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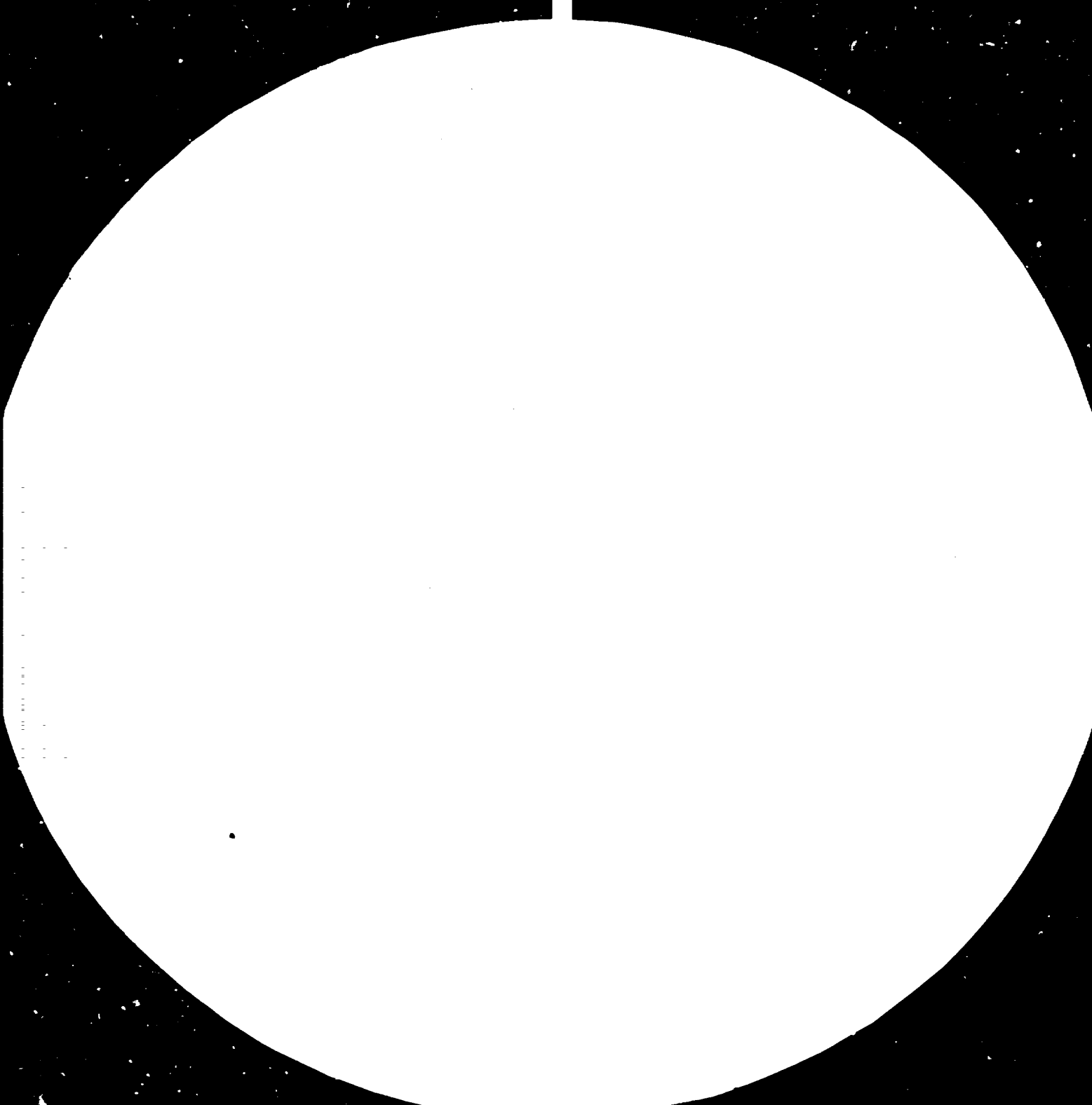
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Seminar on the Role of Women in the  
Development of Industrial Branches  
Traditionally Employing Female Labour

Sofia, Bulgaria, 15-18 October 1981

REPORT . (Seminar on the role of women  
in industrial development).

99.00

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The Seminar on the Role of Women in the Development of Industrial Branches Traditionally Employing Female Labour was organized by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in co-operation with the Government of Bulgaria. It was held in the Representative Trade Union Centre, Poyana, Sofia, 15-18 October 1981.

2. The Seminar should be viewed within the context of the agreement reached by the international community that the share of the developing countries in world industrial production should be increased from the present 10 per cent to 25 per cent by the year 2000.

3. It is evident that national and international strategies for attaining the industrialization target by the end of this century will involve the restructuring of world industry and the creation of additional industrial capacities in developing countries. The resulting policies and programmes will involve, besides industrialization programmes and projects, programmes of social and economic infrastructure development.

4. In the formulation of these strategies, which no doubt would include the development of human resources, attention should be given to the integration of women in the industrialization process. It should be borne in mind that the aim of increasing the participation of women in industry is not only to accelerate the economic development of their respective countries but also to improve the status of women themselves and their role in society.

5. A meeting on the role of women in industrialization in developing countries, organized by UNIDO in 1978,<sup>1/</sup> reviewed in general terms the impact of industrialization in developing countries on the employment of women. It was then recognized that, in a number of developing countries, industrialization had had substantial impact but that, to a large extent, women were participating in industrial production at subordinate levels and that their employment was often confined to specific sectors and types of industry. The main purpose of the Seminar on the Role of Women in the Development of Industrial Branches Traditionally Employing Female Labour was to study more closely those specific sectors and

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<sup>1/</sup> See "Women and industrialization in developing countries" (ID/251).

types of industry which seemed to be employing mostly female labour, analyse the reasons for the female concentration, identify existing problems and make proposals for strategies leading to an improvement of the status of women in these sectors on the basis of past mistakes and of successful cases.

## I. ORGANIZATION OF THE SEMINAR

6. The Seminar on the Role of Women in the Development of Industrial Branches Traditionally Employing Female Labour was opened by a representative of UNIDO on behalf of the Executive Director, Abd-El Rahman Khane. Gueorgui Evgueniev, Vice-President of the Central Council of Bulgarian Trade Unions addressed the participants at the opening session. A statement was also given in the course of the Seminar by the Director of the Division of Industrial Operations, UNIDO.

7. The Seminar was attended by 22 participants from 16 developing countries. In addition to a delegation from Bulgaria and UNIDO staff, representatives from one international organization and two non-governmental organizations also participated (see annex I).

8. Pencheva Liliana Dimitrova, Secretary of the Central Council of the Bulgarian Trade Unions was elected President of the Seminar.

9. Other officers elected were: Ruby Betancourt (Mexico) and Catherine Barongo (United Republic of Tanzania) as first and second Vice-Presidents respectively; Eleni Kalava (Cyprus) and Sarala Gopalan (India) as Co-rapporteurs.

10. The main programme of the Seminar consisted of (a) the presentation of background reports prepared by the Government of Bulgaria, the representatives of India, Mexico, United Republic of Tanzania and Venezuela (see annex II for a list of these and other reports distributed at the Seminar); (b) information provided by other participants on the experiences of their respective countries; (c) discussions on basic issues; (d) adoption of the conclusions and recommendations. Visits to a day-care centre and a garment plant were also included in the programme.

11. The report of the Seminar was unanimously adopted on 18 October 1981.

12. At the closing session the participants expressed their gratitude to the Government of Bulgaria, the Central Council of Bulgarian Trade Unions and the UNIDO secretariat for organizing the Seminar and for providing facilities conducive to its success.



## II. SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSIONS

13. Representatives of Bulgaria highlighted the various measures adopted in Bulgaria for integrating women in the process of economic development by giving them special training and education facilities, identifying jobs which would be more suitable to women, improving conditions of work in industry to reduce hazards for women, and for providing health-care and child-care facilities as well as leave facilities after the birth of a child. These measures had all helped in the diversification of the employment of women.

14. The participants reviewed the situation in their respective countries, and the representatives from the ILO and UNIDO dwelt on the general issues.

15. The consensus was that, depending on the policies and measures of the Governments and on employers' attitudes on the integration of women in development, industrial development could exert either a positive or a negative impact on women, which was apparent to various degrees in different countries and in different industrial branches. If economic development were to take place and women were to be integrated in the process of such development it was necessary that conditions of peace, political and economic independence of countries were assured. The problems faced by women workers in the industrial branches traditionally employing female labour were governed by the political, economic and social environment prevailing in different countries. Provided that appropriate conditions were created through government measures and policies, women could contribute and participate on an equal basis with men in all industrial branches according to their aptitudes and interests.

16. The various matters raised at the Seminar are dealt with in detail in the documentation shown in annex II. The following is a brief summary of the major issues:

(a) In the industrial sector, the employment of women in the developing countries was confined to unskilled and semi-skilled jobs in certain types of industry:

- (i) Industries emanating from sectors in which women had informally acquired the necessary skills in domestic production and which, in general, were related to the basic needs of the family, i.e. food processing, textiles, garment and other light industries;
- (ii) Some export-manufacturing industries which were set up in some developing countries by foreign companies, especially transnational corporations, utilizing cheap, female labour;

(b) The main problem of women employed in the first type of industries was that, with the introduction of new technologies, women were being progressively displaced from their jobs without the creation of alternative work or the provision of training opportunities. The expansion and modernization of this group of industries had not been accompanied by a corresponding increase of employment opportunities for women;

(c) The evaluation of women's work for the determination of wages generally tended to depress the value of female labour and to give women grades lower than men. This situation was particularly aggravated in industrial branches with a heavy female labour component. The low levels of wages for women workers had a tendency to depress wage levels in the industry for all workers, and also affected general conditions of work;

(d) Women workers were often preferred for their economic advantage to employers as generally they were less conscious of their rights than men, and less prone to trade union activities. In labour-surplus situations, women suffered from job insecurity, poor conditions of work, low wages, and lack of training opportunities and social amenities;

(e) Labour laws protecting women workers or conferring special privileges on them, and their enforcement, sometimes had an adverse effect on employment opportunities for women because employers were reluctant to implement those laws and privileges, especially under conditions of abundant labour;

(f) The large majority of women did not have adequate education or technical and vocational training. This reduced their bargaining power and limited their opportunities for advancement and adaptation to new technology;

(g) While there was a concentration of female labour in the lower echelons, rarely were women given opportunities to take up supervisory and managerial positions in the same industrial branches. This was a result of both inadequate education and training and of prejudices against women;

(h) Women workers suffered from increasing stress and poor conditions of work; this exposed them to occupational hazards and reduced their capacity to work as well as their ability to bear children;

(i) The lack of social services such as child-care facilities, public catering, community services, and others restricted women's participation in employment and created problems in the retention of their jobs and career development.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

17. When considering the various industrial branches traditionally employing female labour (see paragraph 16 (a)), the Seminar decided to formulate recommendations which had wide applicability to all industrial sectors with a significant female labour component. On the basis of the main issues that emerged during the discussions, the Seminar made the following recommendations to the national and international authorities concerned:

(a) While planning economic development, national authorities should take specific notice of women as an integral part of the economic system, with particular emphasis on industrialization, and adopt policies so that:

- (i) In economies which are in the initial process of industrial development, women are gradually included in all branches of industry ab initio, without "crowding" into a limited number of branches;
- (ii) In economies which are already in the process of industrialization and are passing from one level of technology to another, women do not get displaced but are either retained in the same branches or are redeployed in branches that may not be traditionally "female";
- (iii) In economies at more advanced stages of industrialization, a proper "mix" of female and male labour is established, eliminating undue concentrations of women in certain branches, and thus facilitating their entry into non-traditional activities;

(b) Measures should be taken to ensure equal access by women to all forms and levels of education and training, particularly:

- (i) To eliminate illiteracy among women;
- (ii) To provide adequate formal education, including training in occupational skills, which can be used both in self-employment and wage-employment;
- (iii) To provide vocational training in all fields, especially those areas which traditionally do not employ women;
- (iv) To provide training and retraining to ensure upgrading of skills, including technical and managerial skills, to facilitate women's adaptation to changed technical and technological modernized methods of production;
- (v) To provide appropriate vocational and career guidance so as to direct women towards productive and permanent industrial employment;

(c) Priority should be given to the building up of the socio-economic infrastructure, including health, sanitation, housing and communication, to improve the quality of life for women and, hence, their potential for effective economic contribution;

(d) Special emphasis should be placed on industrial projects in the rural areas, preferably utilizing local raw materials, to provide year-round employment opportunities and ensure continuation of existing rural activities for women living in those areas;

(e) In accordance with national and local conditions, the setting-up of organizations such as co-operatives should be promoted to enable women to continue, or undertake viable, gainful industrial employment including self-employment;

(f) Policy and legislative measures should be adopted and implemented to ensure the improvement of working conditions for women, including safety and hygiene regulations, welfare amenities and maternity leave. Efforts should be made to ensure that undue application of such protective measures do not produce counter-effects on women's employment opportunities;

(g) Governments should control and regulate the policies and practices of transnational corporations, especially those employing women workers, and should rectify any discriminatory or exploitative practices;

(h) (i) Legislation should be enacted to ensure that women are not discriminated against in employment and, where legislation already exists, it should be effectively enforced;

(ii) The placement of women in industries should be regularly monitored to ensure that positions due to them are not denied because of prejudices, particularly in labour-surplus situations,

(i) National authorities should consciously promote attitudinal changes to give women access to managerial positions in the production hierarchy, without confining them to the lowest categories of workers. This may be done by involving workers, trade unions, and other social organizations in the management;

(j) Women's participation in trade unions should be encouraged by making them more aware of their rights in order to increase their bargaining power in industry;

(k) A strong network of supportive services such as child-care facilities should be regarded as the responsibility of national Governments, and child-care centres should be established to help working mothers and encourage others to undertake employment;

(l) Credit facilities and marketing facilities should be made accessible to women to encourage their entrepreneurship;

(m) Governments should adopt and ensure the effective enforcement of national and international instruments to guarantee an equitable status for women in employment;

(n) Governments should strengthen their efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination in the traditional society which have prevented women from participating as an active element in production, especially in industry;

(o) All international bodies should, through their programmes, assist developing countries to:

- (i) Attain self-reliance, accelerate economic growth and eradicate unemployment;
- (ii) Identify, through studies and research, the problems faced by women in the various industrial branches traditionally employing female labour, in order to assist Governments in the formulation of concrete proposals for the improvement of the status of women.

Annex I  
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World Peace Council (WPC)

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Annex II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

- ID/WG.351/1      Employment of women in India. Critical issues<sup>a/</sup>  
Sarala Gopalan
- ID/WG.351/2      The role of women in the development of industrial branches  
traditionally employing female labour. Country paper on  
the United Republic of Tanzania<sup>a/</sup>  
Catherine Barongo
- ID/WG.351/3      The role of women in the development of industries which  
traditionally employ female labour. Based on the example of  
Bulgaria.<sup>b/</sup>  
Nikolina Ilieva
- ID/WG.351/4      Safety regulations for women workers in the People's Republic  
of Bulgaria<sup>b/</sup>  
Vasilka Ivanova
- ID/WG.351/5      Education and qualification of women in the People's Republic  
of Bulgaria<sup>b/</sup>  
A. Manolov
- ID/WG.351/6      Medical and social care for the woman-mother and the growing  
generation in the People's Republic of Bulgaria<sup>b/</sup>
- ID/WG.351/7      The impact of industrialization on women's traditional fields  
of economic activity in developing countries<sup>a/</sup>  
Mechthild Petritsch
- ID/WG.351/8      Draft recommendations<sup>c/</sup>  
Note by the UNIDO secretariat
- El papel de la mujer en el desarrollo de las ramas industriales, Venezuela<sup>d/</sup>  
Submitted by the Ministry for the Participation of Women in Development,  
Venezuela
- El trabajo de la mujer en las empresas maquiladoras, Mexico<sup>d/</sup>  
Ruby Betancourt
- La large participation des femmes dans l'artisanat du pays (Afghanistan)<sup>e/</sup>  
Statement delivered by Nafissa Mobares

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a/ English only.

b/ English, French, Spanish and Bulgarian.

c/ English, French and Spanish.

d/ Spanish only.

e/ French only.

Le travail des femmes dans les branches industrielles (Algeria)<sup>e/</sup>  
Submitted by the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, Algeria

National monography of Cuba: Equal access of women to employment<sup>f/</sup>  
Submitted by the Federation of Cuban Women

Role and status of Vietnamese women<sup>a/</sup>  
Country paper submitted by Hô Ti Chi

The changing role of the working woman in Greece<sup>a/</sup>  
Chariclea Sotiracopoulos

The experience of the Republic of Cyprus concerning the participation of  
women in industrialization<sup>a/</sup>  
Note submitted by the Government of Cyprus

The Zimbabwe experience<sup>a/</sup>  
Statement delivered by Joice Teurai Nhongo

Women in Angola<sup>g/</sup>  
Statement delivered by Carolina Cerqueira

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<sup>f/</sup> English and Spanish.

<sup>g/</sup> Portuguese only.

