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Status of Women in Asia and the Pacific Region

Series 1

WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY : EMPLOYMENT





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PREFACE

Five papers on issues concerning women's status in Asia and the Pacific were commissioned for the Regional Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace which was held on 26-30 March 1984 in Tokyo. The meeting was organized by ESCAP in co-operation with the United Nations Center for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and hosted by the Government of Japan. These papers, which documented regional issues emerging from accumulated evidence during the United Nations Decade for Women, were subsequently expanded into more detailed studies which could be of value for governments and concerned agencies as a basis for planning and implementing programmes to advance the status of women and their full integration in the Asian and Pacific region.

The five studies on specific issues concerning women in development are now being published by ESCAP as the Status of Women in Asia and the Pacific Region *series which include the following publications:*

1. *"Women in the economy: employment", by Linda Y.C. Lim*
2. *"Socio-cultural and attitudinal factors affecting the status of women in South Asia", by T. Scarlett Epstein*
3. *"Impact of science and technology on women", by Malee Suwana-adth and the ESCAP secretariat*
4. *"Participation of women in politics", by Rounaq Jahan*
5. *"Role of the women's movement and non-governmental organizations in enhancing the status of women", by the ESCAP secretariat*

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CONTENTS

		Page
A.	WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN SELECTED ESCAP COUNTRIES	1
B.	IMPACT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ON WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT	17
C.	CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN TO THE ECONOMY	21
D.	IMPACT OF EMPLOYMENT ON WOMEN	23
E.	EVALUATION, PROJECTIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS	29
F.	SUGGESTIONS FOR RESEARCH	31
BIBLIOGRAPHY		33

LIST OF TABLES

1.	Economically active population by sex	2
2.	Labour force participation and per capita gross national product (GNP)	3
3.	Labour force by occupational status	9
4.	Unpaid family workers by industry	11
5.	Employers and own-account workers by industry	12
6.	Labour force by occupation	13
7.	Labour force by industry	15

LIST OF FIGURES

1.	Female labour force participation rate by age in selected industrialized or newly industrializing Asian economies (1982)	4
2.	Female labour force participation rate by age in selected South-East Asian countries	5
3.	Female labour force participation rate by age in selected South Asian countries	6

A. WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN SELECTED ESCAP COUNTRIES

With economic development in the Asian and Pacific region over the past few decades, employment has been growing as both the demand for and the supply of labour have increased. Population growth combined with increased labour force participation has expanded labour supply, while accelerated growth rates from agricultural and industrial development have increased labour demand.

In most countries labour force participation has increased for both males and females[1] but more for females, resulting in an increased female share of the labour force and of total employment (table 1). Female participation rates are still much lower than male rates, but the disparity has been narrowing at least through the 1970s and early 1980s. Female employment has increased both absolutely and relative to male employment in this period.

Within the Asian and Pacific region, there are inter-country differences in participation rates for both males and females, reflecting demographic, cultural and economic differences. In general, participation rates for both males and females are higher in the more developed, higher-income countries (as is the case in the three developed nations of ESCAP, Australia, Japan, and New Zealand, and the two high-income city states of Hong Kong and Singapore) and lower in the less-developed and lower-income countries (table 2). There is less variation in the male rates than in the female rates, which range from a low of 7.9 per cent in Pakistan to a high of 45.7 per cent in Thailand. These two countries represent cultural extremes. In Pakistan, female labour force participation is low because of the practice of feminine seclusion under Islam, while in Thailand women have traditionally had an equal role in the rural economy, which still accounts for some 80 per cent of total employment in the country.

Figures 1 to 3 show age-specific female labour force participation rates by country. The patterns for the four most developed/industrialized Asian countries are illustrated in figure 1. All four have pronounced early peaks in female labour force participation in the 20-24 age group, with particularly high peaks for Hong Kong and Singapore where, however, participation rates decline continuously thereafter (at a slower rate in Hong Kong than in Singapore). In contrast, both Japan and the Republic of Korea exhibit a second peak in the 40s age group – the familiar "M" curve found in most developed countries.

[1] Two exceptions among the countries in table 1 are Japan and Thailand. In Japan participation rates declined for both males and females between 1970 and 1982, perhaps reflecting aging of the population.

Table 1. Economically active population by sex

Country or area	*Year*	*Total population*		*Labour force participation*	
		(1 000s)	*(Percentage)*	*Male (Percentage)*	*Female (Percentage)*
Australia	1971	5 330	41.8	56.8	26.7
	1981	6 691	45.9	57.4	34.5
Brunei Darussalam	1971	41	30.2	47.0	10.8
Hong Kong	1971	1 655	42.0	54.8	28.8
	1982	2 511	49.1	61.9	35.7
India	1971	180 373	32.9	52.5	11.9
Indonesia	1971	40 100	33.9	46.0	22.0
	1980	52 153	35.5	47.9	23.3
Japan	1970	53 321	50.9	63.2	39.1
	1982	57 740	48.7	60.4	37.4
Malaysia	1970	2 871	32.6	44.2	20.9
(Peninsular)	1979	4 375	38.4	48.7	27.9
Nepal	1971	4 853	42.0	59.0	24.7
New Zealand	1971	1 119	39.1	54.9	23.3
	1981	1 332	42.0	55.5	28.5
Pakistan	1972	18 481	30.0	52.0	5.4
	1981	27 407	31.0	52.0	7.9
Philippines	1970	12 297	33.6	46.0	21.3
	1978	17 362	36.9	46.3	27.5
Republic of	1970	10 378	35.3	44.1	26.4
Korea	1980	15 080	38.3	46.8	29.7
Singapore	1970	727	35.0	50.8	18.5
	1982	1 173	47.0	60.4	34.2
Sri Lanka	1971	4 418	34.3	50.1	18.7
	1981	5 715	37.3	53.1	21.2
Thailand	1970	16 850	49.0	52.0	46.0
	1980	22 728	48.1	50.4	45.7

Source: ILO, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics*, 1974 and 1983.

Table 2. Labour force participation and per capita gross national product (GNP)

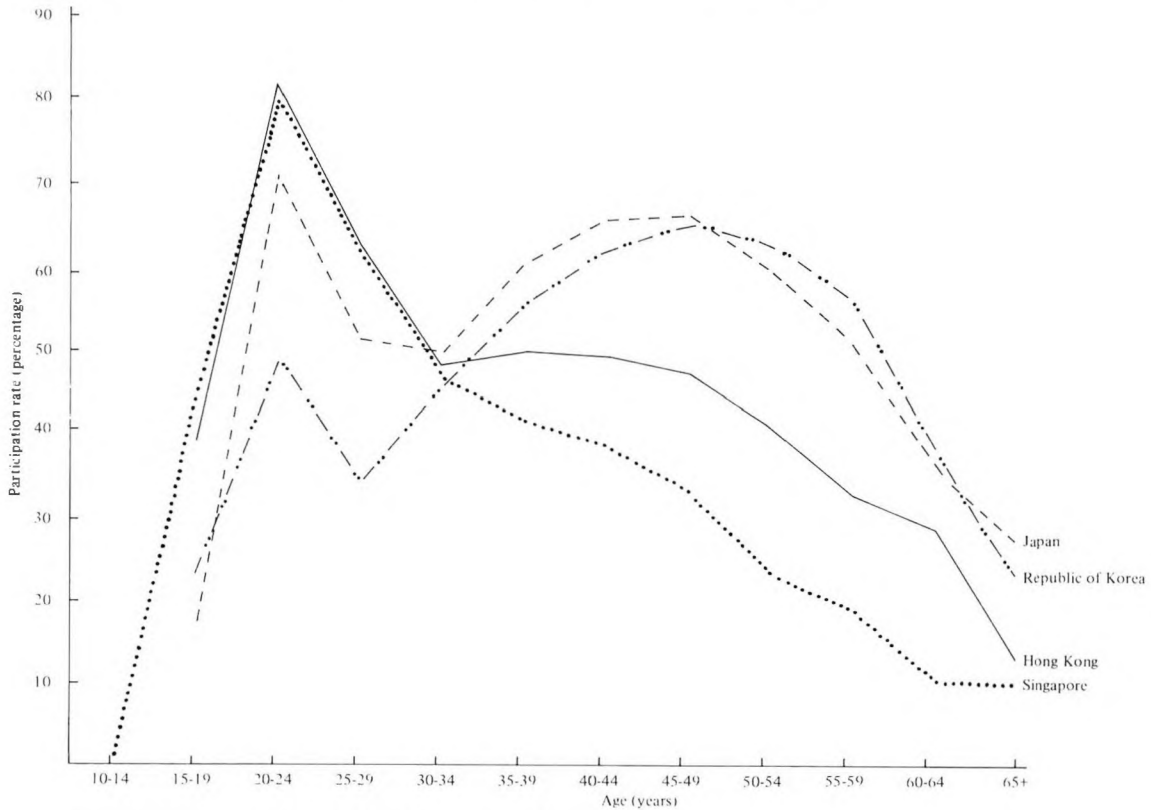
Country or area	*Per capita GNP 1982*[a] *(US dollars)*	*1981*[b] *Labour force participation Percentage*	
		Male	*Female*
Australia	11 140	57.4	34.5
Hong Kong	5 340	61.9	35.7
Indonesia	580	47.9	23.3
Japan	10 080	60.4	37.4
Malaysia	1 860	48.7	27.9
New Zealand	7 920	55.5	28.5
Pakistan	380	52.0	7.9
Philippines	820	46.3	27.5
Republic of Korea	1 910	46.8	29.7
Singapore	5 910	60.4	34.2
Sri Lanka	320	53.1	21.2
Thailand	790	50.4	45.7

Source: [a] The World Bank, *World Development Report 1984*, table 1.
[b] ILO, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics 1983*, table 1.

In Japan this second peak is slightly lower, and in the Republic of Korea it is much higher than the first peak.

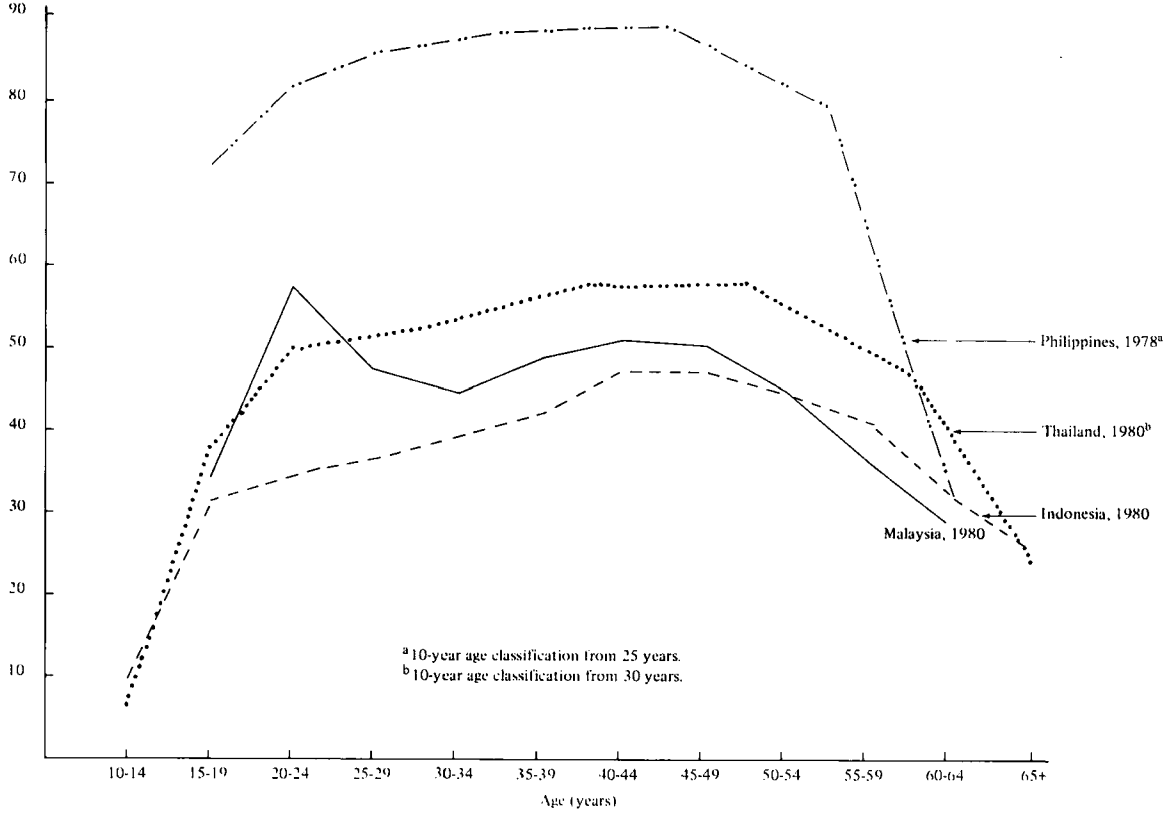
Figure 2 presents the age-specific participation rate patterns for women in four South-East Asian countries – Indonesia. Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand. Except for the marked early peak in Malaysia, these patterns are roughly similar, with a plateau-like shape. The level of female participation is much higher in Thailand than in the other three countries, reflecting that country's distinctive cultural tradition of relative sexual equity, and is lower in the two Islamic countries, Malaysia and Indonesia. Bangladesh and Pakistan show even lower stable rates of female labour force participation as shown in figure 3. The other three South Asian countries represented in figure 3 – India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka – exhibit the relatively stable plateau-like distribution characteristic of the South-East Asian countries in figure 2, but (with the exception of Nepal) at a noticeably lower level.

Figure 1. Female labour force participation rate by age in selected industrialized or newly industrializing Asian economies (1982)



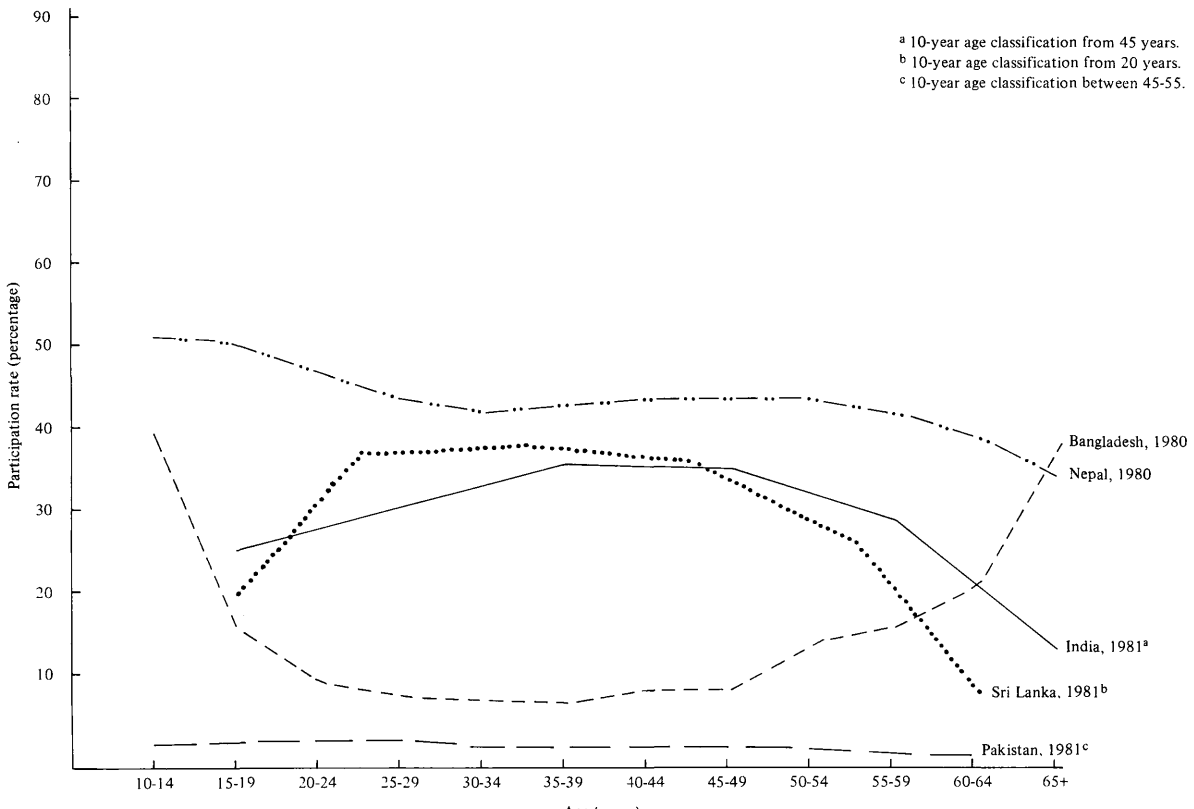
Source: ILO, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics*, 1983.

Figure 2. Female labour force participation rate by age in selected South-East Asian countries



Source: ILO, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics,* 1983 and 1984.

Figure 3. Female labour force participation rate by age in selected South Asian countries



Source: ILO, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics,* 1983 and 1984.

These differences in age-specific female participation rates reflect different stages of economic development as well as cultural differences among countries. The cross-sectional rates given here are not necessarily good approximations of age-specific participation rate variations over particular age cohorts' life-times, especially in dynamically changing societies. But in the absence of more detailed time-series cohort analyses, the cross-sectional patterns may be dynamically interpreted to suggest the following explanation for inter-country similarities and differences.

In predominantly agrarian societies, abstracting for the moment from cultural differences, women who participate in the labour force would continue to do so through most of their working-age-life, as child care can frequently be combined with both farm work and trade,[2] and employment is frequently as own-account or unpaid family labour. Labour being the primary factor of production, female labour is often necessarily employed on family farms. The basic pattern of age-specific female labour force participation in agrarian societies is thus that of the plateau. The height of the plateau, and the differential with the level of male participation (which should exhibit a similar plateau distribution, but at a higher level than the female) is explained by cultural factors. Thus in South-East Asian countries where there are no strong traditional cultural sanctions against married women participating in the labour force, the level of the plateau is higher (especially in Thailand) than in South Asian countries where such sanctions do exist in both Hindu and Muslim societies (except in the case of Nepal which bears a greater resemblance to the South-East Asian pattern).

The transformation of agrarian societies with economic development induces distinct changes into this plateau-like distribution of age-specific female labour force participation. The creation of urban-industrial wage employment increases the demand for especially young female labour – which is more likely to have the education (given the relatively recent introduction of modern education for girls and women), the physical mobility (permitting migration from rural areas) and freedom from marital and child-care responsibilities required by modern wage employment (which is locationally and temporally fixed outside the home.[3] This explains the sharp early peak found in all the rapidly industrializing countries in figure 1 and also Malaysia in figure 2.

In modern urban societies it is often difficult to combine child care with wage employment outside the home, especially where extended family and kin networks which characterize more rural societies have broken down. Women thus tend to withdraw from the labour force on marriage or child-bearing,

[2] Because of the availability of extended family and kin and neighbour support networks for child care, and the location of farm work and market activity near the home, among other factors.

[3] See Linda Y.C. Lim and L.A. Peter Gosling, "Changing modes of production and the sexual division of labour in Southeast Asia", unpublished monograph, Centre for South and Southeast Asian Studies, the University of Michigan, 1983.

explaining the sharp decline in their age-specific labour force participation after the early peak in these countries. This withdrawal may be further accentuated by cultural beliefs – Confucianist, Islamic or other – emphasising the importance of the mother's staying at home while her children are growing up unless there is a pressing need for her to work outside the home.[4]

The second peak in age-specific female labour force participation observed in the cross-sectional distribution for Japan, the Republic of Korea and to a lesser extent, Malaysia, but not observed in Hong Kong or Singapore, may be explained in one or both of two ways. First, it may reflect the ability of women to return to the labour force once age has freed them from child-care responsibilities – this is the explanation usually assumed for the "M" curve in developed countries. Second, it may reflect the recentness of urban-industrial development in these Asian countries, with the high labour force participation observed for women in their 40s and 50s in Japan and the Republic of Korea (and from their late 30s in Malaysia) reflecting the concentration of older women in the agrarian sector where the plateau distribution still exists. This distribution is not observed in Hong Kong and Singapore because these are urban-industrial city-states with negligible rural sectors (somewhat larger in Hong Kong than in Singapore) and populations with a large proportion of relatively recent immigrants (without much opportunity to work during the child-bearing years due to severance from traditional kin networks for child care). The relative prosperity of the two city-states may also vitiate the need for older women to work as they are easily supported by employed spouses or children.

It is likely that the second peak for Japan reflects the developed-country phenomenon of women returning to work after their child-raising years are past, while in the Republic of Korea this urban effect may be combined with that of relatively high labour force participation of older women in a continued sizeable rural sector to yield a second peak much higher than the first early peak. The recentness of urban-industrial development and continued importance of the rural sector with relatively high female labour force participation is also reflected in the age-specific participation pattern for women in Malaysia, with its relatively low early peak and relatively high plateau thereafter. In Hong Kong and Singapore, there is no rural sector to cushion the cross-sectional decline in female labour force participation after its high early peak, but it is possible that a second peak may eventually appear due to the working through of the developed-country phenomenon of women returning to wage employment after child-raising.

With economic development, the structure of employment changes in a number of ways. Table 3 shows the distribution of the economically active population by occupational status. In the more developed countries, between

[4] In rural societies, she can continue to work because the family/household is also the unit of production and doing farm work in the fields, craft work in the home, and horticulture and animal-raising on the house-lot do not remove her from the realm of home and family. See Lim and Gosling, "Changing modes of production".

Table 3. Labour force by occupational status

(Percentage)

Country or area and year		*Employers and own account workers*	*Employees*	*Unpaid family workers*	*Not classifiable*	*Total*[a]
Australia	M and F	13.9	77.0	0.4	8.7	100.0
1983	Total F	11.3	79.7	0.6	8.5	100.0
	F share	29.7	37.8	50.0	35.5	36.6
Hong Kong	M and F[b]	9.5	85.1	1.4	4.0	100.0
1981	Total F[c]	4.4	89.1	2.8	3.7	100.0
	F share[d]	16.4	37.0	69.3	32.9	35.3
Indonesia	M and F	39.4	37.3	20.8	2.5	100.0
1978	Total F	30.4	35.5	32.2	1.8	100.0
	F share	28.0	34.3	56.2	26.1	36.2
Japan	M and F	16.3	71.0	10.2	2.5	100.0
1982	Total F	13.1	63.0	21.4	2.4	100.0
	F share	31.4	34.6	82.3	37.4	39.0
New	M and F	12.9	81.8	4.8	4.9	100.0
Zealand	Total F	6.8	86.0	1.1	5.9	100.0
1981	F share	18.1	36.0	76.8	41.7	34.2
Pakistan	M and F	55.6	26.4	14.6	3.4	100.0
1981	Total F	31.8	35.0	25.8	7.4	100.0
	F share	2.1	4.9	6.5	8.0	3.7
Republic	M and F	32.6	45.5	17.5	4.4	100.0
of Korea	Total F	23.1	38.9	35.4	2.5	100.0
1982	F share	27.1	32.8	77.7	22.2	38.4
Singapore	M and F	12.6	82.5	2.3	2.5	100.0
1982	Total F	5.7	87.1	4.3	2.9	100.0
	F share	16.2	37.7	66.0	39.7	35.7
Sri Lanka	M and F	23.7	54.4	8.4	13.4	100.0
1980	Total F	11.8	53.7	13.6	21.0	100.0
	F share	13.5	27.0	44.4	42.6	27.4
Thailand	M and F	31.1	21.6	46.3	0.9	100.0
1980	Total F	17.3	16.9	65.1	0.8	100.0
	F share	26.2	36.9	66.3	40.2	47.3

Source: ILO, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics* 1983.

Notes: [a] Because of rounding, totals may not add up to 100 per cent.

[b] M = Male, F = Female.

[c] Percentage of all female workers.

[d] Females as percentage of all workers in each category.

71 per cent and 85 per cent of the labour force consists of employees, with the proportion of unpaid family workers being particularly small. In the less-developed countries the labour force is more evenly distributed among the three categories of workers: employers and own-account workers (the self-employed), employees (wage-labour) and unpaid family workers. Even in this group of countries, however, in most cases in 1981/82, employees formed the largest group of workers and unpaid family workers the smallest group. The exceptions were Pakistan, where employers/own-account workers were most numerous, and Thailand, where unpaid family workers were the largest group.

The distribution of female workers tended to follow this pattern, with the notable variation of a larger proportion of women than of men being employed as unpaid family workers. Indeed, in most cases, including in the more developed countries, females accounted for a disproportionate share, often a large majority, of the unpaid family workers. Conversely, they accounted for a disproportionately small share of employers and own-account workers. In short, women tend to be under-represented at the higher and over-represented at the lower levels of the labour force.[5]

In most countries, unpaid family workers and employers/own-account workers of both sexes are concentrated in the agricultural sector (tables 4 and 5). The exceptions are Hong Kong and Singapore, the two urban centres, where the wholesale/retail trade, and restaurants and hotels sectors dominate. This is also the most important sector for female employers/own account workers in Indonesia, where women in many areas have traditionally controlled trade and entrepreneurial activities in commerce and services.

Looking at female employment by occupation (table 6), we find that women are over-represented relative to their proportion of the labour force in professional and technical occupations in all countries except the Republic of Korea and New Zealand. This reflects the large number and proportion of women in "feminine" professions such as teaching, nursing, social work, etc. On the other hand, women are very much under-represented in administrative and managerial occupations. They are over-represented in clerical, sales and service jobs. Indeed, the more developed and urbanized the economy, the more women dominate clerical occupations especially.

In terms of absolute numbers, most women in the labour force are found in agricultural occupations in Indonesia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, and in production jobs in the newly-industrializing economies (Hong Kong and Singapore). In the Republic of Korea, which is a newly-industrializing country but not a city state, agricultural occupations are still most common, followed by production jobs (mainly in manufacturing). In the developed countries, production jobs are most common in Japan (which is heavily-industrialized),

[5] It should be noted that most women in the employer/own-account group would be own-account workers rather than employers in modern enterprises.

Table 4. Unpaid family workers by industry

(Percentage)

Country or area and year	*Sex*	*Agriculture*	*Manufacturing*	*Wholesale, retail trade, restaurants and hotels*	*Percentage of total unpaid family workers*
Australia	Male	71.3	–	–	71.3[b]
1983	Female	51.7	–	–	51.7[b]
Hong Kong	Male	47.2	14.0	30.7	91.9
1981	Female	31.1	20.0	41.8	92.9
Indonesia	Male	88.5	2.6	7.1	98.3
1978	Female	83.2	6.2	9.6	99.0
Japan	Male	42.7	11.7	28.2	82.6
1982	Female	41.8	11.6	31.1	84.5
New Zealand	Male	70.0	–	11.7	81.7[c]
1981	Female	65.3	–	17.0	87.9
Pakistan	Male	81.1	5.6	4.7	91.4
1981	Female	77.9	9.2	4.9	92.0
Republic of	Male	80.3	4.6	12.4	97.3
Korea	Female	65.3	4.1	29.1	98.5
1982					
Singapore	Male	13.1	7.8	70.0	90.9
1982	Female	12.2	7.1	75.5	94.8
Sri Lanka	Male	84.1	3.8	9.0	96.8
1981	Female	83.9	5.5	7.8	97.2
Thailand	Male	92.8	2.1	3.8[a]	98.7
1980	Female	90.4	2.1	5.8[a]	98.3

Source: ILO, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics* 1983.

Notes: [a] Commerce.

[b] No other figures available.

[c] Other figures negligible.

Table 5. Employers and own-account workers by industry

(Percentage)

Country or area and year	*Sex*	*Agriculture*	*Manufacturing*	*Wholesale, retail trade, restaurants and hotels*	*Community service*	*Others*
Australia	Male	29.2	–	20.9	–	18.8[a]
1983	Female	24.7	–	33.9	18.6	–
Hong Kong	Male	9.3	19.6	47.5	–	–
1981	Female	14.4	10.3	63.0	–	–
Indonesia	Male	73.1	3.7	17.2	–	–
1978	Female	27.8	14.5	52.7	–	–
Japan	Male	31.7	–	25.8	–	13.6[a]
1982	Female	–	29.4	26.4	22.0	–
New Zealand	Male	42.0	–	12.5	–	15.3[a]
1981	Female	35.5	–	34.5	12.9	–
Pakistan	Male	63.6	–	12.4	8.1	–
1981	Famale	45.0	17.8	–	14.0	–
Republic of	Male	49.1	8.4	30.9	–	–
Korea	Female	31.1	13.2	47.8	–	–
1982						
Singapore	Male	–	10.4	47.3	–	18.0[b]
1982	Female	–	27.8	49.4	16.1	–
Sri Lanka	Male	68.1	5.7	17.5	–	–
1981	Female	40.3	33.0	20.0	–	–
Thailand	Male	80.3	4.2	8.5[c]	–	–
1980	Female	57.3	8.9	25.6[c]	–	–

Source: ILO, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics* 1983.

Notes: [a] Construction.

[b] Transport, storage and communications.

[c] Commerce.

Table 6. Labour force by occupation

(Percentage)

Country or area and year	*Sex*	*Professional and Technical*	*Administration and Management*	*Clerical*	*Sales*	*Service*	*Agriculture*	*Production*	*n.e.c.*[a]	*Unemployed*	*Total*[b]
Australia	M and F	13.5	6.0	16.1	8.1	8.7	6.6	34.0	n.a.	7.0	100.0
1982	Total F	16.2	2.4	30.8	11.5	14.7	3.8	11.5	n.a.	9.1	100.0
	F share	44.4	14.7	70.7	52.3	62.7	21.5	12.5	n.a.	48.1	37.0
Hong Kong	M and F[c]	6.0	3.8	14.7	10.0	15.0	1.5	47.9	0.1	0.9	100.0
1982	Total F[d]	7.4	1.1	22.4	7.7	15.3	1.4	43.4	0.3	1.0	100.0
	F share[e]	43.1	10.5	53.9	27.4	36.1	33.3	32.1	–	47.8	35.5
Indonesia	M and F	2.9	0.1	3.4	12.8	4.2	55.2	18.7	1.0	1.7	100.0
1980	Total F	3.2	–	1.4	18.4	6.6	52.9	14.8	0.3	2.3	100.0
	F share	36.5	10.3	13.5	47.3	51.3	31.6	26.1	25.6	44.3	33.0
Japan	M and F	8.2	3.8	16.8	14.5	8.3	9.4	36.4	0.2	2.4	100.0
1982	Total F	9.6	0.5	23.5	14.3	11.7	11.7	26.3	0.2	2.3	100.0
	F share	45.9	5.5	54.4	38.3	54.8	48.6	28.2	26.7	–	39.0
New Zealand	M and F	13.8	3.5	16.1	9.5	8.0	11.0	34.4	3.1	0.6	100.0
1981	Total F	17.7	0.8	32.5	11.4	12.3	6.6	14.7	2.9	1.0	100.0
	F share	43.9	8.0	68.7	40.7	52.8	20.6	14.7	32.2	55.7	–
Philippines	M and F	6.4	1.1	4.4	11.7	11.6	50.0	14.8	n.a.	n.a.	100.0
1981	Total F	10.7	0.7	5.3	20.1	14.1	37.0	12.0	n.a.	n.a.	100.0
	F share	59.7	23.8	42.4	61.8	43.0	26.4	29.0	n.a.	n.a.	35.7
Republic of Korea	M and F	4.2	1.1	9.2	14.7	9.6	30.4	26.4	1.3	3.1	100.0
1982	Total F	3.6	–	8.3	17.6	14.4	34.8	18.7	1.0	1.4	100.0
	F share	32.8	2.4	34.1	45.9	58.2	44.0	27.1	22.3	17.1	38.4
Singapore	M and F	9.2	5.0	16.2	13.3	10.9	1.3	38.6	4.9	0.6	100.0
1982	Total F	10.1	2.3	29.1	11.6	14.9	1.1	29.9	0.2	0.8	100.0
	F share	39.6	16.4	63.8	31.1	49.0	28.5	27.7	–	51.6	35.7
Sri Lanka	M and F	4.8	0.5	4.8	7.0	4.5	39.8	24.9	0.2	13.5	100.0
1981	Total F	8.4	0.2	3.2	3.7	4.7	42.2	16.6	–	21.0	100.0
	F share	48.3	9.7	18.3	14.5	28.9	29.1	18.3	41.7	42.7	27.4
Thailand	M and F	2.5	1.3	1.7	8.2	2.7	70.2	12.5	0.4	0.5	100.0
1980	Total F	2.4	0.4	1.6	10.4	2.8	73.6	7.9	0.3	0.4	100.0
	F share	47.1	17.8	42.8	59.6	50.0	49.6	29.8	34.0	47.5	47.2

Source: ILO, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics* 1983.

Notes: [a] n.e.c. = not elsewhere counted.

[b] Because of rounding, total may not add up to 100.0 per cent.

[c] M = Male, F = Female.

[d] Percentage of all female workers.

[e] Females as percentage of all workers in each category.

and clerical jobs in Australia and New Zealand. This reflects the changing composition of employment as societies develop and, especially, industrialize, from the primary/agricultural to the secondary/industrial and then tertiary/services sectors as the major sources of output and employment.

Looking at female employment by industry (table 7), inter-country differences by stage of development are again apparent. The largest employer of women in Australia and New Zealand was community, social and personal services, followed by trade (wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants), and then by manufacturing in 1971 and 1981. During this period in Japan, agriculture was replaced as the largest employer of women by trade, followed by manufacturing (second and third respectively at the earlier date), and then by community, social and personal services. In Hong Kong, manufacturing, community, social and personal services, and trade, in that order, remained the three major sectors of female employment. In Singapore, the ranking changed, with manufacturing dominating both trade and community, social and personal services as the largest employer by 1982. The pre-eminent role of manufacturing in these two urban economies reflects their rapid industrialization – which took place earlier in Hong Kong than in Singapore – especially in female-intensive export manufacturing industries.

In the Republic of Korea, also a newly-industrializing country, however, agriculture in 1971, and trade and agriculture in 1982 were more important employers of women than manufacturing, which fell from second to third place in that period. This probably reflects the fact that male-intensive heavy industries such as steel, automobiles and shipbuilding are more important in Korean manufacturing than in Hong Kong and Singapore, where female-intensive light industries are more prominent.

In Indonesia and Thailand there was no change in the rankings of industries employing women between 1971 and 1980. In Indonesia, agriculture was most important, followed by trade and manufacturing, and in Thailand, agriculture was followed by trade and then by community, social and personal services. In Pakistan in 1981, agriculture was also the largest employer of women, followed by community, social and personal services, and then by manufacturing.

As for the female share of total employment in each industry, it is disproportionately high in trade and community, social and personal services in all countries, with the addition of financial and business services in Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Singapore, of manufacturing in Hong Kong and Singapore, and agriculture in the Republic of Korea, Indonesia and Thailand. In all economies women are poorly represented in mining, utilities, construction, and transport and communications.

These inter-country differences and changes over time within countries suggest the changing pattern of women's employment as economic development takes place. In heavily agrarian developing countries, agriculture is the largest

Table 7. Labour force by industry

(Percentage)

Country or area and year		*Agriculture*	*Mining*	*Manufacturing*	*Utilities*	*Construction*	*Trade*[a]	*Transport and communica-tions*	*Financial and business services*	*Community social and personel services*	*n.e.c.*[b]	*Not employed*	*Total*[c]
Australia													
1971	M and F[d]	7.2	1.4	22.9	1.7	7.7	20.7	7.0	6.8	18.8	4.1	1.7	100.0
	Total F[e]	4.0	0.3	18.5	1.2	0.4	27.2	3.5	9.3	29.3	4.0	2.2	100.0
	F share[f]	17.6	7.9	25.7	4.9	8.8	41.7	15.5	43.5	49.5	31.3	41.0	31.7
1983	M and F	6.5	1.6	18.6	2.1	7.1	1.7	7.7	8.5	26.3	–	1.9	100.0
	Total F	4.2	0.4	12.4	0.6	1.8	23.7	3.5	10.5	40.2	–	2.7	100.0
	F share	23.9	8.2	24.4	9.6	9.5	43.9	17.0	45.2	55.9		51.5	36.6
Hong Kong													
1971	M and F	3.9	0.3	46.1	0.5	5.2	15.6	7.2	2.5	14.4	2.8	1.5	100.0
	Total F	4.0	0.2	57.2	0.1	1.1	10.9	1.6	1.9	17.5	3.2	2.1	100.0
	F share	34.8	24.8	41.7	8.4	7.0	23.6	7.6	25.4	41.2	38.3	50.0	33.7
1982	M and F	1.9	0.1	40.9	0.6	7.9	19.0	7.6	4.7	15.2	1.4	0.7	100.0
	Total F	1.3	–	48.4	–	1.3	18.9	2.8	5.9	20.0	–	1.2	100.0
	F share	35.3	–	47.4	5.7	5.2	31.6	12.1	41.1	40.3	50.0	47.8	35.3
Indonesia													
1971	M and F	62.2	0.2	7.4	0.1	1.9	10.4	2.3	0.2	9.9	4.4	1.0	100.0
	Total F	59.9	–	10.7	–	–	13.6	0.1	0.1	8.1	6.5	0.8	100.0
	F share	31.8	6.5	48.1	5.3	1.3	43.3	1.9	17.2	27.0	49.3	26.5	17.2
1980	M and F	55.3	0.7	9.0	0.1	3.2	12.8	2.8	0.6	13.7	0.1	1.7	100.0
	Total F	52.9	0.3	12.2	–	0.2	18.6	0.1	0.3	12.9	–	2.3	100.0
	F share	31.6	15.5	44.8	9.0	2.4	47.9	1.5	16.9	31.0	23.7	45.1	33.0
Japan													
1970	M and F	19.1	0.4	25.6	0.5	7.5	19.9	6.1	4.1	15.4	–	1.4	100.0
	Total F	25.9	0.1	23.4	0.2	2.1	23.7	2.0	4.1	17.4	–	1.2	100.0
	F share	52.9	10.8	35.8	11.3	10.8	46.4	12.6	39.1	44.1	42.1	33.6	39.0
1982	M and F	9.5	0.2	23.9	0.6	9.3	22.5	6.0	6.1	19.3	0.3	2.3	100.0
	Total F	11.8	–	23.7	0.2	3.6	26.8	1.9	6.7	22.8	0.2	2.3	100.0
	F share	48.7	10.0	38.8	11.8	14.8	4.7	12.0	43.0	45.9	33.3	38.2	39.0
New Zealand													
1971	M and F	11.5	0.5	25.1	1.2	8.4	17.7	9.2	5.8	19.4	1.2	–	100.0
	Total F	5.5	–	22.2	0.3	0.9	24.3	5.5	8.1	31.6	1.6	–	100.0
	F share	14.0	3.4	26.3	7.7	3.2	40.9	17.5	41.5	48.8	35.7	–	29.8
1981	M and F	10.8	0.4	23.3	1.2	6.4	16.4	8.1	6.9	23.0	3.5	–	100.0
	Total F	7.0	–	18.9	0.2	0.9	21.2	5.7	9.2	32.9	3.9	–	100.0
	F share	22.2	7.1	27.3	6.2	4.7	44.0	24.1	45.7	48.9	39.1	–	34.2
Pakistan[g]													
1972	M and F	56.9	0.4	12.0	0.4	3.3	9.4	4.7	0.8	7.0	3.1	2.0	100.0
1981	M and F	50.8	0.4	8.9	0.6	4.0	9.1	4.0	0.8	13.2	5.1	3.1	100.0
	Total F	36.2	0.2	14.2	0.2	2.2	5.6	1.6	0.5	27.2	4.5	7.4	100.0
	F share	2.6	2.3	5.9	1.6	2.0	2.3	1.5	2.5	7.6	3.3	8.8	3.7
Philippines[g]													
1970	M and F	51.4	0.4	11.4	3.8	0.3	7.0[h]	4.2	–	15.7	1.5	4.3	100.0
	Total F	31.4	0.1	19.4	–	0.1	12.0[h]	0.3	–	27.5	1.2	8.0	100.0
	F share	19.5	5.3	54.4	4.0	0.7	54.8[h]	2.2	–	56.1	24.9	59.8	32.0
1981	M and F	50.0	0.7	10.2	0.4	3.2	11.6[h]	4.2	2.1	17.6	–	–	100.0
Republic of Korea													
1970	M and F	41.6	1.0	13.9	0.3	4.5	12.3	3.2	0.9	11.3	0.3	2.2	100.0
	Total F	58.9	0.2	14.3	–	0.5	13.5	0.7	0.5	9.7	0.2	1.4	100.0
	F share	41.4	7.0	35.9	6.4	4.3	38.2	7.6	17.5	28.9	21.4	22.2	37.2
1982	M and F	30.7	0.7	20.2	0.2	5.5	21.1	4.0	2.6	10.6	1.3	3.1	100.0
	Total F	34.9	–	20.3	–	0.1	27.7	1.0	2.3	10.1	1.2	1.4	100.0
	F share	43.7	1.8	38.6	16.1	7.0	50.5	9.5	34.6	36.1	34.4	17.1	38.4
Singapore													
1970	M and F	3.1	0.3	19.7	1.0	5.9	21.0	10.9	3.2	24.4	0.1	10.4	100.0
	Total F	2.6	0.1	25.7	1.5	0.3	15.5	2.1	2.8	31.4	–	18.0	100.0
	F share	22.7	9.5	33.6	6.5	7.0	19.0	5.0	23.0	33.3	–	44.5	25.7
1982	M and F	1.0	0.2	29.5	0.7	6.3	22.1	11.2	7.8	20.4	0.2	0.6	100.0
	Total F	1.0	0.2	35.8	0.2	1.4	23.4	6.0	10.5	20.8	–	0.7	100.0
	F share	33.3	20.5	43.3	12.5	8.1	37.8	18.9	48.3	36.4	8.2	42.8	35.7
Thailand													
1970	M and F	78.2	0.5	4.1	1.2	0.2	5.2[h]	1.6	–	7.0	0.9	1.2	100.0
	Total F	82.7	0.2	3.7	0.3	–	6.0[h]	0.2	–	5.4	0.5	0.9	100.0
	F share	49.7	26.4	42.6	14.4	12.0	53.9[h]	6.0	–	36.3	26.7	36.4	47.1
1980	M and F	70.1	0.2	7.9	1.9	0.3	8.4[h]	2.0	–	8.3	–	0.9	100.0
	Total F	73.5	–	7.0	–	0.6	9.6[h]	0.3	–	8.1	–	0.7	100.0
	F share	49.5	24.3	42.1	10.0	11.9	54.0[h]	6.6	–	46.1	–	40.5	47.3

Source: ILO, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics* 1983.

Notes:
[a] Trade = wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants.
[b] n.e.c. = not elsewhere counted (not adequately defined).
[c] Because of rounding, totals may not add up to 100 per cent.
[d] M = Male, F = Female.
[e] Percentage of all female workers.
[f] Females as percentage of all workers in each industry.
[g] Sex breakdown not available for some years.
[h] Commerce.

employer of women, as well as of men, and women's share of employment in this sector is high and remains so through later development. As countries industrialize and urbanize, manufacturing (often female-intensive in its early labour-intensive stage), trade, and community, social and personal services become important. Finally, as the service sector expands in developed countries and women's educational levels rise, financial and business services becomes important employers of women, and an area where the female share of employment is high.

Women change occupations from being predominantly agricultural workers in developing countries, to being factory workers, sales and service workers including domestic servants, waitresses, hairdressers and shop employees and finally clerical workers (in all sectors, but particularly in financial and business services, and in the government). Teachers and nurses account for the high proportion of women in professional occupations, and in community, social and personal services. This pattern reflects both the structural transformation that countries undergo in the process of economic development, and the tendency for many occupations and industries in all countries, developed and developing, to be segregated by sex. The particular characteristics of female-intensive industries and occupations have been extensively discussed elsewhere.[6] Generally they reflect the economic and cultural correlates and consequences of women's specialization in the reproductive role, and their impact on both the supply of and the demand for labour.

The discussion in this section shows that women's employment in countries of the Asian and Pacific region follows a pattern common to women's employment in other regions of the world.[7] In general, there has been an increase in women's labour force participation, and an increasing share of women in the national labour force and in total employment. Women's employment is becoming increasingly " modernized" in terms of occupational status, and occupational and industrial distribution. But the pattern of women's employment remains different from that of men. Women are disproportionately concentrated in agriculture, in unpaid family labour, and in low levels of the occupational hierarchy, as well as in certain sectors and industries into which they are "crowded". Individual country studies have suggested that their average earnings are also lower than those of men, even within the same broad

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[6] See, for example, Martha Blaxall and Barbara Reagan, ed., *Women and the Workplace: The Implications of Occupational Segregation* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1976). For works by this author on countries in the ESCAP region, see, for example, Linda Y.C. Lim, *Women in the Singapore Economy,* Occasional Paper Series No. 5, Economic Research Centre, National University of Singapore, 1982; and Linda Y.C. Lim and L.A. Peter Gosling, "Changing modes of production and the sexual division of labour in Southeast Asia", unpublished monograph, Centre for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan, 1983.

[7] See, for example, International Labour Office, "Women's participation in the economic activity of the world" (Statistical analysis), ILO/W. 3/1980, Geneva, March 1980.

occupational or industrial classification.[8] The reasons for this will be examined below.

This discussion has been necessarily limited by the amount of data available and by time constraints. Further research should include more intensive statistical data-gathering and analysis of women's employment in each country over time, in order to expand on and refine the above discussion and provide for more detailed cross-section and time-series analysis. In particular, statistical data should be collected on women's earnings and hours of work by occupation and industry, over time and as compared with those of men. The distribution of employment by industry could be more finely broken down into 3-digit or even 5-digit industrial classifications. Country-specific historical, cultural, policy and other information should be used to explain the statistical data in each country, especially changes over time, and to enrich the cross-country comparative analysis.[9]

B. IMPACT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ON WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

In the course of economic development and structural change, women's employment in the developing and newly-industrializing countries of ESCAP has been affected in certain distinctive ways which will be reviewed briefly in this section.

In *agriculture*, the diffusion of new technology – most notably the Green Revolution in high-yielding rice – is now generally agreed to have expanded not only output but also rural employment and incomes, because of increases in labour productivity, multiple cropping, the greater need for weeding and application of fertilizer and pesticides, etc.[10] But employment losses have also been associated with (not necessarily caused by) the new technology, and in the Asian region these losses appear to have been concentrated on women, especially among the landless rural poor. Changed harvesting procedures (such as the switch from " open" harvesting for a share of the output to the employment of regular wage-labourers) and techniques (from the largely female-wielded hand-knife to the male-wielded sickle), and the mechanization of rice processing

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[8] For example, Lim, *Women in the Singapore Economy*.

[9] For background on differences in women's role and status in several countries of ESCAP, see, for example, Robert Orr Whyte and Pauline Whyte, *The Women of Rural Asia,* (Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1982); and Pehny Van Esterik, ed., *Women of Southeast Asia,* Occasional Paper No. 9, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Northern Illinois University, 1982.

[10] See, for example, Yujiro Hayami and Masao Kikuchi, *Asian Village Economy at the Crossroads* (Tokyo, University of Tokyo Press, 1981).

activities such as hulling, have reduced demand for female labour.[11] Much appears to depend, however, on pre-existing patterns of landowning and labour use, and on whether women have access to the new technology.[12] The availability of adequate off-farm employment for workers displaced by the new technology is also important. It should be noted that many of the jobs eliminated by new technology are tedious, poorly-paid, and backbreaking, and the major concern should be to provide superior alternatives. It is also likely that the non-introduction of new technology and agricultural stagnation itself would also eventually result in the loss of employment and/or income for rural women.

Economic development brings about other changes in the rural economy which affect women's employment. Diversification into a wider range of commercial crops may change the sexual division of labour in agriculture. In general, it appears that men have better access to new crops and techniques which yield higher productivity and incomes, while women tend to remain concentrated in low-productivity subsistence cultivation. With rural development, off-farm employment is also created and this too may be differentially distributed among men and women.

Many rural wage jobs are in infrastructural construction and maintenance such as the building of irrigation works, drainage canals, roads, modern processsing facilities, electric utilities, piped water, schools, clinics, etc. These are sectors (utilities, construction, transport and communications) in which women tend to be poorly represented. In addition, modern public services may displace many tasks previously performed for a wage especially by poorer rural women, such as carrying water, gathering firewood, local marketing, child-minding and traditional medical care. Modern agricultural institutions whether in the private or public sector (such as marketing agencies, banks, and even co-operatives), may also compete with and undermine women's traditional dominance in trade and petty entrepreneurial activities. Transport development may have the same effect by destroying previous "natural monopolies" in local trading. Finally, handicraft production, traditionally the domain of women, is replaced by competition from cheap modern manufactures, either imported or made in urban-based import-substituting local industries.

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[11] See, for example, Melinda L. Cain, "Java, Indonesia: the introduction of rice processing technology", in Roslyn Dauber and Melinda L. Cain, eds., *Women and Technological Change in Developing Countries* (Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1981), pp. 127-137; Ann Stoler, "Class structure and female autonomy in rural Java", *SIGNS, Journal of Women in Culture and Society, vol. 3, No. 1, 1977,* pp. 74-89. See also Ingrid Palmer, *The New Rice in Asia: Conclusions from Four Country Studies* (Geneva, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1976).

[12] For example, in the matrilineal Menangkabau area of Indonesia, where women own the land and control production, they have benefitted from the introduction of mechanized rice processing (Cain, "Java, Indonesia: the introduction of rice processing technology"). See also Paul Deuster, "West Sumatra and South Sulawesi, in Gary E. Hansen, ed., *Agricultural and Rural Development in Indonesia* (Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1981), pp. 65-94.

On the other hand, there have also been non-agricultural developments in rural areas which have generated new employment opportunities for rural women. Modern manufacturing, particularly in female-intensive textile, garments, electronics and basic consumer goods industries for the domestic or export market, is beginning to spread to rural areas.[13] Traditional handicraft production is being sustained and transformed by tourism (both domestic and foreign), on the one hand, and by the spread of subcontracting for export agents and industries located in urban areas.[14]

Developments in the urban sector also create employment opportunities for both urban women and rural women migrants.[15] For rural women migrants, the predominant forms of employment in the urban areas of the less-developed countries are in services, primarily domestic service,[16] but also other service jobs such as hairdresser and beautician, serving the growing urban middle class, and waitress, office cleaner, hotel chambermaid, bar-girl and prostitute. Local and foreign tourism contribute to the demand for some of these services, especially in countries such as Thailand and the Philippines.[17]

Both rural and urban women may find employment in small, family-owned businesses, often as unpaid family labour, and older women especially

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[13] See, for example, Cynthia Mather, "Industrialization in the Tangerang Regency of West Java: women workers the Islamic patriarchy," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, vol. 15, No. 2 (1983), pp. 2-17; Aihwa Ong, "Global industries and Malay peasants in Peninsular Malaysia", in June Nash and Maria Patricia Fernandez-Kelly, eds., *Women, Men and the International Division of Labor* (Albany, New York, State University of New York Press, 1983), pp. 426-439; Diane L. Wolf, "Making the bread and bringing it home: female factory workers and the family economy in rural Java", in Gavin W. Jones, ed., *Women in the Urban and Industrial Workforce, Southeast and East Asia*, Development studies Centre Monograph No. 33, (Canberra, Australian National University, 1984), pp. 215-231.

[14] See, respectively, Heather Strange, "Some changing socioeconomic roles of village women in Malaysia", in Sylvia A. Chipp and Justin J. Green, eds., *Asian Women in Transition*, (University Park and London, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980), pp. 123-152; Rosalinda Pineda-Ofreneo, "Philippines domestic outwork: subcontracting for export-oriented industries", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol. 12, No. 3 (1982), pp. 281-293.

[15] See, for example, Siew-Ean Khoo, "Urbanward migration and employment of women in Southeast and East Asian cities: patterns and policy issues", in Jones, eds., *Women in the Urban and Industrial Workforce*, pp. 277-292; Luisa Engracia and Alejandro Herrin, "Employment structure of female migrants to the cities in the Philippines", in Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 293-304; Pawadee Tongudai, "Women migrants in Bangkok: an economic analysis of their employment and earnings", in Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 305-324; and James T. Fawcett, Siew-Ean Khoo and Peter C. Smith, eds., *Women in the Cities of Asia, Migration and Urban Adaptation* (Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1984).

[16] See, for example, Marilou Palabrica-Costello, "Female domestic servants in Cagayan de Oro, Philippines: social and economic implications of employment in a 'premodern' occupational role", in Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 235-250.

[17] See, for example, A. Lin Neumann, " 'Hospitality girls' in the Philippines", *Southeast Asia Chronicle* No. 66 (Jan.-Feb. 1979), pp. 18-22; Pasuk Phongpaichit, *From peasant girls to Bangkok masseuses*, Women, Work and Development 2, (Geneva, International Labour Office, 1982).

participate actively in own-account petty trading as hawkers, vendors, stall-holders in bazaars and market-places, etc. As development proceeds further, small family businesses and own-account trading may be displaced by competition from larger, more modern urban commercial enterprises, where typically younger, more educated women (including rural migrants) are employed as saleswomen, cashiers, etc. Urban women, with better education and more contacts, are over-represented relative to rural migrants in professional and clerical jobs such as teacher, nurse, secretary and office clerk, which expand with the growth of the public sector and private sector business.

Industrial development in both import-substituting and export-oriented industries also creates employment for both urban women and rural migrants. Many export-oriented industries (such as textiles, garments, footwear, electrical and electronic products, toys) are female-intensive and employ large numbers of women, many of them in multinational enterprises, and in some countries, in export processing or free trade zones which may be located in urban semi-urban or rural areas. Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, and increasingly the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand are countries where export manufacturing is or is becoming an extremely important employer of women. In Singapore, for example, the single most common female occupation is that of electronics assembler.[18]

Where such female-intensive manufacturing has been successfully and widely established, it attracts both urban and rural migrant female labour away from less-preferred service occupations, particularly domestic service. Thus in several of the major metropolitan areas of South-East Asia, domestic servants have become scarce and their price has risen so much so that households in Hong Kong and Singapore have resorted to the employment of foreign female migrants (mostly quite well-educated and from the urban areas of their own countries). In both Hong Kong and Singapore, the Philippines, Thailand and Sri Lanka are important sources of foreign maids, while in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia are also important sources. Filipinas venture further to countries outside Asia – Western Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia – for employment as maids, other service personnel, nurses and clerical staff. Export manufacturing industries and other sectors of the labour-short Singapore economy also employ foreign, mostly Malaysian, but also Thai and Sri Lankan female labour.[19]

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[18] There are too many studies on women workers in export-oriented industries in Asia to cite here. For reviews of the literature and references, see Linda Y.C. Lim, "Multinational export factories and women in the third world: a review of theory and evidence", in Nagat El-Sanabary, comp., *Women and Work in the Third World: The Impact of Industrialization and Global Economic Interdependence* (Berkeley, California, University of California, 1983), pp. 75-90 and Linda Y.C. Lim, *Women's Employment in Multinational Enterprises in Developing Countries* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 1985) (forthcoming).

[19] See, for example, Pang Eng Fong and Linda Lim, "Foreign labour and economic development in Singapore", *International Migration Review*, vol. 16, No. 3 (Fall 1982), pp. 548-576.

Finally, women are employed in a range of other jobs spread throughout the urban sector, including in industries where men dominate, such as construction.[20]

This brief discussion suggests that economic development both creates and destroys jobs for women, as for men, changing the composition of women's employment in line with the changing structure of the economy. In aggregate, it appears from the statistics in the previous section that employment creation must outweigh employment loss, since women's employment has increased both absolutely and relatively in the past few decades. This assumes, of course, that the statistics capture most or all of women's income-earning activities, or at least as much of these as they do of men's, which may not be the case in some countries. However even in aggregate, the net employment creation for women may not have been sufficient to absorb all displaced workers and new entrants to the labour force, resulting in rising rates of open unemployment, underemployment and "discouraged" unemployment among women, especially in the less-developed countries. The discouraged worker effect in particular (the tendency of women to withdraw from the labour force into the home and cease actively looking for work when none appears available) may understate the overall unemployment of women. The returns from women's employment are also important and will be discussed below.

Further research should attempt to identify, on the basis of aggregate statistical data, special surveys and case studies, the regional, sectoral and industrial distribution of employment gains and losses for women in each country over time. The intention is less to determine if and how much women's overall employment has benefitted from economic development, especially as compared with men's employment, than to identify problem areas where employment losses for specific groups outweigh employment gains to those groups, and why, in order to devise appropriate remedial policy measures, if any are warranted.

C. CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN TO THE ECONOMY

It will be obvious from the preceding discussion that, just as economic development has affected women's employment, so have women contributed much to economic development. Without women's labour, certain sectors and industries could not have developed to the extent that they did in many countries. Women's participation in export-oriented activities is particularly notable for its contribution to foreign exchange earnings and the balance of payments. In the agricultural sector, women's wage-labour in tea plantations in South Asia and in rubber plantations in South-East Asia has contributed to some countries'

[20] See, for example, Anchalee Singhanetra-Renard, "Effect of female labour force participation on fertility: the case of construction workers in Chiang Mai City", in Jones, ed., *Women in the Urban and Industrial Workforce*, pp. 325-338.

most important exports. In agricultural processing, fruit-canning operations in countries such as Thailand and the Philippines are heavily dependent on female labour, which has helped to build major export industries.

Most other export manufacturing industries are also female-intensive, and would not exist without women's labour. Industries such as textiles and electronics are among the top foreign exchange earners for Hong Kong, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Singapore, and among the most rapidly growing export sectors in other countries in the region. Many of women's service sector activities (such as work in restaurants, hotels, bars, shops, and in prostitution) also earn foreign exchange by serving foreign tourists (although on the whole tourists usually form only part of their business). Women who work in foreign countries, usually as domestic servants and factory workers, also contribute to the balance of payments through their remittances. And in the urban areas of their own countries, female domestic servants enable their women employers to engage in a range of higher-earning occupations such as professional and clerical work.

Women's participation in so-called "informal sector" activities such as petty trade, brokering, shopkeeping and other small-scale enterprises help to lubricate the developing commercial market economy, performing many functions which are not profitable enough to attract or support larger modern businesses, yet are necessary to serve the local consumption needs of the population at large, particularly lower-income groups. It is significant that women are frequently the only members of the indigenous population who can compete with minority immigrant groups in such activities.[21]

Thus women's employment or self-employment in market production makes an important direct contribution to economic growth, and particularly to the development of certain "modern" sectors and industries which could not survive without them and have proved especially important to the balance of payments. But women's non-market activities also play an important though largely unrecognized and unrewarded role.

Women's subsistence agricultural production, for example, subsidizes many rural workers' families and thus lowers the real wage that employers have to pay them, increasing the surplus available for reinvestment and growth. It includes not only the cultivation of staple grains, but also poultry rearing, vegetable farming, collection of forest products and other supplementary activities. Women's craft production for household use has the same effect. And in many areas, the time-consuming and backbreaking tasks of fetching and carrying water, and gathering firewood, are assigned to women, as is household marketing and the transport of goods often for considerable distances on foot. Child-rearing, including the teaching of many household and farm production

[21] For example, in Thailand, see Thomas Kirsch, "Buddhism, sex-roles and the Thai economy", in Van Esterik, ed., *Women of Southeast Asia*.

tasks, which largely devolves on women, daily housekeeping and cooking, and general household management, including budgeting and financial management, complete the wide range of activities which comprise women's reproductive duties.[22]

These non-market and unremunerated activities of women are rarely counted in either labour or GNP statistics, which thus seriously understate both women's labour efforts and their contribution to the economy. Many of these activities make up for non-existent or inadequate public services, such as water and energy utilities, and public transport networks, and thus subsidize both the state and private employers whose expenditures on public works and on wages are kept low as a result. They enable both rural and urban families to enjoy higher consumption and living standards than are provided by the market economy and the state.

At the same time it should be noted that these activities are, for the women who perform them, tedious and often unpleasant or difficult. Their eventual replacement by more modern and efficient (though more costly) state or market-provided services does relieve women from arduous labour and is generally welcomed by them. All too often, however, women are not employed by these replacement activities (such as construction, and public works) which particularly hurt those of them, usually the very poor, who used to perform many of these previously labour-intensive functions for a wage.

Finally, as will be noted in the next section, women's non-market activities, although they may be declining with development, still constrain their participation in market activities, and especially disadvantage them relative to men in the wage-labour market because of the competing demands on their time and physical location. This is because the sexual division of labour even in developed urban societies still requires women to bear the burden of virtually exclusive responsibility for the reproductive role, even though they may be engaged in market production and wage labour as well.[23]

D. IMPACT OF EMPLOYMENT ON WOMEN

The increased employment of women resulting from economic development has led to an increase in the total income, especially money income, earned by women, which has also increased relative to that of men.[24] A few points need to be noted here.

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[22] For a more detailed discussion, see Lim and Gosling, "Changing modes of production and the sexual division of labour".

[23] Ibid.

[24] Women's share of total money income is higher if their share of total employment is higher, unless we assume (a very rigid and unlikely assumption) that it has been accompanied by a fall in women's relative wages (a rise in men's wages) large enough to outweigh their increased employment share.

First, greater total income may not mean greater average incomes for women (although in most cases it probably does), as wages may have remained constant or declined as employment increased. Second, even rising money earnings in real terms (discounted for inflation) may not necessarily mean increased real income, if these earnings merely substitute for previous income-in-kind of an equal or greater value (for example, the earning of a money wage by a previously unpaid family worker, or a shift from domestic service to industrial wage labour which pays a higher money wage but no income-in-kind). In general, however, money earnings do seem to add to the total real incomes of individual women, even if they do not completely cover their costs of subsistence, which are subsidized by non-market activities.[25]

Third, increased average real incomes may hide an unequal distribution of income gains and losses among women themselves, with some (notably young, single, industrially employed) women experiencing considerable real income increases and other (notably older, married or divorced/widowed, agriculturally unemployed) women suffering losses of income. There are likely to be regional, sectoral, industrial and individual differences in income gains and losses. Fourth, although women's real incomes may have increased, they may not have increased as rapidly as men's, leaving a larger income disparity between the sexes. Fifth, even if women's real incomes have increased relative to men's, and with it their contribution to total family income, they may not have complete control over the disposition of their income, which may be wholly or partly turned over to male spouses or male or female elders within the family.[26]

Sixth, the higher earnings may not translate into equivalent welfare gains if part of them must go into paying the opportunity costs of wage employment – such as reduced subsistence production, increased living costs for migrants in the city, child-care and transport costs, etc. For married women especially, wage employment also means an increase in hours worked in the productive and reproductive roles combined. Even where men share more of the reproductive tasks when women work outside the home, women everywhere still bear most of this burden, resulting in very long hours of paid employment and unpaid domestic labour.[27] Women's families may benefit overall, but not the women themselves.

These are all empirical issues, which may be resolved by further research into conditions prevailing in different countries. In general, we may expect that

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[25] The argument that rural families subsidize the wages of daughters working in rural-based modern factories is made by, among others, Ong, "Global industries and Malay peasants", and Mather, "Industrialization in the Tangerang Regency."

[26] This appeared to be the case in Hong Kong, for example. See Janet W. Salaff, *Working Daughters of Hong Kong, Filial Piety or Power in the Family?* (Cambridge, U.K., Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[27] See, for example, Virginia A. Miralao, *Women and Men in Development, Findings from a Pilot Study,* (Quezon City, Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University, 1980).

total and average earnings of women have increased with expanded employment, but that these earnings gains and corresponding losses are unevenly distributed among different groups of women, and in most cases are probably insufficient to significantly narrow the earnings gap between men and women.[28] Many if not most women and their families have benefitted from increased real incomes, but this has been at the cost to women of much longer hours of work within and outside the home. But these hours may not necessarily be longer than the hours women previously worked performing largely unpaid productive as well as reproductive tasks within the rural household economy. Indeed, modern developments such as piped water, electricity and improved transport reduce the labour inputs required by women's reproductive tasks.

Finally, the terms and conditions under which women work in new wage jobs have to be taken into consideration. Factory work may introduce new hazards from working with machines and chemicals, while prostitution poses obvious health and safety hazards, as well as possible long-run emotional, psychological, family and social problems. These have to be balanced against the hardships of traditional women's work (from which they may be qualitatively but not necessarily quantitatively different) and the costs of unemployment.

If we assume that women allocate their labour rationally, as they have always done, then it is likely that overall most women enjoy a net benefit from their employment, at least as compared with not being employed, or being employed in alternative occupations, if not always as compared with their previous situations. However this net gain may be very small, and for many non-existent, while others actually lose from the new forms of employment creation resulting from economic development. Many women may put up with net losses (taking into account non-monetary as well as monetary factors) to themselves if they perceive a net gain to their families. The policy challenge here is to increase the returns and diminish the costs to women of new forms of employment.

Comparing the returns to employment for men and women, available statistics show a clear discrepancy in monetary earnings, with women earning much less on average than men, in developing as in developed countries of ESCAP.[29] There are many reasons for this:

(a) Women's employment tends to be concentrated in less-productive, lower-paid sectors and industries such as subsistence agriculture, personal services, and labour-intensive manufacturing;

(b) Within these sectors and industries, they are concentrated in lower-level, less skilled and lower-paid occupations;

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[28] The narrowing of this gap requires a stronger demand for female than for male labour, which will occur locally in some areas.

[29] For example, in Singapore, the gap is about 25 per cent. Lim, *Women in the Singapore Economy*.

(c) Women dominate the ranks of unpaid family workers. Men, on the other hand, tend to dominate more capital-intensive, high-wage industries and more skilled and higher-level occupations;

(d) Even within the same industries and occupations, women tend to have a shorter job tenure and less seniority than men, and so are paid less;

(e) Even where women have the same seniority as men in the same jobs, they are less likely to be promoted;

(f) In a few countries (e.g., Sri Lanka), male and female wage rates as determined by government wage scales or minimum wage legislation are different even for the same jobs and seniority levels;

(g) In some sectors women may work fewer hours than men, since more of them perform part-time work out of choice or necessity. This situation is common in Japan, for example;

(h) Although there is little evidence for it, it is sometimes argued by employers and observers that women have higher rates of sickness and absenteeism than men, and so again may work fewer hours;

(i) Even where they may work the same number of hours as men, women are often prohibited by law from working on more lucrative shifts, such as the night shift, and in more highly-paid tasks, usually those involving heavy manual labour and high risk of physical injury;

(j) Finally, there is pure discrimination on the basis of sex alone, which also enters into many of the other factors just mentioned.

These factors themselves may be explained by the sexual division of labour which assigns women primary if not exclusive responsibility for the tasks of the reproductive role (child-rearing and housekeeping) even when they also work outside the home. Women's employment is considered, by employers, by men and by women themselves, to be of secondary importance to men's employment (within a given family), and also secondary to women's reproductive role. The reasons are both economic and cultural, with the former predominating.

Biology differentiates women from men in essentially two ways: first, only women can bear and nurse children; second, women have a weaker musculature than men and thus, on average, lesser physical strength. In traditional rural economies, when families were large, these conditions limited women's opportunities for wage employment, which often required long periods of time away from home, as well as heavy manual labour. Men's greater mobility and physical strength gave them an advantage in seeking and obtaining wage jobs, which quickly became identified as "male", and soon provided earnings superior to what could be earned in household production and exchange dominated by women. Better employment opportunities and higher current and life-time earnings for men (whose work would not be disrupted by child-bearing and rearing) made it rational for the individual family to practise an even more distinct

sexual division of labour, with men specializing in wage employment and market production, and women in reproduction, when family incomes increased sufficiently to release them from productive labour within the fast-changing household economy.[30] It should be noted that in traditional society women were overburdened with their dual responsibility for productive and reproductive tasks, and often welcomed being able to specialize in the reproductive role alone.[31]

With further economic and social development, several factors work to change both the demand for and supply of female labour. Greater education for women increases their skill levels and employability, and also their desire to delay marriage and limit child-bearing, which itself is encouraged by family planning programmes and the availability of birth control technology. Women increasingly wish to work for income to earn a return on their investments in education, and to enjoy, at least for a time, the fruits of independence.[32] In circumstances where marriage bonds are weak and/or male unemployment high or male wages too low to support a family, women have an added incentive to continue working after marriage and child-bearing. The tradition in peasant families of multiple workers/producers or income earners continues in the urban and modern rural sectors, where rising costs of living, changing consumption patterns and in some cases a relative decline in rural incomes, all make it desirable even if not always necessary for women to obtain wage employment. This is reinforced by desires for higher current living standards and for upward mobility (e.g., via improved education for self, siblings and children).[33] Traditions of female responsibility for family economic support which are pervasive throughout South-East Asia, particularly in Thailand, also contribute to women's eagerness for wage employment. Education also changes the attitudes of ethnic groups, such as the Chinese, who may not have such traditions.[34]

These factors increase the supply of female labour which, combined with the increase in demand for female labour that accompanies economic development, expands women's employment. But this is not accompanied by any

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[30] For more discussion, see Lim and Gosling, "Changing modes of production and the sexual division of labour".

[31] See, for example, Heather Strange, "Some changing socio-economic roles of village women".

[32] Many studies show this. See, for example, Robert T. Snow, "Dependent development and the new industrial worker, the case of the export processing zone in the Philippines", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Sociology, Harvard University, 1977; and Susan E. Ackerman, "The impact of industrialization on the social role of rural Malay women: a case study of female factory workers in Malacca", in Nik Safiah Karim, ed., *Women, A Malaysian Focus* (Singapore, Oxford University Press, 1985) (in press).

[33] See, for example, Janet Salaff, *Working Daughters of Hong Kong.*

[34] See, for example, Aline K. Wong, "Women's status and changing family values: implications of maternal employment and educational attainment", in Eddie C.Y. Kuo and Aline K. Wong, *The Contemporary Family in Singapore* (Singapore, Singapore University Press, 1979), pp. 40-61.

change in women's primary responsibility for and identification with the reproductive role, which strongly shapes employers' and women's own behaviour in the labour market. The expectation of both is that women's working life will be truncated or interrupted by marriage and periodic child-bearing.

Employers thus tend not to hire women for or promote them to more important jobs, and are reluctant to invest in skills training and upgrading for them. Women employees are perceived as being both more costly (because of legislated maternity leaves and benefits) and less productive (because of higher absenteeism[35] and turnover rates) than men, and their employment is additionally complicated by so-called "protective legislation" which, for example, restricts or prohibits their employment at night or in certain jobs, or, as in Indonesia and the Republic of Korea, requires the provision of monthly "menstruation leave".

Women, on the other hand, responding to their limited employment opportunities and expectation of a short work-life, also tend to invest less in their own education and training than men do, and may be reluctant to accept promotions and more responsible jobs which they feel may conflict with their reproductive role.[36] Many women might prefer part-time work as a means of accommodating the still more important reproductive role. If they work full-time, the additional demands of the reproductive role may result in fatigue and lower productivity at the workplace.

Finally, a wide range of government policies both directly and indirectly affect women's employment and their returns from it. These include labour policies such as protective legislation, minimum wage legislation and discriminatory wage scales; educational policies; social policies such as family planning and child-care services, and in some instances, housing and transport; economic policies such as the encouragement of female-intensive export industries and tourism, and agricultural policies, including policies which neglect or adversely affect rural areas and encourage female as well as male rural-urban migration which increases the urban labour supply and depresses the urban wage.[37] Some of these policies might raise the returns to women's employment relative to men's, while others reduce them.

So far this discussion has centered on monetary returns, with brief mention of the monetary and non-monetary costs associated with them. Some of the non-monetary costs are employment-related (workplace health hazards,

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[35] It is assumed, for example, that women rather than men will absent themselves from work in family crises.

[36] See, for example, Janet Salaff and Aline Wong, "Women's work: factory, family and social class in an industrializing order", in Gavin W. Jones, ed., *Women in the Urban and Industrial Workforce, Southeast and East Asian,* pp. 189-214; and Aline K. Wong, "A study of female workers in transnational electronics firms in Singapore", A Research Report submitted to the Stiftung Volkswagenwerk, October 1983.

[37] For this last argument, see, for example, Tongudai, "Women migrants in Bangkok".

for example), while others reflect the additional responsibility for reproductive tasks, imposing a dual burden on working women which is not borne by men. At the same time, there are certain non-monetary returns to wage employment which are specifically important to women. These include the opportunity to delay marriage and child-bearing, to enjoy at least a temporary economic and social independence, especially independence from family and male authority and the claims of children, to enjoy the companionship of other women and to widen their horizons and experiences, which in the case of migrants, means to see the city and even the world. These are opportunities and freedoms which are frequently denied to non-employed women, particularly isolated housewives, in patriarchal cultures, but which men automatically enjoy. Employment is in many cases, especially for young women, important because it permits an escape from the confines of the reproductive role, rather than because it yields money income.

The net return (monetary and non-monetary) that women get from their employment, the differential with men's, and the causes and consequences of both are empirical questions which remain to be determined by further research in individual countries. In general, it appears that women do obtain a net (monetary and non-monetary) benefit from employment, but this is less than the benefit enjoyed by men. The returns to women's employment are limited largely by the demands of their reproductive role, which is neither socialized nor shared with men as development proceeds, and significantly disadvantages them in the market-place.[39] For the economy, while women's unpaid performance of reproductive duties fulfils many important needs (as discussed in section C above), it also imposes a cost in terms of their under-realized productivity. That is to say, women's productive potential and its contribution to the economy are not being maximized, resulting in lower productivity and foregone output.

E. EVALUATION, PROJECTIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Have women benefitted from economic development and employment creation in the countries of ESCAP? The answer, subject to previously noted qualifications, appears to be yes. In some ways and in some countries they have even benefitted more than men, where employment creation for women has proceeded more rapidly than for men, and the income disparity between the

[38] See especially Ackerman, "The impact of industrialization on the social role of rural Malay women".

[39] For a discussion of how working women and their employers accommodate the reproductive role at different stages of development and in different countries, see Linda Y.C. Lim, "Factory production and household reproduction in Southeast Asia: the role of family, market and state", unpublished paper presented at the Conference on Women in Development, Cornell University, 7 April 1984.

sexes has, at least in some cases, been narrowed or at least maintained. Nevertheless, there remains a great gap between men and women in total employment and the returns to employment, and large differences in the gains made by women in different countries, regions, sectors and industries. The main reason for the persistence of this gap is women's continued primary resposibility for the reproductive role, which disadvantages them in the labour market, as do certain employer practices and government policies.

Can women benefit more from economic development and employment creation than they already have? The answer again is yes. At the policy level, sex-discriminatory employer practices and government policies can be removed, efforts may be made to equalize educational and training opportunities and access to employment for women, to encourage female-intensive investment projects and the entry of women into male-intensive occupations and industries, and to redeploy or otherwise compensate displaced female labour. Attempts can be made to reduce the burden of the reproductive role by continuing to promote small-sized families, by establishing child-care and education programmes or subsidies, by restructuring terms of employment to enable women – and men – to combine wage-work and child-raising, and by public education programmes to change cultural attitudes towards women's role and status in society, and to increase men's participation in the reproductive role (child-raising and housekeeping).

But several reservations about the likelihood and effectiveness of such policies must also be noted. For one thing, even aware and well-intentioned governments have budget and manpower constraints, and competing development priorities. Policies to improve women's economic position will be considered only if they fit into overall macroeconomic development plans and goals. Cultural perceptions and prejudices also do not change easily, even among women, and even in developed countries where sexual inequities persist in the economy despite "progressive" government policies. In affluent societies, changes in women's and families' "tastes" and preferences regarding the allocation of women's labour take place only slowly and in response to sustained market and educational pressures.

The best hope for women's increased and improved employment is a strong market demand for their labour, which expands women's employment opportunities, pushes up female wages, and increases the incentive for women to acquire more education and skills and to remain longer in the labour force (high wages increase the opportunity cost of withdrawal from or non-entry into the labour force), thereby increasing their productivity and job commitment and diminishing employers' prejudices. As female wages rise relative to male wages, an incentive will be provided for males to share in reproductive tasks in order to maintain and increase family incomes.

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[40] See, for example, *Report of the Task Force on Female Labour Participation*, (Singapore, National Productivity Board, 1984).

Government interventions into the labour market should concentrate on removing institutional rigidities and discriminatory regulations and practices which artificially restrict either the demand for or the supply of female labour. They should also invest more heavily in the education and training of women, and in health and family planning programmes. Beyond that, vigorous efforts to promote economic growth and employment creation should result in increased employment opportunities and higher returns for women as for men. In assessing the employment implications of various development projects in the private and public sectors – for example, in evaluating technology choices – equal weight should be given to men's and women's employment.

The incentive for governments to attempt these policies lies in the increasingly important contribution that women's employment makes to economic growth and development. Currently women's labour is still underutilized, and their productivity depressed. Increased utilization of female labour and improvements in its productivity will further enhance economic growth,[41] increase incomes, and reduce poverty and unemployment, in which women are currently disproportionately represented. Reductions in family size not only facilitate female employment, they also result in higher family living standards and future productivity, and reduce labour force growth so that wages rise. Finally, an egalitarian distribution of employment and incomes by sex should itself be a goal of development.

F. SUGGESTIONS FOR RESEARCH

This report has included suggestions for further research throughout the discussion. In this section an attempt will be made to incorporate these suggestions into a comprehensive outline for further research. The outline should be applied to each country individually.

1. *Statistical analysis.* Comprehensive statistical data on women's employment and earnings should be collected and analysed for each country over time. The data should include the characteristics of women workers (age distribution, marital status, educational attainment, ethnic group and nationality (where relevant), etc.) and their distribution by occupation and industry at the most disaggregated level possible. Data gaps for particular countries should be identified, with suggestions as to how data might be collected (making reference perhaps to the countries which do gather such data).

The pattern of women's employment and earnings could thus be analysed across time, by worker characteristics and occupational and industrial characteristics (including, for example, such considerations as productivity, skill and

[41] For discussion in a particular country context, see Linda Y.C. Lim, "Married women in the workforce: some productivity implications", talk presented at the Public Forum on Married Women in the Workforce, Ministry of Social Affairs, Singapore, 25 November 1983.

capital-intensity levels of given occupations and industries). Comparison would be made with men's employment and earnings in each case. Where possible, data on work hours, accident rates, unionization, industrial disputes and stoppages, etc., should also be collected and analysed for different workers, occupations, industries, sectors and regions (where relevant).

The goal would be to present a comprehensive picture of women's employment, earnings and conditions of work, how these have changed over time, how they compare with the employment, earnings and conditions of work of men, and how this comparison might have changed over time. It would also be desirable to conduct this statistical analysis with reference to concurrent changes in the economy and society which can be documented, e.g., growth of GNP, employment and incomes (in aggregate and in particular sectors), changes in educational levels, family size, age at marriage, literacy rates, etc.

2. *Historical and cultural background.* Historical and cultural factors affecting women's role and status in society, particularly their economic activities, should be examined, as background to current patterns of labour force participation.

3. *Government policies.* Government policies which have direct or indirect impacts on women's employment should be reviewed. These include economic development policies, social policies and especially labour policies which affect either the demand for or the supply of labour.

4. *Literature review.* In each country, a review should be made of the existing literature and studies pertaining to women's employment, including large-scale surveys and intensive case studies of particular groups, sectors or industries. It may be possible in some cases to "mine" the data from existing surveys with other focuses, e.g., on agricultural productivity, migration, or family planning practices, to obtain information relevant to the current study. A full bibliography of references consulted, annotated if possible, should be prepared.

Further original research. On the basis of the foregoing information and analysis, country researchers should suggest what other research might be needed to provide information not currently available, e.g., surveys or case studies of particular groups, sectors or industries inadequately covered by statistical data or previous research. In some cases, e.g., where statistical data are limited and the available literature scanty, it may be necessary to conduct original research as part of this project.

Evaluation and policy suggestions. Evaluation of the information and analysis provided should focus on the effects of women's employment on (a) women's welfare (broadly defined), and (b) the economy.

Evaluation of women's welfare must include: (a) a historical comparison (e.g., are women better off now than they were before?), (b) a comparison

among women (e.g., are women who are employed better off than those who are not employed? are women who are employed in certain sectors and industries, or regions better off than those in others? why or why not?), (c) a comparison with men (e.g., are women better off relative to men?), (d) a comparison with other countries, and (e) a comparison with their expectations (e.g., are women satisfied with their returns? is their situation better or worse than they expected? how could it be improved?).

Evaluation of the economy must include (a) a historical comparison, (b) a comparison among sectors, industries, etc., (c) a comparison with other countries, especially countries with different patterns of women's employment, (d) projections of what the situation would be like without a change in women's labour force participation patterns, and what it would be like with further changes (bearing in mind the inherent limitations of all such hypothetical projections).

Suggestions for policy would be based on evaluations for each country, and on cross-country comparisons. The goal would be to suggest in what ways and how, women's employment should and could be improved to increase women's welfare and their contribution to economic development.

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