YOUNG WOMEN WORKERS IN MANUFACTURING:

A CASE OF RAPIDLY INDUSTRIALIZING ECONOMIES OF THE ESCAP REGION



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I. YOUNG WOMEN WORKERS IN THE ASIAN AND PACIFIC REGION

A. Introduction

The year 1985 had dual significance for the United Nations. It marked the final year of the United Nations Decade for Women and also was designated as the International Youth Year. This coincidence underscores the special concerns that the United Nations attaches to both women and youth, especially in developing countries.

Within the United Nations it is today fully recognized that there is a special need to consider the role of women and youth in the development process. Priority attention to these two major disadvantaged groups, it is increasingly believed, will permit developing countries to maximize the utilization of their human resources for development and at the same time ensure that the benefits of development are equitably shared by all citizens.

The focus of the present study is the problems and issues faced by a specific group of youth and women – young women workers in manufacturing industries of rapidly developing countries of Asia and the Pacific. Many countries in the Asian and Pacific region are, like developing countries elsewhere, encountering the fact that the effects of economic development on women's participation differ from those experienced by men. Working women have dual socio-economic roles, one role directly in the formal production system and as unpaid domestic labour in the family and household and a second role in reproduction.[1] Distinctions between these two roles are often blurred in the traditional sector in developing countries, while in the modern sector only the direct production role is acknowledged. The result is that women's roles and contributions are underestimated so that women benefit less and are often marginalized in the process of modernization and industrialization.[2] Thus, one important social issue is whether economic development makes women increasingly subordinate, inferior or marginal labour force participants, even while providing them with new economic opportunities.

Women's participation in and contribution to the growth of a modern manufacturing sector in developing countries takes place in a complex context

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[1] This dual role is carefully examined in Esther Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development* (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1970) and J. P. Nash and M. P. Fernandez-Kelly, eds., *Women, Men and the International Division of Labor* (Albany, New York, State University of New York Press, 1983).

[2] ILO and UNCTC, *Women Workers in Multinational Enterprises in Developing Countries* (Geneva, ILO, 1985), p. 2.

which emerges out of national cultural traditions, social conventions, distinctive historical conditions and indigenous economic structures, on which are superimposed government plans, policies and programmes reflecting a national vision of modernization and development. Developing Asian and Pacific countries, to the degree that they have opened their economies to foreign investment and international trade, must deal with the added impact of the international context, wherein transnational corporations play a decisive role.

The present study begins by analysing the role of young women workers in manufacturing in five rapidly industrializing economies – Hong Kong, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Thailand – in the context of the international division of labour. The focus is on the relationship between two approaches to industrialization – import-substitution and export-orientation – and how these have affected the participation of young women in the industrial labour force. The broad survey is followed by two in-depth studies: one, on young women's participation in the textile industry of Thailand; the second, on young women workers in the garment and textile industries of the Philippines.

Analysis of the role of young women in the growth of the manufacturing industries must pay special attention to the concept of the new international division of labour.[3] This concept refers to the split between highly-skilled, capital-intensive production, which is dominated by men in the developed countries, and low-skilled, labour-intensive production, which is heavily participated in by women in developing countries.

Analysis of the international division of labour addresses several related questions. First, it seeks to explain how and why this gender distinction has emerged. This requires a consideration of why certain forms of production have moved from the developed to the developing countries and why such production in developing countries is mostly carried out by women. With regard to the first question, we can look at the increased mobility of capital, increased competition among some of the world's largest corporations and labour rigidities and other economic constraints in developed countries. These include high costs for labour and energy, high taxes, and high costs of complying with environmental and industrial safety regulations. These factors provide a "push" to move production to developing countries where such costs are kept down by market forces and government policies. The highly skilled tasks can be kept in the developed countries where the work force is better educated. The less sophisticated, labour-intensive and routine operations can be transferred to developing countries.

[3] Annette Robert, "The effects of the international division of labor on female workers in the textile and clothing industries," *Development and Change*, 14 (1983), pp. 19-37; Annette Fuentes and Barbara Ehrenreich, *Women in the Global Factory* (New York/Boston, Institute for New Communications/South End Press, 1983); J.P. Nash and M.P. Fernandez-Kelly, eds. *op. cit.*

This still leaves unanswered the question of why low-skilled production tends to be carried out by women. One reason which has been suggested is that corporate management prefers women in low-skilled work as a general employment strategy and that this is based on the stereotype that women are more docile than men, that they are more willing to do tedious work for lower wages and under poor working conditions with less desire or ability to organize resistance.[4] Similarily, it has been argued that corporate management in developing countries takes advantage of patriarchal cultures, which typically expect women to be more submissive and compliant than men.

Women's role in the new international division of labour raises a number of research questions for this study. What roles do women actually play in the industrialization process? What factors push and pull women to enter the industrial labour force? Why are women hired predominantly in the textile, garment and other labour-intensive manufacturing industries? Does corporate management consciously adopt a strategy of employing women because it believes they are more docile? What arrangements and processes in the social structure make women resort to employment in textile and garment factories? Finally, are women actually more willing to accept low wages and inferior working conditions without organizing to demand their rights and benefits as workers?

B. An overview of women workers in five rapidly industrializing economies of the ESCAP region

This section presents an overview of the relationship between economic development and female labour force participation in five rapidly industrializing economies of the ESCAP region: Hong Kong, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Thailand. The analysis is based mainly on aggregate data on economic development and women's labour force participation from 1960 to the early 1980s.

Women throughout the ESCAP region have experienced dramatic changes in their economic and social lives over the past 20 years. This is especially true in the rapidly industrializing economies. A great number of women have left the farm to enter the factory. For these women, the rhythm of work, social relations and reproductive life have changed radically. The lives of women remaining on the farm have been deeply affected as well.

The changes in the lives of these women can only be understood within the broader context of the patterns of development in the ESCAP region. This development process, in turn, has been to a significant degree a function of the changing nature of the international division of labour.

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[4] L.Y.C. Lim, "Capitalism, imperialism and patriarchy: the dilemma of third world women workers in multinational factories," in J.P. Nash and M.P. Fernandez-Kelly, eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 70-93.

Over the past two decades, East and South-east Asia have been among the most rapidly developing subregions in the world. In particular, the five economies highlighted in this study registered high average annual GDP (gross domestic product) growth rates between 1965 and 1973: Singapore 13 per cent, the Republic of Korea 10 per cent, Hong Kong 7.9 per cent, Thailand 7.8 per cent and the Philippines 5.4 per cent.[5] Table 1 shows that the economic success of these economies was generally associated with low population growth rates and rapidly expanding manufacturing sectors.

Table 1. Selected indicators of growth in five rapidly industrializing economies of the ESCAP region

Country/area	*1984 Population (millions)*	*Average annual population growth 1973-1984 (percentage)*	*1984 GDP (billions of US dollars)*	*Average annual GDP growth rate 1973-1984 (percentage)*	*Manufacturing output, average annual growth rate 1973-1984 (percentage)*
Hong Kong	5.4	2.4	30.6	9.1	8.0[a]
Philippines	53.4	2.7	32.8	4.8	4.3
Republic of Korea	40.1	1.5	83.2	7.2	11.5
Singapore	2.5	1.3	18.2	8.2	...
Thailand	50.0	2.2	41.9	6.8	10.0

Source: World Bank, *World Development Report 1986* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1986).

Note: [a] Industry as a whole.

The rapid growth experienced by these economies has been related to two major industrialization drives. The first was marked by import-substitution strategies and policies begun in the late 1950s. The second, which generally replaced the first in the early 1970s, has been based on export-oriented industrialization strategies and policies.

Following the Second World War, the United States of America led the world economy into a period of rapid and sustained economic growth. At the same time, large corporations from the United States, Europe and Japan became transnational in character as they expanded their investment and production activities abroad. One motive behind the internationalization of production was to protect overseas markets threatened by tariffs and increasing competition. Another was to take advantage of low labour cost opportunities. A corporate strategy of overseas production coincided with the desire of developing countries to attract industry in the belief that industrialization would solve national problems of poverty, unemployment and slow growth. The strategy of attract-

[5] World Bank, *World Development Report 1986* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1986).

ing foreign industry to produce for domestic consumption behind tariff barriers is a key element of import-substituting industrialization.

Several international economic organizations vigorously promoted the import-substitution drive. In turn, many developing countries eagerly accepted this strategy and its related policies. For example, during the 1950s and 1960s, World Bank missions to the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, and Thailand recommended that each of these countries embark on import-substituting industrialization. Essentially, this meant a reduction in state-owned firms, a commitment to free enterprise under tariff protection, an open-door policy to foreign investors, provision of fiscal incentives to private investors and the rapid development of infrastructure. These recommendations were adopted in the development plans of the above-mentioned countries. Each country set up a Board of Investment to attract and facilitate the development of private industrial enterprises. As anticipated, import-substituting industrialization produced an inflow of foreign capital and rapid industrial growth in each case.

However, the import-substitution strategy created many problems. First, the production of consumer goods was expanded without a sound industrial base. Few forward or backward linkages were established, so that import-substitution did not reduce industrial goods imports but only imports of consumer goods. Expanded production of consumer goods required capital goods that could not be produced domestically, and so imports of intermediate and capital goods rose rapidly. The result was a deteriorating balance of payments. The second problem was that the new industries employed capital-intensive technology, which failed to absorb the surplus labour force to any significant degree. Except for Hong Kong and Singapore, which rapidly changed to export-oriented industrialization, the manufacturing sectors of the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Thailand continued to absorb only a small percentage of the labour force; by 1970 the labour force absorption of industry was only 14 per cent in the Republic of Korea, 11 per cent in the Philippines and 4 per cent in Thailand (see table 2). A third problem was related to domestic market constraints. The local population had limited purchasing power, partly because of the low-labour absorption of industry and the low-wage policies adopted to attract foreign investors. Local markets were thus soon saturated, and the import-substitution industrialization process thus ran out of steam.

In many developing countries of the ESCAP region, export-oriented industrialization started to replace import-substitution industrialization as the dominant industrial policy in the early 1970s, or even earlier. This new strategy, like the former one, was actively promoted by certain major international development agencies. It urged developing countries to specialize in the production of manufactured goods for export, based on the principle of comparative advantage. This implied the manufacture of goods requiring a high labour content at low cost and relatively low levels of industrial capital.

One report recommending export-oriented industrialization suggested the adoption of the following measures: further development of infrastructural

Table 2. Structure of production and employment in five rapidly industrializing economies of the ESCAP region, 1960-1980

(Percentage)

	Agriculture			*Manufacturing*			*Services*		
	1960	*1970*	*1980*	*1960*	*1970*	*1980*	*1960*	*1970*	*1980*
1. *GDP distribution*									
Hong Kong	4	2	1	34	31	18	62	67	81
Philippines	28	28	23	16	23	26	56	49	51
Republic of Korea	43	29	16	14	20	29	43	52	55
Singapore	6	2	1	8	23	31	78	75	68
Thailand	40	28	26	11	16	19	41	56	55
2. *Employment distribution*									
Hong Kong	8	4[a]	2[b]	52	46	41	40	50	57
Philippines	61	52	52[c]	15	11	15	24	37	33
Republic of Korea	66	51	36	9	14	21	25	35	43
Singapore	8	3	1[d]	23	20	28	69	77	71
Thailand	84	78	68	4	4	8	12	18	24

Source: United Nations, *Statistical Yearbook,* 1973: table 178; 1981: table 29.

United Nations, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics,* 1963: table 4A; 1975: table 2A; 1984: table 2A.

United Nations, *Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific,* 1981: 171.

Thailand, National Statistics Office, *Statistical Yearbook,* (1985), pp. 458-460.

Philippines, NEDA, *Philippine Statistical Yearbook,* 1982: table 11.2.

Notes: [a] 1971.

[b] 1981.

[c] 1978.

[d] 1983.

facilities; tax rebates on imports of parts used for manufacture; generous credit facilities; tax exemption on profits; and particularly, low wages and predictable, stable labour conditions.[6] The key to successful export-oriented industrialization, even more than import-substitution industrialization, is maintenance of low wages plus a docile labour force, conditions which were generally absent in developed countries. As the above-mentioned report put it: "... in order to succeed in the export of labour-intensive manufacturing, wage costs must be kept low. Wage costs depend not only on the level of wages but also the productivity of labour."[7]

[6] Hla Myint, *Southeast Asian Economy: Development Policies in the 1970's,* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972).

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 60.

The strategy of export-oriented industrialization was formulated in the context of changing production conditions in developed countries. By the late 1960s, rising labour costs in the United States and Western Europe were squeezing profitability of home country production and rendering exports less competitive in the international markets. Many transnational corporations, particularly those in labour-intensive industries, therefore began to consider the relocation of their production facilities to developing countries, where wages were one fifth to one tenth the level of wages at home.

Each developing country and area of the ESCAP region that shifted to export-oriented industrialization attempted to outbid other countries in offering the least expensive and most efficient labour force to foreign investors. The Republic of Korea and Hong Kong were among the first to adopt this strategy, followed by Singapore, the Philippines, Malaysia and more recently Thailand. Measured in terms of industrial growth, the policy has been successful. For all except Hong Kong, where the economic structure already favoured manufacturing, the manufacturing sector grew rapidly between 1970 and 1980 (see table 2).

The most significant effect of the industrialization policies on the economic structures of these five economies was the decline of the agricultural sector and, with the exception of Hong Kong, the expansion of the manufacturing sector. Of course, Hong Kong and Singapore did not have very large agricultural sectors to begin with, but what little they had virtually disappeared between 1960 and 1980. In all five economies, agriculture's declining contribution to GDP coincided with a decline in agricultural employment (see table 2). By the 1980s, Hong Kong and Singapore, respectively, had only 2 and 1 per cent of their economically active population employed in agriculture. The Republic of Korea was the most dramatic case. In 1960 it was essentially an agricultural country, with 66 per cent of its labour force employed in that sector, but by 1980 only 36 per cent of the labour force remained in agriculture.

Again, with the exception of Hong Kong, between 1960 and 1980 the contribution of manufacturing to GDP rose steadily in each of the economies. Unlike the rest, Hong Kong already had a substantial manufacturing base in 1960, and further expansion was primarily in retail, trade, finance and services.

As table 2 indicates, employment in manufacturing has not kept pace with the steady increase in manufacturing's contribution to GDP. For example, between 1960 and 1970 manufacturing contributed an increasing share to GDP in the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, but the percentage of the labour force employed in manufacturing in these countries stagnated or declined. Perhaps the most important explanation is that this was the height of the import-substitution phase in these countries. A good deal of foreign investment entered to produce consumer goods for the domestic market. The new industries were capital-intensive and, in addition, they undermined indigenous industry. Jobs were thus destroyed as well as created. More jobs were created in manufacturing than were destroyed (see table 3), but the aggregate number of jobs created

Table 3. Participation of men and women in the manufacturing sector by country, selected years

		Economically active population in manufacturing (thousands)		*Total economically active population (thousands)*	*Proportion of economically active population in manufacturing (percentage)*
		Total	*Increase*		
Philippines					
1961	Men	409	...	5 932	6.9
	Women	512	...	3 163	16.2
1970	Men	640	231	8 368	7.6
	Women	762	250	3 929	19.4
1978	Men	1 004	364	10 677	9.4
	Women	917	155	5 991	15.3
Republic of Korea					
1963	Men	437	...	5 145	8.5
	Women	207	...	2 801	7.4
1970	Men	925	488	6 754	13.7
	Women	518	311	3 625	14.3
1980	Men	1 785	860	8 622	20.7
	Women	1 012	496	4 973	20.4
Singapore					
1957	Men	54	...	394	13.8
	Women	12	...	87	14.2
1970	Men	95	41	539	17.6
	Women	48	36	188	25.8
1980	Men	174	79	731	23.8
	Women	150	102	385	38.9
Thailand					
1960	Men	293	...	7 145	4.1
	Women	174	...	6 692	2.6
1970	Men	392	99	8 911	4.4
	Women	294	120	7 939	3.7
1980	Men	1 032	640	11 998	8.6
	Women	752	458	10 740	7.0

Sources: United Nations, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics* (New York, United Nations, various years) 1963: table 4A; table 2; 1983: table 2A.

economy-wide was not enough to keep pace with the expanding labour force. The situation reversed itself in the 1970s as new industries tended to be more labour-intensive. The increase in manufacturing's contribution to GDP was smaller, but the increase in labour employed by manufacturing was greater.

All five economies began the 1960s with low labour force participation rates overall (see table 4). Levels of unemployment and underemployment were correspondingly high (though this is contradicted by the data presented in table 6.) With the exception of Thailand, the situation was uniformly worse for women. In the Republic of Korea, for example, table 4 shows that 45 per cent of men were participating in the labour force in 1960 whereas only 30 per cent of women participated. As table 5 shows, women were much more likely than men to fall within the category of unpaid family labour.

Table 4. Labour force participation rate by sex, selected years

(Percentage)

	Male[a]			*Female*[a]		
	1960	*1970*	*1980*	*1960*	*1970*	*1980*
Hong Kong	53.8[b]	84.7	82.5	22.8[b]	42.8	49.5
Philippines	47.6[b]	78.4	79.0	26.5[b]	34.1	50.1
Republic of Korea	45.0[c]	74.8	75.1	29.9[c]	38.4	39.5
Singapore	51.6[d]	82.3	81.7	12.7[d]	29.5	45.7
Thailand	54.3	87.6	79.1	51.1	73.1	76.2

Source: United Nations, ILO, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics*, 1965: table 2; 1975: table 1; 1984: table 1.

Notes: [a] Labour force participation rates for 1960 and 1970 = population over 15 years old.

[b] For 1961.

[c] For 1955.

[d] For 1957.

As mentioned previously, another feature of the economies of the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Thailand in 1960 was the concentration of economically active population in agriculture. Indeed, this is where most of the unpaid family labour worked. Employment in the manufacturing sectors of all five economies was not very large, with the exception of Hong Kong and Singapore in the 1980s (see tables 3 and 7).

Table 5. Distribution of labour force by employment status and sex, selected years

(Percentage)

	Female						Male					
	Employers and self-employed	*Employees*	*Unpaid family labour*	*Not classifiable*	*Total*		*Employers and self-employed*	*Employees*	*Unpaid family labour*	*Not classifiable*	*Total*	
					Percentage	*Number*					*Percentage*	*Number*
Hong Kong												
1961	9.7	79.1	9.5	1.6	100	347 204	17.1	78.9	2.3	1.8	100	864 795
1971	5.6	86.2	3.7	4.5	100	558 007	12.8	81.6	1.4	4.3	100	1 096 900
1981	4.4	89.1	2.8	3.7	100	885 415	12.2	83.0	0.7	4.1	100	1 618 389
Philippines												
1961	26.7	35.8	32.5	5.1	100	3 479 000	47.8	31.9	17.9	2.4	100	6 234 000
1970	23.3	41.0	27.0	8.6	100	3 928 732	42.7	39.4	15.1	2.8	100	8 367 851
1981	27.0	42.4	30.6		100	6 433 000	42.1	41.9	16.0		100	11 584 000
Republic of Korea												
1960												
1970	17.4	29.6	51.4	1.7	100	3 642 919	42.8	42.5	11.6	3.1	100	6 752 596
1980	27.0	42.4	30.6		100	5 788 000	42.1	41.9	16.0		100	9 292 000
Singapore												
1951	13.7	71.8	11.9	2.6	100	86 470	22.0	73.0	3.4	1.5	100	393 797
1970	8.6	68.4	4.8	18.2	100	187 453	21.0	68.6	2.6	7.8	100	539 223
1980	6.4	86.2	3.6	3.8	100	385 352	18.3	76.6	1.8	3.3	100	730 606
Thailand												
1960	11.2	6.5	81.7	0.6	100	6 692 188	47.3	16.8	35.2	0.8	100	7 144 786
1970	12.0	10.4	76.0	1.6	100	7 939 376	45.4	19.9	32.6	2.2	100	8 910 760
1980	17.3	16.9	65.1	0.8	100	10 740 000	43.5	25.9	29.6	1.0	100	11 988 000

Source: United Nations, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics,* 1963: table 4A; 1975: table 2A; 1983: table 2A.

Table 6. Distribution of labour force by industry and sex, selected years

(Percentage)

		Agriculture	*Mining*	*Manufacturing*	*Construction*	*Utilities*	*Trade*	*Transport*	*Finance*	*Service*	*Not adequately defined*	*Unemployed*	*Total percentage*	*Number (thousands)*
Hong Kong														
1961	Male	6.5	0.9	36.9	10.6	1.9	12.7	9.1	...	18.3	1.3	1.8	100.0	865
	Female	9.0	0.4	45.0	2.4	0.7	6.2	2.4	...	30.8	1.4	1.6	100.0	347
1981	Male	2.0	0.1	34.5	0.8	11.4	20.4	10.3	4.3	14.1	1.4	0.7	100.0	1 619
	Female	1.8	0.0	52.7	0.2	1.5	16.4	2.6	5.3	17.4	1.3	0.7	100.0	885
Philippines														
1961	Male	69.6	0.5	6.9	3.8	0.3	6.0	4.6	...	6.4	0.4	...	100.0	5 932
	Female	43.7	0	16.2	0	0	16.3	0	...	19.8	0.5	...	100.0	3 163
1978	Male	59.9	0.6	9.4	4.4	0.5	5.6	0.5	1.9	11.3	0.3	...	100.0	10 677
	Female	38.5	0.1	15.3	0.2	0.1	19.1	0.5	1.7	24.3	0.4	...	100.0	5 991
Republic of Korea														
1963	Male	60.2	1.1	8.5	– 6.1 –		8.7	...	...	15.4	...	...	100.0	5 145
	Female	68.7	0.1	7.4	– 1.0 –		12.1	...	...	11.3	...	...	100.0	2 801
1980	Male	30.6	1.0	20.7	0.4	7.2	14.0	5.6	2.4	11.5	0	6.7	100.0	8 622
	Female	43.3	0.1	20.4	0.1	0.9	17.2	1.4	1.6	8.3	0	6.7	100.0	4 973
Singapore														
1957	Male	6.6	0.4	13.8	5.8	1.4	27.8	12.5	...	29.6	0.5	1.5	100.0	394
	Female	16.1	0.2	14.2	2.1	0.1	14.0	1.3	...	49.2	0.2	2.3	100.0	87
1980	Male	1.9	0.1	23.8	1.0	9.2	20.8	13.8	6.3	19.8	0	3.3	100.0	731
	Female	0.8	0.1	38.9	0.3	1.4	20.4	4.9	8.6	20.9	0	3.8	100.0	385
Thailand														
1960	Male	78.0	0.3	4.1	0.9	0.2	5.1	2.2	...	6.4	2.2	0.5	100.0	7 145
	Female	86.0	0.1	2.6	0.1	0.0	6.2	0.1	...	2.9	1.4	0.4	100.0	6 692
1980	Male	67.2	0.2	8.6	3.1	0.5	7.3	3.8	...	8.5	0	1.0	100.0	11 988
	Female	73.5	0.1	7.0	0.6	0.1	9.6	0.3	...	8.1	0	0.8	100.0	10 740.1

Sources: United Nations, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics,* 1963: table 4A; 1975: table 2A; 1983: table 2A. Hyoung Cho, 1983: 18; Republic of Korea *Yearbook of Labour Statistics,* 1970: 13-15; *Philippines Statistical Yearbook,* 1982: tables 11.1, 11.2.

Table 7. Employment distribution of men and women in manufacturing industries, Republic of Korea and Thailand

(Percentage)

	1970		1983	
	Men	*Women*	*Men*	*Women*
1. *Republic of Korea*				
Food and beverages	10	9	7	7
Textiles	3	54	14	45
Fabricated metals	8	1	10	3
Electronics	6	4	9	13
Transport equipment	4	3	11	1
Petroleum and chemicals	12	6	7	4
Rubber and plastics	12	6	7	7
Steel	7	–	3	–
2. *Thailand*				
Textiles	...	...	17	60
Food and beverages	...	...	19	9
Chemicals	...	...	7	7
Cement	...	...	12	2
Electronics	...	...	4	3
Transport equipment	...	...	7	1

Sources: Thailand, National Statistics Office, *Report of the 1980 Industrial Census, Bangkok Metropolis,* table 1, pp. 29-33; Republic of Korea, Ministry of Labour, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics* 1970: pp. 51-55; 1982: table 23, pp. 85-95.

Increasing numbers of both men and women were drawn into the labour force during the import-substitution phase of industrialization in the 1960s, but men more so than women (see tables 3 and 4). Not only were there more men in the labour force to begin with, but more men entered the labour force during this period. Thus, by 1970 at least three quarters of the men were participating in the labour force in each economy whereas, with the exception of Thailand, substantially less than half of the women were participating in the labour force.

Of course, newcomers to the labour force did not all enter manufacturing. Many were entering the growing service sector. Workers were leaving or not entering agriculture at the same rate as the other sectors, so the importance of

agriculture began to decline. The decline in agriculture was least severe in the Philippines (see table 2). In the Republic of Korea, however, industrialization was carried out very much at the expense of agriculture, and the conditions of work and life in agriculture deteriorated significantly.[8] A similar deterioration in the agricultural sector occurred in Thailand. Significantly, the deteriorating agricultural sectors in these two countries had always been where most women were employed. Women's employment share in agriculture actually increased. In the Republic of Korea between 1965 and 1980 the labour force participation rate of women in the farm sector rose from 41 to 59 per cent while the labour force participation rate of men in the farm sector dropped from 77 to 73 per cent.[9] Data presented in table 6 show that the percentage of men employed in the agricultural sector declined more sharply between 1963 and 1980 than the percentage of women employed in that sector.

In the Republic of Korea, more men than women entered the manufacturing sector up to the 1980s (see table 3). By contrast, in Thailand and the Philippines in the 1970s, slightly more women than men entered manufacturing. However, in the Philippines, women had previously predominated in manufacturing and men were now closing the gap in percentage terms.

The fact that more men than women entered the manufacturing sector in the 1960s is related to the characteristic features of import-substitution industrialization. On the whole, the industries that were promoted under import-substitution tended to be more capital-intensive than the industries subsequently promoted under export-oriented industrialization. They also tended to offer higher wages. The import-substitution phase of industrialization in Asia and the Pacific thus saw the beginning of the tendency for women to be slotted into the low-wage, labour-intensive manufacturing industries.

Statistics available for the Republic of Korea reflect this pattern, as shown in table 7. By 1970, male employment in manufacturing was broadly spread over a number of capital-intensive industries such as food and beverages, fabricated metals, petroleum and plastics. This fairly even distribution still persisted in 1980. Women were not significantly represented in these industries. Instead, women in manufacturing were highly concentrated in textiles, with electronics emerging as a second area of concentration around 1980.

When export-oriented industrialization was introduced in the 1970s, policies were redirected to promote other types of industry, but the industries that had been promoted under the import-substitution programmes were not shut down. Many even expanded alongside the new industries. In some cases, as with textiles in Thailand, export-orientation simply meant remarketing abroad the surplus originally produced for domestic consumption.

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[8] Eu Ho Yu and Byung Tae Kim, *The Economic Plight of Korean Farmers* (Seoul, Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development, n. d.).

[9] Uhn Cho and Hagen Khoo, "Economic development and women's work in a newly industrializing country," *Development and Change*, vol. 14, No. 4 (October, 1983), p. 519.

The Thai situation is similar to that of the Republic of Korea. However, Thailand entered its export-oriented industrialization phase much later than the Republic of Korea, so its export-oriented electronics industry is not yet well-developed. As previously mentioned, Thailand's shift to export-oriented industrialization meant major growth in textiles exports. Thus, as table 7 shows, Thai men were fairly evenly spread over a range of capital-intensive, domestic market-oriented industries in 1980, whereas Thai women in manufacturing were highly concentrated in the export-oriented textile industry.

During the 1970s, increasing numbers of men and women entered the labour force, and the manufacturing sector in particular (see table 3). However, within the manufacturing sector men and women were channelled into different industries. Whether or not greater absolute numbers of men than women were drawn into the manufacturing sector during this period depended on each country's mix of import-substituting and export-oriented industries. Export-oriented industries tended to take more women. Import-substituting industries generally employed more men. In Singapore, more women than men were drawn into the manufacturing sector during the 1970s since the import-substitution phase was short-lived. The Philippines and Thailand had longer import-substitution phases, so more men than women were absorbed by the manufacturing sector in the 1970s.[10] In all of the economies surveyed here except Hong Kong, the relative growth in manufacturing employment was greater between 1970 and 1980 than it had been between 1960 and 1970. But the increase in manufacturing's contribution to GDP between 1970 and 1980 was not as great as between 1960 and 1970. This may be a reflection of the greater numbers of labour-intensive industries in the later period, which contributed relatively less to GDP than the more capital-intensive industries.

Different levels of industrialization and urbanization in the five economies are reflected in the distribution of the labour force by employment status (see table 5). A clear distinction exists between Hong Kong and Singapore and the three larger economies. In Hong Kong and Singapore, over 80 per cent of the labour force was classified as employees. This was about twice the percentage in the other three economies. High numbers of both males and females were in the employee category for Hong Kong and Singapore. In both cases, the percentage of unpaid family labour was low and had been declining but it was still higher among women than men. Finally, the proportion of men who were self-employed or employers was three times that of women.

Data for the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Thailand suggest a slightly different development. First, the number of males and females who were employees is relatively low. As of the early 1980s, the employment status distribution in the Philippines and the Republic of Korea was remarkably similar. About 42 per cent of both males and females were employees. Of the remaining

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[10] A.K. Wong, "Women's status and changing family values: implications of maternal employment and educational attainment," in C.Y. Kuo and A.K. Wong, eds., *The Contemporary Family in Singapore.* (Singapore, Singapore University Press, 1979).

males, most were mainly self-employed or employers (42 per cent) while the remaining females were mostly unpaid family labour (about 31 per cent). In Thailand, which has a more agricultural economy, the percentage of employees was much lower. Only about one quarter of the male work force and 17 per cent of the female counterpart were employees. In 1980, almost 44 per cent of males were self-employed or employers and about 30 per cent were unpaid family labour. The percentage of unpaid female labour (65 per cent) was more than twice that of the males (30 per cent) (see table 5).

The increase in the number of women in the self-employed or employer category mainly reflects increased participation of self-employed women in the informal sector. A great number of women in the developing countries of the region work as petty traders, street vendors, operators of grocery stores and food stalls. Most of these jobs require little capital and, even more important, offer flexible hours. Women are still regarded as secondary wage earners with primary responsibility for housework and child-raising. At the same time, they need to supplement household income and find the flexibility of such informal sector jobs suitable.

Just as women workers predominate in certain sectors, they are also concentrated in a narrow range of occupations (see table 8). In the Philippines and Thailand, agricultural occupations continue to predominate, although there has been some decline. Production-related, clerical and sales occupations are commonly held by men in all five countries and territories. Significantly, it is the professional, technical, and administrative and management occupations where the lowest percentages of women are found.

Table 9 shows a striking pattern for women's occupations in the five countries and areas. Women are found predominantly in five occupations: domestic servants, sales workers, tailors and garment-related workers, clerical workers and teachers. Equally significant, between 1970 and 1980 there was no change in the top five occupations filled by women. The sole exception was the rise of one new occupational category: electronics and electrical workers.

There have been changes in the ranking of some of the top five occupations. Most noticeable is the decline in women's employment as domestic servants in the Republic of Korea and Singapore. As economic development proceeds, more women are absorbed into the industrial and non-domestic service sectors and the availability of women as domestic servants declines. Thus, during the period 1970-1980, the percentage of the female labour force employed as domestic servants in Singapore decreased from 14 to 4 per cent. In Seoul, the contraction was from 20 to 6 per cent, and in Hong Kong it dropped from 11 to 8 per cent. Only in Manila did the percentage of women working as domestic servants rise, from 29 to 32 per cent.[11]

[11] Gavin W. Jones, ed., *Women in the Urban and Industrial Workforce: Southeast and East Asia* (Canberra, Australia National University, 1984), table 2.11.

Table 8. Distribution of labour force by occupational category and sex, selected years

(Percentage)

	Profes-sional/ Technical	*Admini-stration/ Manage-ment*	*Clerical*	*Sales*	*Service*	*Agri-cul-ture*	*Produc-tion related*	*Not classi-fied*	*All occu-pations (percentage)*	*All occupations (thousands)*
Hong Kong										
1971 Male	4.1	3.2	8.0	11.9	14.0	3.7	50.0	3.2	100.0	1 096.0
Female	6.4	0.6	7.4	6.7	74.8	4.0	54.1	3.8	100.0	538.0
1982 Male	5.4	5.2	10.6	11.2	14.9	1.5	50.3	0.0	100.0	1 620.0
Female	7.4	1.1	22.5	7.7	15.3	1.4	43.4	0.0	100.0	891.7
Republic of Korea										
1955 Male	2.4	1.2	4.1	5.4	1.8	72.6	12.5	0.0	100.0	4 853.3
Female	0.6	0.1	0.3	3.3	2.6	90.5	2.6	0.0	100.0	3 219.7
1980 Male	4.9	1.5	9.3	11.5	5.1	30.4	30.7	0.0	100.0	8 622.0
Female	3.2	0.0	8.0	10.8	9.2	43.3	18.6	0.0	100.0	4 973.3
Philippines										
1961 Male	2.2	2.5	3.5	3.2	3.8	67.1	15.1	0.4	100.0	6 231.0
Female	5.0	5.3	1.9	10.4	11.8	42.5	18.1	0.5	100.0	3 479.0
1981 Male	4.0	1.3	4.0	6.9	10.3	57.1	16.4	0.0	100.0	11 584.0
Female	10.7	0.7	5.3	20.1	14.1	37.0	12.0	0.0	100.0	6 433.0
Singapore										
1970 Male	6.3	2.0	10.8	16.5	11.7	4.1	38.6	4.3	100.0	539.2
Female	11.6	0.3	13.9	8.7	19.1	2.7	25.3	0.2	100.0	187.5
1982 Male	8.6	6.5	9.3	14.2	8.6	1.5	43.4	7.6	100.0	754.0
Female	10.1	2.3	29.1	11.6	16.8	1.1	29.9	0.2	100.0	418.9
Thailand										
1970 Male	1.9	2.6	1.4	4.2	2.7	74.6	11.0	0.2	100.0	8 911.0
Female	1.5	0.2	0.8	5.8	2.9	82.8	5.0	0.1	100.0	7 939.6
1980 Male	2.5	2.0	1.9	6.3	2.5	67.2	16.6	0.4	100.0	11 988.0
Female	2.5	0.5	1.6	10.4	2.8	73.6	7.9	0.4	100.0	10 740.1

Sources: Same as table 6.

Table 9. Top five occupations of women in four cities in the ESCAP region in 1970 and 1980

(Percentage of female labour force)

Singapore			
1970		*1980*	
Domestic workers	14.2	Electronics/electrical	13.0
Sales	9.7	Clerical	12.4
Teachers	8.3	Sales	8.7
Clerical	7.3	Bookkeeping, cashier	7.0
Tailors	7.2	Tailors	6.9
Bangkok			
1970		*1980*	
Domestic workers	10.5	Proprietors	14.2
Sales	8.9	Sales	13.1
Teachers	8.3	Tailors	9.3
Clerical	7.3	Domestic workers	8.1
Tailors	5.1	Farm labourers	8.0
Seoul			
1970		*1980*	
Domestic workers	20.5	Tailors	13.8
Textile workers	12.3	Sales	11.7
Sales	11.1	Bookkeepers, cashiers	11.3
Tailors	8.0	Proprietors	6.5
Waitresses	6.1	Waitresses	6.3
Manila			
1970		*1980*	
Domestic workers	29.3	Domestic workers	31.9
Tailors	12.7	Sales	9.3
Sales	9.6	Clerical	8.6
Teachers	9.2	Tailors	7.8
Clerical	5.9	Teachers	6.6

Source: Adapted from Gavin W. Jones, ed., *Women in the Urban and Industrial Workforce: South-east and East Asia* (Canberra, Australian National University, 1984).

Data on the Republic of Korea show that women are paid less than men in all industries and occupations. The gap between the average wages of Korean men and women has widened over the last decade. According to a wage survey of Korean workers in establishments with 10 or more employees, the ratio of female to male wages decreased from 46.5 per cent in 1970 to 44.4 per cent in 1980. The average wage of male workers in 1980 was 192,600 won per month, while that of female workers was 85,700 won.[12] Within occupational categories, the wage differential between men and women is less. The gap is least for the administrative and managerial occupations (the female/male wage ratio is 83.7 per cent) and widest in the production category (49.6 per cent).

C. Summary

Over the past two decades, Hong Kong, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Thailand have experienced rapid economic growth. The growth has been based on a development process which emphasizes industrialization and de-emphasizes agriculture. Industrial development has passed through two distinct stages, import-substitution and export-promotion. The first of these industrialization strategies employed more men than women in higher-paying jobs, while the second has absorbed more women than men into lower-playing jobs. The changing pattern of employment for men and women has, therefore, been tied to the international division of labour.

Important structural changes have occurred in the lives and work of women in the Asian and Pacific region as a result of the industrialization process. Growth of the manufacturing and service sectors has absorbed young women workers from rural areas into the modern sector. As a result, between 36 and 48 per cent of the manufacturing work force in these economies has consisted of women. Women's contribution to the manufacturing sector has, therefore, become very significant.

Movement of young women and men out of the agricultural sector has also had an impact on the women who remain in the rural areas. Labour force participation rates in the rural areas have increased for women more than for men. Women not only have their household work, but they must now take up the extra agricultural work, most of which is unpaid.

Women's entry into the labour force is based on a sexual division of labour in which women are concentrated in industries and occupations requiring fewer and simpler skills and providing lower wages and poorer working conditions. In the manufacturing sector, women are thus found overwhelmingly in the textile/garment and electronics/electrical industries. In the trade and service sectors they tend to work as peddlers, domestic servants and in sex-related industries.

[12] Hyoung Cho, "Labour force participation of women in Korea," paper presented at Conference on Korean Women at Home and Abroad, California State University, Los Angeles, California, June 24-25, 1983 p. 21.

Women workers in the textile and garment industries account for over 40 per cent of the female labour force in the manufacturing sector. Given this predominance and concentration of women within manufacturing, it is worth while to analyse the conditions, problems and issues that women encounter in the garment and textile industries. The case studies of these industries in Thailand and the Philippines that are presented in the following chapters provide an insight into how women workers are integrated into the development process. They can also help us to understand better women's contribution to national development and to consider whether women are, indeed, sharing equally in the benefits from economic development.

II. YOUNG WOMEN WORKERS IN THE THAI MANUFACTURING SECTOR

A. Introduction

Thailand has undergone rapid development since the early 1960s, when the manufacturing sector was targeted for a shifting combination of import-substituting and export-promoting investment as a means of inducing the rapid growth of investment. By the 1970s, Thai industrial development policy had come to focus on labour-intensive, export-oriented manufacturing industries, particularly garments and textiles. One important result of these policies was to open a new labour market for young women workers. The role and status of Thai women thus has changed over the past twenty years as part of the national economic transformation. It has been acknowledged, however, that the many problems and issues concerning young women in manufacturing employment have not received sufficient attention from policy makers and scholars.

The study which follows reviews the experience of young women working in the Thai textile industry. It examines, within the context of Thai government laws and regulations, the major characteristics of women's labour force participation and provides a general picture of women's manufacturing employment. The study is based, in large part, on interviews with women at selected factories, as it is felt that this is the only effective means of identifying the problems and issues that Thai women workers face from day to day. The results, when compared with other ESCAP countries, provide a basis for evaluating the relationship between these problems and the general condition of rapid industrialization.

B. National development planning, the legal framework and Thai women

1. Development planning

Since 1961 the Thai Government has been guided in its policy-making by a series of five-year economic and social development plans. The plans are

primarily indicative, outlining general approaches, goals and broad targets. Implementation has been left largely to private sector initiative.

Women were not designated as a social group requiring special attention during the 1960s and early 1970s, the period of the first through third five-year development plans. Policies and goals aimed at human resources development might be considered to have had special relevance for women. But, in fact, cultural norms, including traditions and customs, acted as important moderating influences. It is important to observe that, given the importance of cottage industries as well as labour-intensive farming practices where females play equal or greater roles than males, Thai society has generally recognized a major economic role for women in the family and the local community.[1] The forces of modernization in the 1960s and thereafter, including the shift from an agricultural to a more industrialized economy, deeply affected such traditions and contributed to new patterns of women's participation. But, in the 1960s, no consideration was given to this emerging phenomenon.

The Government's recognition of women as a specific target group in development did not occur until the fourth development plan, covering the years 1977 to 1981.[2] The plan noted women's importance and indicated what would be done to encourage their participation in the development process, in terms of creating educational opportunities, generating equality through legal reform, encouraging economic and occupational advancement, providing special short-term measures and preparing for long-term change.

In the fifth plan (1982-1986), women were again designated as a special target group for social development, along with children and youth and tribal minorities.[3] The plan recognized the educational, employment, social, political and health/nutrition problems of women, but beyond that it only expressed generally what was to be done to "encourage, promote, revise or improve" women's development. No mention was made of how or when these actions would be taken. A committee on the development of women's role and activities that had been established under the fourth plan was the focus of proposals for reform and reorganization under the fifth plan. Concerted, co-ordinated government policies and programmes for Thai women thus continued to be lacking.

The situation with respect to immediate development programmes has been less vague and prospective because the Department of Community Development in the Ministry of Interior has developed various programmes of training

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[1] S.H. Potter, *Family Life in a Northern Thai Village: A Study in the Structural Significance of Women* (Berkeley, California, University of California Press, 1979).

[2] Thailand, National Economic and Social Development Board, *The Fourth National Economic and Social Development Plan* (Bangkok, Office of the Prime Minister, 1977), pp. 289-291. Children and youth also received special attention in the fourth plan's section on social development.

[3] *Ibid. Fifth National Economic and Social Development Plan* (Bangkok, Office of the Prime Minister, 1981), pp. 253-257.

and follow-up education for women. The Department of Community Development has been devising policies and programmes targeted to women since at least 1964.[4] One purpose of the Department's work has been to unify efforts that previously had been disorganized and one-dimensional.[5] The policy goals have been to develop women so that they will be able to increase their family incomes, encourage women to participate in community development and educate and encourage women to work in groups to develop their leadership potential.

According to targets set in the fourth plan (1977-1981), the programme was to cover 70 provinces and provide basic training for 42,000 women, follow-up education for over 18,000 women and vocational training to over 26,000. For young women, intensive training courses were aimed at 1,250 persons, short training courses at over 3,000 persons and training in special activities at several thousand more. Generally, the courses emphasized food and nutrition, cottage industries, family development in an agricultural society, group formation and family planning.[6] Such ongoing, short-term programmes have generally been considered successful, even in the absence of any medium- or long-term development plan for women.

At least five other departments in several different ministries formulate plans and programmes aimed at social services for women in rural and urban areas. The Department of Agricultural Extension provides projects to help women in agricultural families develop new agricultural occupations and cottage industries. The Department of Public Welfare in the Ministry of Interior provides assistance to women facing economic and social problems. Training in handicraft industries is provided by two agencies, the Department of Industrial Promotion and the Department of Non-formal Education. Development of health and nutrition for women and children is the responsibility of the Department of Public Health.[7]

In addition, numerous non-governmental organizations, mostly located at Bangkok, are active in providing women's development programmes.[8] It has been observed that the Government tries to emphasize integrated activities while non-governmental organizations focus on specific activities. The result may be

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[4] Thailand, Department of Community Development, *Women's Development Programmes* (Bangkok, Ministry of Interior, 1964).

[5] Yuwat Vuthimedhi, "An assessment of existing administrative mechanisms for integrating women in the development in Thailand," in S. Prasith-rathsint and S. Piampiti, eds., *Women in Development: Implications for Population Dynamics in Thailand* (Bangkok, National Institute for Development Administration, 1982), p. 181.

[6] Thailand, National Economic and Social Development Board, *The Fourth National Economic and Social Development Plan* (Bangkok, Office of the Prime Minister, 1977), p. 291.

[7] Yuwat Vuthimedhi, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-186.

[8] A few examples of these non-governmental organizations are: Social Welfare Association of Thailand, Association of Women Lawyers, Svita Foundation, Piriyanukroh Foundation, National Council of Women and Council on Social Welfare.

conflicts between organizations, duplication of efforts, lack of co-ordination, incorrect identification of target groups' needs and, ultimately, less effective programmes.[9] The Government has recognized these problems but seems uncertain whether centralization could provide the direction, priorities or procedures to satisfy all interested groups and organizations.

Thailand has now begun its sixth development plan (1987-1991), and several new directions have been mapped out for social development.[10] First, the social targets seem to be moving away from expansion of basic social services (which presumably had targeted women) to an even more basic level: attainment of appropriate population size and structure; development of human quality and decency (moral qualities and self-help) and creation of a peaceful society by reducing crimes and accidents. The plan places increased emphasis on the private sector rather than government programmes and projects. Encouragement is given to private organizations to play a leadership role by helping people form community organizations in co-ordination with the public sector and using public relations aimed at the family's social role and responsibilities.[10] Such emphasis on self-reliance, privatization and private sector leadership in development seems to mean that the Government will emphasize advising rather than leading. The implications for participation in development still need to be analysed.

2. The legal framework

The Thai legal framework is directly relevant to any study of the employment of Thai women because of the constraints and opportunities that the law sets on women's social and economic participation. The general standard for assessing laws and regulations affecting women is the 1967 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, which emphasizes the principle of equality of men and women before the law. Another legal standard is the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) 1975 Declaration on Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Women Workers. It has been noted that Thai labour laws for both men and women workers give very minimal protection when measured against these two United Nations' standards.[11]

Thai labour laws concerning women have not been codified, but they are found in three main pieces of legislation: the 1929 Law Concerning Hire of Services Contract, which is Section 582 of the Civil and Commercial Code of Thailand; the 1972 Notification of the Ministry of Interior Re: Labour Protection; and the Labour Relations Act of 1975.

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[9] Yuwat Vuthimedhi, *op. cit.*, pp. 177-201.

[10] Thailand, National Economic and Social Development Board, "Sixth National Economic and Social Development Plan," a summary of the major features (Bangkok, n.d.) (Mimeographed)

[11] Malee Plukspongsawalee, "Women and the law," in S. Prasith-rathsint and S. Piampiti, eds., *op.cit.*, p. 171.

The Hire of Services Contract Law (1929) gives no employment security to either male or female workers. The law states that if there is no contract or the duration is not fixed, either the employer or employee can give prior notice of termination, to take effect at the next payment. This means that up to one month's notice is needed. However, the next payment can be made by the employer immediately and the employer released the same day. The law does not require the employer to provide reasonable grounds for termination. It also does not prohibit the employer from terminating a woman's employment because of marital status, pregnancy, maternity leave or family responsibilities.

The Notification on Labour Protection (1972) states that when a regular employee is terminated the employer must give severance pay at a specific rate determined by length of time employed. However, the Notification law does nothing to improve job security. Contracts may still be of unspecified duration and employers may still terminate a contract for any reason as long as they are willing to make a final payment and severance pay. If an employee is dismissed for misconduct, both the 1929 Hire of Services Contract Law and the Notification on Labour Protection allow immediate termination without severance pay.[12]

The Notification on Labour Protection does provide the universal minimal protections to workers relating to working hours, overtime, rest periods, holidays, minimum wage rates, severance pay, employer liability for job-related illness, injury or death and workers' welfare regarding health, safety and sanitation. Chapter II of the Notification law stipulates the protection for women workers under its jurisdiction. Women are protected from heavy or hazardous work or night work. A pregnant worker is entitled to thirty days sick leave, sixty days maternity leave without pay, and pay at her current wage rate for not more than thirty days if she has been employed for more than 180 days.[13] Clause 26 of the Notification law states that wages, overtime and holiday pay must be the same for both male and female workers if the work is of similar nature, quality and quantity.[14] As far as social security or social insurance are concerned, employers are only responsible for workman's compensation for job-related injury, illness or death and for severance pay.

The Labour Relations Act of 1975 gives certain further protection to Thai workers. The most important is protection when workers exercise their guaranteed rights to organize and make lawful demands on the employer.[15] In order to help protect these worker rights as well as protect employers' interests, Thailand has recently instituted a tripartite approach to labour dispute settlement, as recommended by ILO. Following the Labour Procedure Act of 1979,

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[12] *Ibid.*, p. 171.

[13] Thailand, Ministry of Interior, "Notification re: labour protection" (Bangkok, 1972).

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] Malee Plukspongsawalee, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

the Central Labour Court of Thailand was set up in 1980. The Central Labour Court is empowered to hear only certain types of cases and generally only after the Labour Relations Committee has heard the case and made a ruling. The Central Labour Court thus has an appellate function. The Court's proceedings, judgements and rulings are free of charge and qualified persons are available from the Court to give legal service (but not legal advice or advocacy). The Court tries to resolve disputes with minimum technical, formal or bureaucratic delay. It has been observed that the Court has a heavy work load and lacks proper facilities or personnel.[16]

In general, the legal framework providing rights and protections to workers is not as beneficial to Thai women workers as might be wished. Certain parts are clearly out of date. Furthermore, the parts which apply to all workers as well as those designed to protect women workers in particular are not enforced as well as might be desired owing to lack of funds, lack of personnel and inefficiency. Lack of education may mean workers, especially women, are unaware of their rights and legal protection as workers. Thus, employers find it easy to ignore or violate the labour laws. The result is inequality of opportunities for women workers.

C. Profile of Thai women's employment

Thai women play a substantial role in the national economy regardless of the laws and plans designed on their behalf. By 1980, Thai women comprised 49.6 per cent of the population. Of the country's 23.1 million women, 45.6 per cent were in the labour force. Among the 10.66 million women in the labour market, 74 per cent were employed in agriculture, 7.1 per cent in industry and 18.9 per cent in commerce, services and other sectors.[17]

Table 10 presents the most recent statistics and allows for comparison between males and females. It is clear that the majority of Thai workers are employed in the agriculture sector. The commerce and service industries rank second and third in terms of distribution of the female labour force. The distribution of male workers shows services ranking second and manufacturing third.

Table 11 shows the distribution of male and female workers within the manufacturing sector in the early 1980s. Slightly over half of all workers in manufacturing were men and close to 45 per cent were women.

In order to gain a better insight into women's employment in manufacturing, several different indicators may be used. Each has its own limits in addition

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[16] Snit Nitithamas, "The Central Labour Court of Thailand", in M. Baumann and B. Mathijsen, eds., *Tripartite Approaches to Labour Dispute Settlement in the ASEAN Region, the Republic of Korea and Japan,* (Bangkok, ILO and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 1982), pp. 98-101.

[17] Thailand, National Statistics Office, *Report of the Labour Force Survey, Whole Kingdom, Round 2* (Bangkok, July-September 1980).

Table 10. Thailand: employed persons by industry and sex, 1982

(Percentage)

	Male	*Female*
Agriculture, forestry and hunting	66.4	70.0
Mining and quarrying	...	...
Manufacturing	8.6	7.0
Construction, repair and demolition	3.3	...
Electricity, gas, water and sanitary services	...	...
Commerce	7.7	11.0
Transport, storage and communications	3.5	3.0
Services	9.6	9.0
Other	...	...
Total	13 139 900	11 691 400

Source: *Statistical Yearbook, Thailand, 1981-1984,* No. 33 (Bangkok, National Statistics Office, 1984), pp. 506-507.

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding and exclusion of negligible figures.

Table 11. Thailand: distribution of employment in manufacturing by sex, 1980-1982

(Thousands of persons)

	1980	*1981*	*1982*
Male	1 036.0	971.4	1 129.9
Female	752.7	770.2	876.8
Total	1 788.7	1 741.6	2 006.7

Source: *Statistical Yearbook, Thailand, 1981-1984,* No. 33 (Bangkok, National Statistics Office, 1984), pp. 504-507.

to problems of statistical reliability. Therefore, interpretation must be made cautiously. With these caveats in mind, Table 12 presents employment data on Thai women's occupational distribution for each industry in 1982. Overall, it is clear that most Thai women are still employed in the primary sector, mainly agriculture. Women are found in sales, service and clerical occupations in both

Table 12. Thailand: distribution of female employment by industry and occupation, 1982

(Thousands)

Occupation / *Sector*	*Professional, technical and related*	*Administrative, executive and managerial*	*Clerical*	*Sales*	*Workers in transport and communication*	*Craftsmen, production process workers and labourers, n.e.c.*	*Service, sports and recreation workers*	*Farmers and related*
Agriculture and forestry	–	1.0	2.1	0.3	–	3.0	1.7	8 246.3
Mining and quarrying	–	–	0.3	–	–	2.6	...	17.5
Manufacturing	3.1	6.5	38.4	0.6	0.3	795.9	14.7	17.0
Construction repair and demolition	0.4	0.2	3.4	–	–	75.7	2.4	1.8
Electricity, gas water and sanitary services	0.4	2.1	3.0	–	0.4	2.9	0.6	0.2
Commerce	14.1	14.5	60.1	1 152.9	1.8	35.9	9.7	0.1
Transport, storage and communications	3.3	3.4	10.0	–	16.4	2.8	3.3	0.1
Services	342.4	52.4	82.2	248.7	3.0	39.2	341.7	5.7
Other	–	–	0.3	–	–	–	–	–
Total	364.0	80.4	200.2	1 402.7	22.1	958.1	374.5	8 289.1

Source: *Statistical Yearbook, Thailand, 1981-1984,* No. 33 (Bangkok, National Statistics Office, 1984), pp. 516-517.

commerce and service industries. Thai women have taken occupations as craftsmen, production workers and labourers, particularly in manufacturing, as the economy has been restructuring away from agriculture and into industry. It is worth noting that despite the small numbers, women have entered professional, technical, executive, managerial and administrative occupations, especially in the service sector.

Table 13 shows another general characteristic of women workers through a comparison with male workers in terms of educational level. The data indicate that, in general, low levels of education have been attained by Thai workers but that women have lower educational attainments than men. Men seem to have greater access to education, especially at the upper secondary level. This information suggests that low education could be an important factor explaining inadequate opportunities for career advancement, lack of marketable skills or knowledge, ignorance of workers' rights under the law, low pay and so forth. The situation is especially problematic for young women.[18]

Young Thai women who migrate to urban areas in search of industrial work find their job opportunities very restricted, given their low levels of education. It has been reported that almost 60 per cent of young females under 25 years of age who migrate to Bangkok end up working as cooks or maids.[19] Female migrants aged 11 to 19 have the highest labour force participation rates, and their level of education is ordinarily four years of schooling or less. Their high participation rates also show that they have completed their education.[20]

The general profile of women's employment presented above provides a context for examining young women's employment patterns in manufacturing. This, in turn, will set the stage for the case studies presented here of women working in the garment industry.

Manufacturing has been the key sector in Thailand's economic development since the 1960s. The result has been a major restructuring of the Thai economy. Such structural change has obviously affected employment and the social aspects of Thai workers' lives. Table 14 gives a picture of the changing employment in manufacturing.

Over the twenty-year period covered in table 14 all sectors of manufacturing grew rapidly. By 1980, the textiles, apparel and leather industries accounted for about 25 per cent of total employment in manufacturing, although from 1970 to 1980 this sector's growth rate fell below the combined average. While precise data are not obtainable, it is possible to assert that in those sectors with high

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[18] Malee Plukspongsawalee, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

[19] Peter Smith and Virginia Crockett, "Some demographic dimensions of occupations: research implications from an urban Thailand case study," (Honolulu, East-West Center, 1980) (mimeographed) cited in S. Piampiti, "Female migration and labour force participation," in S. Prasith-rathsint and S. Piampiti, eds., *op. cit.*, p. 132-133.

[20] S. Piampiti, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

Table 13. Thailand: distribution of employed persons by educational level and sex, 1980-1982

(Percentage)

	1980	*1981*	*1982*
Female			
Level of education:			
1. None	11.4	10.4	10.0
2. Kindergarten, elementary and lower secondary	82.3	82.7	82.3
3. Upper secondary	2.6	2.7	3.0
4. Vocational	1.1	1.2	1.4
5. University	.8	.9	1.0
6. Teacher training	1.5	1.5	1.9
7. Short course vocational	...	.1	...
8. Others and unknown	...	.1	...
Total (Thousands)	10 657.4	11 507.2	11 691.4
Male			
Level of education:			
1. None	6.7	6.3	5.5
2. Kindergarten, elementary and lower secondary	82.5	82.6	81.5
3. Upper secondary	6.2	6.4	6.9
4. Vocational	1.3	1.5	1.7
5. University	1.3	1.4	1.6
6. Teacher training	1.5	1.7	2.1
7. Short course vocational	...	...	...
8. Others and unknown	...	...	...
Total (Thousands)	11 866.3	12 858.8	13 139.9

Source: *Statistical Yearbook, Thailand, 1981-1984,* No. 33 (Bangkok, National Statistics Office 1984), pp. 508-509.

Table 14. Thailand: employment in manufacturing by sector

Sector	Employment (thousands)			Growth (percentage per year)		Share of employment (percentage)		
	1960	1970	1980	1960-70	1970-80	1960	1970	1980
Processed food, beverages and tobacco	126.3	145.7	356.0	1.4	9.3	26.8	21.3	19.9
Textiles, apparel and leather	137.4	205.9	462.2	4.1	8.4	29.2	30.2	25.8
Wood, furniture and fixtures	89.8	90.2	282.0	0.0	12.1	19.1	13.2	15.8
Minerals, metals and metal products	42.1	89.3	226.3	7.0	9.7	8.9	13.1	12.6
Transport equipment	26.3	59.3	152.4	8.5	9.9	5.6	8.7	8.5
Other	49.2	92.2	310.1	6.5	12.9	10.4	13.5	17.3
Total	471.0	682.6	1 789.0	3.8	10.1	100	100	100

Source: World Bank, *Thailand: Managing Public Resources for Structural Adjustment* (Washington, DC, IBRD/World Bank, 1983), p. 179.

shares of manufacturing employment, namely, processed food and beverages, textiles, apparel and leather, women currently comprise over half of the work force. A survey conducted by the National Economic and Social Development Board in 1979 found that among all factory workers in Bangkok 56.4 per cent were women.[21] Most of these women were 21 to 25 years old, and virtually all of them were production workers. Only 2.5 per cent of women working at the surveyed Bangkok factories held administrative posts.

This information suggests that women are at the centre of the social dynamics underlying Thailand's rapid economic development. Much of the information discussed thus far has been of a general, macro-economic nature. At this level of analysis, the broad patterns are suggested, but important details are still to be supplied. This is done in the following case study.

D. A case study of the textile industry

Promoting growth and investment in export-oriented manufacturing industries has been the prevailing economic strategy in Thailand's recent development plans. Social concerns related to this strategy have not been explicit other than favouring labour-intensive industries which contribute to employment creation. On issues directly concerning workers, there is scope for action by the Thai Government. As discussed previously, legal rights, benefits and protections extended to workers have been minimal. As a result, it has been left to the discretion of individual companies to set standards. In this regard, the treatment that manufacturing companies give to women as it relates to their special situation (marital status, physical capabilities, etc.) in comparison with treatment of male workers must be closely examined.

The following case study of the Thai textile industry provides an appropriate means of analysing the twin problems faced by working women, their need for special benefits and their need for equal treatment.

1. Background

This case study is based on a sample of thirteen textile firms located in the Bangkok area. The factories selected are located in the outlying sub-metropolitan areas of Nakhon Pathom, Rangsit and Samut Prakarn. The thirteen factories have a total combined employment of 18,135 persons of whom 80 per cent are women. A total of eighty workers, forty women and forty men, were selected as a sample for in-depth analysis through interviews and a standard questionnaire. In addition, interviews were conducted with management personnel at four of the factories and with one or more members of the union's executive committee

[21] Thailand, National Economic and Social Development Board, "Seminar papers on Thai women's status" (Pattaya, 6-9 September 1978) cited in S. Prasith-rathsint and S. Piampiti, eds., *op. cit.*, p. 8,9.

at each factory. The union officials provided general background on the history of labour-management relations and the conditions and experiences of the workers.

Table 15 presents general characteristics of the work force at the thirteen factories. Except for one wholly Thai-owned factory, 12 of the factories are joint ventures between Thai and foreign investors (mostly Japanese and Taiwanese). More than half of the sampled factories are ranked among the top 100 textile factories in Thailand. Nine of them have employment of 1,000 or more workers. For the most part, these large factories also have the most modern facilities and thus a work environment of generally high standard. The majority of these large-sized textile mills are located in Rangsit, a suburb to the north of Bangkok. The remaining four factories are medium-scale, employing between 1,000 and 500 workers. The technological nature of the facilities as well as the quality of the work environment is generally less modern and not of the highest standard. The medium- and large-scale textile mills covered here are clearly distinguishable from a third set not included in the sample, the small, wholly Thai-owned and often family-owned-and-operated textile factories.

Some important social characteristics of the 80-person sample are displayed in table 16. The age distribution for men and women is almost the same. For both women and men, the combined grouping of those aged 22 to 34 years accounts for 78 per cent of the sample for each sex. About four fifths of the women have never been married while about two thirds of the men are single. Provision of dormitory facilities implies a large number of unmarried workers. The married workers seldom use the dormitories, where the men and women are segregated. It should be noted that working at a textile factory does not necessarily preclude marriage or child-rearing for women workers. Shift work would seem to be a restrictive factor. However, given the prevalence of extended family living arrangements in Thailand, children may stay with relatives. Shift work involves mainly women, so it is possible for one parent to stay home with the children while the other works. Several married people in the sample reported that they used that arrangement.

Information on the workers' level of education reveals generally low levels for all textile workers. In particular, it was found that 65 per cent of the women had studied only the first four years of primary school, 28 per cent had studied to the junior high school level and only 3 out of 40 (7 per cent) had reached some level above junior high (lower secondary) school. Such low education levels undoubtedly have an effect on job opportunities, employable skills, promotions and wages.

The information gathered about length of time employed and previous employment suggests job stability, especially for women workers. The average length of time employed for both men and women at one factory is about the same, 10.7 years on average for men and 10.4 years for women. Another study of a sample of women textile workers reported similar characteristics: length of time on the job was over five years; low levels of education, usually about four

Table 15. Thailand: general characteristics of sample textile factories

Factory number	*Ownership*	*Number of workers*			*Union membership (percentage of workers)*		*Leadership of union committees (number of persons)*	
		Male	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
1	Thai-Japanese	84	300	384	29	66	2	1
2	Thai-Taiwanese	60	400	460	–	–	–	–
3	Thai-Japanese	200	2 700	2 900	20	81	...	...
4	Thai-Japanese-Indian	230	800	1 030	86	80	...	...
5	Thai-Japanese	300	1 100	1 400	33	91	...	...
6	Thai-Taiwanese	1 000	2 000	3 000	50	45	17	4
7	Thai	270	1 083	1 353	37	65	...	...
8	Thai-Japanese-Hong Kong	535	2 807	3 342	20	96	...	...
9	Thai-Japanese	123	312	435	10	12	8	3
10	Thai-Taiwanese	70	380	450	29	67	8	7
11	Thai-Taiwanese	203	800	1 003	–	–	–	–
12	Thai-Japanese	400	1 000	1 400	50	100	...	...
13	Thai-Taiwanese	200	853	1 053	25	76	...	...
Total		3 675	14 535	18 210			35	15

Source: Interviews.

Table 16. Thailand: selected characteristics of factory workers covered in the case study

	Women	*Men*
1. *Age*		
Under 21	6	5
22-27	16	16
28-34	15	15
Over 34	3	4
2. *Marital status*		
Never married	33	27
Married	4	12
Divorced	2	1
Widowed	1	–
3. *Education*		
Prathom 1-4 (Primary)	26	15
Mathayom 1-3 (Junior high school level)	11	17
Above Mathayom (Secondary, high school level)	3	8
4. *Years employed at factory*		
Under 5	9	18
5-10	20	18
Over 10	11	4
5. *Number of previous jobs*		
None	22	13
1	8	13
2	8	7
3	2	3
4	–	1
5	–	3

Source: Interviews.

years of primary school; and mostly single women without much previous job experience.[22]

The patterns of work for men and women in the Thai textile industry are so distinct that the situation can be characterized as a division of labour based on sex. This may be due partly to the fact that work in a textile factory is likely to be the first formal job a woman has had, whereas this is not the case for men. Women in the sample who had had other jobs had previously been domestic servants or hand weavers or sewers/seamstresses in the informal sector. For example, one woman in the sample had previously worked as a servant earning 400 baht per month and then as a hand weaver of fishing nets earning 280 baht per month. In contrast, men had had a wide variety of previous jobs, ranging from gardeners to gas station attendants and security guards. Men were also more likely to have had previous experience in factories.

Low pay was not the only reason why women or men left their previous jobs to come to work in textile factories. Other reasons were boredom, difficulty of the work or seasonal unemployment. Employment in textile factories represents a different type of opportunity for males and for females. The textile industry provides some of the best-paying jobs available to Thai working women (apart from prostitution). In contrast, men in the textile industry earn much less than they could earn in male-dominated industries such as automobile assembly. The wage for men averages 18,000 baht per year in the textile industry as compared to 38,000 baht per year in the automobile assembly industry.[23] It is thus important to recognize that, within the manufacturing sector, textile industry employment is at the low end of men's job opportunity spectrum but at the high end of women's.

2. Working conditions and wages

Within a Thai textile factory, tasks are allocated largely on the basis of sex. As can be seen from table 17, women are virtually all machine operators (or more properly, machine supervisors, since the main task is to intervene when a machine malfunctions), and virtually all machine operators are women. In the factory's weaving section, a woman generally supervises 16 to 25 machines. By contrast, men are virtually all non-operators, working either as technicians who repair broken machines or as heavy labourers who load, transport and otherwise prepare the materials for the machines.

According to interviews with management, this division of labour originates with the company rather than with the workers themselves. Prospective workers do not apply for specific jobs, but rather for openings of an unspecified nature.

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[22] Malinee Wongphanich and others, *Women Workers in the Textile Industry of Japan and Thailand: A Socio-Economic Profile,* (Tokyo, Japan Foundation, 1982).

[23] Thailand, National Statistics Office, *Labour Force Survey* (Round 2), (Bangkok, 1982).

Table 17. Thailand: work section and division of tasks by sex

(Number of persons)

Work section	Men		Women	
	Operator*	Non-operator	Operator	Non-operator
Spinning	1	3	16	–
Weaving	1		9	–
Dyeing	–	2	–	–
Sewing	–	–	2	–
Winding	–	3	7	1
Rolling	–	–	1	–
Folding	–	–	1	–
Thread tightening	–	–	1	–
Technician	–	15	–	–
Inventory/warehouse	–	5	–	–
Clerical	–	2	–	–
Transport	–	3	–	–
Security guard	–	1	–	–
Inspection	1	1	1	–
Cutting/carding	–	2	1	–

* "Operator" refers to the actual attendance of machines. "Non-operator" refers to transport, repair and preparatory tasks.

Source: Interviews.

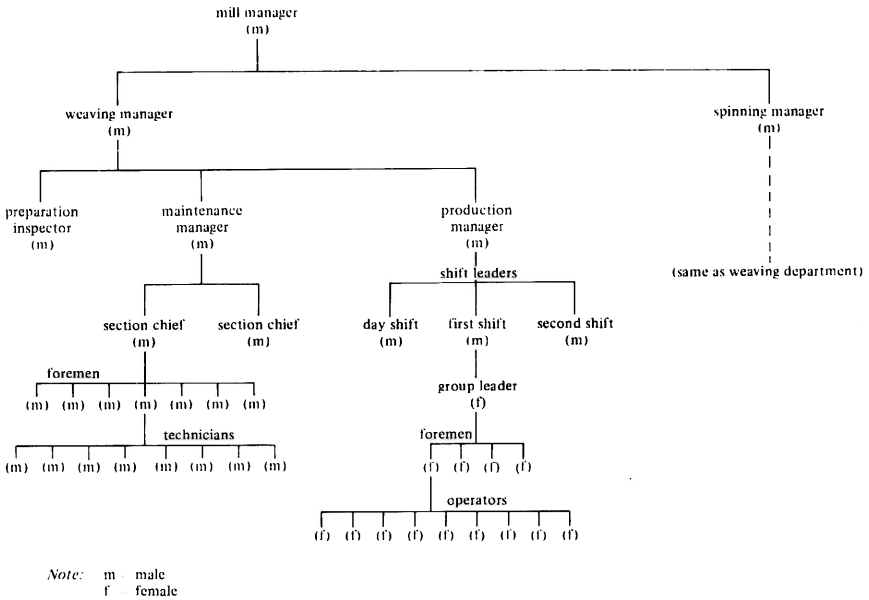
Management then assigns the jobs on the basis of sex. Management has the view that women's fingers are more nimble and their temperaments more patient. Even the top managers seem to fully accept these assumptions, along with the assumption that men are more suited to heavy work. They also assume that men are more suited to be technicians, although few male workers interviewed had any more training for this job than the women. It is true that part of the technician's job may require the lifting of heavy machine parts, but the allocation of technical jobs to men does not seem to be a function of objective considerations.

Despite such stereotypes, management in some factories has experimented with job changes. Management at one factory reported that it had once tried to have women do sizing (stretching and gluing yarn for production) but that the work had proved to be too heavy for them. The personnel manager at another factory said he had experimented with ten male machine operators per shift for six months. However, the fabric had come out with too many defects. In

addition, the men had complained about doing women's work. Interestingly, some of the male workers interviewed said they believed that women's work was harder and that even though they received the same pay as women they would not want to switch jobs.

Figure below shows the typical organizational structure of four sample factories where management was interviewed. With very few exceptions, the top management positions are all held by men. In one factory, only one of twenty top management positions is held by a woman. People at the level of production manager and above are generally recruited directly from colleges offering technical programmes. Managerial positions from the level of shift leader on down are generally filled through internal promotion. Management believes that the largely female work force easily accepts male authority. Shift leaders are therefore men, with some exceptions. These men have generally been promoted from the ranks of the technicians. In some factories, the group leaders are also men, although they tend to have female assistants. For supervisory levels close to actual production, it is important that the supervisors be knowledgeable about the work. For this reason, foremen tend to be women.

Figure. Thailand: typical organizational structure of a textile factory



Men have a somewhat greater opportunity for upward mobility within the factory, but the opportunities for both men and women are generally quite limited. Textile production is relatively undifferentiated in terms of skills levels, and the number of supervisory positions is relatively small. Factories organized in keeping with the Japanese model have additional supervisory levels in order to

provide a sense of opportunity for advancement. However, lower-level supervisors do not get paid much more than production workers. In fact, pay differences reflect longer service more than benefits of promotion.

Time spent working in a textile factory is not very likely to lead to a better job elsewhere. Management frankly admits that the jobs involve very low-level skills which can generally be mastered within a few weeks. Of course, it is possible that men with a good record at a textile factory may find employment at factories in higher-paying industries. It seems, however, that employment in a textile factory is generally a dead-end job for both sexes. This is especially important because long-term employment in a textile factory is likely to be very damaging to a worker's health.

New workers in all of the textile factories studied receive the current minimum wage of baht 70 per day (roughly $US 2.70) without overtime. With a six-day work week, this totals about baht 1,820 (roughly $US 70) per month. There are only slight wage differences based on gender in the factories studied. The mean total wages for women and men are roughly equal: baht 2,447 per month for women and baht 2,501 per month for men (see table 18). Even controlling for years of employment, despite some discrepancies, there is a general consistency between women's and men's wages. This consistency is even stronger when base pay rates are compared. Discrepancies in base pay, which can be quite large, are due mainly to differences in the size of the factories. In the larger factories, workers with over eight years of service can earn a base wage of well over baht 100 per day, while smaller factories pay both women and men with over ten years of service a base wage below baht 95 per day.

Table 18. Thailand: earnings by years of work for women and men in textile factories

Years of work	*Sex*	*N*	*Average years of work*	*Average daily base wage*	*Average total wage per month* *
1-3	F	10	2.0	74	1 969
	M	14	1.6	72	2 019
4-10	F	21	7.4	83	2 630
	M	23	5.8	89	2 603
Over 10	F	9	13.8	94	2 549
	M	3	13.7	121	3 972
	F	40	7.5	83	2 447
	M	40	4.9	85	2 501

Source: Interviews.

* Average total wage includes base pay, cost of living allowance and overtime.

In addition to differences in base wages offered by different factories, discrepancies in average total wages are due to differences in the amount of overtime worked. Factories vary widely in the amount of overtime they offer or require. At six of the factories, including some of the largest, no one works overtime. At other factories, the frequency of overtime is erratic and not all workers participate. In contrast, at a few factories, workers regularly work one day overtime per week. There is not much difference in the number of overtime hours worked by men and women.

Although there is not much difference in wages earned by men and women, the big difference between the work of men and women is in terms of shift work. Thirty-seven (92 per cent) of the women do shift work as compared with 18 (45 per cent) of the men. It is important to note that shift work can be stressful, especially when workers rotate their shifts every week.[24] Such a routine is particularly disruptive of sleep patterns, and many women who do shift work complain of insomnia and other physical and emotional problems.[25]

Relying on women to do shift work is a function of the sexual division of labour in the factory. The machines must be run continuously, and since women are generally the machine operators, they must adapt their lives to the requirements of the production process. The necessity for continuous machine operation and the consequent necessity for shift work is one of the major factors explaining the institution of dormitories in the Thai textile industry. Management recognizes that it would have significant problems maintaining a largely female labour force if the women had to travel at night to do shift duty.

Workers at most factories receive a number of benefits beyond wages. Some factories provide workers with two work suits and a pair of shoes each year. The dormitories are generally free, although a nominal rent sometimes is charged. Some factories provide free drinking water, and many provide free rice at the company canteen. Most factories provide one month of paid maternity leave, and some allow an additional month of non-paid leave. The factories also allow between 15 and 30 paid sick days per year, although some require a physician's documentation in order for the worker to receive his or her sick pay benefits. Many factories also allow the workers to take up to 15 days of business leave without pay. Workers generally receive six days of paid vacation per year, and this increases with length of service. A number of factories allow men two months of non-paid leave to enter the monkhood. Some factories provide up to baht 10,000 in funeral expenses if a parent dies, and some also provide compensation to the spouse of a worker who dies. For example, at one of the larger factories studied, the spouse of a deceased worker can receive baht 9,000 plus additional allowances. Another large factory is willing to pay the spouse of a deceased worker baht 3,000, and one smaller factory is willing to pay baht 5,900. One factory allows newly married workers to take seven days non-paid leave, and another factory has a retirement fund for its workers.

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[24] Malinee Wongphanich and others, *op. cit.*

[25] *Ibid.*

Medical benefits vary widely by factory. Some provide no medical benefits, but most factories which do provide medical benefits limit the entitlement to work-related injuries. Most of these benefits are fixed at a certain sum so a worker with more costly problems will not receive full compensation. For some factories the upper limit on medical compensation is baht 10,000 while at one it is baht 5,000. Workers at the latter factory complain that this limit is too low since many workers needing hospital treatment exceed their entitlement. An illustration of what can happen when a worker exceeds his or her entitlement is provided by a female worker who had dislocated her shoulder on the job. As a consequence of the fact that she had previously used up her entitlement, she could not get the condition treated and her shoulder was set improperly. This left her unable to work at her previous level of efficiency, and thus she ended up receiving only half pay. Her fellow workers were concerned that her condition might deteriorate as a result.

Health and safety conditions associated with the work environment vary somewhat by task, section and factory. In most cases the conditions are not very good, and in some cases they are very bad. As table 19 indicates, 95 per cent of women and 75 per cent of men complain of work-related health problems. Both men and women state that the most common health problems are with breathing, hearing and seeing. Excessive dust is the most serious and prevalent health problem. Two of the sample factories are air-conditioned, which cuts down on dust as well as heat. Two other sample factories are not air-conditioned. Dust and heat are very noticeable. Workers wear masks over their noses and mouths, but this may not be adequate to prevent lung damage. Many respondents complain that breathing problems persist, even outside of the factory. Dust also causes eye discomfort and, since dust permeates all sections of the factory, it affects all workers.

The second most important health problem is noise. As table 19 indicates, no worker reports quiet working conditions. Seventy per cent of the women and 53 per cent of the men report that their work conditions are very loud. Noise levels vary by section; in spinning sections they are loud enough to inhibit conversation, in weaving sections they are literally deafening. This is true at all the sample factories. A weaving section may be in a room the size of a football field, with 800-1,000 heavy weaving looms operating continuously at high speed. The noise of the machines is not only deafening, it is disorienting. Workers are issued ear plugs, but these are not very effective. In fact, depending on how they fit, ear plugs can intensify the noise; some respondents say they do not wear ear plugs because they make the noise worse.

In the weaving and spinning sections, each woman supervises 15 to 25 machines. As a consequence, they are on their feet all day, standing or walking from machine to machine. Many women accordingly complain of pain in their backs and legs. Whereas 65 per cent of the women are on their feet all day, this is the case for only 20 per cent of the men (see table 19). The lower percentage of men on their feet all day reflects the different tasks that men perform. Technicians, in particular, may be sitting or lying down much of the time.

Table 19. Thailand: respondent's reports on working conditions

(Number of persons answering)

	Female	*Male*
1. *Health problems*		
Yes	37	28
No	2	12
2. *Noise*		
Quiet	0	0
Moderate	12	16
Very loud	28	21
3. *Work posture*		
Always on one's feet	26	8
Not always on one's feet	14	31
4. *Lighting*		
Too bright	2	0
Too dark	10	5
Appropriate	23	31
5. *Accidents*		
Yes	28	18
No	12	21

Source: Interviews.

Most of the workers report lighting conditions to be appropriate, neither too bright nor too dark, but many of the women complain of eye strain and short-sightedness. This may result from the close work they have to do. Only one man complains of problems seeing outside of the factory. He says that an electrical machine had exploded and the ensuing flash left him sensitive to bright light.

Table 19 shows that 75 per cent of the women and 45 per cent of the men report having had accidents while at work. Most of these injuries were minor, but some were not. Three women in weaving sections report having been cut by a flying shuttle which had broken. Several of the women report having had their fingers caught in the machines, with one case resulting in broken bones. One woman in a spinning section says that each year between 5 and 10 workers cut their hands in the machines. Several of the men report receiving electrical shocks. One man required nine stitches when an iron used for tightening cloth sprung

out and hit his leg. Another man had his leg broken when a load of cloth fell on him.

In sum, after 10 years of working in a Thai textile factory, many men and women can expect to suffer moderate to severe damage to their lungs and ears. In addition, many women can be expected to become short-sighted. Some women and men will have experienced work-related injuries requiring major medical attention. In a few cases, the workers' compensation will be inadequate for receiving proper medical treatment.

Besides threats to health and safety, working in a textile factory can be an extremely isolating and alienating experience. With the possible exception of technicians' tasks, the work is boring and unchallenging for both women and men. The heat, noise and dust cause considerable discomfort.

Thirty eight (95 per cent) of the female respondents and 31 (78 per cent) of the males live in the company dormitories. There may be anywhere from 2 to 24 women per room. On average, however, there are about eight women per room. There are generally fewer men per room, four or five on average.

Sleeping facilities vary. In some cases, both men and women are provided with beds. Usually, if beds are provided, they are reserved for the supervisors, specifically the male supervisors. The most common sleeping facility for both men and women is a raised platform. It is not uncommon for both men and women to sleep on a mat on the floor. Drinking, smoking, eating and gambling are prohibited in the dormitories. There are lounges where workers can meet and watch television. Some factories provide video cassettes and others show movies. In many cases, the factory provides a union hall on the premises.

In the large factories, it is not unusual for 1,500 women to share 20 toilets, only 10 of which may be working. The ratio of men to toilets is generally much lower. Access to toilet facilities can be a problem since machines must be attended continuously. The facilities must be used by everyone at the time of shift changes. Women report long lines forming at peak hours, such as in the morning before work. Many women who have to be at work by 8 a.m. get up at 4 a.m. in order not to be rushed in their use of the toilet and washing facilities.

3. Women workers and unionization

The conventional assumption of policy makers and employers is that the textile industry actively seeks women workers because women are a docile work force and are therefore willing to accept relatively low wages and poor working conditions. The present case study indicates that this is a mistaken belief and that employer's attitudes based on their assumptions concerning female docility actually help to heighten union activism among women.

Female textile workers were asked why, in their opinion, women tended to be hired in the textile industry. Virtually all said it was because the work

was delicate and women's fingers were more nimble and because women were more patient and thus better suited for that type of work than men. It seems, therefore, that the workers themselves tend to accept the notion that women are more suited to textile work. Since there is no evidence that management actively promotes this idea among the workers, it is probable that the workers' belief reflects a widespread stereotype.

Management was asked whether they had a preference for hiring women or whether they hired women merely because women tended to apply for the jobs the textile industry offered. They responded that they did prefer to hire women and that their hiring policy was responsible for the predominance of women in the textile industry. They added that that hiring policy was a local decision rather than one which had originated with the parent firm in a foreign country.

When management was asked why they preferred women workers, they replied that textile work was light and thus suitable for women. When it was pointed out that men could do light work too, different responses were received. In two cases, management groped for an answer and finally said (like the women workers interviewed) that women were more patient and nimble and for that reason better suited to textile work. It did not seem to be a question that the managers had thought a great deal about. Only when directly asked whether they thought women were more controllable than men did they cite that reason as well. They said they thought women were easier to supervise and less likely to engage in union activities. It appeared from the manner of their response that that was a rationalization for a traditional policy that had never been questioned rather than a deliberate hiring strategy.

At two textile factories management was quicker to cite labour control as a factor explaining their preference for female employees. At one of these factories, management pointed out that in comparison with the automobile industry, the textile industry was relatively labour-intensive, requiring several thousand workers at a single site. Management explained that with many workers present, it was easier to control women than men. The management representative added that the Hong Kong affiliate did employ men predominantly because in Hong Kong women were prohibited from doing shift work. The productivity of male workers in Hong Kong was higher than the productivity of Thai female workers, but management reported there were also more strikes and labour problems in Hong Kong. For that reason, the Thai management preferred to hire women.

The president of one association of Thai textile manufacturers said that in his opinion female workers were preferred because they could be more easily managed and were less likely to engage in labour agitation. However, during an interview at an automobile factory, where men predominate, the personnel officer said that the gender bias in his industry was simply because heavy or technical tasks were more suited to men. He said that women applied for jobs at his factory but were always turned down. Asked whether he thought women might not be easier to manage, he strongly disagreed. He said women were less

controllable than men, as shown by the fact that there had been no labour problems at his factory for over two years.

In sum, it does not appear that there is a deliberate policy to hire women as part of a strategy of labour control in the Thai textile industry. In other cases it seems that, in general, women are hired because that has come to be the tradition in the textile industry. The traditional policy of hiring women and the belief in sexual stereotypes have apparently been mutually reinforcing.

Textile management in Thailand generally believes that it is the men in their factories who instigate labour unrest. One possible reason for this is that the executive committees of the unions in the textile factories are dominated by men (see table 15), and these committees directly interact with management in negotiations. This viewpoint may be mistaken. Both male and female workers who were interviewed believed that men were better leaders and talkers than women, and for that reason they tended to elect men to the executive committees of their unions. However, women are the backbone of the union movement in Thai textile factories. As noted earlier, the percentage of women union members in the factories studied is consistently higher than the percentage of men. This calls into question the view that women workers are relatively more docile than men.

Table 20 indicates the workers' knowledge of their legal rights and their willingness to take overt actions to achieve those rights. Male workers are more knowledgeable than female workers about their legal rights (95 per cent of the men versus 80 per cent of the women describe themselves as having at least some knowledge of their rights). Mere knowledge of those rights, however, does not necessarily translate into action. More females than males state that they are willing to take action against management to protect or improve their working conditions. Eighty three per cent of the female respondents said they would be willing to slow down their work as a protest action, compared with 53 per cent of the men. Seventy per cent of the females were willing to protest vocally against management compared with 60 per cent of the men. Only with regard to the willingness to break a machine were the views of both sexes distributed in the same proportion. This suggests that while female workers are less knowledgeable of their legal rights, they are more willing to undertake overt action when they feel unfairly treated.

The interviews with union members at the various factories further belied the assumption that women workers are docile. Both male and female committee members consistently said that it was the women who generally pushed the committee to seek more from management, particularly regarding benefits. A male committee member at one factory said that during a 15-day slow-down that the union had conducted the previous year, women had participated more than men. Moreover, women had performed a traditional Thai dance and given management a black rose as forms of protest against inadequate wages, holidays and safety conditions. The respondent said that the men had remained behind the scenes because they were afraid of a violent response from the security guards.

Table 20. Thailand: workers' knowledge of and attitudes toward labour issues in textile factories[a]

(Percentage)

	Female	*Male*
1. *Knowledge of workers' rights*		
Yes	22	25
No	58	70
2. *Willingness to undertake individual work slowdown*		
Yes	83	53
No	17	47
3. *Intention to break machine*		
Yes	36	37
No	64	63
Not applicable (do not work with machines)	–	–
4. *Willingness to protest*		
Yes	70	66
Don't know	8	3
No	22	32

Note: [a] Based on sample of 40 men and 40 women.

Source: Interviews.

An even more dramatic example of the direct leadership role of women concerned a conflict between the company security guards and the union committee. Security guards had intimidated the workers, and women asked the union committee to demand that management fire the guards. In response, the guards threatened to become violent and the police had to be called in. Before the police arrived, however, the female workers formed a circle around the male workers to separate them from the guards. The reason for this manoeuvre was the expectation that the guards would not be as violent towards women as they would toward men. This strategy had been devised during committee meetings before the confrontation, when it had been decided that negotiations would be performed better by men while logistics would be performed better by women. The guards were eventually fired.

In the case of another factory with a work section of 80 women and 10 men, one man had been dismissed for quarreling with a supervisor. In response,

all 80 women wore black armbands and engaged in a slow-down for seven days. As a consequence, management placed their names on a blacklist. No men participated in this protest although it had been a man who was dismissed. A male committee member said that in his seven years at the factory, he could not recall the men carrying out any similar form of protest. He went on to say that management promoted sports clubs so that the workers would have less time for union activities. He said that women participated much less in those activities than men because they recognized that those activities were a ploy used by management to diminish union strength.

Many of the union leaders interviewed said men were more likely to serve as spies for management than women. The reason given was that men, unlike women, went out drinking a lot, and management often invited some of them to go drinking. Furthermore, men generally interacted more with each other after work hours, discussing politics and union activities. In contrast, women were more likely to spend their leisure time alone, resting, washing clothes or knitting. More women than men said that they did not interact much with other workers after work hours. As a consequence, men generally knew more of the details of union activities than did women. For this reason as well, they were considered to be better spies and better placed to spread rumours about plant closings, which management frequently used to intimidate the workers.

Thai labour law prohibits management from dismissing union leaders, like other workers, without due cause, but it was asserted that management often tried to get around that by dismissing many other workers at the same time and calling it retrenchment. For example, at one large factory, management had fired 100 workers, including 10 of 15 union committee members.[26] Unions can fight this tactic by taking the company to the tripartite labour court presided over by representatives of labour, management and government. However, court battles take a long time and require the union to obtain the services of lawyers from some non-governmental organization. During this drawn-out process many workers may lose interest. For this reason, unions are not inclined to bring cases before the court. Management also knows it may lose the case if it goes to the court and consequently avoids egregious violations of the law. Both labour and management tend to comply strictly with legal procedures in disputes since both are disinclined to go to court. Thus, if the workers follow certain steps, they cannot be easily dismissed for being union activists. Similarly, they cannot be summarily fired for engaging in a slow-down, which can be more effective than a strike since the workers will still get paid.

Not all workers participate in the unions (only 20 per cent of the work force needs to be unionized before a union can legitimately negotiate on behalf of the workers), but the workers who do participate tend to be well organized, The unions at different factories also try to work together, indicating still another level of labour organization. For example, unions at three of the

[26] This factory was not included in the sample of 13 factories.

sample factories co-operate in renting a three-storey apartment, where union members can cook and hold meetings and where over 20 women can sleep (on the floor) with no problem. One female worker who had been dismissed from her textile job acts as a housekeeper and sewing teacher at the apartment. Her union sent her to be educated as a dressmaker so that she could come back and educate other workers. The union has 12 sewing machines for the purpose of enabling the workers to make clothes both for their own use and for sale.

On the basis of all this evidence, it would appear that female textile workers are far from docile and, if anything, relatively more militant than their male co-workers. It still may be asked whether women in the textile industry are nevertheless more docile than workers in male-dominated industries. There is not sufficient information to answer this question. One place to start would be with a comparison of unionization levels in different industries. If male-dominated industries are more highly unionized than female-dominated industries, that might indicate that females tend to be less militant than males.

The Thai Government has not released the comprehensive statistics required for such an analysis, but the results of a small survey by the Department of Labour provide some basis for comparison. These data are presented in table 21, and permit a comparison of unionization levels in the cement and transport equipment industry (both of which are male-dominated) with the level of unionization in the textile industry. The textile industry is at least as unionized as the transport equipment industry. The overall percentage of unionized workers is the same for the two industries, but all of the sampled textile sites are unionized whereas unions are more sporadic in transport equipment. Moreover, the level of union participation by women in the textile industry is slightly higher than the level of union participation by men in the transport equipment industry.

Table 21. Thailand: unionization levels in the textile, cement and transport equipment industries, by sex

Industry	*Number of sites sampled*	*Number of unions*	*Total number of union members*		*Total number of possible union members*		*Percentage of unionized workers*		
			Men	*Women*	*Men*	*Women*	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*
Textile	10	10	1 100	4 922	3 135	8 749	35	56	50
Cement	1	1	327	–	1 600	200	20	–	18
Transport equipment	43	20	49 097	8 130	92 631	20 954	53	39	50

Source: Thailand, Ministry of Interior, Department of Labour, 1984.

To conclude, the available evidence suggests that female workers in Thailand's textile industry are neither absolutely docile nor even relatively docile in comparison with male workers. In fact, female workers seem to be more militant than male workers. At the same time, neither workers nor employers seem ready to bring labour disputes before the legal and administrative mechanisms provided by the Government. This may be conducive to settling disagreements informally or in the early phases of labour disputes. However, unwillingness to follow through on legal procedures entices both sides to use illegal or extra-legal manoeuvres in disputes. Strikes may be avoided, but workers may use other means to express dissatisfaction. There are not enough data to indicate how effective non-strike methods can be. Ultimately, the effective power of unions may be less than the number of members might indicate. Interviews with workers and union committee members show, however, that the union provides substantial social and organizational support.

E. Summary

The situation of women workers in Thailand's textile industry coincides with patterns found in other developing countries of the ESCAP region. There are definite gender stereotypes about factory work. It is taken for granted that passive, boring, meticulous work is better suited to women while active, heavy, technical work is more suited to men. This assumption or stereotype is found in attitudes of both employers and employees, both men and women. It is also consistently believed that women have more patient temperaments and more nimble fingers, suitable for certain jobs. This unexamined assumption contributes as much as conscious policy to management's preference to hire women as machine operators.

This gender-based division of labour has a number of important consequences. First, textile machinery must run continuously and, since women are the machine operators, they must do shift work. This seems to be the major reason for dormitories, as management wants to reduce absences and turnover that would result from night-time travel by female shift workers. Because their shifts rotate so frequently, the women suffer disruptions in their lives that most of the men do not.

Women's work in the Thai textile industry is more boring and more isolating than that of men. Men who do the heavy labour often work together while the women machine operators work alone, supervising 15 to 25 machines each. They are on their feet all day, often standing in one place. As a result, women suffer eye strain and aches in their backs and legs more frequently then men.

The division of labour based on sex also means less upward mobility for women than for men. Men have more opportunities to find subsequent employment in higher-paying industries, and within the textile industry men have more opportunities to achieve middle management positions. The social dynamics are based on the presumption that men have more leadership qualities. The presumption is reinforced by the further view that women respond better to male

than to female leadership. Management personnel as well as workers accept these propositions. Similarly, while women are more active and militant union members, union leadership positions are dominated by men. Workers explain that the men have better speaking and negotiating skills. Despite all this, there is little sexual discrimination in terms of pay. Even male technicians who perform more skilled tasks receive the same pay as the female machine operators.

The 13 factories sampled generally comply with Thai labour laws and regulations. They pay at least the minimum wage and provide a variety of benefits. Nevertheless, both men and women in these factories consider that their working conditions are harmful to their health. The workers also have more work-related accidents than should reasonably be expected. Even in this small sample a number of workers had suffered serious injuries on the job. In several cases of job-related injuries, they had received inadequate compensation. Furthermore, toilet and washing facilities for women are inadequate and poorly maintained. Inadequate cleanliness is one of the women's chief complaints about their living conditions. Such difficulties in the everyday working lives of women workers indicate that easy-to-remedy inequalities reflect stereotypes and fixed attitudes that accord inadequate respect for women's contribution to economic growth and industrial development in Thailand.

III. YOUNG WOMEN WORKERS IN THE PHILIPPINES MANUFACTURING SECTOR

A. Introduction

Women at present constitute over one third of the total labour force in the Philippines. This represents an increase in women's participation in the labour force since the 1960s. In fact, females have come to outnumber males in some professional and technical fields, particularly in the wholesale and retail trades, where more than three fourths of total employment is female.

The traditional roles of Philippine women are undergoing profound change with the emergence of new economic conditions and technologies. Women are finding themselves more and more directly involved in development efforts. This involvement is most evident in urban areas. In rural areas as well, however, the impact of industrialization is bringing about profound changes in women's participation in development.

The role and status of Philippine women are said to arise out of the conjunction of the positions each woman occupies as worker, student, wife, mother, church member, political worker and so forth, and the rights and duties she is expected to exercise in these positions. Prospective employers in the Philippines can ill afford to disregard the family obligations and legal disabilities of married women workers. As a result, some employers have gone so far as to adopt a policy of employing only single women and imposing as a condition of

their employment that marriage would automatically terminate their jobs. Such problems lie at the heart of the problems faced by young women workers in the Philippines.

B. The legal background, development planning and women's situation

1. The legal framework

Although a number of additional factors are involved, in the Philippines the legal system provides the basic framework defining the rights, duties, capacities and incapacities of women. No inquiry into employment policies and practices affecting young women workers in the Philippines can be dissociated from the law and related factors affecting women's status in general. Employment policies regarding women in the Philippines are largely derived from past colonial policies which include some relatively forward-looking legislation enacted during the American administration. Colonial policies were characterized by protectiveness and paternalism. The policies underlying this legislation have been increasingly challenged as the legal system has responded to the social changes accompanying independence and modernization.

A perspective on Philippine women's roles from pre-colonial times through the centuries of colonial rule to the present, discloses various factors which continue to influence employment policies. Women in the pre-colonial Philippines appear to have enjoyed a position equal to men, but laws imposed under foreign rule relegated women to a subordinate position. Thus, the Spanish Civil Code, which was extended to the Philippines in 1889 and remained in force except for a few changes until its revision in 1949, gave the husband substantial power over the person and property of his wife. Laws on the rights and obligations of respective spouses were, in turn, protective and effectively restrictive on the wife.[1]

Notwithstanding the various legal prohibitions and restrictions, married women enjoyed a degree of autonomy, even if not explicitly accorded by law. For example, the wife usually kept the family purse and engaged freely in business. Traditions and practices rooted in history overcame legal restrictions.

One important breakthrough late in the colonial period was the law giving women the power of management and control of their own moveable/peripheral property.[2] Following independence, the 1949 revisions of the

[1] Philippines, Spanish Civil Code. By explicit provision, Article 57 made it a husband's duty to protect the wife, and she had the legal duty to obey him. Under Article 58, the wife had to follow the husband wherever he established his residence. Under Article 59, the husband administered the conjugal property and could represent his wife (who could appear only with his permission, or have a lawyer represent her only with the husband's permission) in any judicial proceedings, except in specified cases. Until it was amended, Article 61 restricted a wife's right to alienate her moveable property or to enter into contracts.

[2] Act Number 3922, 1932.

Civil Code removed some, but not all, of the remaining restrictions in this regard.

Perhaps the most significant holdover of colonial law discriminating against women is the following:

> The wife is allowed to exercise her profession or calling or engage in business only as her husband does not object. This "veto power" is deemed justifiable if the husband's income is sufficient for the family in accordance with its social standing and if his opposition is founded on serious and valid grounds.[3]

The husband thus retains a large amount of legally prescribed power over his wife's economic activities. As has been noted, custom and tradition do not necessarily concede a subordinate economic position to Philippine women in practice. Nevertheless, discriminatory legal provisions such as this not only affect women's status but have an important bearing on their employment situation.

The progressive legislation of the late colonial period and since, concerning women's employment, could be interpreted as providing special protection for women. For example, legislation was enacted to ensure maternity leave with pay in both public and private employment.[4] Special requirements to provide seating while working and to provide nurseries were imposed after independence.[5] Later, legislation was passed to establish a Women and Minors Bureau in the Department of Labour.[6]

Protective legislation of this type can have counter-productive effects, however. In the Philippines, this is evident in the fact that employers became reluctant to recruit women because of the added expenses incurred in complying with these laws. Thus, some firms decided to employ only unmarried women and imposed the condition that marriage would automatically terminate employment. The legacy of this response to protective legislation lingers on.

The rights, conditions and restrictions which directly affect women's employment in the Philippines under the present legal framework cover four distinct issues. Significantly, women's marital status is one issue receiving direct attention. The other issues are night work, maternity leave and remuneration.

Night work for women is prohibited from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. in industrial undertakings and from 12 a.m. to 6 a.m. in commercial firms. In agriculture,

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[3] Civil Code, Act Number 117.

[4] Commonwealth Act Number 647, as amended.

[5] Republic Act Number 679, 1952.

[6] Republic Act Number 2714, 1960.

no woman may be required to work unless she is given a rest period of not less than nine consecutive hours.

Article 134 of the Labour Code empowers the Minister of Labour and Employment to initiate the integration of maternity leave benefits into the Social Security system. The maternity leave benefit provisions of the Code thereby become universal. The maternity leave provision of the Labour Code was thus amended as follows:

> A covered female employee who has paid at least three monthly maternity contributions in the twelve-month period immediately preceding the semester of her childbirth, abortion or miscarriage and who is currently employed shall be paid a daily maternity benefit equivalent to one hundred per cent of her average daily salary credit for forty-five days.[7]

Article 135 of the Labour Code states that no employer shall discriminate against any woman with respect to the terms and conditions of employment on account of her sex. It expressly stipulates that equal remuneration shall be paid to both men and women for work of equal value.

Under Article 136 of the Labour Code, employers cannot lawfully require as a condition of employment or continuation of employment that a woman employee shall not get married, or to stipulate expressly or tacitly that upon getting married a woman employee shall be deemed resigned or separated. Neither can an employer dismiss, discharge, discriminate or otherwise show prejudice against a woman employee merely by reason of her marriage.

Article 137 of the Labour Code, furthermore, states that an employer is prohibited from: (1) Denying any woman employee the benefits provided by law or discharging any woman employee for the purpose of preventing her from enjoying any of the benefits provided by the Labour Code, such as maternity leave with pay, the facilities related to maternity like nursery, play centre, etc.; (2) Discharging any such woman employee on account of her pregnancy or while on leave or in confinement due to her pregnancy; and (3) Discharging or refusing admission to any such woman employee upon her return to work for fear that she may again become pregnant.

The case studies presented in subsequent sections provide a picture of how women's actual working experiences conform with this legal framework.

2. The policy and planning framework

The Philippine Government conforms to the position that the problems and interests of women are generally inseparable from those of men. Workers,

[7] Labour Code, Article 134.

whether male or female, should be equally protected from dangers on the job and must have equal opportunities to develop their capacities and to participate actively in national economic and social life.

One important shift in government policy is reflected in the change of emphasis in its programmes from protection and prevention of exploitation to the promotion of opportunity and equitable treatment for women workers. In the past, the Government's thrust was to prevent exploitation of women workers, but today the thrust of the programmes of the Bureau of Women and Minors of the Department of Labour and Employment, in co-operation with the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines and various forward-looking employer's organizations, is to promote equality of opportunity and treatment for women workers.

As a result, development policies and plans of action have been modified to utilize education, research and information to change deep-rooted social attitudes about the role of women workers. Further, employment of women has been linked to family responsibilities based on an active campaign for consciousness-raising among women and employers.

The increasing participation of women in national development is underscored in the successive development plans. The Philippine development plan for 1974-1977 considered the total development programme and was addressed to the Philippine people in general. No separate mention of women was made in that plan of action. In the subsequent Philippine development plan for 1978-1982, section 6.6 indicated that the State would pursue integrated social development to promote total human development. Consequently, the national social welfare policies formulated in the plan covered 10 areas of reform which included, among others: health; nutrition; housing, education and culture; manpower development; and youth and sports. These policies recognized women, cultural minorities, welfare recipients, social security recipients and other social groups as their beneficiaries. In short, the Plan recognized the changing role of women in modern society. Whereas the traditional role of wife and mother had previously been assumed to be the permanent lot of women, the Plan stated that now women were clearly among those considered capable of contributing to a modern competitive society.

The policy framework of the 1978-1982 development plan covered economic concerns in the context of social development, with emphasis on the improvement of individuals, corporations or other forms of organizations which are subject to the laws governing employment. It was envisaged that the pursuit of economic growth through livelihood mobilization would bring about positive and lasting economic and social gains to all segments of the population. Consequently, human development would be enhanced through programmes that attack poverty directly and that seek rapid improvement in workers' welfare and productivity. In essence, therefore, the development programme would be implemented in order to increase people's participation in productive and gainful activities.

In response to the current problems confronting the Philippine economy, a number of specific problem areas have been identified by the Government so that targets can be set to increase women's productivity, livelihood and self-reliance.[8] Among the major problems are the following:

First, it is a matter of concern that, as of the mid-1980s, the country's population continued to grow at the rate of 2.4 per cent, despite progress in family planning programmes, and that rural population was increasing at the even faster average rate of 4 per cent annually. Second, there is concern that resources and technology are being strained to support the country's 55 million people and that this will continue and possibly intensify as population grows to 75 million in the year 2000 and 115 million in the year 2020. Third, there is a concern that, with 600,000 to 700,000 people entering the work force annually, employment opportunities must be expanded to absorb them into productive activity and bring down current underemployment rates of 15-20 per cent of the work force.

Generating income and employment opportunities are the most immediate development concerns to ensure that the economic welfare of the Philippine people improves. This is particularly crucial for least developed geographic areas and for low income groups in the country. The past development plans and current policy priorities recognize that, in this context, generating productive employment for women would greatly enhance their well-being and status.

C. Philippine women and employment

1. Profile of Philippine women in the labour market

In 1980, the female labour force in the Philippines was estimated to be 6.6 million, which was about 38 per cent of the total labour force of 17.3 million persons. Women's labour force participation in the Philippines might thus be considered low, but this would not be the case if housekeepers were included as part of the work force. If 5.9 million women housekeepers were added, the total labour force would be about 25 million. Under those circumstances the female labour force would comprise 12.5 million, or 50 per cent of that total.

Table 22 summarizes women's labour force participation and employment rates as of 1982. It shows that 43.6 per cent of all women were in the labour force and almost 91 per cent of this group were employed. Women in urban areas had a higher labour force participation rate than rural women, but the former group had a 10.7 per cent unemployment rate compared with the latter group's 8 per cent unemployment rate.

[8] Cesar Virata, "Harnessing women's participation in national development", Address to the Civic Assembly of Women in the Philippines, 37th anniversary, June 18, 1983, Manila.

Table 22. Philippines: labour force participation and employment rates of women by marital status, urban-rural, 1982

(Percentages)

Area and marital status	*Labour force participation rate*	*Employment rate*
Philippines	43.6	90.9
Single	43.3	87.1
Married	43.1	92.1
Widowed/separated	47.3	96.0
a. *Urban*	44.4	89.3
Single	45.5	86.8
Married	43.4	90.6
Widowed/separated	44.8	94.6
b. *Rural*	42.9	92.0
Single	41.4	87.4
Married	43.1	93.9
Widowed/separated	49.0	96.9

Source: Philippines, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Labour Statistics Service.

Among rural women, those classified as widowed or separated had the highest participation and employment rates while single women had the lowest participation rate and the highest unemployment rate. The highest unemployment rate, about 13 per cent, was found among single women in both urban and rural areas. It should be noted that, of the approximately 2 million women in agriculture, 1.4 million do not receive salaries for their work.[9]

Table 23 shows that higher participation rates are found among women who have completed three levels of education – elementary, secondary and collegiate. More than 85 per cent of college graduates enter the labour market and less than 9 per cent of them are unemployed. Many of the women college graduates in the labour force, however, are not working in their areas of training and specialization. Thus, the problem of underemployment is real, with many women taking any job just for the sake of getting employment. The second highest participation rate is found among elementary school graduates, of whom 45.8 per cent join the labour force, with about 7 per cent unemployed. The lowest participation rates are found among women who have some high

[9] Philippines, National Census and Statistics Office.

Table 23. Philippines: labour force participation and employment rates of women by level of education, 1982

(Percentages)

Educational attainment	*Labour force participation rate*	*Employment rate*
No grade completed	37.1	95.2
Some elementary	44.4	93.9
Elementary graduate	45.8	92.9
Some high school	31.3	89.4
High school graduate	39.1	84.7
Some college	32.5	82.8
College and post-graduate	85.6	91.5

Source: Philippines, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Labour Statistics Service.

school (31.3 per cent) or some college education (32.5 per cent), probably because most are still in the process of completing their education. The highest unemployment rates were found among high school graduates (15.3 per cent) and women with some college education (17.2 per cent). By contrast, while only 37.1 per cent of women who have not completed any grade are in the labour market, this group has the highest employment rate of 95.2 per cent.

The distribution of employed Philippine women by economic sector is presented in table 24. The data suggest that employment opportunities for women differ by economic sectors. Most significant as an employment field for women is the primary sector – agriculture, forestry and fishing – since most of the Philippine population live in rural areas. As shown in the table, only 14.5 per cent of employed women are engaged in the manufacturing sector, which ranks fourth among all sectors.

The increasing participation of women in the Philippine labour force may make it inevitable that women will be increasingly affected by economic conditions causing lay-offs and unemployment. As a result, during 1983-1984, when there was general international economic recession, Philippine women bore a serious unemployment burden. For instance, in the third quarter of 1984 there were about 1.3 million persons comprising household populations 15 years and older who were totally unemployed. Over half of the unemployed, 679,000, were females.[10] Further, youth (those aged 15 to 24 years) accounted for over

[10] Philippines, National Census and Statistics Office, "Special release on the integrated survey of household labour force" (Manila) NCSO, 1985).

Table 24. Philippines: employment of women by economic sector, 1982

Sector	*Percentage*
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	33.8
Services	29.0
Wholesale and retail trade	21.8
Manufacturing	14.5
Transport, communication, storage	0.5
Construction	0.2
Mining and quarrying	0.1
Electricity, gas and water	0.1
Total	100.0

Source: Philippines, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Labour Statistics Service.

half (57 per cent) of total unemployment. In the unemployed youth group, 53 per cent were females.[11]

Some 75,428 workers were laid off in 1983, an increase of about 52 per cent over 1982. Most of the lay-offs were in the manufacturing sector, with textiles, food processing, chemicals, rubber, plastics, fabricated metals and transport equipment being the most seriously affected industries. In the case of most of these industries, those located in and around Manila accounted for almost 60 per cent of all laid-off workers. In 1984, 92,167 workers had their employment terminated; the manufacturing sector again recorded the highest numbers of laid-off workers.[12]

A 1982 study analysing termination clearance reports filed with the Ministry of Labour and Employment revealed that young female workers (those aged 16 to 25 years) had the highest rates of termination and lay-off.[13] The problems of young women workers during recession, retrenchment and partial shut-downs are thus especially serious. They are often the first to be fired or laid off. Special problems also relate to the narrow range of jobs available to women and the tendency for these jobs to be concentrated in a few manufacturing industries where employment of young women workers prevails.

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] Philippines, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Labour Statistics Service, 1984.

[13] Irene R. Cortes, "Discrimination against women and employment policies", *Philippine Law Journal,* vol. 97, 2nd quarter (June 1982), p. 171.

2. Industrial employment of Philippine women

In 1980, about 6.6 million Philippine women were classified as gainfully employed. Of this number, about 901,000, or 14 per cent, were employed in industry. Within industry, 98 per cent were employed in the manufacturing sector. The balance of 2 per cent were employed in utilities, mining, and construction industries.

Table 25 shows the occupational distribution of women working in manufacturing. The pattern shows that most women are employed in the garment and textile industries and food manufacturing. (Some parts of the food manufacturing industry are included in the residual category of "craftsmen and production process workers not elsewhere classified").

Table 25. Philippines: women workers in manufacturing, by occupational group

Occupation groups	*Percentage*
Tailors, cutters, sewers, embroiderers	38.0
Spinners weavers, knitters, dyers	8.0
Millers, bakers, brewers and related food and beverage workers	5.0
Electricians and related electrical and electronic workers	4.0
Packers, labellers and related workers	4.0
Potters, kilnmen, glass and clay workers	1.4
Tool makers, machinists, plumbers, welders, platers and related workers	0.8
Compositors, pressmen, engravers, book binders and related workers	0.6
Footwear makers and leather workers	0.6
Chemical and related process workers	0.5
Tobacco preparers and tobacco production makers	0.4
Craftsmen and production process workers, not elsewhere classified	37.0

Source: Philippines, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Labour Statistics Service.

Only 314,000, or 22 per cent, of women in industry are wage earners The rest are self-employed persons and unpaid family workers. Most women industrial workers, about 60 per cent, are employed in cottage enterprises and

firms which employ less than 20 workers. Only 27 per cent work in companies employing 200 or more workers.

It was noted above that women have a narrow range of jobs and occupations within the manufacturing sector and that they predominate in the garment and textile industries. Part of the explanation for this phenomenon is apparently the preference of employers. Generally, the following qualifications are required of female applicants in these industries: 18 to 25 years old, unmarried, at least a high school graduate, in good health and with no police or criminal record. With these minimum qualifications, acceptance of applicants for employment as garment workers is based largely on their performance in a practical examination of skill and experience in sewing. On the other hand, textile workers appear to gain employment largely on the strength of recommendations.

Some 90 to 95 per cent of all workers in the Philippine garment industry are women, particularly in the top-ranking garment firms. There are also male workers, but they are few in number and usually assigned to cutting, packaging and delivery and to the maintenance of company machines and facilities. Women workers, therefore, are the backbone of the industry's work force.

Companies' experience indicates that many men are as qualified as women to work as sewers. However, attitudes toward work are given weight aside from skill and experience. Thus, management's preference for women is based on sewing performance, docility and submissiveness. This is reinforced by reports that male presence and behaviour on the assembly line tends to interfere with the job performance of female workers.

It is frequently said that women are "willing to toe the line," which means they are willing to comply with company work schedules, particularly night-shift assignments. This is apparently because women workers generally find the conditions of the job worth accepting because of wage expectations and the security a company can provide.

The garment industry is an even more female-dominated industry than the textile industry. This is so even where, as a matter of company policy, gender is not deemed an important hiring consideration. Consideration of gender is not perceived as important by some textile mills. However, some of these companies may have gender-based preferences and considerations in the allocation of section and job assignments.

Newly-hired female workers are usually sent to particular production departments such as preparatory, spinning, weaving and cloth room departments. Male workers are assigned exclusively to the finishing, production main control, package dye house, general services and energy/engineering departments.

More women handle spinning and weaving machines because management feels it can rely upon them to handle and monitor machine operations. Women have been observed to be more careful in handling machines and more likely to

remain patiently at their duties. Men, on the other hand, become impatient with the work routine and roam around the workplace.

Management prefers to employ single women over married women. This can be perceived as an attempt to save on labour costs, since the hiring of married women may mean additional expenses for maternity leave benefits. Aside from this, however, married women are often perceived by management to be less efficient workers. It is believed that married women are subject to family-related constraints which lead to absenteeism, tardiness and lack of full-time commitment to work.

Some companies are very strict in hiring only single women. In some instances, this policy has been set aside, but married women applicants are required to submit to a pregnancy test. They are advised by management not to get pregnant while serving their six-month apprenticeship. Further, management prefers to hire married women who have been sterilized to prevent future pregnancy. In some cases, married women applicants with a strong sponsor are accepted for work. Often, acceptance of married women for employment depends on the disposition of the manager or supervisor in charge of the screening of job applicants.

While companies may be strict about the marital status of women workers, they are not very particular about the level of the workers' formal education. High school graduates are preferred, but women without formal schooling are also accepted as long as they can demonstrate skill and expertise for the job to be performed. In a similar way, young women workers are preferred, but those 30 years of age and older are sometimes accepted. Recommendations are not necessary since women workers are accepted on the basis of their merits as sewers.

Unlike the garment industry, no special skills are required of job applicants in the textile industry. Applicants should have the proper height (at least 5 feet, 2 inches) and proper build (supposedly neither too fat nor too thin) for handling and monitoring machine operations. Proper timing is also important. Filing one's application at the time the company needs workers is also a factor. It appears that the best time for workers to apply is immediately after a strike.

The most common type of promotion is from "apprentice" to "regular" status. Chances for further promotion are perceived as very limited. While some workers are initially employed on a temporary basis for a minimum period of six months, as prescribed by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, others go through an extended apprenticeship period averaging 1.9 years. Most workers find the apprenticeship period unnecessary and, at most, unreasonable. This holds true especially for workers in the textile industry, where the required skills can be learned easily. Similarly, some garment workers adjust to the various sewing operations in a matter of days. As many workers see it, the training is unnecessary; they were accepted because they already knew how to sew, and they all passed the practical examinations using company machines.

The situation thus described for the Philippine garment and textile industries confirms observations made in other studies. There may not be any gender biased company employment policies *per se.* However, there is a preference for women workers based on their alleged physical and psychological characteristics. Women are said to be more skillful at garment-making owing to their small hands, greater manual dexterity, and expertise at delicate manual tasks through their traditional experience with needlework.[14] In addition, employers may have a stereotyped view of women workers as docile and hard-working under boring conditions. Furthermore, women have been perceived as marginal workers who make a secondary contribution to the family income; thus it is easier to give them low wages and lay them off when necessary.[15]

The labour requirements of the companies in the garment and textile industry are compatible with the foregoing assumptions about women workers. Women are ideal for factory work because of their patience, docility, passivity and tolerance of routine and repetitive work. The readiness with which it is believed they can be controlled to meet production targets fits conveniently with the needs of the industry.

On the other hand, studies have found that women see many benefits from factory employment. They perceive that their lives improve through the increased independence, status and value associated with their employment as manufacturing labour. This is experienced through their increased ability to make contributions to the family, engage in discretionary spending, and enjoy the companionship of other women on the job.[16]

D. Case studies of six garment and textile companies

The preceding discussion presented the general context of government policies and plans for women's employment, the legal framework giving women rights and protection and some general patterns of employment and attitudes toward female workers in manufacturing industries in the Philippines. This survey is complemented below by an in-depth case study of the experiences of women workers in six selected garment and textile companies. These case studies provide first-hand information on which to devise socio-economic and legal policies in order that women can be ensured of fair and equitable participation in national development.

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[14] L.Y.C. Lim, "Capitalism, imperialism and patriarchy: the dilemma of third world women workers in multinational factories," in J. Nash and M.P. Fernandez-Kelly, eds., *Women, Men and the International Division of Labour* (Albany, New York, State University of New York Press, 1983), pp. 70-93.

[15] E. Paglaban, "Philippines: workers in the export industry," *Pacific Research,* vol. 9, Nos. 3, 4 (March-June 1978), pp. 2-31.

[16] A. Salaff and A. Wong, "Women's work: factory, family and social class in an industrializing order," in N. El-Sanabary, ed., *Women and Work in the Third World: The Impact of Industrialization and Global Economic Interdependence* (Berkeley, California, University of California Press, 1983), pp. 215-234.

The case studies have special interest because they illustrate the effects on labour of industrial processes which are sensitive to technological change and the vagaries of international economic fluctuations. They reveal the varying company responses to the recession of the early 1980s after the buoyant expectations created by the export growth of the late 1970s.

The following in-depth study of the Philippine garment and textile industries covers six companies which are among the largest in the two industries. Data were obtained from company reports, government sources, interviews with company managers, workers and officials, and secondary sources, such as periodicals and newspapers.

1. The textile industry: case 1

A group of Philippine-Chinese businessmen established this company in 1958. The company soon became one of the pillars of the Philippine textile industry, and by 1983, ranked first as a fully integrated textile mill. Thus, the company covers a wide range of production activities, employing a work force of more than 3,000. Women comprise 60 to 70 per cent of the total work force. Women outnumber men in the preparatory, spinning, and weaving departments. Men are assigned jobs in smaller departments such as finishing, warehouse, engineering and electrical.

Female workers clearly constitute the rank and file among company workers. They usually are confined to the bottom of the company's occupational hierarchy. Management positions are generally reserved for men. Women, however, may aspire to some slightly better paying assignments. The jobs open for women's advancement are those not requiring use of machines, such as instructor or trainer, inspector for jobs involving quality control, and typical office jobs such as secretary, clerk or time-keeper.

In the late 1970s, this firm was among the top 1,000 Philippine companies in terms of sales.[17] From 1978 to 1980, the company recorded profits, but from 1981 to 1983, losses were registered. The financial situation was considered a reflection of a deteriorating situation throughout the textile industry. A number of chronic problems plagued the industry – obsolete machinery, poor technical performance, high production costs and heavy indebtedness. These problems were aggravated by reduced domestic and export demand owing to the international economic recession.

Highly indebted and dependent on obsolete technology, the company started to impose its business burdens on its workers. For several years, it filed for exemptions from wage orders, none of which was approved.

In an effort to survive without substantially reducing its 3,000-person work force, the company began a number of cost-cutting measures. In 1984,

[17] Business Day, *Top 1000 Corporations, 1977-1982* (Manila).

when workers were entitled to a wage of pesos 41 per day, more than two thirds of the labour force were placed on extended apprenticeship at a wage of pesos 12 per day. Regular workers were paid at the reduced rate of pesos 23 per day, including allowances. Working facilities and health and safety devices were allowed to deteriorate. Despite reduced wages and obsolete machinery, workers continued to be strictly monitored and were required to meet production targets which the union thought were unrealistic.[18]

The workers responded to these conditions by going on strike in April 1984, led by the unofficial union. In July 1984 the picket lines were broken by police, causing injuries to about 50 striking workers.[19] The strike lasted for over one year. As a result, large numbers of young women workers were left without employment or income.

2. The textile industry: case 2

This company is a leader among the fully integrated textile mills in the Philippines, and in the late 1970s, it was the industry's largest consumer of cotton, which it used to produce mainly denim fabrics. It accounted for 75-85 per cent of domestic denim sales in 1983 and also exported denim products.

As in the first case, the company was established by prominent Philippine-Chinese businessmen. The company was transformed when it became lessee-operator of a textile mill foreclosed by the Development Bank of the Philippines in 1970.

The firm grew into one of the country's top 100 corporations by 1978, less than 10 years after starting business. It became the sales leader in the textile industry and recorded profits every year up to 1982.[20] The company employed over 4,000 workers in 1980.

The firm's industry leadership and success has been attributed to renovation and improvement of its technology with the help of local and foreign capital, foreign technicians and a World Bank loan via the Government to help buy new equipment. It was also one of the first to qualify for the Government's Textile Industry Modernization Programme. The management has been noted for its competence and for making the company a showcase in labour-management relations.[21]

This type of modernization drive might solve some of the structural problems faced by firms in the textile industry, but it is certainly not a cure-all. Declines in company sales and profits in the early 1980s were due more to

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[18] Interview with union officials, April 1985.

[19] "Stifling workers rights", *Katarungan* (July-August 1984).

[20] Business Day, *Top 1000 Corporations, 1983*

[21] "Fabric mills lay off workers", *Business Day*, 25 September 1980, p. 22.

international market conditions, which lay beyond company or industry control. Rising costs for energy and raw material inputs also affected productivity and financial performance. At the same time, modernization, including automation of machinery and production processes, obviously affects workers.

The company was not able to avoid the difficult times faced by the whole Philippine textile industry in the early 1980s. Thus, in 1980, over 4,000 of its workers were placed on rotation, and about 2,700 of them had their work days cut from seven to three.[22] By early 1981 the work force totalled about 3,900, of whom 1,215 were retrenched as the company operated only four days a week.[23]

Economic recession is however, not the only factor causing retrenchment of workers. The Government's Textile Industry Modernization Programme also affected workers. One programme requirement called for companies to reduce production costs by 40 per cent. To comply, textile mills were more than willing to cut costs for their most visible and controllable production input – labour.

Retrenchment was an inevitable part of the modernization programme. By 1983 the work force had been reduced to a total of 1,658. Workers have had a strong sense of job insecurity since 1980. The labour union could not avoid the inevitability of retrenchment; its efforts were limited to negotiating with management to allow retrenchment on a voluntary basis.[24]

3. The garment industry: case 3

In 1977 a group of Philippine and Chinese businessmen established this company as a garment exporting firm. It enjoyed quick success as manufacturer and exporter of trousers, slacks, jeans, shorts, overalls and coveralls and, by 1983, outranked the Philippine affiliate of the top international company, in terms of gross revenue and sales. From 1979 to 1983, the firm was ranked among the top 500 corporations in the Philippines.[25]

The company had international linkages with a sister company in Hong Kong, and other Hong Kong suppliers of raw materials. The finished products manufactured in the Philippines were exported to the major garment markets in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States under popular brand names. By the early 1980s, the company was among the top two or three Philippine garment exporters.[26]

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[22] Ibid., p. 32.

[23] Jose Nolasco, "Textile, garment firms in deliriums", *Financial Times Magazine*, 17 March 1981, p. 9.

[24] Interview with the Secretary, Progressive Worker's Unions.

[25] Business Day, *Top 1000 Corporations, 1983.*

[26] "Top twelve garment exporters in 1983," *Garment Journal*, 1984.

A significant part of the firm's success can be attributed to a work force reported to comprise 90 to 95 per cent young women, who work as sewers. Interestingly, the company originally hired male sewers with previous experience in small tailoring shops, who were thus familiar with making trousers and slacks. After a time, however, the male sewers were dismissed and the production line was comprised of female sewers exclusively. There is no direct evidence indicating the reasons for this management decision, nor its consequences.

Given the level of expertise of the firm's former male work force, and given the unexplained shift to women, skill and experience are not the only criteria for employment in the garment industry. As suggested in a previous section of this study, women are generally considered more obedient workers, more keen on meeting quotas, more "willing to toe the line," more willing to work overtime and on night shifts. In fact, interviewed workers reported that they must be willing and may have to sign a paper agreeing to work night shifts and overtime in order to be accepted for employment.

Like most companies, this one has an apprenticeship system which initially employs workers on a temporary basis for a minimum of six months. Such a trial/apprenticeship period is permitted by the Ministry of Labour and Employment. Nevertheless, most workers interviewed for this study said the apprenticeship was not necessary for the garment industry. They already had the skills since they had to pass a practical exam using a sewing machine, and adjusting to company operations takes only a few days. Most workers view the terms and conditions of the apprenticeship system as unreasonable.

From management's point of view, the apprenticeship period has several important advantages, quite aside from the training provided. First, new workers receive much lower pay. Second, they do not receive the full rights and privileges of regular employees as mandated by law or as provided by the collective bargaining agreement and third, they are not qualified to become union members.

Many of the women workers interviewed for this study reported they were not interested in promotion or career advancement, especially if promotion meant becoming a foreman or supervisor. One reason was that the pay of supervisors and foremen was not much higher than that of a regular worker. Women could earn more money by working overtime, double time or simply exceeding their quotas. A second reason related to the social conditions on the job. That is, the responsibilities and incentives for supervisory jobs required greater compliance with management and its interests, against the interests of the workers' colleagues in production. The workers viewed foremen and supervisors as enemies and any woman willing to take promotion to such positions risked ostracism from her former co-workers. At the same time, in such positions, she would be responsible for failure to meet quotas, failure to fill job orders on time and any declines in productivity. Several women said they were offered promotions to supervisory positions but had refused. One woman said, "If you are a

foreman... you can no longer be of real help to your co-workers.... In fact, you will be anti-worker."[27]

By 1984 the company had run into a number of economic difficulties. As a result, the Philippine Government's Garment and Textile Export Board had recommended that the company be dissolved. The official dissolution occurred in October 1984, but this act gave birth to two new companies which took over the resources and facilities. The two new companies actually had some of the same shareholders as the original company.[28] During the reorganization process, production workers were without work under a factory shutdown for several months. After the reorganization, four out of five production groups were reabsorbed, two groups going to each of the new companies. The fifth production group was dissolved; these workers, as well as all apprentices, were laid off.

Interviews with workers give a clearer understanding of what booms and slumps in the garment export industry mean for them. At the height of its prosperity the company operated 24 hours a day. Workers reported for 12-hour work days, either 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. or 6 p.m. to 6 a.m., subject to mandatory shift rotation every two weeks. During slump periods, due to declines in export demand, workers faced temporary shutdowns which could last from two weeks to two months. The effects of these fluctuations were disruptive to the workers' social and economic lives.

4. The garment industry: case 4

The company is owned by a well-established European transnational corporation which produces foundation garments (brassieres, girdles), lingerie and swimwear. Ownership and control of the Philippine subsidiary, established in 1974, rests with the firm's Hong Kong affiliate.

This case fits the pattern of so-called "quota refugees", especially from Hong Kong. In the 1970s, a number of garment industry transnational corporations were attracted to the Philippines because local Philippine manufacturers were unable to fill their quotas. Companies were attracted by the business potential in the Philippines, the fact of TNCs' competitive edge over domestic garment manufacturers and the availability of an educated, low-cost labour force. These factors were combined with the Philippine Government's policies and programmes of incentives to promote export-oriented foreign investment.

The company began production in 1975 with 600 employees. Based on strong export sales (70 per cent of output) and healthy profits, it quickly became an industry leader and entered the top 500 corporations[29] and, by 1980, employed 2,000 workers.

[27] Interviews with company workers, June 1985.

[28] Based on data filed at the Philippine Securities and Exchange Commission.

[29] Business Day, *Top 1000 Corporations, 1983* (Manila).

Compared with others, this company's workers are considered well-treated. The management is considered good, and workers are paid according to the law, with opportunities to increase their daily wages by exceeding their quotas. The working conditions are modern and convenient, the workplace is air-conditioned, lighting is adequate, and an eating and drinking facility is provided.

While work environment is important, other employment conditions are equally so. In interviews, union officials reported that management set rigid rules and imposed heavy demands on employees. As in other garment factories, declines in export demand and sales had resulted in lay-offs of the production workers. Despite the modern facilities and good management, workers went on strike in early 1985 to protest the lay-off of 450 workers.[30]

The company has a six-month apprenticeship or probationary period like other garment companies. Workers feel this period is not necessary and that it serves as an excuse for management to exploit them. Workers reported that apprentices received lower pay, were ineligible for union membership and were not entitled to mandatory benefits and privileges. The result was that apprentices had to work harder and be subjected to greater supervision and criticism from company management. They were compelled to accept such conditions in the absence of union membership to protect their interests. Several workers noted that management would readily lay off apprentices as they neared the end of their probationary period. Subsequently, workers were hired back and had to go through another six-month apprenticeship. The result was seen to be a saving for the company since the transition to regular worker at full pay and full benefits was delayed. One woman said, "Since 1981, very few manage to become regular workers at [the company]... Recently, out of one hundred recruits, only five made it."[31]

Young, single women are generally preferred, but there have been cases where married women or women in their 30s may be accepted. This generally happens during rush periods of high demand. Significantly, however, the company has been known to place special demands on married workers as conditions for employment. According to one worker interviewed at the factory:

> "Those who are married are required to sign an agreement that they would not get themselves pregnant while they are still on probation for six months. They also do not accept women who have children below two years old. As viewed by the management, that usually leads to frequent absences – especially when the child is sick or when no one else can be relied upon to baby-sit. They say your productivity is affected if you have very young children."[32]

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[30] Interview with union official, June 1985.

[31] Interview with worker, June 1985.

[32] Interview with worker, June 1985.

5. The garment industry: case 5

Women workers' struggle to receive fair treatment and the full employment benefits provided under Philippine law has meant protracted struggle with garment company management in some cases. A case in point is this company, where the workers had to fight for two years to gain the rights and benefits to which they were entitled, including recognition of their legally organized union. Located in Metro Manila, the company is a sister corporation of a Hong Kong-based corporation. Operations began in January 1977, with Philippine and British nationals as majority stockholders.

The company employed 1,200 workers in 1985. The majority of workers hired in the production department were women, some coming from the provinces. Women workers did the main production work: cutting, sewing, revising and packing of the undergarments. Only a few men were employed to do heavier work, such as repairing machines, loading and unloading cargo.

The year 1978 marked the beginning of the company's labour troubles, which started in the sewing department. Eighteen workers were dismissed for low production and insubordination. Aside from this, other grievances surfaced, including non-payment of claims for overtime pay. Free bus service was also withdrawn upon the implementation of the Presidential Decree on increase of workers' living allowance. This ran counter to the Philippine Labour Code, which categorically forbids withdrawal of benefits or privileges previously enjoyed.

As of September 1979, the workers' basic pay was pesos 13.00 per day with an extra pesos 6.75 as an emergency cost of living allowance. For a year of service, workers were given five days emergency leave, as provided by law, without vacation benefits.

As a result of what they considered the unjust demands and conditions set by management, the workers felt the need to organize themselves. Small groups were formed for signing members into the union. Management responded to this action by getting other workers to sign papers to form a company union run by management, which it claimed to be the legitimate labour union.

Notwithstanding this management move, the workers' group sent a delegation of 30 representatives to the Ministry of Labour to petition for election certification, which was granted in August 1979. In December 1979, a certification election was held which resulted in overwhelming votes for the workers' union.

The first problem faced by the workers' union was enforced overtime work which came into effect in April 1980. Despite the union's protests, long rotation hours and temporary lay-offs were introduced. Further protests by the union brought suspension of work for members of the delegation who complained

to the Personnel Department. To reinforce their protest of this management action, the union filed a notice of strike on May 29, 1980. This action resulted in an increase of pesos 2.00 per day for the living allowance, a benefit which had previously been denied.

During the months following the workers' notice of strike, management made various attempts to intimidate workers, including harassment of the union leadership and illegal dismissal of seven workers. Unable to endure these actions, the workers staged a three-day strike in September 1980. At first, management agreed to negotiate through the collective bargaining agreement and reinstate the seven workers within a month. However, the workers' victory was short-lived, as management did not honour the agreement made. On the contrary, the company laid off three other workers and broke off the collective bargaining agreement negotiations.

A second strike was staged in October 1980. This time management used violence to threaten the workers. The workers had formed an elbow-to-elbow picket. The Company hired men to drive a car through the picket line to break it, and firehoses were used. In co-operation with the police, management also called in the anti-riot squad to disperse the workers. Management also tried unsuccessfully to arrest the union leaders, especially its president.

The management disregarded all the agreements made and continued to lay off more workers; this time under the guise of a charge of theft to frame innocent workers. On October 24, 1980, the workers protested with a work stoppage and sent a delegation to lodge a complaint with the Personnel Department. Instead of settling the case, management laid off 164 workers, including the union's leaders.

A third strike followed, the longest and reportedly the best-organized in Philippine labour history, lasting for 22 days. Management tried various means to break the strike by intimidating new workers and even bribing others with promises of higher pay. Ultimately, the workers' sacrifices paid off. A collective bargaining agreement was concluded and the agreements that had earlier been reached were placed in full operation.

6. The garment industry: case 6

The Bataan Export Processing Zone was established by the Philippine Government in 1969 as part of a port development scheme. The Zone developed very little and played only a small role in employment and exports until 1972. Activity increased in 1972, partly owing to Philippine Government incentives; the opening up of export markets, especially in the United States; and government policy to allow domestic firms, in addition to foreign firms, to set up operations in the Zone. By 1978, domestic firms' investment in the Zone accounted for 61 per cent of total investment. Among 55 firms operating in the Zone in 1982, 18 were wholly foreign-owned, 24 were joint ventures between

Philippine and foreign investors and the rest were local companies.[33] Rough estimates from the early 1980s suggest that the Zone accounted for about 20 per cent of the total value of Philippine exports.

The Zone's exports came to be dominated by garment firms, which were responsible for 40 per cent of Zone exports in 1978.[34] More significantly, the garment industry became the major Zone employer. Statistics from 1980 indicate that a total of about 20,000 people were employed in the Zone. About 8,400 (42 per cent) worked in garment factories.[35] When all Zone industries are included, about 70 per cent of the workers were women and about 88 per cent of this group were young women under 29 years old.[36]

One advantage usually attributed to the Zone is the docile, co-operative work force of young women who can be more readily controlled inside the Zone (fenced in and guarded) under government authority. Nevertheless, this company, located in the Zone, shows how women workers can organize to prevent their employment rights from being abused.

The factory was established in the Zone in the early 1970s, employing mostly women as daily wage earners. The work force put in 16 hours a day, 7 days a week, without Sundays off or a rest day. The overtime wage was computed on the basis of the basic wage, exclusive of living allowance. This overtime wage was less than the wage for the first eight hours, which included living allowance (when it was given).

Workers who got sick, collapsed on the job, or needed time off for pregnancy reasons were permitted a leave of absence without pay. The workers not only received less than the daily minimum wage decreed by the Labour Law, but they were required to clean the whole factory, including the toilets, after working hours without additional compensation. Workers could be suspended or dismissed if they protested or demanded their legitimate rights and benefits.

Seven years of such labour practices finally pushed the workers in 1980 to form a union to act as their exclusive bargaining agent with management. As soon as the union registered itself with the Ministry of Labour, management cracked down on the workers. Management refused to recognize the union and forced workers to sign a separate collective bargaining agreement before the union could ratify it.

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[33] Philippine Export Processing Zone Authority, *Annual Report 1982.*

[34] Jean Currie, *Investment: The Growing Role of Export Processing Zones* (London, Economist Intelligence Unit, 1979).

[35] H.L. Ngo, *Policies to Attract Export-oriented Industries: The Role of EPZs in the Philippines* (Freiburg: Institute for Development Policy, 1982), p. 61.

[36] Judy S. Castro, *The Bataan Export Processing Zone* (Bangkok: ILO-ARTEP, 1982).

The workers asked for four hours off on a Sunday to hold a general membership meeting, but management demanded overtime work on that day. They offered to work overtime after the meeting, but management rejected their proposal and locked them out instead. Despite this management opposition, the meeting was attended by all the workers. The next day, fifty workers known to be union leaders were not allowed to return to work. The union then filed a complaint with the Ministry of Labour in protest against this unjust treatment. The Ministry of Labour promised to investigate and set a date for the hearing. However, management ignored the notice given and continued its coercive practices.

The workers subsequently reported back to work, but they were required to obey their supervisors' demands and comply with overtime schedules or else be dismissed. In December 1980, they asked for payment of their salaries, which had repeatedly been delayed for fifteen to thirty days at a time.

During one week, the women worked 108 hours, divided into three shifts of 36 hours. This meant starting work at 6 a.m. on Monday and working straight through until 6 p.m. of Tuesday. The next 36-hour shift started at 6 a.m. on Wednesday until 6 p.m. Thursday. The final phase was from 6 a.m. Friday to 6 p.m. Saturday. Few rest periods were provided during the course of each shift. During this enforced overtime, the exits and windows were all closed. Workers were not allowed to punch in their time cards. Instead, they were asked to sign on a piece of paper that served as management's confidential record.

After this incident, 50 workers were told to leave the factory. They went to collect their pay but were given a "value" coupon worth pesos 100.00 of goods on credit. Forty-nine of these workers were local union officers and members. In the meantime, the factory hired 50 new apprentices, presumably to replace the employees who had been dismissed. In the absence of any alternative means of representing their grievance against these actions, the workers gave notice of strike. Since they had no strike funds and had been unable to save from their meagre earnings, they adopted the work slow-down method, producing only 2,000 garments per day instead of the 9,000 required by management.

On February 8, 1981, the workers' long-suffering patience seemed partially rewarded. The labour court ordered management to reinstate the 49 workers who had been laid off in December 1980. The court order stated that they should be allowed back to work with full wages and with allowances from the time they had been laid off up to the time of actual reinstatement.

Encouraged by such support from the Ministry of Labour, the workers decided to hold a general membership meeting to discuss their problems and formulate further plans. Management became aware of the workers' intention and reacted by imposing overtime work on the day of the meeting. In spite of this, the workers went ahead with the meeting. The next day, however, seven

workers from the finishing department were dismissed for refusing to work overtime. The workers responded by filing a complaint with the Ministry of Labour for illegal dismissal. A week later, management was ordered to rehire the seven workers.

The women workers were subsequently successful in gaining their legitimate rights and benefits when the Government conscientiously intervened in employee-management disputes. This, of course, did not prevent management from trying to use whatever means were available to preserve its interests. In 1981, for example, the management hired a group of women belonging to a religious sect which forbids its followers to join unions. Given the difficulties of everyday life in a job where wages are low and working and living conditions are hardly adequate, many women workers at this factory have to organize and struggle, others continue to accept and acquiesce. The competition for jobs at Zone garment firms, despite such conditions, remains intense.

E. Summary

The preceding case studies, based largely on interviews with workers, provide a picture of the problems young women workers face in the Philippine garment and textile industries. If there is one common theme running through all the cases, it is the continuous effort that women workers have had to make in order to gain their lawful rights and benefits. Chief among these is the right to organize into unions. The issue of unionization has generated some of the more intractable disputes between employers and women employees at the factories studied in this report.

In several cases, employers sought ways to circumvent the law with the intention of getting rid of the union. Nor was it always easy for women workers to get the full support of relevant government agencies to enforce the laws on workers' rights and benefits. Once the government agencies stepped in decisively, the workers usually prevailed and working conditions improved, particularly labour-management relations.

In other respects, the Government's policies and laws could be adjusted to conform more realistically with actual working conditions and to ensure against abuses. The most pertinent example is the requirement that workers go through a six-month apprenticeship. Women workers in the garment industry see this requirement as inappropriate and unreasonable. Moreover, the requirement leads to abuses, lack of job security and exploitation of new workers. Another important example is discrimination concerning marital status, child-bearing and child-rearing, which could be resolved if the Government exercised its full enforcement powers to back up laws concerning benefits for married women or women who become pregnant.

Finally, some of the difficulties that Philippine women workers encounter in the garment and textile industries may be beyond government intervention or the workers' or company management's capability to resolve. The difficulties

relate to these industries' high dependence on foreign demand for their manufactured products. The case studies give some indication of the unpredictable, fast-changing situation in world markets. The consequences for young women workers are predictable – wage reductions, lay-offs, retrenchments and lack of any sense of job security. Competition for existing jobs in such an environment becomes intense, even more so as the Philippine companies, in turn, must compete against low-wage, equally efficient companies in other countries.

Their low education levels and lack of marketable skills make the women working in the garment and textiles industries vulnerable and insecure. The Government has established a number of education and training programmes which have benefited women. It might be worth considering more programmes targeted at women industrial workers to give them additional marketable skills, making laid-off and retrenched women less dependent on the unpredictable demand for garment or textile workers. Moreover, training or education in other skills can help eliminate stereotypes about women having a natural advantage for sewing and being passive, compliant and docile.

In conclusion, the case studies of women workers in the Philippine garment and textile industries suggest that government strategies for women in industrialization may need a dual emphasis. That is, policies and programmes, laws and regulations should serve two functions: first, protection against exploitation, and second, promotion of opportunities and equal treatment. It has been observed that the Government has, over the years, shifted emphasis from the first function to the second. The experiences and problems of young women workers in the Philippine manufacturing sector suggest that both functions should be served simultaneously.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study began by addressing itself to a number of questions about the role that women play in the industrialization process in rapidly developing economies of the ESCAP region. It was observed that women's role in industrialization in these economies is closely associated with the international division of labour. According to this process, women in the economies studied tend to be hired predominantly in the textile and garment industries, which are relatively labour-intensive. It is possible to compare their working and living conditions with those of male workers as a first step to coming to an analytical understanding of how and why they are treated less favourably than men. The in-depth case studies of the textile and garment industries in two countries, Thailand and the Philippines, reveal the micro-dimensions of the problem and the steps that women themselves take at their workplace to improve their conditions, to secure their rightful employment benefits and utilize legal protection to achieve equitable and fair treatment.

Over the last 20 years, industrialization has proceeded rapidly, though unevenly, in the developing economies of the region. In the rapidly industrializ-

ing economies the industrialization process has taken two forms. The first form was the result of government policies in the 1960s and 1970s which emphasized import-substitution. The industries that were created were relatively capital-intensive, required foreign investment and technology and employed mostly men. The second form, export-oriented industrialization, began in the 1970s and is more labour-intensive. The data presented in this study indicate that women's employment has been concentrated in the more labour-intensive and low-wage industries and that, in association with this fact, the labour force participation rate of women has risen much faster than that of men during the export-oriented phase of industrialization. In aggregate terms, by 1980, women formed between one third and one half of the manufacturing labour force in the rapidly industrializing economies of the region. Men's industrial employment was more evenly distributed throughout all industries, but women's employment in manufacturing was concentrated in garments, textiles and electronics.

The garment and textile industries were found to be among the main export-earning industries in the manufacturing sector for these economies. The large-scale employment of women in the garment and textile industries represents a twofold division of labour. First, there is an international division of labour where labour-intensive and low-wage industries find it efficient and profitable to locate in developing economies. Within this is a second, sexual division of labour where women form the major part, over two thirds, of the work force. This pattern has been common in all rapidly industrializing economies of the ESCAP region.

The second and third parts of the study examined this phenomenon in greater depth by focusing on case studies in Thailand and the Philippines. It was noted that industrialization in Thailand has been carried out at the expense of the rural sector, which has been the source of inexpensive industrial labour comprising mostly young women with low levels of education and few marketable skills. The textile industry in Thailand and the Philippines employs women predominantly. According to the division of labour based on gender that occurs in the factories women are mostly machine operators occupying lower job ranks than men. It is commonly believed that women are employed in the textile and garment industries because they have greater patience and nimbler fingers, can be paid lower wages and are more docile and controllable. The case studies of Thailand and the Philippines show this to be an oversimplified stereotype. It is questionable whether women are more suited for jobs such as sewing and attending textile machines. However, both management and workers (including female workers) are predisposed to believe this is so. Women are, therefore, explicitly assigned to such positions.

In Thailand, the wage levels of men and women are similar. The same, however, cannot be said for the working conditions of men and women. On the whole, women are assigned more onerous tasks, are subjected to a harsher working environment and have a higher rate of industrial accidents. Docility is not a major factor accounting for the employment of women in either Thailand or the Philippines, although some managers believe that women workers are

more docile. However, neither attitudinal nor behavioural data support this belief. It was found that women workers tend to be more unionized and more willing to organize strikes and take other forms of industrial action. Significantly, in the case of Thailand, though most of the rank and file support is provided by women, male workers still dominate the union committees.

The Thai and Philippine case studies shed light on some of the questions raised earlier. In the process, they have also raised new questions for consideration. Clearly, industrialization in Thailand and the Philippines has produced uneven benefits for and exacted unequal sacrifices from different sectors of the population. From the perspective of gender, it is appropriate to ask whether women workers have borne the costs while the men have enjoyed the gains. Evidence from this study supports the view that the sexual division of labour in society has worked against women. Women have been concentrated in occupations which are more labour-intensive, less well-paid and lacking in security or mobility. Nevertheless, contrary to the belief that women are docile and submissive, more women than men have taken action to claim their rights and benefits as workers. Their contributions not only to the economy, but also to the process of social change, cannot be underestimated.

Several overall policy conclusions and observations emerge on the basis of the Thai and Philippine case studies. First, it appears that development programmes have not effectively addressed women's contribution as industrial workers. Plans, policies and programmes have aimed at economic growth and industrial development, often with the apparent assumption that social development and benefits to women workers follow automatically, Second, the legal framework that has been devised to protect women's rights, conditions of work and employment benefits needs strengthening. In both Thailand and the Philippines, this means that more appropriate, fairer laws are needed covering women working in manufacturing. Laws can be improved with respect to job security, the right to unionize, the apprenticeship system and the minimum wage. Laws must not only be improved, the Government must strengthen its enforcement capabilities. As the case studies from the Philippines show, companies and management will conform to the law and regulations only when the Government demonstrates its enforcement capability decisively.

Finally, in the late 1980s and 1990s, Governments in the rapidly industrializing economies of the ESCAP region may have to adjust away from the low-wage, labour-intensive, export-oriented industries in which women workers predominate. Unpredictable world economic conditions, protectionism in developed country markets and increasing competition among Asian and Pacific producers/exporters make these industries, and thus women's jobs, more vulnerable. Women already employed in garment or textile production and young women entering the job market cannot be sure about job availability or job security. If Governments are genuinely interested in protecting women as well as promoting opportunities for them, then social policies and job-related programmes will be needed to prepare women workers for the new skills and jobs of the future.

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