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08978



Distr.
LIMITED

ID/WG.283/34*
26 February 1979

ENGLISH

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

Preparatory Meeting on the Role of Women in
Industrialisation in Developing Countries

Vienna, Austria, 6 - 10 November 1978

WOMEN IN INDUSTRY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

An ILO Research Note

prepared by

the Office for Women Workers' Questions, ILO

* ILO/W.6/1978

Id. 79-1230

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WOMEN IN INDUSTRY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

PART A: THE SIZE OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

This note tries to present the problematique. It is based on fragmentary evidence available from more recent studies and reports of the UN system and selected references from current development literature. Its aim is to pose a few basic questions that may be relevant for policy action at the national level and to explore possibilities of collaboration between the ILO and UNIDO. The questions are:

- What type of economic structure is most desirable to improve the position and welfare of women in developing countries?
- In what way can women make an impact on the processes of production to further economic development?
- In the history and patterns of industrialisation in the world of work, how did the inequalities between men and women emerge?
- In any occupational hierarchy, why do jobs continue to be labelled "male" and "female"; "traditional" and "non-traditional"; "primary" and "secondary"?
- What are the main reasons for continued divergence in work opportunities and income between men and women?
- Why have the main benefits of scientific and technological advance bypassed women?
- What are the main issues that should be placed before the planner and policy maker?
- What role can the ILO and UNIDO (as a part of the UN system) play in clarifying these issues?

In posing these questions, several important issues - the choice of industry or choice techniques in an economy or women in management or industrial relations system or the impact of education structures on the labour market, have been excluded from consideration for lack of space. However, it would not be inaccurate to suggest that there is a vast area of darkness in the present state of knowledge on all these issues. The obscurity becomes even denser when "women", "industry" and "developing countries" - the three general descriptors, are fed into computers: who frequently respond with a two-word magic formula - "insufficient data". Perhaps this is a good starting point for the note.

I. Women in developing countries

1. Some estimates

According to the ILO Bureau of Statistics and Special Studies,¹ during the last quarter of a century the "active" female population of the world more than doubled, i.e. from 251 million in 1950 to 576 million in 1975. By the year 2000, there will be 800 million "women workers" in the labour force. More than half of this increase would have taken place in Asia.

¹ ILO, Labour Force Estimates and Projections, 1950-2000, Second Edition, 1977, and ILO, Womanpower, Geneva, 1975.

² The annual average growth rate of the female labour force in Asia was 2.5 per cent, 3.2 per cent in Latin America and 1.9 per cent in Africa. ILO, Women's participation: Economic activity of Asian countries and African countries, (R. Ducommun), Office for Women Workers, May and September 1978.

These estimates are illustrative and give only orders of magnitude as the definitions of "activity rates" and "labour force" need to be applied with caution as they leave out a large chunk of work done by women, the most outstanding example of which is the category defined as "unpaid family labour", most of whom are female and are counted in most censuses with varying criteria. To this category must be added a range of tasks performed by women in an agricultural setting where the distinction between farm work and house work gets blurred. There is thus urgent need to re-examine, reanalyse and recalculate women's work on the basis of new notions. The simple reason for the need to undertake this exercise is that the current concepts of "employment" and "underemployment" do not fit into the economic and social reality of developing countries and their present development plans mainly oriented towards rapid industrialisation and high rates of economic growth. Presently, what stands out in the landscape of patterns of industrialisation¹ are uncharted contours and undulating hills across different geographical regions and economic and social systems. From this haze, however, a bold outline emerges: it shows that in the modern wage sector of many developing countries with or without a large public sector, that in the organised and non-organised sectors, that in manufacturing or non-manufacturing activities - all over Asia, Africa and Latin America - women workers are squeezed into a narrow range of low-income, low-skilled and low-productivity jobs. More importantly, in any economic crisis,² man-made or natural - women are the first to be "sased out" of the labour market.³ Almost everywhere, they seem to work longer hours in unsafe and hazardous conditions of work; almost everywhere more women have lower incomes, inadequate nutrition and lack the most elementary social and health facilities and amenities for child care.

Thus, women are the poorest among the poor (no matter how poverty lines are drawn); the most economically vulnerable (no matter what the nature of the crisis) and are almost always to be found lowest in the occupational ladder of most economies and the last in line as the recipients of benefits derived from modernisation and industrialisation. And all this - even when statistical adjustments have been made and variations between continents, regions and sub-regions are taken into account.

2. Redefining work³

If the official definition of "labour force" were to be employed with the existing economic and social indicators, a world profile of women reveals one-half of the world population and one-third of the official labour force. This means that by the end of the century, there will be a "modest increase" in the economic role of women in the world and only a minority of women will be integrated in economic activities. The striking feature of the existing broad classification is that women work longer hours in both types of activities and that some are defined as "economic", or "marketable" or "monetised", while others are not. But, on the other hand, if a total range of women's "actual activities" were to be taken into account, a different picture could be constructed. For example, using simplified assumptions,⁴ the table below presents the world distribution of work-hours⁵ by sex and by market and non-market activities.

¹ For analysis and classification, see K.B. Griffin and J.L. Enos, "Policies for Industrialisation" in Underdevelopment and Development (ed. H. Bernstein), Selected Readings, Penguin Books, 1976.

² For details on industrialised countries, see ILO, The Impact of the Recent Economic Slowdown on the Employment Opportunities of Women (Diane Werneke), Working Paper under the World Employment Programme Research Series, Geneva, 1977, and Women at Work, No. 1/1978.

³ This section is taken from ILO, "Women, Technology and the Development Process", a paper presented to the African Regional Meeting in Cairo, UNCSTD, 24-29 July 1976.

⁴ The assumptions are: (i) labour force: 1,050 million males and 550 million females; (ii) of which 420 million females of working age actually work, but their activities are not in the market and therefore not included in the labour force; (iii) male labour force work 50 hours per week of which 5 are non-market activities; and (iv) female labour force work 70 hours a week of which 25 are in non-market activities; and women not in the market also work for the same number of hours (70).

⁵ The current terminology in social sciences related to work reflects different concepts of reality. For this reason, here the expression "work-hour" rather than man-hour is employed.

Table 1: World distribution of work-hours by sex and coverage in the labour force (percentage distribution)

	Market	Non-market	Total
Included in labour force			
Male	66	10	41
Female	34	28	59
Not included in labour force			
Male	-	-	-
Female	-	62	24
Total	100	100	100

Source: The estimates give only order of magnitudes for illustrative purposes, ILO, Womanpower (Geneva, 1975).

Thus, it would appear that the first major problem is to redefine the parameters of "work" and what constitutes "market" and "non-market" activity. In describing women's contribution to economy, new meanings need to be given to the notions of "labour", "paid jobs", the concept of "employment" and "productivity" and ideas about "intensity" and "efficiency".

II. The assembly line

As in the labour markets of industrialised countries, so in the "modern wage sector" of the developing countries, the hierarchical distinction based on sex between "male" and "female" tasks continues to operate. However, occupational segregation appears to be caused not just by the labour market but also by the operation of tangible and intangible discrimination at all stages of their entry and exit points - above all the hierarchy - is maintained by the social infrastructure. It also appears to be strengthened by laws prohibiting employment of women in certain occupations.¹ The remarkable feature of the existing unequal division of labour is that irrespective of the economic "model" or the mode of production or the pattern of industrialisation or the stage of development "women perform the least qualified jobs which require supervision while nearly all more qualified jobs are filled by men".

¹ Throughout the world there is a wide variety of occupations which are closed to women on the grounds that these jobs are unhealthy, dangerous, arduous or immoral - and they range from operating circular saws and hoisting equipment to working in bars or gambling rooms; from all kinds of jobs underground and work on scaffolding over 10 m high to transporting or tending cattle and treating rabbit skins for fur.

The history of the last two centuries presents a wide variety of choice in the study of these models. For illustrative purposes, one may select the late nineteenth and early twentieth century British¹ or the Japanese² model after the Meiji Era or the United States³ after the Civil War, occupational segregation between men and women was an integral part of the economy and social organisation. Scientists and technologists; architects and dentists; engineers and physicians are traditionally male-dominated and represent in all countries the peak of the educational ladder. Obviously, the setting in socialist countries is very different, for example, the percentage of women scientists, physicians and engineers is very high in the USSR and Czechoslovakia. The tradition of separation of roles between men and women seems to have been preserved throughout the twentieth century and is perpetrated in the recent experiences⁴ of industrialisation, e.g. in Mexico and Guatemala, in India and Bangladesh, in Morocco and Nigeria.

But this rapid survey of models shows that lines of division between men and women in any occupational hierarchy are constantly shifting, as at various times in nineteenth century teaching, selling in retail stores and office work were each thought to be totally unsuitable for women. "Unsuitability" has been again argued as a reason for not hiring women in similar occupations in some developing countries recently. This "variability of the boundaries" between men's jobs and women's jobs is not a static concept across 200 years of industrialisation in different countries and different periods. But the phenomenon needs to be explained historically, for its consequences on women's work, the wages they receive and the "place" they occupy in society are crucial for understanding the processes of development.

1. Women's work

In the modern sector of many developing countries - a wide spectrum - the profile of a woman "wage and salary earner", reflects some distinguishing features. If the processes of industrialisation and its impact were to be explained by one single factor, that of technological change, it may be usefully noted that its influence⁵ on women's jobs over a period has been profound. Studies and reports written a decade ago and those published recently seem to point to an interesting dichotomy. While technological progress over the years has widened women's employment opportunities in the modern sector, it has simultaneously had the effect of pushing them into less mechanised, less skilled and low-wage jobs. This was recognised by the ILO Panel of Consultants on the Problem of Women Workers as early as 1959. The Panel underlined the positive features of technological developments which reduced the physical effort in a great many jobs, but also noted that wherever employment opportunities for all workers were in short supply, women workers were more likely to suffer the adverse consequences in the transitional period (italics added).

¹ I. Pinchbeck, Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution (1750-1850), London, 1969.

² S.J. Pharr, "Japan: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives" in J.B. Geile and A.C. Smock (Eds.), Women: Roles and Status in Eight Countries, New York, 1977, pp. 227-231.

³ B.M. Westheimer, We were there: the story of working women in America, New York, 1972.

⁴ Mary Elmeudorf, "Mexico: the many worlds of women", in Role and Status in Eight Countries, op. cit., pp. 145-152. N.S. Chinchilla, "Industrialisation, Monopoly, Capitalism and Women's Work in Guatemala" in Women and National Development: the Complexities of Change, the Wellesley Editorial Committee, 1977, pp. 54-56. Ester Boserup, "Women in the labour market", in Devaki Jain (Ed.) Indian Women, New Delhi, 1975. "In India and other countries of old civilisation, where specialised crafts were developed already in ancient times, it is considered normal and natural that independent business and supervision of labour is the preserve of men. But not so in countries which never developed specialised groups of craftsmen and traders and passed on directly from the stage of family production to subsistence to the purchase of imported products from foreign tradesmen", p. 108. Fatima Mernissi, "The Moslem world: women excluded from development" in Women and World Development (Eds. Irene Tinker and Michèle Bo Bransen), pp. 38-39.

⁵ This part of the note is based on ILO, "Women, Technology and the Development Process", op. cit.

A decade later, in 1967,¹ when at the request of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the ILO undertook a preliminary survey to analyse the impact of scientific and technological progress on the employment and conditions of work of women in selected industries, the conclusions were again similar. The analysis of various industries such as metal trades, textiles, clothing, leather and footwear, food and drink and printing and allied trades indicated that there is a consistent pattern in the employment of women. A common thread runs through each of the industries and that concerned the introduction of new machinery or equipment. It tended to displace women workers from previously held jobs to low productivity and low wage occupations. To take an example from the textile industry which is a very large employer of women in many countries, an ILO report found that when a new machine is installed, the tendency on the whole was to "substitute male workers for women workers and to keep women workers on the older and non-automatic machinery".²

More recent investigation confirms this view.³ It appears that even in newer industries such as electronics, also a large employer of women in several countries including Southern California, Norway and Singapore, the dynamics of technical change continually displace women into low-skill occupations. For example, in South Korea, the increase in unskilled female labour has been attributed to the mechanisation of production.

Based on comparative analysis of many countries on the employment of women in postal and telecommunication services, an ILO report states that rationalisation measures made possible by the introduction of new technical equipment often entail the abolition of temporary or part-time posts. Automation in telecommunications does away with operators' jobs; computers eliminate much clerical or book-keeping work. "Such posts are frequently occupied by women, it is the female staff who are the most affected by the adoption of new techniques ..."⁴

2. Women's wages

The principle of equal pay itself has been pursued for many years; adopted in some constitutions and incorporated in national legislation in many countries. Since 1951 over 90 countries have ratified the ILO Convention on Equality of Remuneration (No. 100). But the qualifying clauses in national legislation which make it a precondition that work be of "equal value", or "similar" has raised a host of problems of interpretation and application.

¹ ECOSOC, Commission on the Status of Women, Economic Rights and Opportunities for Women, report prepared by the ILO, 1 December 1967 (E/CN.6/500).

² The ILO studies generally refer to industrialised countries and the research on the impact of technological change in developing countries still needs to be analysed.

³ ILO Report, op. cit. pp. 10 and 13; and ILO, The Effects of Structural and Technological Changes on Industry, Geneva, 1968, General Report and Training Requirements in the Textile Industry in the Light of Changes in the Occupational Structure, Tenth Session, Geneva, 1978. Effects of Technological Changes on Conditions of Work and Employment in Postal and Telecommunication Services, Joint Meeting on Conditions of Work and Employment in Postal and Telecommunication Services, Geneva, 1977.

⁴ ILO, Report on Employment in Postal and Telecommunications Services, op. cit., p. 25. Also report by the US Department of Labor suggests that with the over-all expansion of computerisation one large group of women clerical workers, telephone operators had been greatly affected by the installation of direct dialling ... in factories mechanisation has caused virtual elimination of some of the unskilled manual jobs performed by women. US, Women's Bureau, Wage and Labor Standards Administration, Automation and Women Workers, Washington, 1970.

⁵ Also see other related ILO Conventions and Recommendations, such as Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) (No. 111) of 1958 and Human Resources Development Recommendation (No. 150) of 1975.

⁶ For example, see the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 (No. 25), India and the Employment (Equal Pay for Men and Women) Act, No. 34 of 1975, Jamaica.

Apart from these legal complexities, the current economic analyses do not show the direct linkage between inequitable occupational distribution and pay differentials between men and women. What is evident, however, is that women workers in almost all jobs in traditional and modern sectors (intra-industry or intra-enterprise) are linked to low wages in the production process. The causes for inequality in wages seem to spill over from the economic sphere to institutional structures and social policies.¹ Unequal wages have been mainly reported in the organised sector, but not much is known about the informal sector where a large number of women work on a monetised basis. Essentially, the lesson to be learned from a survey of existing "pay differentials" is that as yet adequate institutions have not been established which would allow women access to the full value of their labour.²

The International Labour Office inquiry of October 1976, the results of which have been published,³ throws some light on the national situation in respect of six occupations,⁴ in more than 50 countries. The information available as to the gap between women's and men's earnings in these six occupations, although not always comparable,⁵ shows that equal remuneration has not become a reality in many countries, as may be seen from the examples given in the table below.

¹ See P.D. Blau and Carol L. Jusenius, "Economist Approaches to Sex Segregation in the Labour Market: An Appraisal" in Women and the Workplace: the Implications of Occupational Segregation (ed. M. Blaxall and W. Reagan), the University of Chicago Press, 1976, pp. 181-199.

² UNRISD, Monitoring Changes in the Conditions of Women: A Critical Review of Possible Approaches (U. van Buchwald and Ingrid Palmer), Geneva, 1978. Restricted.

³ For details, see ILO Bulletin of Labour Statistics, 2nd Quarter 1977, pp. 111-145. Also ILO, Women at Work, No. 3/1977.

⁴ These occupations are as follows: weavers, sewing-machine operators, machine-sewing bookbinders, laboratory assistants, sales persons and accounting machine operators. They are the only occupations for which the ILO October inquiry compiled information on earnings by sex.

⁵ The comparability of the data is limited by the fact that the information is not compiled everywhere using identical definitions and methods and that it may be affected by differences in the breakdown by age, length of service or size of establishment.

Table 2: Disparity between men's and women's earnings in selected occupations (October 1976)¹

Type of remuneration, occupation and country	Currency unit	Earnings		Disparity %
		Males	Females	
HOURLY WAGES				
Spinners (textile manufacture)				
Czechoslovakia	Korunas	12.60	11.10	11.9
Germany (Fed. Rep. of)	Mark	10.12	8.72	13.8
Morocco	Dirhams	1.74	1.50	13.8
Singapore ²	Dollars	0.98	0.76	22.4
Venezuela	Bolivares	26.12	19.00	27.3
Sewing-machine operators ³				
Algeria	Dinars	3.89	3.77	3.1
New Zealand	Cents	223.40	199.80	10.6
Pakistan	Rupees	3.25	3.00	7.7
Portugal	Escudos	26.48	19.30	27.1
Switzerland	Francs	9.33	8.50	8.9
Machine-sewing bookbinders				
Australia (Sydney)	Cents	334.75	284.00	15.2
Canada (Montreal)	Dollars	6.85	4.17	39.1
Hong Kong	Dollars	3.42	2.98	12.9
Hungary	Forints	19.41	15.25	21.4
Sweden (Stockholm)	Kroner	27.92	26.22	6.1
MONTHLY SALARIES				
Laboratory assistants ⁴				
Norway ⁵	Kroner	5 602	4 701	16.1
Peru (Lima)	Soles	9 400	8 800	6.4
Venezuela	Bolivares	1 078	910	15.6
Sales persons (retail grocery)				
Honduras	Lempiras	268.75	189.71	29.4
Ireland (Dublin)	Pounds	204.84	166.92	18.5
Mali	Francs	32 480	29 280	9.9
Mauritius ⁶	Rupees	525	415	31.0
Accounting machine operators (banks)				
Finland	Markkas	2 369	2 143	9.9
Haiti	Gourdes	1 000	750	25.0
Malaysia (Sarawak)	Ringgits	489.51	409.42	16.4
New Zealand	Dollars	428.26	417.95	2.4

1 Percentage by which women's earnings are lower than men's.

2 June 1976.

3 Employed in the manufacture of men's cotton shirts.

4 Working in the manufacture of chemicals.

5 September 1976.

6 Statutory minimum after five years' service.

Source: "Results of the ILO 1976 October Inquiry", Bulletin of Labour Statistics, Geneva, 2nd Quarter 1977.

Six occupations out of hundreds - that is not much of a basis on which to draw conclusions, but these are the only ones for which data are available. Another selection might give a different picture. Much progress still needs to be made to analyse the gap between the remuneration of women and of men for work of equal value.

3. Women's workplace

It has often been suggested that the world of work, particularly its institutions, are mainly geared towards male jobs and that participation of women in all sectors of the economy has not yet brought about the desired changes necessary to support such a large number of women workers. Much of the discussion on this has been recently devoted to reconcile the irreconcilable - to find ways to enable women "to fulfil" their responsibilities at home and at work. The diversity and complexity of the subject is immense and yet the premises on which current analysis is based emanates from social mythology and not economic facts. Should women go out to work and contribute to the material well-being of the family and to the country's economy or should they stay at home? The question is posed in mutually exclusive terms on the hypothesis that such choices are clearly given in an economy to women. In developing countries irrespective of the recognition awarded to women about their work, they continue to perform a vast range of jobs from sheer economic necessity. It may be that in the case of a very small percentage of women their participation in productive activities is highly conditioned by their multiple role in the family. But the extent and degree of this conditioning has not yet been established by empirical evidence.

According to an ILO survey on employment of women with family responsibilities,¹ the problems of working women "can only be handled effectively in the context of a broad approach to the problem of women in general ..." and "that the implementation of a policy to help women carrying the dual responsibilities of work and family is most successful when women account for a large proportion of the labour force and when there are conditions of full employment, when the social infrastructure is well developed ..." The conclusions of the world-wide survey indicate that social facilities and services for working women even in industrialised countries - though improving - are still not adequate to meet the needs of a large number of women who have either entered or stayed in the labour force.

Recognising the fact that social services for women workers are urgently required in developing countries, the ILO survey also indicates "that the basic needs in these countries are often so serious that any measures taken for women workers tend to be purely protective and concentrate on the more general aspects of their conditions of work and life".²

In the urban wage sector, these "protective measures" have followed the "unquestioned transfer" of norms and beliefs from the developed to the developing world. Thus, social legislation has focussed on barring women from certain occupations as in underground mines and/or prohibiting night work, irrespective of the social conditions that may or may not support this legal prohibition. What began as a "protective measure" becomes a constraint on employment opportunities and acts as discriminatory in the labour market. In this area, some interesting contradictions between legal niceties and economic reality have begun: on one extreme are some countries, such as Chile, which has recently abolished the prohibition on night work for women, while on the other extreme are some developing countries which have not yet ratified ILO standards which would introduce social legislation to protect women against dismissal in the event of pregnancy or maternity.

III. "Development" as if women mattered

(a) Some conclusions

It need not be reiterated that the questions raised at the outset of this note form part of the current debate in the UN system and outside and are directly relevant to the broader issue of economic structures and the state of the world economy.

¹ ILO, General Survey by the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, Geneva 1978, p. 50.

² *ibid.*, p. 50.

The role of women in industry in developing countries cannot be set apart from the concerns of the new international economic order or the global strategies for the satisfaction of basic needs. At the same time, the international community and the national planners have not yet admitted into their consciousness the significant fact that any analysis of industrialisation or modes of production or rates of economic growth or equitable distribution among nations and within economies must include a recognition of women's contribution and participation, if the development effort is to be viewed in its totality. Development efforts could be addressed to the entire community, to the needs of both men and women, once it is realised that women's contribution to any economy influences its direction and determines its orientation. The negative or the adverse consequences of omitting women from fully participating in industrial activities and being the beneficiaries of technical and scientific progress have not yet been studied. The success or failure of any policy in such diverse areas as science and technology, education, and nutrition, food processing and distribution, could very largely depend on the extent and degree to which women are involved, neglected or forgotten.

(b) Some areas of collaboration between ILO and UNIDO

The brief analysis of the present status of women in industry indicates that there are various constraints inherent in the employment structures of the developing countries. In the first instance, the following areas could be selected for analysis:

- case studies of urban labour markets and employment of women;
- comparative analysis of industries employing women and wages;
- factors affecting inequitable occupational distribution between men and women within an economy;
- the impact of technological change on the employment of women by industry,¹ e.g. textiles, electronics, food and drinks;
- policy measures to upgrade women's skills, specially in scientific and technological areas; and
- strengthening programmes of national institutions training women in managerial, administrative and technical jobs.

PART B: ILO ACTIVITIES

I. ILO standards concerning women workers

1. List of Conventions and Recommendations

Non-discrimination against women in employment and occupation

Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111) and Recommendation (No. 111), 1958.

Employment Policy Convention (No. 122) and Recommendation (No. 122), 1964.

Human Resources Development Recommendation, 1975 (No. 150).

Special Youth Schemes Recommendation, 1970 (No. 136).

Social Policy (Basic Aims and Standards) Convention, 1962 (No. 117).

¹ For example see ILO, "Resolution concerning employment of women" adopted by the Second Tripartite Technical Meeting for Food Products and Drink Industries (Geneva), October 1978.

Equal remuneration for work of equal value

Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100) and Recommendation (No. 90), 1951.
Plantations Recommendation, 1958 (No. 110).
Social Policy (Basic Aims and Standards) Convention, 1962 (No. 117).

Maternity protection

Maternity Protection Convention, 1919 (No. 3)
Maternity Protection Convention (Revised) (No. 103) and Recommendation
(No. 95), 1952.
Plantations Convention, 1958 (No. 110).

Social security

Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102).

Night work

Night Work (Women) Convention, 1919 (No. 4)
Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised), 1934 (No. 41).
Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised), 1948 (No. 89).

Unhealthy or arduous employment

Underground Work (Women) Convention, 1935 (No. 45).
White Lead (Painting) Convention, 1921 (No. 13).
Lead Poisoning (Women and Children) Recommendation, 1919 (No. 4).
Radiation Protection Recommendation, 1960 (No. 114).
Benzene Convention (No. 136) and Recommendation (No. 144), 1971.
Maximum Weight Convention (No. 127) and Recommendation (No. 128), 1967.

Welfare

Welfare Facilities Recommendation, 1956 (No. 102).

Employment of women with family responsibilities

Employment (Women with Family Responsibilities) Recommendation, 1965 (No. 123).

Declarations and Resolutions

Declaration on Equality of Opportunity and Treatment for Women Workers, 1975.
Resolution concerning a Plan of Action with a View to Promoting Equality of
Opportunity and Treatment for Women Workers, 1975.
Resolution concerning Equal Status and Equal Opportunity for Women and Men in
Occupations and Employment, 1975.

2. Regular supervision of standards

In so far as the Conventions relating to women's work have been ratified by member States, it is a regular ongoing task to examine governments' reports on these Conventions and to identify fields in which they are not applied. The following areas are directly relevant to women workers:

(i) Discrimination

Convention No. 111 provides for a national policy designed to promote equal opportunity in employment and occupation with a view to eliminating discrimination on the basis of a number of criteria, including sex.

The Employment Policy Convention No. 122 also has provisions relating to equal opportunity in employment irrespective of sex.

(ii) Equal remuneration

Convention No. 100 provides for promotion and application of the principle of equal remuneration of men and women workers for work of equal value.

(iii) Night work

Conventions Nos. 4, 41 and 89 provide for the prohibition of night work by women in industry with certain possible exceptions which vary in each Convention.

(iv) Dangerous or unhealthy occupations

Convention No. 45 prohibits work underground in mines by women. The White Lead (Painting) Convention, 1921 (No. 13) prohibits the employment of women in painting work of an industrial character involving the use of white lead. The Maximum Weight Convention, 1967 (No. 127) requires that assignment of women to the manual transport of loads shall be limited. The Benzene Convention, 1971 (No. 136) prohibits the employment of pregnant and nursing women in work involving exposure to benzene.

(v) Maternity protection

Conventions Nos. 3 and 103, together with the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) provide for maternity leave, maternity benefits in the form of cash and medical care and protection against dismissal during maternity leave.

(vi) Social security

In addition to maternity benefit as referred to above, Convention No. 102 provides for the grant of such social security benefits as medical care, sickness, employment injury (industrial accidents and occupational diseases), unemployment, invalidity, old-age, survivors' and family benefits. The requirements under the Convention are equally applicable to women workers. Similarly, recent social security Conventions Nos. 121, 128 and 130 set up advanced standards of employment injury benefits, invalidity, old-age and survivors' benefits, and medical care and sickness benefits respectively. These standards are also applied irrespective of sex.

3. Studying existing standards

In accordance with the 1975 resolutions that "thorough and sufficiently extensive studies on matters relating to special protection for women and men, as the case may be", the ILO has undertaken a study on the various types of special protective measures for women and their adequacy in the light of present circumstances and conceptions regarding the need for protection and for equal treatment of workers of both sexes.

The ILO is also studying the need for a new international instrument concerning equal opportunities and equal treatment for women and men in occupation and employment with a view to supplementing the provisions of the Equal Pay Convention, 1951 (No. 100) and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111).

A general survey, under article 19 of the ILO Constitution, of the application of Recommendation No. 123 (1965) on the Employment of Women with Family Responsibilities was published in 1978.¹ In the light of its findings, it may be decided to place the question of workers with family responsibilities on the agenda of the Conference with a view to the adoption of a new instrument.

A special study on night work and its effects on the health and welfare of the worker was also published by the ILO.² The study came to the conclusion that "night work is medically harmful and raises some contrasting social issues ...". In the case of women, the study said that "... night work is expected to aggravate the disturbances mentioned above, not by lesser biological and psychological aptitudes for night work, but by the social usages". At the same time it was also mentioned that "the present regulations governing night work result in discrimination between men and women in their choice of employment and in the development of their working life".

II. Technical co-operation activities

1. Major emphasis

The major fields of ILO technical co-operation activities for women include vocational training, promotion of employment opportunities, development of co-operative and rural development. Various ongoing projects seek not only to teach technical skills but also to draw conclusions from practical experience which can be used by other countries. The aim is to advise and assist the member States to assess training needs and employment opportunities for women, to plan, organise, implement and evaluate training programmes for them. Particular attention is paid to the needs of underprivileged women, particularly those in the low-income bracket in rural and urban areas, and those who are the primary earners.

2. Selected examples

Examples of ILO activities include technical co-operation projects launched in the Congo (promotion of women and the family in the regions of Pool and the Kou'ouya Plateau), Fiji (vocational training for women), Ghana (training for women) and Lesotho (development of handicrafts co-operatives in which almost all workers are women). In India a large-scale vocational training programme for women financed by the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) launched in co-operation with the Government of India in 1976. During the first phase three training centres - the main centre in New Delhi and two regional centres in Bombay and Bangalore - have been opened. During the second phase it is planned to establish four additional centres in other parts of the country.

III. Selected research and studies related to women in industry (1978-1979)

(a) Ongoing projects

- Strengthening social infrastructure in developing countries: monographs on conditions of life and work including child-care facilities, working hours and opening hours of shops, etc.
- Selected issues related to employment and basic needs: studies on women's participation in wage labour (agricultural and non-agricultural) and the impact of working mothers' participation in productive activities.

(b) Studies (published 1977-1978)

- Night Work: Its Effects on the Health and Welfare of the Worker, 1972.
- Employment of Women with Family Responsibilities. General Survey of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, 1978.

¹ ILO: Employment of Women with Family Responsibilities. General Survey of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, Geneva, 1978.

² ILO: Night Work: Its Effects on the Health and Welfare of the Worker, Geneva, 1977.

- Women's Participation in the Economic Activity of Asian Countries (Statistical Analysis), May 1978, (mimeo.).
- Women's Participation in the Economic Activity of African Countries (Statistical Analysis), September 1978, (mimeo.).
- Labour participation and remuneration of women in Latin America, the USA and Canada, March 1978.
- Female employment: Some factors affecting women's participation in differentiated labour markets, April 1977.

(c) Planned (1980-1981)

General - Employment and unemployment and wage data by sex.

- Study on the training of women in metal trades.
- Study on industrial relations problems of low-paid workers.
- Study on income-generating skills in selected countries of Africa and the Middle East.

(i) Asia

Case studies of trends in women's employment in South and South-East Asia, industry-wise, with reference to their implications for:

- technological displacement in agriculture and small-scale industries;
- wage structures for male and female labour;
- levels of living of low-income groups.

(ii) Latin America

Several studies are planned in which the emphasis would be on factors affecting women's participation in the labour markets of the countries of the region.

IV. Data on labour force participation

1. Working women: 1965, 1975, 1985 and 2000
(in millions)

Major area or region	Labour force			
	1965	1975	1985	2000
<u>WORLD</u>	<u>485.2</u>	<u>575.7</u>	<u>676.5</u>	<u>877.8</u>
More developed regions	180.2	206.7	229.9	260.3
Less developed regions	305.0	369.0	446.6	617.5
<u>AFRICA</u>	<u>39.9</u>	<u>49.4</u>	<u>61.3</u>	<u>90.2</u>
Eastern Africa	13.9	17.1	21.2	30.5
Middle Africa	6.0	7.1	8.4	11.6
Northern Africa	1.7	2.4	3.5	6.2
Southern Africa	2.4	3.7	4.9	8.0
Western Africa	15.9	19.1	23.4	33.8
<u>LATIN AMERICA</u>	<u>16.0</u>	<u>22.8</u>	<u>32.6</u>	<u>56.7</u>
Caribbean	2.3	2.7	3.4	4.9
Middle America	2.7	4.2	6.5	12.8
Temperate South America	2.9	3.6	4.5	5.8
Tropical South America	8.2	12.3	18.2	33.2
<u>NORTH AMERICA</u>	<u>29.8</u>	<u>39.0</u>	<u>46.0</u>	<u>56.1</u>
<u>EAST ASIA</u>	<u>153.7</u>	<u>179.5</u>	<u>206.7</u>	<u>256.5</u>
China	128.7	148.6	170.1	211.0
Japan	19.1	22.7	25.9	30.3
Other East Asia	5.9	8.2	10.7	15.2
<u>SOUTH ASIA</u>	<u>111.9</u>	<u>142.9</u>	<u>175.5</u>	<u>248.9</u>
Eastern South Asia	37.2	45.3	55.9	78.5
Middle South Asia	73.3	90.0	109.9	155.8
Western South Asia	6.5	7.6	9.6	14.6
<u>EUROPE</u>	<u>68.3</u>	<u>76.1</u>	<u>84.1</u>	<u>93.2</u>
Eastern Europe	22.2	25.3	27.4	30.1
Northern Europe	12.1	13.5	14.8	16.8
Southern Europe	13.0	14.4	16.2	18.4
Western Europe	21.0	22.9	25.7	28.0
<u>OCEANIA</u>	<u>2.2</u>	<u>2.9</u>	<u>3.6</u>	<u>4.9</u>
Australia and New Zealand	1.6	2.2	2.7	3.6
Melanesia	0.5	0.6	0.8	1.0
Micronesia and Polynesia	0.05	0.08	0.1	0.2
<u>USSR</u>	<u>58.5</u>	<u>63.1</u>	<u>66.7</u>	<u>71.3</u>

Source: ILO: Labour Force Estimates and Projections, 1950-2000 (Geneva, 1977).

2. Married women aged 15 and over
in selected countries

	Percentage of women in total labour force		Percentage of married women among active women
	All women	Married women	
Argentina	25	9	36
Chile	23	7	30
France	35	12	34
Great Britain	36	22	61
Hong Kong	35	15	43
Hungary	41	28	68
Ireland	26	4	15
Mexico	20	7	35
Morocco	14	6	43
Singapore	26	7	27
Sweden	35	20	57
Switzerland	34	15	44
United States	37	21	57

Source: ILO: Womenpower: the world's female labour force in 1975 and the
outlook for 2000 (Geneva, 1975).

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80.04.16