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United Nations International Research and Training Institute
for the Advancement of Women

WOMEN'S ADVANCES IN THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE:
LOOKING BACK WITH HOPE

Dr. Krishna Ahooja-Patel

An INSTRAW Paper presented at
Seely Hall - Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts (USA)
on 20 October 1986

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Introduction

To pin-point the exact landmarks of the main elements of social change is a difficult task in history. The main challenge lies in the fact that the processes of change are complex and hidden and come up to the surface at unexpected junctures and turns. In addition, there is a tendency on the part of society to accept what is given and familiar as a permanent state of affairs. For example, it is difficult to determine the exact date of the industrial revolution or the landmarks that shaped its course during the last 200 years. It is equally difficult to determine why the industrial revolution began much earlier in certain countries before spreading to others.

Similarly, to define the exact points at which women's problems became questions and then issues and now probably a interdisciplinary subject in its own right, would not lend itself to a chronology of dates. Economic and social changes that have changed or altered the status of women everywhere have occurred in leaps and bounds and cannot yet be handed over to econometrics for linear or regression analysis. However, there are some events that have lighted the road towards advance and these put together could be classified as social and economic indicators. They are probably the beginnings of a "silent revolution" which has been taking place in our sub-conscious and is crossing over the conscience level in society today. What is "silent" about the revolution is that unlike other revolutions in history, its battlefields are not the streets or individuals at the workplace, but instead the "household" or the "family" where women are applying unique protest techniques and are facing a spectrum of situations which could be described as "cooperation", "conflict", "confrontation" and "consensus". All or a combination of these are used to sensitise society on the rightful place of women.

History as has been presented down to us has but one thread, told over and over again through generations and across cultures that most societies are structured on the basis of a patriarchal system which accords a secondary place to women. The accepted standard for being human in this system was being male; which pushed the female human beings to become "the other" or "secondary" (as first spelled out in a brilliant masterpiece "The Second Sex" written by Simone Beauvoir in 1949). Consequently it is

not surprising that international bodies, governments and community groups discuss the world's critical problems such as calling mini or maxi summits, or declaring war and peace, considering poverty lines, managing refugee settlements, discovering new diseases, deciding on the nature of ecological balance and so on - without women. No wonder that the basic perception that among those who suffer more and most from the fallout of such problems are women, has completely escaped the decision takers.

The year 1985 marked the end of the United Nations Decade for Women the main theme of which was equality, development and peace. There was an early recognition of the fact that the three are interlinked in a chain of cause and effect and that without the prerequisite one, the other objectives could not be implemented. Looking back in 1986, it is becoming even clearer that peace among nations is a condition of the development of society. This year brought into focus the changing perspectives on women in economy and society and the sharp realisation that women are still far from achieving equity with men and realising their full potential.

The Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies adopted by consensus in July 1985, reflect the central role of women's questions in national and international priorities in a 372 paragraph document. It is a charter of women's rights and puts together dreams and aspirations. These paragraphs carefully confirm the proposition that the economic contribution of women is a key element in planning and implementing social policies and this requires women's access to economic assets and political power. There is an urgent need to strengthen the sectoral dimension of national and international policies and programmes to bring women into the mainstream of current and future activities and this has been re-emphasised in several UN resolutions.¹

1. U.N. General Assembly resolutions 40/108 and 40/204 of December 1985 and ECOSOC resolution 1985/46 of May 1985. See also the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, (New York, 1985), doc. A/CONF.116/28.

The Forward Looking Strategies go one step further and provide a framework for a long term vision of the future and spell out policies and action to be taken until the end of the century. The Strategies clearly indicate that all women's issues are human issues and that the neglect or exclusion of women in decision-making processes will seriously jeopardise economic and social progress². Any value system, any economic structure, or social order no matter what its political orientation will have to take note of the neglected human resource potential of women and of the vast inequalities faced by women worldwide.

It was once assumed that development efforts aimed at people in general would automatically benefit everyone, male and female. However there is no automaticity in development nor in the benefits it will bestow on any particular social group. This is one of the basic messages of the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985).

It appears that the root causes why women's problems are considered non-problems or women's issues are relegated to non-issues, have not yet been clearly identified. Across cultures, this is closely linked to perceptions which create barriers in recognizing a "problem" or understanding a social "issue", linked to women's lives. To eliminate areas of darkness and focusing on bringing women's issues into the spotlight as an integral part of all development policies and programmes will continue to be crucial till the end of the century. Now, that the reflections on the goals of the Decade have begun, it might be the right time to take stock on what has happened to women and whether the meaning of "advancement" could be correctly applied to this transitional stage in history.

2. Ibid.

I What are the issues?

There are several issues which form the base to women's achievement of equity with men. The crux of the problem is which of these issues should be given priority and which could be left aside. This becomes clear in a random sample of problems for which only partial answers exist.

One such issue is the lack of diversification of women's training and employment opportunities. With women's increased participation in the labour force in general, their share of professional, technical and related occupations is also increasing but not in the necessary magnitude. For women to be properly integrated into development policies and programmes they must also occupy top professional and technical positions and take part in decision making processes.

Rural women share the same needs as women in general but, due to their particular isolation and living conditions, they have additional specific requirements. These women must have equal access to land, education, technology, training and extension services, and credit and other resources. Because these women are usually beyond the reach of trade unions and other women's organizations, rural women need special attention in legislation and development programmes.

Special consideration must also be given to women in the informal sector where they are doing a range of tasks neither counted nor accounted for in the economy. Their situation requires detailed research to devise new perspectives in order to make them visible and to find new ways so that they continue to make a decent living. In this sector there are "home makers" and "home workers" which includes millions of women either paid very little or not at all.

The matter of women's workload must also be considered. Since in most countries women frequently combine paid employment and multiple tasks of family responsibilities, their work-hours are lengthened and additional stress is placed on their physical and mental health. For this reason the working life of women has specific problems at the workplace. Its impact on the welfare of the family is different and special from those of male workers. They need to reconcile different demands of job and family to

achieve an equilibrium between the job and welfare at home. However, it needs to be noted that women who work outside the house have fewer children, as paid employment tends to reduce fertility rates, according to some recent surveys³.

While women share the problems and difficulties with all workers in the production process, their "reproductive capacity" places them in a different category at the workplace. They need and require different types of "protection" without discrimination because of their physiology, whether or not they have children.

Special legal provisions protecting working women - for example maternity benefits - do not necessarily contradict the principle of "equality of treatment" if it is interpreted in a wider sense and not in the restrictive meaning of "similarity" with male workers. Women's physiology and in particular their child-bearing function, requires the application of norms of equity and social welfare at the workplace. In general, conditions of work are also inextricably linked to scientific and technological development in production and the manner in which they aggravate or reduce strenuous and unhealthy work so as to contribute to the improvement of the general social welfare of all workers.

Another important area of research and investigation has arisen, since women's participation in trade unions is increasing and more and more women are joining trade unions, especially in occupations where they represent the majority of employees. However, women's representation in national and craft trade unions is still disproportional to the number of women workers. This may be a reflection of the low status given to women workers but it also shows that where trade unions have played an important role in national decisions, women's participation has tended to be lower.

3. See U.N. Report on World Social Situation, (New York, 1982), doc. E/CN.5/1983/3/ST/ESA/125, ILO Convention on Workers with Family Responsibilities, (Geneva, 1981); Working Women in Socialist Countries: The fertility connection, Bodrova and Anker (eds.) (Geneva, 1985); "Women's work activity and fertility", G. Standing in Bulatao and Lee (eds.) Determinants of Fertility in Developing Countries (New York, 1983).

Most female white-collar workers are secretaries and clerical workers (the least unionised section of white-collar workers). In the industrial sector unionisation among women is very weak and in the agricultural sectors their representation is almost non-existent. In general, it can be said that women enter occupations where motivation for unionisation is low. Where women are represented in unions their interests tend to be neglected. This problem is global and has multiple diversions linked to the political situation in each country. Trade unions play an important role in the diffusion of information to working women increasing their awareness of their rights as set forth by legislation, but again social and cultural traditions keep most women away from organized groups.

Women's organisations have also multiplied rapidly but seem to move round single issues. These issues have shorter time horizons and seem closer to the workplace, for example the payment of various benefits, maternity protection and social security. These are very social issues, but the current industrial relations system seems to put them down as low priority issues. This means that the women's organisations are less likely to make an impact on higher and strategic levels of decision-making, unless their bargaining power is enhanced.

From all these research areas, the issues presented here are those that occupied the centre stage during the United Nations Decade. For example, the question of defining women's work and the elimination of discrimination in the employment sector. This is spelt out in unequal remuneration, sex biased criteria for job evaluation and classification, and the lack of special maternity protection measures. These are bread and butter issues as employment is at the heart of the development process and women's emancipation is linked to earning an income in their own right and thereby enhancing their status.

II The meaning of work for women.

a) New legal norms

There are new economic, legal and social norms beginning to evolve towards giving women a better deal in the world of work. But despite formal policy declarations and legislative reforms, they do not yet enjoy freedom from discrimination in access to employment. Everywhere women form a large percentage of the labour force but are still auxilliary, marginal or part-time workers. Somewhere between legislation and its enforcement, policy and practice, and principle

and implementation lies a watershed. In theory, the right to work is equally available to all citizens in a society, but there is such difference in its application between men and women leading to an increasing number of women in the category of unemployed in many industrial market economies and developing countries.

Since the beginning of the Decade there have been many advances made in the legislation concerning employment in many countries. The spirit and intention of international standards on the right to work have found expression in some constitutions which make a direct reference to women. (Algeria, Bangladesh, Cuba, Hungary, Mexico, Portugal, Spain and the USSR)⁴. Several other countries for example the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy and Switzerland, while not specifically mentioning the right to work guarantee 'equal opportunity in employment between men and women' in the supreme law of the land. In the industrialised market economies several countries have adopted anti-discrimination legislation, some countries have made special efforts to promote equality policies, while others have set up institutional mechanisms to enhance equal access in employment, training and social facilities.

b) Difference between "work" and "employment"

Official statistics reporting on women's participation in economic activity are underestimated due to the application of outmoded tools and techniques of quantification. There is also the situation which has been described as "statistical discrimination" - a situation in which decisions regarding women are based on "group probabilities" - a collective perception of what constitutes women's work.

Thus the first major problem is to define work itself and how it relates to women. The existing definitions of "work", the methodology of quantifying "economic activity", the components of labour force statistics - all but reflect a partial image of women's work. The extensive exercise of mathematical model-building in economic literature, the built-in-bias in the social sciences and the systematic neglect of the national planning institutions have carefully concealed social reality, an important dimension of which is that women have been always at work. Women have always contributed to their nation's economy. The recognition of women's economic contribution to society is slowly entering the parameters of various disciplines. However, there is a strong resistance to re-examine and reconsider the existing structures in order to reflect this important reality.

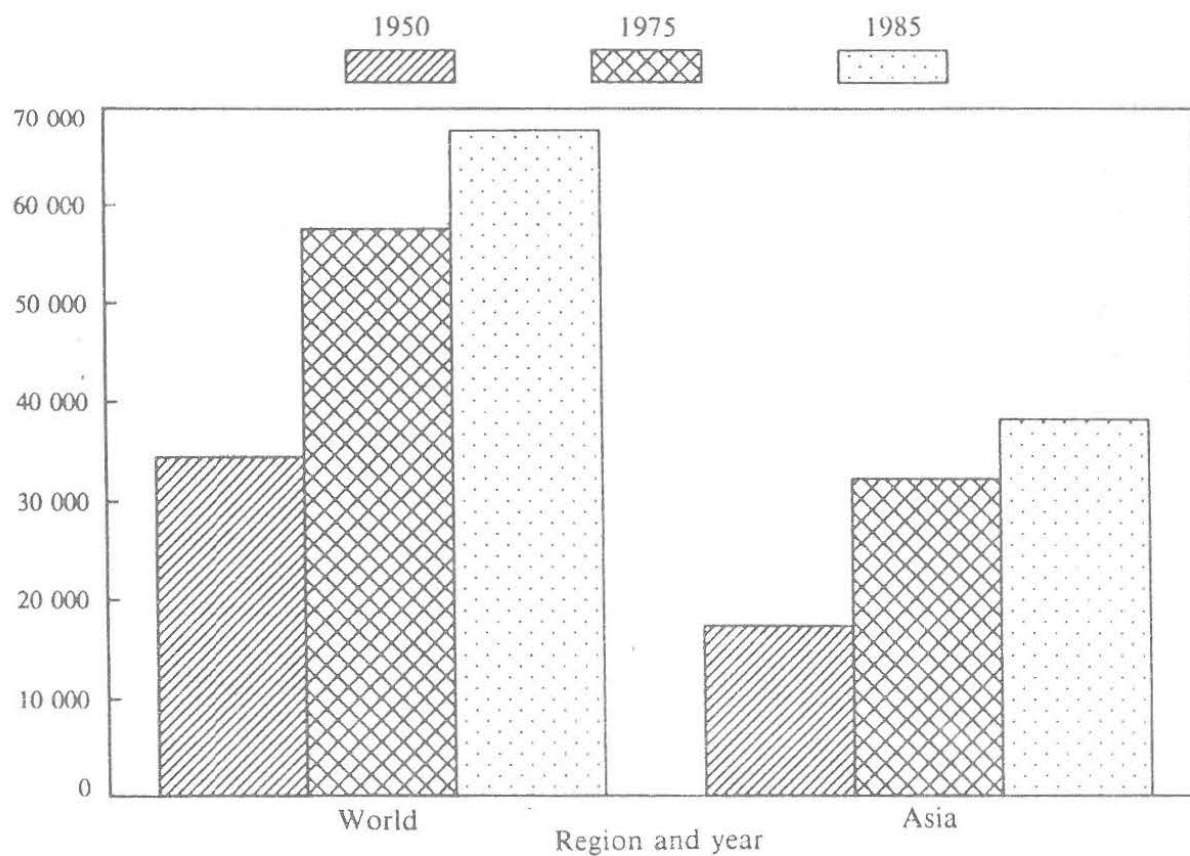
4. See Annex, Chart 1.

"Employed" is often perceived or specified in terms of a main or a primary line of work. Women, especially those in rural areas, who work relatively long hours altogether, do not have a "main" line of work. The same is true in the urban informal sector or in urban family enterprises. Certain economic activities of women, such as tending farm animals, food processing and storage, cooking for hired help, providing food for the family from small household plots and the like are generally unrecorded and require further attention. Furthermore, the question of whether the whole area of housekeeping and child care and the value of such work should be incorporated into the economic activity data has been raised. The value of household production and other non-monetary economic activities of women is increasingly being recognised, however, and a considerable amount of work on estimating their economic and social value is currently under way.

Recent data from the International Labour Organization (ILO) on the participation of women in the labour force show that there has been a spectacular increase in the number of working women during the last decade (some recent decline to be noted). Since the rates of increase vary widely as to region, to country, to sector, it is not easy to make an international comparative analysis. However, they do provide the shades in spectrum. In the industrialized countries the range is estimated to be from 20 percent in the Netherlands to 50 percent in Romania. In the developing countries it ranges from 4 percent in Iraq and Mauritania to 50 percent in Botswana and Haiti.

Graph 1

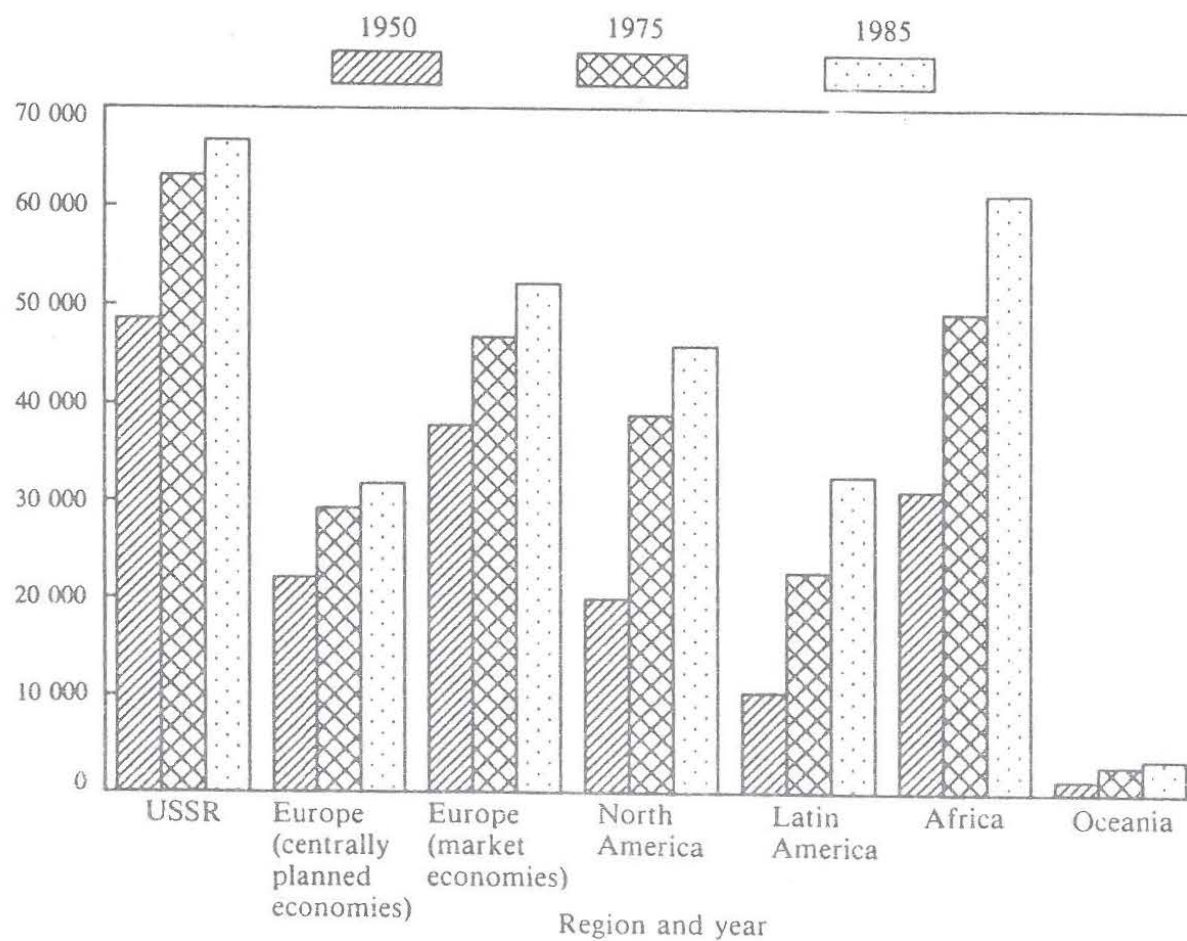
Female labour force 1950, 1975 and 1985 by region (in tens of thousands)



Source: ILO: Labour force estimates and projections, 1950-2000 (2nd ed., Geneva, 1977).

Graph 2

Female labour force 1950, 1975 and 1985 by region (in thousands)



Source: ILO: Labour force estimates and projections, *ibid.*

A glance at the unemployment rates in developing and industrialised market economy countries reveals that despite women's impressive gains in the labour market, it is they who carry a disproportionate share of unemployment. In most Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries women's unemployment rates are higher than men's because women workers are as affected by the consequences of macro-economic, demographic and structural changes leading to unemployment as are men, but in addition they suffer specific constraints as workers. In other words, women's unemployment rates are caused by the accumulation of factors related to gender.

Table 1

Unemployment rates of men and women, 1973-82 (in percentages)

Country	1973		1975		1979		1981		1982	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Australia	1.6	3.6	3.7	7.0	5.0	8.0	4.7	7.4	6.2	8.4
Austria	0.6	1.8	1.4	2.3	1.5	3.1	1.9	3.6	2.6	4.6
Belgium	1.8	3.1	3.1	6.3	4.1	11.6	4.3	12.8	n.a.	n.a.
Canada	4.9	6.7	6.1	8.1	6.6	8.7	7.0	8.3	11.0	10.8
Finland	2.4	2.2	2.3	2.1	6.4	5.6	5.2	5.2	6.1	6.0
France	1.5	4.6	2.8	6.3	4.0	8.9	5.0	10.9	5.6	11.7
Germany (FedRep)	0.9	1.3	3.8	4.6	2.5	4.6	3.9	6.0	6.0	7.7
Italy	4.1	11.4	3.7	10.5	4.8	13.1	5.3	14.2	6.0	14.7
Japan	1.3	1.2	2.0	1.7	2.2	2.0	2.3	2.1	2.4	2.3
New Zealand	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.3	1.7	2.3	3.2	4.6	n.a.	4.9
Norway	1.0	2.4	1.9	2.9	1.6	2.4	1.5	2.8	2.3	3.0
Portugal	--	--	5.1	6.1	4.8	12.9	4.0	13.9	n.a.	n.a.
Spain	2.7	2.6	4.7	4.2	8.7	10.8	13.8	18.0	15.1	20.3
Sweden	2.3	2.8	1.3	2.0	1.9	2.3	2.3	2.7	3.0	3.4
Switzerland	--	--	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.4
United Kingdom	3.0	1.0	4.4	1.4	5.5	3.3	10.9	6.0	12.7	7.1
United States	4.0	6.0	7.6	9.3	5.0	6.8	7.2	7.9	9.6	9.4
Seven major countries	2.8	4.2	4.9	6.2	4.2	6.0	5.8	7.1	7.4	8.2

Source: ILO/INSTRAW: Women in Economic Activity: A Global Statistical Survey (1950-2000) (ILO/INSTRAW, Santo Domingo, 1985).

III Discrimination or Equality: A question of definition

There are several issues by which the progress made by women during the Decade may be measured. At the top of the list is the concept of discrimination or equality. These are probably two sides of the same coin. When there is no equality between men and women there exists discrimination against women and where there is discrimination there can be no equality. The effect of this double-edged sword is evident and present in our daily lives. But from a multitude of discriminatory situations a few glaring examples may be selected to demonstrate at what pace women's lives are being rapidly and radically changed.

The ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No.111) and Recommendation (No.111) define discrimination as "any distinction, exclusion or preference (on any grounds specified) which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity and treatment in employment or occupation". This definition takes into account the fact that equality of opportunity or treatment may be affected not only by negative attitudes, but also by preferences, which are often less easy to discern in practice. It embraces both situations where equality is nullified completely and those more subtle instances where it is merely impaired⁵. This formulation neatly summarizes the notion that equality does not necessarily signify identical treatment and that special measures in favour of women, do not constitute discrimination. Other articles of the ILO instruments spell out that there should be no discrimination against women workers on grounds of marital status, pregnancy and childbirth and/or family responsibilities.

The culmination of all the efforts to end discrimination against women is the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women adopted by consensus in 1979. This Convention which had been ratified by 95 States as of January 1985⁶, made an important contribution to the understanding

5. For example, see Article 1 which provides that there shall be equality of opportunity and treatment for all workers and that all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sex which deny or restrict such equality are unacceptable and must be eliminated. Article 2 states unequivocally that "positive special treatment during a transitional period aimed at effective equality between the sexes shall not be regarded as discriminatory...".

6. See Annex, Chart 2.

of legal measures on discrimination emphasizing that special measures of protection for women are not discriminatory if they are designed to promote equality of treatment.

The UN Committee established to monitor the implementation of the various clauses of the Convention has discussed reports from several developed, developing and socialist countries. The simple conclusion of their analysis is that there continues to be a large gap between the legal position of women and their daily lives (described as de jure and de facto discrimination). Interestingly enough this gap is not linked to whether a country is rich or poor, advanced or not and whether or not she belongs to the higher or lower income decile of an economy. But it needs to be emphasized that women below poverty line in several countries are the victims of multiple forms of discrimination which increases their chances of morbidity, mortality and therefore survival.

IV Unequal economic rewards

a) At work

Unequal wages and salaries of women workers has been one other glaring instance of inequity of the present wage systems in many countries. It is also a typical example of "stagnation and inertia" of the wage system that has continued and endured by women for a long time. The principle of equal remuneration for equal work is receiving greater attention from a large number of countries and has become a matter of urgency and concern. Lower wages for women is a comparatively universal phenomenon in almost all countries, irrespective of the level of economic development⁷. In some instances the wage differentials between males and females are more pronounced and have persisted for a longer period, whereas in others these disparities have tended to diminish, if not disappear altogether. There are no definitive conclusions at this point as international comparative analysis requires new methodologies for computation.

The ILO Equal Remuneration Convention 1951 (No.100), sets forth the general principle that ratifying member States shall promote and, in so far as is consistent with the methods for determining rates of remuneration, must ensure the application of the principle of equal remuneration to all workers for work of equal value. Recognising that application of the principle of equal pay for work of equal value raises difficult questions of

7. See Annex, Chart 3

interpretation, the Convention (and the supplementary Recommendation No.90 of 1951) recommended the creation of methods for the "objective appraisal" of the "work to be performed", whether by job analysis or other procedures. Since its adoption, 113 Member States have ratified this Convention⁸.

What has brought about this change? The ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations has noted from the various reports submitted during the last decade by ratifying committees, that several of them have carried out detailed analyses of the different forms of pay discrimination in violation of the Convention and have subsequently undertaken or envisaged a wide variety of measures to ensure its implementation. The Committee concluded that while the principle of equal pay is generally accepted as a matter of public policy, there are various shortcomings in putting this principle into practice. Since the Convention refers to all remunerations "arising out of the workers' employment", it is not enough to ensure equality with regard to the basic wage alone, for inequalities may creep in by other means, for example in fringe benefits and particularly in pensions.

From the reports of the Committee, the reasons for this unsatisfactory condition are clear. It has noted four factors which affect the effective application of the principle. First, the difficulty of ensuring application where the relevant national legislation excerpts certain classes of workers (often those not protected or ill-protected by labour legislation or by trade unionism such as in small undertaking and homeworkers). Second, the problem of enforcing the principle where women workers are themselves not aware of their rights (on this point, the Committee stressed the need for diffusion of information to ensure that women are aware of and able to exercise their rights and that employers respect these rights). Third, special mechanisms are recommended to ensure that equality of rights is adequately enforced, for example specialised staff, including women, for labour inspection. Finally, the Committee has observed that effective application of the principle depends largely on the existence of legal sanctions for violations, and the establishment of grievance procedures. It is important that enforcement procedures should be set in motion, not merely by an individual complaint, but also by a responsible authority or body acting in lieu of the women workers concerned.

8. See Annex, Chart 4.

Recently the Committee has again noted that equality of remuneration must not be restricted to the basic wage or salary and must also include "any additional emoluments whatsoever"⁹. These emoluments include inter alia, wage differentials or increments based on seniority or marital status, cost-of-living allowances, housing or residential allowances and family allowances as well as benefits in kind such as the allotment and laundering of work clothes.

The Committee also noted the importance of the words "for work of equal value" thus placing the point of comparison on value instead of using "the same" or "similar" work since men and women often do not perform the same work. They continued by stating that the adoption of the idea of work of equal value necessarily implies some comparison between jobs and so there must exist the appropriate procedures to ensure an evaluation free from discrimination based on sex.

In one final note, the Committee stated that it is not sufficient to replace separate wage scales for "male" and "female" jobs by similar scales worded in neutral language but still preserving both the inherited job profiles and existing wage differentials. Job classification methods need to be replaced by new ones based on criteria having no connection with the former distinctions based on sex.

What is significant is that women remain economically and socially vulnerable at home, in the labour market, and when they retire. Their low pay is linked to sex segregation in the employment structure and to their low average level of skills and education. Segregation means that women and men do not perform the same work and thus it is difficult to establish 'equal value' for which the same remuneration should be paid. Women have lower skills because they have unequal access to education and training facilities. Furthermore social perceptions of what is 'women's work' tends to channel even those women who benefit from equal opportunities for education and training towards the social sphere (e.g. nursing, teaching, etc.) rather than to scientific, technical and other professional careers whose contribution usually receives greater recognition from society. There is a chain of causation which keeps women in a secondary place in the economy.

9. See Equal Remuneration, International Labour Conference, 72nd Session, 1986.

b) At home

Millions of women today work both inside and outside the household. In the home, the range of tasks they perform are ill defined and unpaid. In addition what is equally important is that these tasks which require input of a substantial number of labour hours are not counted in official statistics. Furthermore, these essential jobs without which family and society cannot survive in an orderly manner are ranked so low in social value systems that they are not even recognised as 'work' thus obliterating the efforts of women in to a non-entity.

However, there arises a series of complex social and economic difficulties in considering the household as an economic unit, quantifying its production and services and clarifying the status of the head of the household. Clearly, there are complex conceptual problems in defining household production and services. The basic question concerns the multiple tasks undertaken in a family/household which are considered non-productive. No unified criteria have as yet been agreed upon to determine which household activities produce goods and services, which are productive or unproductive, which generate economic value, or how household activities should be measured in economic terms!

Equally, concepts of household headship and household composition should be further examined in light of the changing economic and social reality during the last two decades. The quantification and measuring of the incidence of households headed by women is quite relevant for future priorities.

Similarly, the current debate on household work is complex. It rests on three propositions. The first relates to the economic value of household tasks performed by women for which they do not receive any economic reward in cash. The second concerns the measurement of this economic value and the techniques used in fixing a monetary amount for the services performed. The third, which is more complex, is the quantification of the opportunity cost of the women working in the labour market instead of performing household tasks. The social implications of assigning monetary value to household work is even more baffling to the researcher¹⁰.

10. See L. Goldschmidt-Clermont, Unpaid work in the household, (Geneva, 1982) Women, Work and Development Series No. 1.

There is also the problem of defining and quantifying the category of the unpaid family worker which has been particularly discriminating against women. In general, an "unpaid family worker" is considered to be a person who works without pay, in an economic enterprise operated by a related person living in the same household. The classification or enumeration of women as unpaid family labour as distinct from other members of the family such as children, is not usually undertaken. This type of enumeration, though, could provide better insight to women's contribution to the national economic product and support accurate measurement of labour force participation rates.

In 1985, some reports showed that the aggregate Gross National Product (GNP) of all countries would be increased by one-third if the unpaid labour of women in the household were counted. According to one calculation in Argentina for example, the contribution by home makers was considered to be 33 percent of the GNP, or roughly as much as the total earnings of all wage-receiving workers. Here in this area there are several problems of quantification although some countries have worked out their own methodology for assigning an economic value to various household tasks. These problems can be classified into technical and non-technical. Statisticians have recently found that the technical problems can be resolved but that the intellectual barriers are quite another matter.

The "Wages for Housework Campaign" at the Nairobi NGO Forum stressed the need for women's household and unpaid work to be officially recognised and counted on a par with men's work. The low status of women in the home contributes to the exploitation of women in the paid labour force. This exploitation has a growing impact as the number of families in which women are the sole supporters is on the increase. Owing to the particular difficulties (social, economic and legal) which they face, many such women are among the poorest people concentrated in urban informal labour markets and they constitute large numbers of the rural unemployed and marginally employed. Those with very little economic, social and moral backing face serious difficulties in supporting themselves as well as in bringing up their children alone. Recognising the economic value of women's work is the first step towards equal access for women to training, technology, resources, representation in trade unions, social services and social security, benefits, employment, occupational health and safety, decent housing and sufficient food for themselves and their families.

Giving women the proper recognition due to their work outside the labour force would also raise their social status. It must be recognized that housework is not the exclusive monopoly of women and that all members of the household - male and female - can

and should share in these domestic tasks. The benefits of such tasks are enjoyed by society as a whole as well as by the individual persons and families so it is only reasonable that society as a whole share the burden of performing these tasks. This means improved child care facilities, health services, and due attention and recognition to women's special needs during and after pregnancy as relates to their employment within the labour force.

IV Reproduction and Equality: Is maternity protection discriminatory?

The idea that equality at the workplace is directly linked to equality inside the household adds a new dimension to understanding women's position in society and thereby enhancing the welfare of all workers. The new ILO instruments represent a major advance towards raising the status of women by accepting that family responsibilities are an important feature in employment policy planning¹¹. These instruments on workers with family responsibilities contain provisions which provide guidelines indicating a broader perception and vision of social policy at the national level. They implicitly reflect new trends in social thinking and the point of view that women alone need not be penalised or over burdened with a regular job plus household duties.

Trends in social thinking must also encompass maternity and the special treatment it requires in the employment sector. Child-bearing must be seen as a "social function" whose benefits extend beyond the individual family unit to society as a whole. And thus the notion of equality must also extend to the particular needs of maternity in the employment sector. This has been simply summed up as protection without discrimination.

11. Op. cit. Convention Concerning Equality of Opportunity and Treatment for Men and Women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities, 1981.

Although the number of working mothers has increased everywhere, existing legislation has not always kept pace with this profound economic change. In many countries working mothers continue to be the victims of de jure and de facto discrimination, often based on inherited social customs, beliefs and values. The major stumbling block in recruitment practices, promotion procedures and social security schemes is the assumed economic cost of maternity protection. In several countries the shadow of maternity falls on women so that they frequently do not get jobs. After having gotten them they lose them even on the imagined threat of pregnancy or the assumption of being 'unreliable workers' in their employment contracts¹². However, available information indicated that marital status and maternity frequently act as obstacles to employment opportunities and have an adverse impact on the income of the working mother presenting special problems at all stages including recruitment, promotion and retirement¹³.

An analysis of the national legislation of 127 countries for which information is available, shows that the average length of maternity leave in the world is between 12-14 weeks. Over half the countries (69) stipulate maternity leave of this duration. The next

12. As for maternity protection, the first international standard was written in 1919. The Maternity Protection Convention (No.3) set forth the basic principles of women worker's right to maternity leave, cash benefits during absence from work, nursing breaks and, more importantly, the right to retain her job throughout pregnancy, confinement and child-bearing. In 1952 the International Labour Conference adopted the Maternity Protection Convention (Revised No.103).

13. For this and the following paragraph see Maternity benefits in the eighties (1964-1980), (International Labour Organization, Geneva, 1985).

group (31 countries) provides less than the average, while the rest exceed this average. The shorter period of leave is prevalent mostly in developing countries, while longer maternity leave has been the national policy of socialist countries for a long time. In market economy countries, since 1975, there has been a trend towards increasing the period of maternity leave. In the three decades since the adoption of international standard on maternity protection it has not yet been recognized that "maternity is a social function and not a handicap in employment, a privilege for which working women should not be punished on an individual basis".

As far as working relations are concerned, maternity protection covers all laws, regulations and agreements that provide for specific benefits for women workers during or after pregnancy and protect their jobs during absence from work. The principal objective of these measures is to protect the health of the future mother and child and to guarantee a continuing source of income and security of employment.

Although almost all the countries considered have passed laws and regulations on the subject, the nature and scope of such legislation take various forms: laws relating exclusively to maternity protection, laws on female labour, labour codes, laws on conditions of employment in certain sectors of the economy, social security laws, labour ordinances or regulations, workers charters, etc. A very large number of countries also have collective agreements to reinforce and supplement existing legislation or to fill the gap where no such legislation exists. Because these measures take so many different forms it is difficult to assess their scope with any degree of accuracy, as the relevant texts do not always cover the same occupational categories. A comparative analysis is further complicated by the virtual absence in some developing countries of any information on enforcement of maternity protection legislation, particularly in medium-sized and small undertakings. The problem with women - especially those who are not members of a trade unions - is that they often do not take full advantage of maternity protection laws and regulations as they themselves are not aware of their rights.

This unawareness of economic and legal rights is due to many causes all of which are complicated by social and cultural traditions. Because of women's "secondary" place in society information of importance to them is often not considered in the same light by the patriarchal society. Thus, the information is hardly diffused, if at all. And when such information is made "available" it still does not reach a large majority of the women for whom it is intended. This is due to the generally lower educational levels of most women and the fact that large sectors of the population in many countries do not speak the official language of that country.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In looking back at the advances of women achieved during the Decade, one cannot help but be amazed by the vast accomplishments made in such a short period of time. As we all know, it is the "forces of time" that have shaped and continue to shape history. But with the aid of women and men these "forces" were accelerated so that much was achieved in only ten years. Never before has there been such an awareness of women's actual situation and the importance of recognizing the participation of women and their inclusion into all sectors of society, as clearly reflected in the extensive legislative changes made in most countries. Never before has not only one but three World Conferences been convened to deal specifically with women's issues. It was under the vast umbrella of the United Nations that women from most cultures and regions, gathered to express a collective voice to demand a charter of rights.

These "forces of time" have behind them a tremendous amount of momentum built up in this short span of time which must not be lost. Now that the goals of the Decade have been extended to the year 2000, this momentum must continue to increase so that women's place in society, deeply carved over the passing of centuries, may find a new location alongside men in every aspect of society, in every country of the world.

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ANNEX

Chart 1

Special legislation: A global View (1973-84)

Algeria	Ordinance No. 75-31 (minimum wage) 1975
Argentina	Act No. 20393 (1973) Contracts of Employment Act(1974)Decree No. 439(1982)
Australia	Anti-Discrimination Act (1977)amended (1980)
Austria	Equal Treatment Act (1979)
Belgium	Economic Reform Act (1978)Royal Decrees (September and December 1981)(amendment of the Decree of 30 June 1967) Royal Orders (1983 and 1984)
Canada	Human Rights Act (1977) Equal Wage Guidelines (1978)
Congo	Labour Code (1975)
Czechoslovakia	Labour Code (1977)
Denmark	Equal Remuneration (Men and Women) Act (1976)
Ethiopia	Labour Proclamation No. 64(1975)
France	Law No. 72-1143 (1973) Law on Professional Equality between Women and Men (1983) Act No. 83-635 (1983) (amendment of the Labour Code and the Penal Code) Decree No. 84-395 (1983) (application of article L.123-1 of the Labour Code)
Federal Rep. of Germany	Law on Equal Treatment of Men and Women at Places of Work and on the Validity of Claims on Transfer of Ownership of an Enterprise (1980)
Gabon	Labour Code (1978)

Greece	Law No.46/75 on Equal Pay for Equal Work (1975)
Guyana	New Constitution (1980)
Iceland	Law No. 78 on Equality between Men and Women (1976)
India	Equal Remuneration Act (1976)
Indonesia	Government Regulation No. 8 (1981)
Iraq	Law No. 53 (19978) (ratification of the Arab Convention (No.5)(1976) concerning the Working Woman)
Ireland	Anti-Discrimination (pay)Act (1974)
Israel	Male and Female Workers (Equal Pay) Law (Ruling of the National Court (1978)
Italy	Act No. 903 repecting Equality of Treatment between Men and Women(1974)
Jamaica	Equal Pay Act (1975)
Luxembourg	Grand-Ducal Regulation (1974)
Madagascar	Ordinance No. 75-0131 (1975)
Netherlands	Law of 30 March 1975 (equal pay for work of equal value) Law of 2 July 1983 (to extend equal pay to the public service)
Norway	Equal Status Act (1978)
Philippines	Letter of Instruction (1974)
Poland	Constitution (1976)
Portugal	Legislative Decree No. 392/79 (1979)
Romania	Law No. 27 (1976) Law No. 4 (1978)
Sudan	Public Service Act (1974)
Sweden	Equal Opportunity Act (1979) amended (June and November 1980 and 1982)

Switzerland	Constitution, amended (1981)
United Kingdom	Equal Pay Act (1979), amended (1984)
Uruguay	Law No. 15.164 approving the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1981)
USSR	Constitution (1977) article 35
Venezuela	Law approving the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1981)
Zimbabwe	Minimum Wage Act (1980)

Chart 2

Countries ratifying the Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Australia	Haiti
Austria	Honduras
Barbados	Hungary
Bhutan	Kenya
Brazil	Lao People's Democratic Republic
Bulgaria	Mexico
Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Rep.	Mongolia
Canada	Nicaragua
Cape Verde	Norway
China	Panama
Colombia	Peru
Congo	Philippines
Cuba	Poland
Czechoslovakia	Portugal
Denmark	Romania
Dominica	Rwanda
Dominican Republic	Saint Lucia
Ecuador	Spain
Egypt	Sri Lanka
El Salvador	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Ethiopia	Sweden
France	Togo
Gabon	Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic
German Democratic Republic	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Greece	Uruguay
Guatemala	Venezuela
Guinea	Viet Nam
Guyana	Yugoslavia

NOTE: as of 25 April 1984

Chart 3

Laws on equality of remuneration in selected countries
1975-1983

<u>Country</u>	<u>Legislation</u>	<u>Date</u>
Canada	Canadian Human Rights Act (article 11(1))	14/7/77*1
Denmark	Act respecting equal wages and women, No.32	4/2/76*2
France	Labour Code (Part I:Laws), as last amended on 28 Jan 1981 Modified by Law No. 83-635 amending the Labour Code and the Penal Code as concern professional equality between between men and women (L.140-1 to L.140-8)	28/1/1981*3 13/7/84*4
German Dem.Rep.	Labour Code of the German Democratic Republic (article2(3))	16/6/77*5
India	Equal Remuneration Act, 1976	11/2/76*6
Jamaica	Employment (Equal Pay for Men and Women) Act, 1975, No. 34	2/10/75*7
Madagascar	Ordinance No. 75-013/DM to promulgate the Labour Code, Title IV, 1st Chapter, article 61	17/5/75*8
Netherlands	An Act to lay down rules respecting the entitlement of workers to a wage that is equal to the wage of workers of the other sex for work of equal value. Equal Wage for Women and Men Act	20/3/75*9
Zimbabwe	Minimum Wages Act, 1980 (No.4 of1980), article 8(1)	Undated No. 4 of *10

Notes

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Chart 4

List of Countries that have ratified the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention of 1951*

Afghanistan	Fiji	Mongolia	United Arab
Albania	Finland	Morocco	Emirates
Algeria	France	Mozambique	United Kingdom
Angola	Gabon	Nepal	United States
Antigua and Barbuda	German Democratic Republic	Netherlands	Uruguay
Argentina	Germany, Federal Republic of	New Zealand	Venezuela
Australia	Ghana	Nicaragua	Yemen
Austria	Greece	Niger	Yugoslavia
Bahamas	Grenada	Nigeria	Zaire
Bahrain	Guatemala	Norway	Zambia
Bangladesh	Guinea	Pakistan	Zimbabwe
Barbados	Guinea-Bissau	Panama	
Belgium	Guyana	Papua New Guinea	
Belize	Haiti	Paraguay	
Benin	Honduras	Peru	
Bolivia	Hungary	Philippines	
Botswana	Iceland	Poland	
Brazil	India	Portugal	
Bulgaria	Indonesia	Qatar	
Burkina Faso	Iran, Islamic Republic of	Romania	
Burma	Iraq	Rwanda	
Burundi	Ireland	St. Lucia	
Byelorussian SSR	Israel	San Marino	
Cameroon	Italy	Sao Tomé and Príncipe	
Canada	Ivory Coast	Saudi Arabia	
Cape Verde	Jamaica	Senegal	
Central African Republic	Japan	Seychelles	
Chad	Jordan	Sierra Leone	
Chile	Democratic Kampuchea	Singapore	
China	Kenya	Solomon Islands	
Colombia	Kuwait	Somalia	
Comoros	Lao People's Democratic Rep.	Spain	
Congo	Lebanon	Sri Lanka	
Costa Rica	Lesotho	Sudan	
Cuba	Liberia	Suriname	
Cyprus	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Swaziland	
Czechoslovakia	Luxembourg	Sweden	
Democratic Yemen	Madagascar	Switzerland	
Denmark	Malawi	Syrian Arab Rep.	
Djibouti	Malaysia	Tanzania, United Republic of	
Dominica	Mali	Thailand	
Dominican Republic	Malta	Togo	
Ecuador	Mauritania	Trinidad and Tobago	
Egypt	Mauritius	Tunisia	
El Salvador	Mexico	Turkey	
Equatorial Guinea		Uganda	
Ethiopia		Ukrainian SSR	
		USSR	

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