves obliged to migrate at an early age. On the contrary, all the values indicated are higher than those of peasant households.

In Suesca, Colombia, in one of the flower industries that preferentially hire women, 70% of the women were middle aged (an average age of 33 years) and had an average of five children. In Brazil, in the study made in the region of São Paulo, the average size of the families of the "volantes" and "moradoras" was 6.5 persons.

d) Opinions on work

The opinions are varied and depend on who expresses them. First there are the opinions of the wage-earning women themselves, among which one must distinguish those of childless women from those of mothers; then there are the views of women who have studied the subject and analysed the insertion of women into wage-earning work under conditions of marked inequality. In the case of Colombia (Silva, 1982; Medrano, 1982), the wage-earning women in the agroindustry of flowers acknowledge, in their new condition, the advantages of a job with fixed hours (in certain tasks); they have a wage equal to that which a man would earn in the region; they are not subject to the orders of a housewife; they are their own mistress and can return home in the evening. These are the opinions of former domestic servants who are now agricultural wage-earners. In the fruit-growing region (Chile) mothers of families do not like to work outside the home; they work because they must, to buy groceries for the winter and school equipment for the children, and to do some repairs in the house. Some 66.7% prefer to work at home; otherwise they feel that they are abandoning the home, running about all day, neglecting the children, etc.

Young single women without children, on the other hand, view their work situation as positive; they do not mind working in the packing stations, especially

/because there

because there they see and meet people, earn money to buy clothes and to help in the home and with the schooling of their brothers and sisters, but they do not like to be "ordered about"; they like "clean" jobs, under cover, and not out on the farms. The ideal for all of them is to work as secretaries (Aranda, 1982; Lago and Olavarría, 1981).

The specific disadvantages of wage work for women are the double working day, the failure to observe labour legislation, and the non-payment of the agricultural minimum wage on traditional farms. In the large enterprises, the disadvantages are selectivity by age and non-acceptance of pregnant women; lack of nurseries for children; minimal sanitary services; wage discrimination; discrimination in the assignment of tasks involving responsibility; and the failure to acknowledge the manual dexterity for which they are contracted as a specialized skill.

The unfavourable conditions common to men and women on farms and in agro-industry relate to problems of environmental health and medical care on the job. Examples are the heavy use of insecticides on the farms and in the packing stations; and the high level of noise which accompanies their work (such as in the packing stations through the use of pressure hammers and staplers and other instruments). Then there is the excess of heat in medium-sized plants due to the construction materials used, such as zinc roofs, and the lack of ventilation systems; the changes of temperature between the packing sheds and the refrigeration areas; the long work periods that often last for 16 hours which, although they are paid as over-time, are excessively long.

It is mainly M. Roldán (1982) 33/ who discusses the significance of wage work for women. She discusses the conception of capitalism that it is through work that women are incorporated into development, and the view of feminism, that work is a liberating force. She bases her arguments on an example in the Northeast of Mexico, in a vegetable-exporting plant with more than 90 000 women as temporary wage-earners.

The enterprises take advantage of the intuitive generic subordination of women to maintain the margins of differential earning, through giving them lower paid work. The posts occupied by women are those characterized by less stability, little qualification, lack of legal protection and lack of opportunities of

/promotion. "In

promotion. "In other words, they are the meanest positions within the hierarchical structure of capitalist labour." The reasons for this situation are based on qualitative differences which have already been mentioned: women are more careful, more punctual, more delicate, more submissive, more efficient, more accustomed to comply and obey: all of which is the result of a social process of generic construction, an "invisible training". The supervisory tasks are performed by men, thus transferring the division of labour in the home and society to the area of employment. Women are thus proletarianized by incorporating the burden of pre-existent generic subordination into their class situation and reinforcing it.

Nonetheless, the incorporation of women into the labour market implies a break with traditional norms; the receipt of an independent income helps to create a position of strength, both in the case of daughters in relation to their parents and wives in relation to their husbands.

5. Income: amount, administration and destination

Although the estimates of FAO 34/ indicate that women's earnings contribute 50% or more of family income, the importance of their contribution is no less qualitative than quantitative.

On the one hand it has been recognized that with these earnings and those of other members of the family (children and others), indigence has been avoided in between 9 and 15% of cases. Equally, between 35 and 20% of these earnings have saved rural households from falling below the critical poverty line, thus showing that the values are underestimated.

The most important aspect is the destination given by the women to this money, since they give priority to food: "The feeding of the children is much more closely linked with an increase in the mother's earnings than in that of the family total".35/

a) Income generated in the peasant unit

The most complete report on the use and destination of earnings has been made for Peru. It is known that after the harvest the husband and wife divide the production into three portions, one for seeds, another for sale and a third for family consumption. The last two are administered by the wife. It is also said that in some cases the total earnings of the men are entrusted to their wives; in other cases the amount appears to be about half (Campaña, 1981; Rubin, 1982;

/Young, 1982;

Young, 1982; Barría, 1983). What is clear is that the women play a large part both in the management of the harvest and in the earnings.

In practice the wife has the responsibility for the daily maintenance of her family group, which implies ensuring the daily meals, and to this she dedicates all her energy. Not only is she a great organizer of her daily and weekly time, which enables her to carry out the multiple tasks of her amplified domestic routine, but she goes out, in the case of the women traders, to sell small quantities of produce "for her ají (chili sauce) and her salt". The other activities mentioned above, such as handicrafts, preparation of meals, sale of services, are destined to the same end. Likewise with the sales made in situ of eggs, poultry, bread, milk, cheese, all is destined to provide and ensure subsistence, which explains the multiplicity of her activities. Although among the myths of the peasantry this woman is spoken of as submissive, in the background, marginated, it must be remembered that, within her family, it is she who has the greatest responsibilities.

Women's earnings in the peasant units are typically stable and daily. Those of the men occur once a year at harvest-time, or once or twice more if cattle is sold. If the husband is a temporary worker or a migrant, the money will arrive with him, or he will send remittances for the children's school equipment once a year and for religious festivals.

When the man is at home he can manage the money (that from the harvests and sales of animals), but the income derived from the wife's activities is for her exclusive use. In addition to assigning it to food, she allocates it to clothing for the children and to their education, which includes enrolment fees, parents' contributions, equipment, daily transport, etc.

b) Income derived from wage-earning labour

These earnings are derived from seasonal work at the time of harvests and product-processing; they usually represent substantial amounts by peasant standards since they are equivalent to industrial wages and are often supplemented by over-time pay. In some regions and countries they can be equal or even superior to those earned by the men, when the work necessarily involves over-time labour. The work in industrial plants is generally allotted in tasks based on a minimum yield, and work in excess of this also receives additional payment. These sums can be as high as US$ 180 per month. The married woman use this money, as in the previous

/case, to

case, to ensure subsistence for the rest of the year, especially during winter in "the blue months" or the months of "John Thin", when things are very difficult economically, since there is no demand for the labour of either men or women. With this money she buys non-perishable goods such as: flour, sugar, tea, spaghetti, and some preserves. She also allots a certain amount to ensure the education and clothing of her children. She hardly ever buys anything for herself.

Enquiry has revealed the noteworthy fact that the money earned by the single women is reserved for the same purposes as that of the mother. In some cases -very few- they hand over all their money to the mother; in others they retain a portion for their own expenses and the rest they assign to the home and to ensuring the education of their younger brothers and sisters. In the case of Mexico (Kate Young, 1982) the single women speak of a "pool" to which all contribute without the mother's having an exact idea of what proportion is contributed by each member of the family. It is agreed that this "pool" is administered by the mother, as in the case of data received on Peru and in most of the cases studied in Chile. There is no detailed information on the rest of the countries.

III. THE RURAL FAMILY

Several studies have referred, specifically or indirectly, to the rural family.

This information taken together shows that the rural family is being affected by a multiplicity of phenomena which makes it necessary to bring up to date our former knowledge on the subject. The existing stereotypes, such as the prevalence of extended families, with early marriages, large size, high levels of fertility and permanence of their members, under the authority of the paterfamilias, must be revised. The situation today would appear to be: a trend towards the increase of nuclear families; low incidence of extended families; increase of one-person and incomplete families; diminution and deferment of marriages; a notable decline in the birth-rate; a female head of household; the proletarianization of the women; absent fathers; emigration.

/1. Nuclear

1. Nuclear versus extended and incomplete families

In the first place and in relation to the predominant types of families (nuclear, extended, composite and incomplete), it seems evident that the nuclear family is predominant and the trend is for this to increase.

There are also statements found in documents of a regional nature on the fallacy of the idea of the prevalence of extended families (Adrienne Germaine, A.C.E.P., 1982, Doc. FAO, 1983, Round Table...). This fact has been observed simultaneously in Chile, Argentina, Peru, Bolivia, Colombia and Brazil, in the studies analysed. This trend behaves in different ways according to spatial strata and region.

It has been observed that relationships exist among the type of family, given points of time within the family cycle, the economic standing of the provider and regional differences.

In a comparison of the Chilean families of Greater Santiago with those of four rural localities in the central region, it was found that extended families were more numerous in the urban than in the rural areas.

It has been suggested (C.D. Deere, 1978) that rural families linked with the labour market become nuclear, whereas those that produce value in kind absorb labour, especially family, and give rise to composite or extended families. What is observed is that, to the extent that the land resource becomes scarce in the small properties, and the large no longer maintain resident population and only contract temporary workers, the young population tends to emigrate. If a son marries he will form his nuclear family apart from the truncal family. If he becomes a proletarian the effect is clearer since he can then move near to the sources of labour.36/ In the medium and upper strata, where stable manpower is required, men are incorporated and the families then become extended or composite.

In many cases it has become difficult to separate the nuclear family from the extended and it has been argued that they cannot be seen outside the family cycle.37/ The new family would often form itself within the paternal family after which at around the age of 30 the son leaves with his own family and constitutes a new nuclear family.

High proportions of extended families are found in the community context. They have been observed in Mexico and Peru. Repayment of labour, work in the house of relatives, preparation of common meals, all weaken the boundaries between

/nuclear and

nuclear and extended family. Noordam (1981) reports that in Bolivia brothers, on inheriting land, build their houses on the same plot and with communicating rooms. They have their meals together and share the care of the children and the work, so that it can be said that "the family relations are of the extended family type although the homes are nuclear".

The nuclear family predominates in the Andean region of Colombia (59% of the total). Here, besides, the women between the ages of 25 and 40 are in the majority because of the high emigration of men. Some 13% of nuclear households are directed by women (Ordoñez, 1983).

In Paraguay, in two areas of State colonization studied, where the aim was to establish an agriculture of medium-sized farmer-owners, the plots of land came to be subdivided through inheritance. New families have been formed on the same farms, but in respect of work they have continued to act in conjunction with the original family under relations of exchange of labour like the "minga" and other forms of solidarity. When the men who form new families find themselves obliged to emigrate in order to survive, it is customary to send the grandchildren to be cared for by the grandparents, thereby converting the original families into extended families.38/ A third of the families of these settlements are of this type (FAO, 1983).

a) Regional variations

Returning to regional variations in relation to types, it has been noted that Bolivia also shows marked differences. The nuclear families are found above all in the rural areas of the Altiplano, with very low percentages of composite households. What occurs is an expulsion of members of the family, explained by the extreme subdivision of the land which converts "the redistribution of poverty into a re-establishment of the young people in the monetarized labour market" (Noordam, 1980). In the tropical plains, where there is commercial agriculture, with zones of colonization, there is a low percentage of nuclear households and a larger one of composite households, these reflecting a greater capacity of labour absorption and the formation of labour communities.

In Peru, Campaña (1981) also observed that the poor families are structured around nuclear families.

Ordóñez (1983) observed the same predominance of the nuclear family in Colombia but also found marked regional variations. The lowest percentage is found on the Atlantic coast; this is due to the type of land occupation based on an itinerant agriculture which entails long absences for the men and thereby creates unstable relationships. Stability is supplied by the women; they establish the families which come from free unions, and are supported by the social mechanisms based on the community, which is often confused with the extended family.

Extended families constitute a third of the families of the country but are also unequally distributed regionally.

b) Types of families and peasant strata

In almost all known cases, differences were seen within regions or areas. Two examples will suffice. In Chile (Aranda, 1982) a predominance of old, nuclear families was found in one valley which was studied. In the peasant strata, however, a different behaviour was observed. In the group of rural semi-proletarians, Group I, nuclear families were as prevalent as incomplete families, but as regards age there was an absolute predomiance (82.9%) of young families. Among the poor peasants or Group II incomplete families predominate and in contrast to what is seen in the previous group, they are mainly old families. In Group III of peasants young nuclear families predominate followed by extended and composite families. In Group IV nuclear families are most frequent followed by incomplete families, with a predominance of old families.

In another Colombian region (El Espinal), a clear correlation is found between peasant strata and type of family. In the lowest strata, I and II, the nuclear family predominates, followed by the extended family. In stratum III the extended family predominates and in IV half the families are nuclear, followed by the amplified family which includes in addition to other relatives the domestic servants.

Generally speaking, the nuclear family would predominate in areas of subproletarianization and proletarianization.

c) The other factor observed in connection with family types is the frequency of incomplete families, this being understood as families which are not based on couples. These families consist of single brothers and sisters who live together or unmarried adult children who live with one or another of their widowed parents, generally the mother. The unmarried status was related to the size of the unit

/and it

and it was found that 41.7% of the single men were owners of surfaces of under 2.5 ha, that is, they belonged to the proletarian strata and poor peasants. It would seem, then, that the explanation of the non-formation of a new family lies mainly in the economic condition of the persons interviewed. (These observations were made in Chile by Aranda, 1982.)

d) Another fact worthy of note is that of one-person families which has been detected in some countries. The source quoted above, which compares Santiago, Chile with four rural areas of the country (Fernández, 1968), found on the one hand "that the percentage of homes of one-person families is twice as high in the rural communities as in Greater Santiago, and that the number of persons who do not form families is higher in rural families. This was also observed in Chile, Peru and Bolivia. In the latter case, 17% of the families were unipersonal.

e) The non-formation of families

There is also evidence of the existence of young couples who have been together for a long time but who continue to live separately in the homes of their parents. In many cases one or two children have been born of these relationships but not even this event induces them to live together under the same roof.

f) Double residence

In the Sierra of the Andean countries (Peru, Campaña, 1981, and Bolivia, Noordam) there is evidence of the double residence of husbands coming from agricultural communities, where for reasons of work outside the region they leave their home and family in the community and live in a second home near their place of work. The children generally go there for school purposes and the wife remains behind in charge of the sustenance of the smallest children and herself.

g) The deferment of the age of unions and marriages

Generally speaking, there appears to be a tendency in all the countries to defer the age at which both men and women form unions. The deferment of unions has been tied in with the changing expectations of agricultural wage-earners and with higher educational levels (Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Colombia). Widespread impoverishment is another factor, in that it becomes necessary to have a steady income, or two seasonal wage sources, in order to form a family when the younger people cannot install themselves in the parents' house.

/2. Headship

2. Headship of households

As regards the foregoing cases, emphasis must be laid on the fact of female headship of households, which was viewed formerly in another context and which presents variations in direct relation with the departure of the husband in search of work outside the village or community. The departures tend to be more prolonged than the hiring for seasonal agricultural jobs, since these men are employed as miners, builders, labourers on public works, in manufacturing, etc. In these cases the wife assumes this function de facto, with the material and effective responsibilities that it implies towards her children, and also towards herself, in view of her husband's absence. There is another type of female household headship which occurs in the free, consensual unions or in unstable sexual relations (Colombia, Paraguay, Brazil, Jamaica and Central America in general). At times various unions occur which leave several children who are the sole responsibility of the woman. In these cases the woman generally becomes proletarianized, carries out a variety of activities during the year and has a larger number of children.

3. The decline in the birth-rate

In consonance with the facts noted above -the loss of land, the difficulty of finding work, the jobs that imply emigration- on the one hand, and the deferment of unions, the non-formation of couples or families, and the knowledge of methods of contraception, on the other, have caused a notable decline in the fertility indexes in all the countries. At the same time a shortening of the reproductive period to more or less 16.5 years in all is observable in some cases (Oliveira, 1978).39/

The decline in fertility at country level can be seen in table 2. The totals for Latin America and the Caribbean show a marked decrease between 1960-1965 and 1975-1980 for the total and for each of the countries of the region without exception. There are striking differences in fertility rates between the countries of the Southern Cone and the others, whether Andean countries or Central American. In Central America there is a surprising decrease in Costa Rica and Cuba. In the Andean countries there is a significant decline in the rates in Colombia and Venezuela. In the North Atlantic sector, there is a notable decrease in Brazil and to a lesser extent in Paraguay. It is believed that large families were customary in historical periods when certain crops which were highly labour-intensiv

/Table 2

Table 2

GLOBAL FERTILITY RATES EXPRESSED IN NUMBER OF CHILDREN

	1960-1965	1965-1970	1970-1975	1975-1980
Southern Cone countries				
Chile	5.0	4.1	3.3	3.1
Argentina	3.1	3.0	3.0	2.9
Uruguay	2.9	2.9	3.0	2.9
Andean countries				
Peru	6.9	6.6	5.8	5.5
Bolivia	6.6	6.6	6.5	6.4
Ecuador	7.0	6.8	6.5	6.3
Colombia	6.7	6.0	4.8	4.3
Venezuela	6.7	6.0	5.2	4.7
North Atlantic				
Brazil	6.2	5.7	5.1	4.5
Paraguay	6.6	6.4	5.7	5.2
Central America and Mexico				
Mexico	6.8	6.7	6.2	5.4
Guatemala	6.9	6.4	6.2	5.7
Honduras	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.1
El Salvador	6.9	6.6	6.3	6.0
Nicaragua	7.3	7.1	6.9	6.6
Costa Rica	7.0	5.8	4.3	3.6
Panama	5.7	5.4	4.8	4.1
Cuba	4.7	4.3	3.5	2.2
Haiti	6.2	6.2	6.1	5.9
Dominican Republic	7.5	7.1	6.2	5.0
Total	6.0	5.6	5.1	4.6

Source: Statistical Yearbook for Latin America, 1981, ECLAC.

(coffee, peanuts, and others) needed large contingents and numerous families. In settlement areas in Brazil, for example, families with more than five members were rewarded and had all their installation costs paid by the State. At present, in circumstances in which the families have little or no land, they tend to be smaller. This has been generally observed in the Bolivian Altiplano and the Peruvian Sierra; in the former the rural families are smaller than the urban (Noordam), whereas in

/areas of

areas of longstanding minifundia the non-constitution of families, and one-person families, have been noted. This means that, apart from emigration, all these new features of the rural family represent an internal control or a strategy for contending with poverty which occurs precisely at this level and with these mechanisms (see table 2).

Data from some researches give examples of these facts:

- There is a very evident difference in the number of children between women of 35 to 40 years of age and those over 40 in Brazil. In the first group there is a very considerable decline in the number of children compared with the second group (despite the fact that the former are still at a child-bearing age they would not be expected to increase much more the number of children):

Women between 35 and 40 years: number of children 4.1, with 3.7 surviving;

Women of over 40 years: number of children 9.8, with 7.8 surviving.

(Data: Study made by ECLAC/University of São Paulo.)

In Colombia, in face of the changes in the structure of coffee-growing, and through excess of population, the closing of the territorial coffee frontier and the process of proletarianization, the concept of the large family is being abandoned. To this end, the Federation of Coffee-Growers is providing programmes of birth control.40/ In García Rovira (Colombia), information is available on the rejection of large families; the stratum which shows the smallest number of children is No. I, that of the poorest families (4.34 children, on average).

- In Brazil the residents (rural) have 3.7 children born alive, the "volantes" 3.3. They have the last child at around the age of 36 or 37, so that the reproductive period is approximately 16.5 years. They make the breast-feeding period last up to five years in order not to become pregnant (Coletta, F.A. de Oliveira, op.cit.)

- In Chile (Aranda, 1984) the women of over 40 years of age have on average 7.0 children; those of under 40 have on average 1.8 children.41/

- For some researchers (Ordóñez, 1983) the decline in fertility among agricultural wage-earners is not so clear. Observations in Colombia led him to affirm that the peasantry has a higher average fertility than the rural proletariat because of the lower average age of the wage-earners, their semi-urban residence, their labour instability, etc. There are contradictory data, as observed in Chile, where proletarian families with urban residence have a larger number of children than

/semi-proletarian

semi-proletarian families with rural residence. At present there is no evidence that enables us to establish the trend.

- In contrast, a very clear relationship is observable between educational level and number of children, operating in the sense of the more education, the fewer children. There are many examples in various countries that support this statement. The following table clearly illustrates the situation in Mexico.

Table 3

AVERAGE OF CHILDREN BORN ALIVE TO MARRIED AND CONSENSUAL WOMEN ACCORDING TO THEIR RURAL OR SEMI-URBAN RESIDENCE AND THEIR LEVEL OF SCHOOLING a/

RURAL WITHOUT URBAN INFLUENCE
SECTOR II

Age groups	Illiterate	1st, 2nd, 3rd primary	4th and 5th primary	6th primary	Secondary and over	Total
15-29	3.3 (181)	5.4 (239)	2.5 (67)	2.2 (20)	- (5)	2.2 (512)
30-49	7.6 (301)	7.4 (254)	7.6 (49)	7.9 (10)	- (5)	7.5 (619)
TOTAL	6.0 (482)	5.5 (493)	4.7 (116)	4.1 (30)	3.5 (10)	5.6 (1 131)
Total b/ Standardized	5.6	5.6	5.3	5.3	2.5	5.5

RURAL WITH URBAN INFLUENCE
SECTOR I

Age groups	Illiterate	1st, 2nd, 3rd primary	4th and 5th primary	6th primary	Secondary and over	Total
15-29	2.0 (25)	3.2 (59)	3.1 (21)	1.4 (15)	- (7)	2.6 (127)
30-49	8.1 (63)	6.7 (60)	7.5 (16)	- (3)	- (3)	7.4 (145)
TOTAL	6.4 (88)	5.0 (119)	5.0 (37)	2.4 (18)	1.6 (10)	5.2 (272)
Total b/ Standardized	5.3	5.1	5.5	4.6	2.2	5.2

/Table 3 (concl.)

Table 3 (concl.)

	SEMI-URBAN SECTOR III						
Age groups	Illiterate	1st, 2nd, 3rd primary	4th and 5th primary	6th primary	Secondary and over	Total	Total
15-29	3.0 (68)	2.7 (95)	2.8 (44)	1.9 (42)	1.6 (26)	2.6 (276)	2.9 (915)
30-49	7.1 (115)	7.0 (108)	6.7 (53)	5.2 (29)	4.3 (21)	6.8 (326)	7.3 (1 090)
TOTAL	5.6 (183)	5.0 (203)	4.9 (97)	3.2 (71)	2.8 (47)	4.9 (602)	5.3 (2 005)
Total b/ Standardized	5.2	5.0	4.9	3.7	3.1	4.9	

Source: PECFAL-R, Mexico, 1969-1970.

a/ Excluding the "NO RESPONSE".
b/ The standardization permits the elimination of the different age structure that may exist between the sectors, thus making possible comparison between them.

- Fewer than 10 cases.
Catalina Gougain: "Influencias de la escolaridad sobre la fecundidad en los medios rural y semiurbano de México", in La Fecundidad Rural en México, 1983.

/IV. WOMEN'S

IV. WOMEN'S DEMANDS AND ORGANIZATIONS: SOME REFLECTIONS

Despite the fact that in almost all the official documents reference is made to the need for women's participation in the discussion of local, regional and national affairs; to the need for them to make proposals and manifest their demands, along with the urgency for this to be channelled through their own organizations, there has been very little progress and/or there is very little information on the subject.

There are several points to be emphasized in this connection. 1) It bears repeating that women are great organizers of their time, as is evidenced by their performance of their amplified household tasks and their independent activities; 2) women do not express themselves verbally, but their opinion is important and can be obtained through their husbands; 3) women fulfil a series of social and cultural roles which are possibly not appreciated by or known to the external agents; 4) women take part in organizations, but they are different from the known ones.

A number of observations concerning the first point have already been made. Regarding the second, it has been shown in the conclusions of the Seminar on Andean Research and in various studies that: women are responsible for important decisions, the more so the poorer the stratum to which they belong. The aforesaid Seminar concludes that it is a myth that women "are marginated from decisions both inside the family and in the community".42/ It is true, however, that women do not know how to express themselves, and are often unable to conceptualize their feelings. It is true that women are inarticulate and therefore cannot express their demands. This is the result of cultural patterns; the one who speaks in public is the man. Moreover, women do not feel prepared; they feel they are uneducated and are ashamed of their lack of preparation for public participation. They also feel "stultified" by child-bearing. In experiments in Chile with Personal Development Workshops women have asked to be taught how to speak (Pemci, 1984). Women must be trained -through workshops, women's groups, special meetings, or other methods- to formulate their aspirations and demands.

Regarding the third point, that of the social and cultural roles performed by rural women as described in the FAO document, 1983, attention is drawn to the large number of activities carried out by women to maintain and further the

/communication, fellowship

communication, fellowship and sympathy that make social life possible. In the peasant communities this duty falls almost exclusively on the women and ranges from organizing ceremonies (baptisms, weddings, etc.) and promoting co-operation and good will among relatives or the families of the neighbourhood, to organizing services, reciprocal exchanges of work and barter arrangements. Not only does the amount of time that women devote to these activities go unrecognized, but there is also a failure to take it into account in calculating how much time is to be assigned to various tasks. The extent to which women must perform such activities can affect the time available for other productive tasks. So too, if they fail to carry out these activities as a result of their increased participation in either unpaid or, paid agricultural work, there will be a deterioration in the relations of solidarity and in general of social fellowship in the community.43/

Respecting the fourth point, membership in organizations, it must also be said that women take part in a great number of activities, which are sometimes very different from those of the men. In general, women are excluded from the traditional productive (male) organizations, such as the associations of irrigation, of the mountain slopes or common pastures, or the co-operatives of production. They have also been excluded from agrarian reform organizations and processes; they have not been regarded as members, nor have they been incorporated into them. This is in line with the stereotype: women to be excluded from matters concerning production.

Nevertheless they are active participants in everything that concerns the direct well-being of their family, i.e., in everything seen as useful and necessary. And it is there that you will find them, on all the "Pro" Committees: Pro-water supply, electric light, polyclinic, mini-market, school, road, improvement in the bus service, etc. They participate actively and in their own way: arranging raffles, preparing meals and sweets to sell at football matches, organizing dances, etc.44/ They are also disciplined and co-operative assistants at the centres of parents and guardians; but even there they do not express their views.

Women also play an important part in religious festivities: through the "cofradías", or dance groups; in the celebration of the day of the patron of the town or community; as "godmother", etc. This is also true of church activities such as catechism, missions, etc.

/The Mothers'

The Mothers' Centres in Chile are a special type of organization. These centres were formed by the State 20 years ago, and there are 350 of them in the central valley region alone, with more than 10 000 members. Experience has shown that when peasant women organize themselves they do not look for a relationship with public life at the national level, but seek a space of their own, "to go out", to "learn to speak", to combine the daily round with a handicraft which as far as possible will produce earnings.45/

A large number of projects for women are supported by the Church with external aid. They are of two types, productive and training. Almost all favour the formation of small groups of around 15 persons. There is some information on educational projects as well as training and discussion groups; housewives' clubs; health centres and monitor training centres; small productive projects; and others. The data are fragmentary, however, and have not been assessed. At the time of writing there is only one evaluation, referring to Chile, which is still unpublished.46/

With respect to the questions of free time and organization, rural women lack leisure time and opportunities for recreation. This is the result of several factors: the fact that women are considered as "housewives" and "home-bodies"; that they actually have so many tasks and responsibilities; that they themselves, as well as others, do not recognize that they have a right to rest and recreation; and the fact that it has never occurred to them that the possibility exists of having their own space to share with other women in clubs, social groups, centres, etc.

These points explain in part women's reluctance to take part in meetings or activities which are not fully justified in their own and others' eyes, especially those of their husbands. The feeling is that they cannot waste time, must always be busy and must not be seen in the street, in order to fit the accepted image of women.

The image of male peasants -and here there are marked contrasts with women- is that of the "public" man. Men are seen as belonging in the street, as establishing the bonds with the outside world. During the week they have the street, the corner where they meet and chat with friends, as well as the community groups such as the irrigation board, co-operative, union and shops. On Sundays and holidays, they congregate at the soccer games, bars and bazaars.

/Kate Young

Kate Young observed something similar in the case of Mexico. "There is another area in which the rights of men and women are markedly different: the men can, and do, spend the product of their work (and that of their wives) on a series of activities of personal consumption such as smoking, drinking, maintaining two families, among others. Indeed, on any feast day or market day the men will be found drinking in the bars with their male relatives and friends while their wives are busy in the market or in household activities."

The intention is to stress the need for changing these images. Women should have free time, should be able to leave the house -as they do now in order to shop- should have their own space, should be able to gather in public with other women to talk about themselves or the community, and should be able to express their needs; in order for this to come about, they must be trained and must organize themselves. Progress must be made in this direction if women are to become participants in society and in the economy.

These aspirations are not alien to them; they are present in the continued existence of the Mothers' Centres, in women's requests to speak out, to have access to more education and to have social centres.47/

V. RECOMMENDATIONS AND POLICIES

In the 1983 FAO document, "Round Table on Survival Strategies of the Peasant Units", a social policy design for women is given on the basis of all the available data, which we fully endorse and support. Some comments are called for, however.

1. Two areas of concern in regard to rural women clearly stand out in the recommendations contained in official documents. One focuses on women as agricultural -and, particularly, food- producers, while the other relates to the integral development of women and their retention in rural areas. The situation is complicated by the fact that peasant women fulfil two different roles: housewife and farmer. Peasant women in the process of proletarianization also play a dual role: housewife and agricultural wage-earner. The issue then becomes how to implement policies which will reconcile both concerns and both roles without adding further to the burden of responsibilities and work already borne by women.

/2. In

2. In the policies there has been a de facto division between the public and private spheres. Women, since they are fundamentally "private" persons, are generally excluded from policy matters, which are public. This means that there are no studies on relations within the family: relations between the couple, socialization, subordination, the real existence of a patriarchy and how it is manifested, relations with the outside world, etc. There is, moreover, an erroneous conception of what is public and what is private. There is nothing more private than conception and yet it has been the object of public policies for over 20 years. Private matters relate to that other area of women's needs or rights to which reference was made; they are outside the sphere of productio and economic considerations, and enter fully into the area of "human needs".

3. It has become clear that peasant women's situations are extremely changeable, contrary to what had previously been thought. They are constantly undergoing two simultaneous processes: peasant stratification, and the family cycle. An additional factor in this regard is the type of agricultural economy in which they are involved. This is brought up in order to bring out the dynamics and the complexity of the situations which policies must take into account.

4. Another highly advisable course of action is to ask the following question in regard to each situation, case and country: what distinguishes a poor rural woman from a poor rural man or a poor rural child? The purpose of this question is to prevent policies from unnecessarily excluding other members of the family group.

5. It has been proposed that, within the context of the economic crisis affecting the region and in view of the increase in rural poverty, some of the solutions should be sought at the local level, where the organization of women should play a leading role both in the articulation of their demands and in the search for solutions based on their own resources. It is important that the technical and financial aid supplied should constitute a support for the mass of accumulated knowledge that peasant women possess (household organization, cultivation techniques, popular medicine, handicrafts, etc. ...) and reinforce their self-reliance in a different model of rural development.

6. Regarding compatibilities and the need to lighten rural women's current and future workload, a package of simple technologies or simple solutions

/should be

should be sought that would tend to lighten the tasks that demand excessive energy and time and to improve the conditions in which the family lives, e.g., fetching water, fetching firewood, making bread, washing clothes. For this it would be necessary to construct simple household elements; to use clean and cheap forms of energy; to increase the use of solar energy to provide hot water; to provide sanitary services, etc.

Further, a package of alternative technologies should be sought which would increase and enrich the variety of food products: e.g., the recovery of lost or forgotten vegetable species of high nutritive value such as the "quinoa"; the introduction of organic vegetable gardens; and techniques for preserving the new food products.

7. There are few studies dealing with the effect of the communication media on rural women, but it is well known that these generally transmit messages foreign to their situation, so that they do not help to develop their awareness and encourage them to modify their situation. An interesting contribution by women's organizations would be to foster horizontal communication media, that is, to develop alternative communication media that would help to give value to their own culture and resources, thereby increasing their self-reliance as an agent of change.

8. There is an unequal emphasis in the researches as between peasant women and proletarian women. The former have been sufficiently studied in the situation of peasant economies, but not in the situation of rural proletarianization. For instance the women in the forest villorios are proletarianized but have no work, agricultural or otherwise, and it is not known how they are inserted into the urban market. All the studies to date have been polarized between women of the rural area, with all the differences that are found there, and women of the urban area. The situation of women in the process of becoming proletarianized who are not yet inserted into the towns but instead live on the periphery or who are established in the villages, villorios, "rural communities" or unstable settlements, has not yet been included in any study, however.

9. Thus far, the studies carried out have not made specific recommendations for policies or have only done so in regard to particular problem situations. Moreover, the official organizations and non-governmental agencies accept the

/diagnoses supplied

diagnoses supplied by technicians and research findings which, although very important, usually represent outside views. This fact shows up the need to supplement this knowledge with information supplied by rural women themselves.

10. This increases the need to support different forms of research which will complement the traditional methods. From this standpoint it is important to collect and analyse the experiments done along the lines of participative research and popular education, as a way of going beyond the knowledge of the situation of rural women; that is, to know this reality in order to transform it. In this sense an important task can be performed in compiling and systematizing the numerous experiments that are being carried out by various groups in Latin America 48/ and which includes techniques such as: group discussions, case studies, personal testimony, dramatizations, etc. The present challenge is to give to these new methodologies a character of research. Arriaga (1981) points out that the chief faults of these methodologies can be summarized in the difficulties in establishing genuine criteria, in characterizing the pre-existent notions of the researcher and in formulating pronouncements of a general nature.

11. The different rural women and the changes they are experiencing should be ranked and classified, from the most general to the most particular cases, in such a way as to present an objective view of Latin American rural women. This classification should function as a matrix of data by subregions which would embrace the main results of researches, documents and theory on women produced in the region. The situation of the different women will make it possible to understand and differentiate them; it will enable policies to be sketched out on a concrete basis and, through the data provided, will feed back the knowledge to the women themselves.

Something similar has been proposed by Campaña, 1980, respecting the compilation and organization of information on women, in what has been termed "a basic model of information".

12. It would be advisable to make an assessment of the numerous action projects generally financed by non-governmental agencies. There are a great number of these devoted to women, but there has been no appraisal of their effects on women and their environment, on the integration with family and locality, the possibility of extending them to other places, their capacity for self-support, and other equally important factors.

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Notes

1/ United Nations World Conference on the Equality of Women and their Contribution to Development and Peace, Mexico, 1975, P. 10, No. 21 and p. 16, No. 14.

2/ United Nations, op. cit., p. 15, No. 9.

3/ "To formulate and execute government planning policies that provide for the effective integration of women in rural development, with a view to reducing their migration to urban areas which only worsens the problem of 'marginality'", p. 12, R.P.A., 1977.

4/ The Third Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, Mexico, 8-10 August 1983.

5/ ECLAC/FAO Expert Consultation on Styles of Development and Agricultural Policies, November 1983, Santiago, Chile.

6/ The additional countries are Peru, Colombia, Brazil, and in Central America, Panama, Nicaragua, Cuba and also Mexico.

7/ ECLAC/FAO Expert Consultation, op. cit.

8/ This does not mean that the production of these products has been sufficient; indeed, food imports are increasing day by day, and this situation is now seen as being a problem of food security.

9/ FAO, Informe de la Mesa Redonda sobre Estrategias de Sobrevivencia en Economías Campesinas: El Rol de la Mujer, Bogotá, Colombia, November 1983.

10/ Luis López Cordovez, "Latin American Food and Agriculture Situation", CEPAL Review, April 1982, p. 122.

11/ FAO, Round Table on Rural Poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean, May 1984, Santiago, Chile.

12/ FAO, Mesa Redonda sobre Estatregias ..., op. cit., p. 20.

13/ J. Matos Mar and J.M. Mejía, 1979, p. 116 (quoted by C. Miró and D. Rodríguez, Capitalismo, relaciones sociales de producción y población en el agro latinoamericano. Preliminary version mimeographed (1980), Mexico, p. 80.

14/ FAO, 1983, op. cit.

15/ Lourdes Arizpe, La migración por relevos y la reproducción social del campesinado. Cuadernos del Centro de Estudios Sociológicos No. 28, El Colegio de México, 1980.

16/ FAO, 1983, op. cit., p. 25.

17/ Zubeida M. Ahmad-Martha F. Loufti, ILO, Programme: Femmes Rurales, Geneva, January 1981.

18/ FAO, 1983, op. cit.

19/ F.H. Cardoso, G. Miller. Quoted by C. Miró and D. Rodríguez, p. 58, CEPAL Review, April 1982, Santiago, Chile, p. 61.

20/ F.H. Cardoso and G. Miller. Quoted by C. Miró and D. Rodríguez, in Capitalismo, Relaciones Sociales de Producción y Población en el Agro Latinoamericano. Preliminary version, Mexico, 1980, p. 61.

21/ FAO, 1983, op. cit., p. 37.

22/ World Conferences in Mexico (1975), Copenhagen (1980); Regional: Cuba (1977); Macuto, Venezuela (1979); Mexico (1983); Workshops on the Impact of Agricultural Modernization on the Participation of Women (Mexico, 1978); Round Table on the Survival Strategies in Peasant Economies: The Role of Women, Bogotá 1983; Expert Consultation on the Function of Women in Food Production (1983); and Special Meetings on Women: such as that in Rio de Janeiro on "La mujer en la fuerza de trabajo en América Latina", 1978; the Seminar on Female and Family Participation (CLACSO), Montevideo, 1979; the First Latin American Congress on Researches on Women in San José, Costa Rica, 1981; the Seminar on Programmes of Studies on Women, Rio de Janeiro, 1981; the Congress on Research on Women in the Andean Region, Lima, Peru, 1982; The compilation made by CEDES, Buenos Aires, on Research on Women; the compilation made by ACEP (Colombia), 1982, on Women Workers in Agriculture; and others.

23/ Cyntia Hewit de Alcántara, Modernization and the changing life chances of women in low-income rural families, ECLAC, May 1979.

24/ Carlos Borsotti, "América Latina: Análisis de Problemas Sociales Relativos a la Mujer en Diversos Sectores", ECLAC, May 1982.

25/ Regional Plan of Action, op. cit., paragraph 35.

26/ Borsotti, ECLAC, "América Latina: Análisis de Problemas Sociales Relativos a la Mujer en Diversos Sectores", 1982, p. 9.

27/ Marshall Wolfe, La Participación de la Mujer en América Latina, p. 21 in ECLAC, Mujeres en América Latina. Aportes para una discusión, Mexico, 1975.

28/ Ximena Aranda, op. cit., 1982.

29/ Magdalena León de Leal, Mujer y Capitalismo Agrario, 1980.

30/ Gabriela Villalobos, La Mujer Campesina: Su Aporte a la Economía Familiar y su Participación Social. First Mexican/Central American Symposium on Researches on Women, November 1977.

31/ This is clearly stated in the Manual del Hacendado Chileno of 1875, by Manuel José Balmaceda.

32/ María Coletta de Oliveira, Clase Social, Familia y Fecundidad, PISPAL, 1978.

33/ Marta Roldán, "Subordinación Genérica y Proletarización Rural: Un Estudio de Caso en el Noroeste Mexicano. Las Trabajadoras del Agro", ACEP, Vol. II, 1982.

34/ FAO, 1983, op. cit.

35/ FAO, Consulta de Expertos sobre Participación de la Mujer en la Producción de Alimentos, Rome, December 1983, No. 30, p. 7.

36/ C.D. Deere, La división por sexo del trabajo agrícola: Un estudio de la Sierra Norte del Perú, 1978. Quoted by Noordam, in La familia y la situación de la mujer en distintos contextos en Bolivia, ECLAC, VII, 1980.

37/ Observations by Noordam, 1980; Durston and Crivelli, 1983, Ordoñez.

38/ Paraguay, Case studies on Ojopoi. Case studies on repatriation. Round Table on Survival Strategies in Peasant Economies: The Role of Women, November 1983.

39/ María Coletta de Oliveira, Classe Social, Familia e Fecundidad, São Paulo, 1978.

40/ UNESCO.

41/ X. Aranda (1984), "Efectos de la pobreza y la proletarización en las mujeres de las familias rurales", paper presented at the Seminar on Family, Catholic University, Santiago, Chile, May 1984.

42/ Congress on Research on Women in the Andean Region, Lima, Peru, 1982.

43/ FAO document, 1983, Round Table ...

44/ This has been studied in detail in Aranda, 1982, op. cit., for Chile and CIPDA, Ema Rubin de Celis, for Peru.

45/ Verónica Oxman, La participación de la mujer campesina en organizaciones, GIA, 1983. It is noted that, in the case in question, the women were provided with 70 000 sewing machines and that 50% of the loan was recovered. Mobile shops were thus created.

46/ GIA, Cecilia Díaz, Organizaciones para Mujeres Rurales. Unpublished draft, Santiago, Chile, July 1984.

47/ In one action project involving the identification of those needs which were felt most strongly, the highest priority was given to a social centre; today there are four. Aranda, 1983, Project for the Organization of Rural Women for Productive Activities, unpublished reports (JAF, Academia de Humanismo Cristiano).

48/ In Chile there are some interesting experiments conducted by non-governmental organizations such as the Programme of Studies and Training for Peasant and Indigenous Women, the Centre for Educational Research and Development and other institutions linked with the Catholic Church. For the rest of Latin America, although we know that there are numerous agencies working along these lines, it was not possible to gain access to them.

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