



**United Nations International Research  
and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women  
(INSTRAW)**

**STATISTICS AND INDICATORS ON WOMEN: INSTRAW'S ACTIVITIES**

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## Introduction: Legislative Mandate

1. The urgent need for statistics and data on the role, situation and status of women was articulated in the early 1970's. The Plan of Action adopted in Mexico in 1975 by the World Conference of the International Women's Year confirmed this need, calling for immediate and effective measures to fill the gap in data on the economic and social status of women. In 1976, a group of Experts on the establishment of the Institute gave this issue high priority and it proposed that one of the primary tasks of this Institute should be to clarify the condition of women and their position in society by evaluating the existing data and recommending ways of improving it. In their view this should be based on the collection and analysis of data from national censuses, surveys and other sources.

2. This proposal, among others, was later endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly; the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and two of its functional bodies, the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) and the Commission on the Status of Women. This point was reiterated by the Programme of Action adopted at the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, (Copenhagen, 1980), which stated that "scientific and reliable data base should be established and suitable economic and social indicators urgently developed which are sensitive to the particular situation and needs of women as an integral part of national and international programmes of statistics".<sup>1)</sup>

3. These earlier recommendations were strengthened by the 1985 World Conference which marked the end of the United Nations Decade for Women (Nairobi) in the "Forward-looking Strategies". The Strategies call for timely and reliable statistics on women; emphasizing that accurate statistics have an important role to play in the elimination of stereotypes and the movement towards equality in development.<sup>2)</sup>

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1) Report of the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, held in Copenhagen, 14-30 July 1980 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.80IV.3) sect. IA, paras. 257-261.

2) Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women adopted by the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, Kenya, 15-26 July 1985 (para. 58).

4. From these proposals, recommendations and decisions of international conferences, INSTRAW's work programme has evolved. The programme is designed to assist and co-ordinate efforts at national and international levels in the development of analytical and conceptual framework for the collection, analysis and dissemination of information and research on the role of women. A major consideration in these and other activities of the Institute is that the participation of women in their own right and as equal partners with men, is crucial for full utilization of human resources in development. Recognizing that women's economic contribution in agriculture, the household and the informal sector is not sufficiently acknowledged, and that the underlying cause of this is inadequate collection and utilization of data and indicators relevant to assessing women's contribution to the national economy, INSTRAW from its inception, has attached great importance to improving statistics and indicators on the situation of women.

5. One of its first activities was the launching of a long term project for improving statistics and indicators on the situation of women, thus responding to the increasing demand for a sound data base which would lead to a proper consideration of issues of relevance to women in the socio-economic and planning process; not only in terms of resources to be used to remedy their situation but also in reference to their participation in this process.

## II. INSTRAW's programme of activities in Statistics and Indicators as related to Women

6. In order to contribute towards the building up of a sound data base which would adequately reflect the role and position of women in society, it was necessary first to survey and analyse current methods and concepts most widely used in data collection and compilation before proceeding to generating additional basic indicators on the situation of women or developing new concepts and methods.

7. A. The first phase of INSTRAW's work in statistics during its biennium 1982-1983 was carried out in co-operation with the United Nations Statistical



Office which resulted in the preparation of two technical reports (i) Compiling Social Indicators on the Situation of Women and (ii) Improving Concepts and Methods for Statistics and Indicators on the Situation of Women.<sup>1)</sup>

8. The technical report on Compiling Social Indicators is user-oriented, focusing attention on data which are already collected in the statistical systems prevailing in most countries using existing concepts and methods. The findings are not primarily concerned with the development of new data collection programmes but rather, with developing reliable indicators on the situation of women from existing censuses, household surveys and registration systems, according to the data systems existing in any given country.

9. The report recognizes the hazards of working uncritically with many data series currently available, and provides some discussion and evaluation of the underlying methods and concepts of existing sources so that they may be meaningfully interpreted and effectively exploited in terms of user's immediate priorities. The report endeavours to provide some orientation on the complementary roles of censuses, sample surveys and registration and record systems; and illustrates with indicators the potentials of data from all three sources, particularly those which may be developed from data systems which already exist in many countries in fields such as employment and women's work, education, training and health, as well as indicators of position within the family or household. The indicators presented in the document should help to measure the unequal distribution of resources between men and women, as well as the diversity in the situation of women.

10. The report suggested that any national statistical office or other organization seeking to prepare indicators on the situation of women should:

- a) Include indicators which both reflect the status of women and indicate the situation of women relative to that of men;
- b) Avoid composite indices of women's status except in very special circumstances;

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1) United Nations: Compiling Social Indicators on the Situation of Women and Improving Concepts and Methods for Statistics and Indicators on the Situation of Women. UN Sales No. E.84.XVII.2 and E.84.XVII.3.

c) Disaggregate, where possible, by significant socio-economic groups and by rural and urban residence, this being essential for most analysis and planning. Official census, survey and registration data may need to be supplemented by case studies of particular groups or areas.

11. In addition to the above methodological suggestions, it is further recommended that any limited list of principal indicators should include:

- i) Some which focus on economic participation, such as employment in the modern sector, wage earners as a proportion of the total and occupational segregation;
- ii) Some measures of literacy and educational attainment;
- iii) Some indicators of position within the family or household.

12. Other indicators will vary and reflect particular country needs and interests, data availability and the uses to be made of indicators on the situation of women.

13. The report on Improving Concepts and Methods for Statistics and Indicators on the Situation of Women provides a critical review of the current approach to data collection and identifies problem areas where a reconceptualization is needed. Additionally, the report suggests changes such as a broadening of concepts and definitions used in data collection and refining classification schemes to reflect the specific circumstances of not only women but men.

14. The general approach in Improving Concepts and Methods is to suggest ways in which individual societies could adapt or redesign procedures for collecting and compiling statistics to produce a more accurate picture of women's needs and participation which would allow pragmatic action according to special circumstances of each country.

15. INSTRAW in collaboration with the United Nations Statistical Office convened an Expert Group in April 1983 to review the two reports as well as to make recommendations for follow-up activities. These recommendations covered such issues as ways to link the selection of indicators to priorities on women's needs at the national level, needed methodological research, ways of enhancing national data collection and compilation activities and needs for related technical co-operation.

16. Among priorities for follow-up, the Expert Group recommended that the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and INSTRAW work with national users and producers of statistics and appropriate international groups:

(a) To develop national and regional workshops to identify and establish priorities for the selection of statistics and indicators in terms of women's needs in specific countries. These workshops could also train users and producers of data in the analysis of sex differentials in key areas of concern;

(b) To promote the development of new or improved concepts and methods for use in future national data collection activities through research, testing and exchange of information;

(c) To develop training materials and technical documentation needed for the workshops and for national statisticians and others interested in developing better statistics and indicators on the situation of women;

(d) To encourage ongoing national data collection activities, such as censuses and surveys, to take full account of the needs for data on the situation of women;

(e) To promote interaction between national and international specialists on a regular basis;

(f) To promote the exploitation of existing data archives with a view to developing new tabulations of existing data.

17. The Expert Group also identified a number of specific areas where research and testing leading to improved statistical concepts and methods were particularly important. These included: (i) intra-household income distribution, (ii) women's participation in the agricultural labour force, (iii) the informal sector; (iv) time allocation; (v) non-monetary income and consumption and housework and their valuation; (vi) training outside the regular education system; and (vii) households and families.

18. Although the recommendations of the Expert Group clearly mandate an ambitious effort they represent the necessary steps to realize the flow of relevant, timely and reliable data required by national policy-makers as well as the general public in each country to assess the situation of women, and stimulate equitable policies and programmes for the global population.

B. Second phase of INSTRAW activities

19. During 1984/1985 INSTRAW implemented the second phase of its programme on Improving Statistics and Indicators on the Situation of Women. The focus was on follow-up activities as recommended by the Expert Group Meeting. In keeping with the Institute's mode of operation - networking - these activities were carried out in co-operation with other United Nations bodies and agencies with which extensive consultations were held for the identification of specific priority areas and the elaboration of the activities.

(a) ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE/INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (ECE/INSTRAW)

20. In co-operation with the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) INSTRAW held a joint meeting in Geneva, 11-14 March 1985 on Statistics and Indicators on the Role and Situation of Women.

21. Four main agenda items were discussed (i) data sources used to obtain statistics on women, (ii) adequacy of existing classification schemes for statistics on women, (iii) conceptual and methodological problems and issues in statistics on women, (iv) recent and planned future improvements in statistics on women.

22. The meeting noted that although a large body of useful statistics on women was available for countries throughout the ECE region through the various data sources, they were often scattered throughout many different statistical publications and therefore not readily available to a large proportion of users. The meeting also identified a number of important problem areas in which further work was required, particularly with reference to the development of improved concepts, definitions, classifications and statistical methods used in deriving statistics and indicators on the role and situation of women. It stressed the importance of statistical

offices making further advances in their efforts to respond to the growing demands for more policy-relevant statistics on women and their life situation. In this connection, it was suggested that national statistical offices in the ECE region can play a leading role in future work on topics referred to which could benefit countries in other regions as well when adapted to their specific conditions and priorities.

23. Participants at the meeting felt it important that a vast effort of collaboration be undertaken between users and producers of statistics, and in particular that statistics offices meet the growing demand for statistics on women and their situation which would be more useful to users from the point of view of policies and that they also conduct more in-depth analysis of available statistics as a function of equality policies implemented. They also stressed the importance of associating both producers and users of statistics in the methodological work on the development and improvement of statistics and indicators on the role and situation of women.

24. The meeting identified areas and issues requiring further work by the Conference of European Statisticians, to be implemented in part in collaboration with INSTRAW on the following subjects: (i) methods developed for assigning socio-economic positions to women living in different situations (e.g. marital unions, living alone); (ii) problems in the measurement of the economic activity of women; (iii) development of a multi-dimensional economic activity concept describing how the individual spends his/her time on more than one activity; (iv) problems in the measurement of women's unemployment and under-employment; (v) methods of measuring women's contribution to household income; (vi) methodological and measurement problems of household consumption (including consumption of home-produced goods and services); (vii) life-cycle studies and cohort and other longitudinal analysis; (viii) social mobility studies; (ix) problems in the collection of data on attitudes and feelings through sample surveys; (x) improvement of the definitions and classifications of households and families (covering different types of household compositions) to be used in censuses and surveys; (xi) socio-economic group classifications; (xii) methods of measuring inequalities; (xiii) statistics on victims of criminal offences and violence and (xiv) power and influence of women in society. Papers presented at this meeting are being reviewed for publication as a technical report.

(b) ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA/INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE  
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (ECA/INSTRAW)

25. In collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the United Nations Statistical Office (UNSO), a subregional seminar on improved statistics and indicators for women in development was organized in Harare, Zimbabwe from 29 April to 7 May 1985.

26. The purpose of the workshop in which both users and producers of statistics participated was to review concepts and methods for statistics and indicators for women and development planning at the national level and also:

- (a) To facilitate a dialogue between producers and users on the sources and application of statistics and indicators on women.
- (b) To familiarize participants with
  - sources of data on women,
  - the resources of national statistical offices,
  - a variety of indicators useful for planning, monitoring and evaluating policies, plans and programmes for women in development, together with methods of calculation and presentation,
  - current and/or potential application of these indicators, and the user organizations;
- (c) To provide participants with experience in calculating and presenting a representative set of these indicators;
- (d) To contribute to the on-going search for better ways of incorporating data on women into national statistical series, and of using such data in policy and programme planning, monitoring and evaluation.

27. The meeting discussed in depth all three sources of information. Censuses, household surveys, and administrative registers. It indicated the advantages and disadvantages of each and that the three sources are important, and complementary to each other. Censuses are largely used, and it was felt that administrative registering in many African countries needed to be improved.



28. It was indicated that since censuses are still the major source of information in Africa it should be used in the most productive and effective way by introducing new questions in the census. Women organizations should be active and should indicate what their needs are from the census and introduce the questions and the changes while the census is being designed.

29. It was emphasized that diverse interpretations as to the head of the household was a major problem. Another problem was the measurement of unemployment and the unpaid family worker. In industrial statistics, there is a need to collect data on the employees by sex.

30. In order to overcome these problems it was indicated that governments should build in a women's component in surveys to try to compute women's activities. Special emphasis should be given to the informal sector of the economy and the issue of private ownership. Among the conclusions arrived at, were the following:

- small scale survey should be carried out to be able to measure attitude,
- importance of dissemination of information collected through censuses or survey, etc.
- importance of decentralizing statistics, but also to have a centralized place where various data collected through census, administrative registry and special surveys are coordinated.
- registration records to be ameliorated.
- create a dialogue between users and producers to raise awareness on the importance of methodology of collection of statistical data on women, analysis and evaluation.
- statistical offices should be strengthened.

(c) ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN/INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (ECLAC/INSTRAW)

31. In collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, a subregional seminar on "Statistical Analysis on the Situation of Women in the Labour Market through Household Surveys" was organized in Montevideo, Uruguay, 3-6 June 1985.

32. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss in depth the document prepared under the joint ECLAC/INSTRAW project "Statistical analysis on the situation

of women in Latin American countries through household surveys" in view to improve and refine the analysis in the light of observations based on the experiences of the participants in their respective countries as well as by their suggestions. The participants were producers and users of statistics as well as officers responsible for the formulation of employment policies.

33. They considered the analysis as an important contribution of the use of statistics and the instrument, the household survey, towards shaping conceptual frameworks and instruments for the collection of information on women. They were also of the opinion that the substantive analysis and methodology used in the document contained a number of innovative aspects which could serve the entire region and could be duplicated in those countries which had a permanent household survey programme.

34. The meeting felt that a better understanding of the problems faced by women could be obtained not only through the improvement of household surveys, but also through the study of specific problems related to the situation of women. For example, a new methodology had to be used when measuring the variations in women heads of household;

- setting up of working groups to study such concepts as work, economic activity, household, family relations, relationship between the production and reproduction role.
- the importance of new methodology, reformulation of questions, tabulation and analysis of household surveys as applied to rural areas.
- measuring of female activity in agricultural tasks.
- condition and status of female headship taking into account subregional differences.

(d) INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION/INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (ILO/INSTRAW)

35. In collaboration with ILO, a report on Women in Economic Activity: A Global Statistical Survey (1950-2000) was prepared and published in July 1985. The importance of statistical data on women's labour participation as a basis for policy planning, dissemination of information and further research has been



repeatedly highlighted in international fora. Indicators concerning the labour participation of women are not only essential for the formulation of policy measures aiming at the amelioration of women's condition, but can also serve as a useful basis for development planning in general. Responding to the need for improved statistical data and analysis on working women the joint publication Women in Economic Activity: A Global Statistical Survey (1950-2000) consists of regional studies from the Africa, Latin America and Asia regions as well as from European market economy countries, and the European socialist countries. Its significant contribution is that it also includes a global analytical summary of the situation of women in the labour force. In addition to statistical data and analysis, the document incorporates projections until the year 2000. The main themes developed in the document are:

- the size and geographical distribution of the total female population and of the total female economically active population (globally, regionally and by country); levels and trends in female participation rates; distribution of women workers according to age; distribution of women workers by economic sector, by occupation and by status of employment; hours of work; size and geographic distribution of female employed and unemployed workers; other characteristics of women workers (e.g. marital status, fertility).

36. It is hoped that the presentation of statistical data and analysis on working women will provide an input to and assist in:

- formulating policy measure with a view to promoting equality of opportunity and treatment for women workers;
- pointing to the existing discrimination among working women and calling attention to areas where remedial action is needed;
- promoting awareness about the economic contribution of women in societies;
- identifying areas in which further data collection might be necessary;
- facilitate the reorientation, where necessary of development planning and strategies.

37. The publication also examines in its introduction some unresolved issues in the measurement of economic activity. Topics discussed, include problems of definition

and estimation of the level of participation in the informal sector economy, in agricultural activity, and in unpaid family work.

(c) UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL OFFICE/INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (UNSO/INSTRAW)

38. In co-operation with the United Nations Statistical Office, two technical reports, which contribute to a better understanding of women's work in and outside the household such as in subsistence agriculture, services and informal economy, were prepared.

39. The first report - Improving Statistics and Indicators on Women Using Household Surveys - discusses with illustrations questions, classifications and definitions which countries could use in their household survey programmes to collect and compile statistics on the situation of women.

40. The report stresses the need to give women fair and equitable treatment in systems of data collection. However, as it is more significant to know what their situation is in comparison to that of men, the report emphasizes the need for systems which yield data that accurately reflect the situation of women as well as of men. The report points out that the problem of under representation or omission of women in the data collection exercise stems primarily from the concepts and definitions used in the enumeration procedures and identifies areas which need special focus if the quality of data on women's situation is to be improved. Reviewing the main source of data on women in developing countries, censuses, the report cites three types of problems associated with census data:

- (i) only a limited number of subject areas are usually covered;
- (ii) low quality of data stemming from problems of measuring certain variables;
- (iii) availability and dissemination of relevant information.

Household surveys can be used to address some of the problems associated with census data, but the report points out, definite steps need to be taken to improve the data collection system.

41. The report enumerates the various stages in planning and conducting a household survey in which the situations of women and men are recorded with equal accuracy. These stages are similar to those currently used in censuses

and surveys except that the report advocates for greater involvement of women in all the various stages. For example the report suggests that:

(i) More women should be incorporated into the staff who will be responsible for the survey.

(ii) The advisory committee should have a mixed composition, with representation from the academic and public spheres, and from organisations at the grassroot level.

(iii) Special attention needs to be given to reducing sex biases in the formulation, language and interpretation of questions.

(iv) When coding responses, women should not be grouped into a few broad categories; detailed, clearly defined categories should be used in order to produce some differentiation among women.

(v) To increase women's accessibility to the survey results, special seminars and "popular" publications aimed at women could be used. Specifically, since numerically, women have less training compared to men, preliminary presentation of results should make extensive use of pictures, explanatory texts and graphics.

42. In addition to improving the systems of data collection, the report also suggests changes in the formulation of questions to determine the characteristics of the household, the labour force status of members of the household, their educational attainment and their income and well being. But in order to maintain comparability with existing series the report proposes the use of the "building block" approach - which implies that new concepts and definitions may be adopted while retaining some old concepts.

43. Finally the report cautions that the use of household surveys should be limited to collecting data or information for which it is well suited. Household surveys, the report points out, are least suited for collecting data that:

- (a) relate to the society as a whole;
- (b) relate to attitudes;
- (c) relate to a rare category of people, or
- (d) require intensive interviewing approach or lengthy questioning.

44. The second report, Valuation of Women's Participation in the Informal Sector of the Economy, reviews existing frameworks for measuring and valuing women's participation in non-monetary economic activities and suggests ways in which the System of National Accounts (SNA) could be revised to improve the quality of data on women in this sector.

45. The report highlights the complexities involved in delimiting those activities of women which can be classified as contributions to economic growth and those that can not. The distinction, the report notes, is more easily drawn when women's activity is fully embedded in the market mechanism and can thus be defined as "productive". However, numerous other circumstances of female activity, disproportionately found in the informal sector, are not easily classified as "productive" or "non-productive".

46. The report reviews some conceptual frameworks that have been proposed to capture and classify these activities of women which have hitherto been excluded from the System of National Accounting, and notes that previous criteria of the classification scheme have emphasized either the characteristics of the activity or the characteristics of the unit performing the activity. These different viewpoints and also the varied social and cultural contexts in which the frameworks have been developed have led to different inconsistent definitions.

47. The 1968 edition of SNA attempts to provide a single framework for classification of women's informal activities. Some aspects of the framework, the report argues, are too general and thus difficult to apply in practice. Also there are some women's activities which by SNA standards are not part of the national product. The report, therefore, attempts to identify the problems and ambiguities which the SNA presents and suggests alternative definitions which will extend the coverage of women's activities in national accounting.

48. The report notes that statistics related directly to women's activities in the informal sector are generally lacking. As a result these activities have to be compiled and their value inputed from information and statistical figures prepared for different purposes. At present the sources of statistical information from which women's informal activities can be valued include:

- (i) Population censuses;
- (ii) Household surveys;
- (iii) Income and Expenditure surveys;
- (iv) Labour force surveys;
- (v) Surveys on household enterprises or household economic activities ;  
and also "time use" surveys.

In addition administrative files where statistical figures are an unintended by-product could be used.

49. Information obtained from all these different sources should be used critically; that is footnotes to tables should be studied and in addition, the questionnaires that have been used in obtaining the data and instructions issued to the enumerators should be examined. Finally, the report offers some suggestions for valuing women's informal sector activities, but cautions that as sources of data vary considerably from country to country methods have to be adapted to the specific circumstances of each country.

(f) OTHER ACTIVITIES

50. INSTRAW has collaborated with the United Nations University (UNU) in its long term project on Household, Gender, Age (HGA). The four research projects which have been underway since 1984 were reviewed in a joint meeting held by UNU and INSTRAW in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, February 1985. The discussions emphasized:

- (i) The importance of designing the HGA research projects in such a way that theoretical concerns are linked to the HGA primary objective of understanding in different cultural contexts the changing roles, activities and statuses of women in the household and in the community.

(ii) The importance of utilizing a life course approach to relate the individual's changing role, activity and status from birth to death to changing social, cultural and economic circumstances.

(iii) The usefulness in combining qualitative sources of data such as extensive personal life stories, and qualitative methods, such as discourse analysis, with quantitative sources and methods in the life course approach to evaluating HGA projects.

(iv) HGA's potential contribution to a better understanding of development processes with the role of gender taken into account.

51. At the regional level, INSTRAW presented a paper to the regional conference for Asia on "Women and the Household" held in New Delhi, India, 27-31 January 1985.

52. At the national level INSTRAW in collaboration with the Office for the Promotion of Women and the National Office of Statistics of the Dominican Republic, held a workshop on "Improving Statistics on Women in the Dominican Republic" in Santo Domingo, 6-10 May 1985.

### C. Third phase of INSTRAW activities

53. The activities of INSTRAW during the biennium 1986-87 are designed primarily to strengthen the national research and training capabilities for the advancement of women of developing countries. While continuing its previous activities in improving concepts and measures of female economic activity, the Institute is also directing much of its attention on training both producers and users to adopt a broader perspective on the collection and analysis of data, especially data on women. In addition, the Institute is compiling for publication a technical report on analytical tools that can be used in studying inequalities.

#### (a) Training in Statistics

54. Six national workshops (including a subregional workshop) on Improving Statistics on Women and Development are planned for the two-year period. Three of these workshops are being planned for 1986: one for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), one in Nigeria, and the third in Pakistan.

55. As in previous seminars, these workshops are expected to facilitate a dialogue between producers and users of statistics on women; to familiarize



participants with sources of data on women, and with current and potential applications of the available data. In general, the seminars are expected to contribute to the on-going search for better ways of defining women's role and participation in national economies and expand the use of data on women in policy and programme planning, monitoring and evaluation of progress in national development.

(b) Research in Statistical Methodology

56. (i) Expert Group Meeting

In co-operation with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), INSTRAW and the United Nations Statistical Office (UNSO) are organizing an expert group meeting to review in detail statistical issues concerning women's income and production and recommend ways to improve the measurement of women's income and production in the informal sector within the structure of the United Nations System of National Accounts.

57. The two principal documents to be reviewed at this meeting are the technical reports prepared by INSTRAW in co-operation with UNSO, Improving Statistics and Indicators on Women Using Household Surveys and Valuation of Women's Participation in the Informal Sector of the Economy, the contents of which are summarized in section B (e). In addition, several other papers will be presented at the meeting. The meeting will focus on conceptual and practical issues and national experiences in collecting statistics on women's income and production.

58. (ii) Measuring Inequalities

In addition to clarifying conceptual issues for improving statistics on women, INSTRAW is also studying ways of analyzing and presenting, in the most concise form, data on inequalities in income, occupational and education attainment.

59. A report is being prepared which reviews various analytical techniques used in national and international studies to measure and monitor changes over time in inequalities between men and women. The report examines the application of such measures in other fields of statistics and indicators, and selectively applies some of the techniques to measure inequalities in a few countries.

### III. GENERAL REMARKS AND CONCLUSION

60. Since the beginning of the UN Decade for Women in 1975, a wide range of initiatives have been taken at the national level, including declaration of policies, legislative changes and practical measures, to eliminate gender based discrimination. Concurrently, increases in female participation in the labour force have been observed. Whether these increases are a result of the policies which have attempted to promote the full integration of women into national economies, or a result of improved concepts and measures of female activity remains unclear. What is clear is the persistent need for improved ways of valuing women's work especially in the informal sector.

61. Though these issues of measurement have received a lot of attention in the past, inadequate gathering, analysis and utilization of data relevant to understanding the role of women, remains one of the major impediments to the acknowledgement of women's contribution to economic development. Particularly in measuring women's economic contribution within the household and in the nation at large, new concepts should address some crucial questions as: Why women work; which women are working; what are the jobs in which women are occupied; and what are the rewards women receive for their labour.

#### (i) Definition of Economic Activity

62. In most censuses and surveys, an individual is classified as economically active if the individual carried out any economic activity during a certain reference period. The reference period often varies from one week to one year. When describing economic activity of women, the first difficulty arises from the fact that they normally undertake multiple activities which, because they are presumed to be extensions of their familial role, are usually classified as "non-economic". As "home maker" is listed as one type of activity it is likely that some female economic activities especially informal sector activity are classified in this category even if by conventional concepts they could be classified as active. The second problem relates to the reference period, which has the tendency of resulting in an undercount of seasonal workers in the field of agriculture. There is the need for more precise measures of female economic activity especially in the informal sector, the agricultural sector and unpaid family work. In addition, the biases associated with different definitions of the reference period need to be ascertained.



(ii) Informal Sector Activity

63. There is generally no agreed upon definition of "the informal sector", but the term is often used to refer to non-registered, small-scale and informally organized activities. Most women, particularly those in developing countries, are predominantly found in the informal sectors of the economy, in both rural and urban areas, where activities are difficult to quantify. One of the reasons why activities in this sector were not earlier quantified is because they were considered to be the extension of family and household duties. Activities such as agricultural processing and storage, producing food from the family or household plots, looking after farm animals and selling home produced goods on the market, are also difficult to quantify.

64. Despite the diversity in activities undertaken in this sector, few studies on the informal sector activities provide occupational breakdown by sex. It might be useful to separate data for men and women to specify the different types of activities performed by them. This would help to understand the size and nature of occupations performed by women; no doubt, women's occupational structure in the informal sector, may be strikingly different from men.

(iii) Agricultural Production

65. For a more accurate evaluation of women's contribution to agricultural production, household data from labour force and agricultural surveys need to be tabulated by size of land holding, production of major crops, ownerships and access to modern inputs. In general, however, women's production in agriculture are undervalued for various reasons. Basically the methodology of designing household surveys, census enumeration and techniques of interviewing women are not well suited to separating some agricultural tasks from household work. This results in no rewards or low rewards for a large majority of women who are food growers or food providers.

(iv) Unpaid Family Workers

66. Among the categories which include employers, own-account workers, and employees, the unpaid family worker is the category that has been particularly discriminating against women. For example, due to problems of definition as to what constitutes unpaid family labour, women in joint business enterprises with

their husbands are classified as unpaid family workers (even though they could just as well be classified as own account workers) but their husbands are classified as own account workers. Also, due to serious difficulties in quantifying various activities, women in this category are sometimes classified as homemakers.

67. Better classification of women's work in this area would provide greater insight to women's contribution to the national economic product; support accurate measurement of labour force participation rates; and reveal the hidden unemployment of women.

68. Much effort has been made to improve the existing concepts, methods and techniques of compiling and tabulating data on the advancement of women. However, there is a need to continue the work at the international, regional and national levels to develop adequate conceptual and analytical frameworks for studying inequalities in specific subject areas. INSTRAW's major contribution to these efforts during the 1986/87 period will be its work on women and the informal sector.





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