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Workshop on Women's Participation in
Industrial Policy- and Decision-making
in Latin America
Buenos Aires, May 1991

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FINAL REPORT*

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CONTENTS

**Report of the Workshop on Women's Participation in Industrial
Policy- and Decision-making in Latin America,
Buenos Aires, May 1991**

	<u>Page</u>
1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. ORGANIZATION OF THE WORKSHOP	4
3. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA: REGIONAL REPORTS	5
4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	7
4.1 Woman as managers	7
4.2 Women as independent entrepreneurs	9
5. PLAN OF ACTION	10
5.1 Plan of action for women as managers	10
5.2 Plan of action for women as independent entrepreneurs	11
 ANNEXES	
- AGENDA (AND TIMETABLE)	13
- LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	15

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years increasing attention has been focused on the question of women in industry. The role of women in the industrial sector is being fully recognized.

Women's participation in the manufacturing sector increased drastically between 1960 and 1980 and the pattern has continued in the last decade. It is important to note that general government policies and programmes have a considerable impact on women since women make up half of the population in Latin America. On the other hand, such general programmes or macro-economic policies only relate to a general production economy and therefore do not have a direct bearing on the specific needs of women, such as household tasks and the upbringing of children.

In 1985 the number of women workers in the industrial sector was more than 166 million, that is to say over half of the female economically active population in the developing countries.

Even though the percentage participation of women in industry has been increasing, the representation of women in administrative and managerial positions is still insignificant and below the required level.

The difference between the actual contribution of women in industry and their representation at decision-making levels was the basis for the regional workshop entitled "Workshop on Women's Participation in Industrial Policy- and Decision-Making in Latin America". This workshop was organized jointly by UNIDO and the International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBPW), a non-governmental organization that has had consultative status with UNIDO since 1988.

The United Nations has a mandate to promote the participation of women at all levels in the development process and the Workshop was designed to help achieve that end.

In the United Nations system-wide medium-term plan for women and development for the period 1990-1995, great importance is attached to women's participation in policy-making in all sectors. The United Nations General Assembly, at its forty-fourth session (see document A/44/803), emphasized the importance of the full integration of women in the development process, bearing in mind the specific and urgent needs of the developing countries. It also called upon Member States to establish specific targets at each level in order to increase women's participation in professional, management and decision-making positions in their countries.

The UNIDO programme for the integration of women in industrial development, 1990-1995, set out in General Conference document GC.3/19 and endorsed by the Conference in document GC.3/15, stresses that "Increased efforts are needed to ensure the participation of women at senior levels in national policy-making bodies responsible for industrial development, such as ministries of planning, industry, labour and education, in industry federations, in industrial enterprises and in intergovernmental and international organizations".

Intergovernmental organizations such as UNIDO should cooperate with international women's organizations with a view to effective compliance with the mandate for enhanced integration of women in the development process. Consequently, the proposal of IFBPW for organizing a workshop on women's participation in industrial policy-making and decision-making in Latin America was enthusiastically welcomed.

The objectives of IFBPW are to promote the interests and to further the achievements of professional women in the local, national and international community. The Federation seeks to improve the status of and opportunities for women in national economic, civil and political life, promoting education, occupational training and cooperation between women participating in the activities of the Federation throughout the world. The member association of the Federation in each country seeks to promote these objectives with a view to attaining important positions in policy formulation and, at the same time, assisting in the country's development.

The Workshop was held at Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 13 to 17 May 1991, with the participation of members of the various national affiliates of the Federation, representing Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama and Peru. These members drew up a set of recommendations and a plan of action to be implemented regionally.

With a view to promoting and intensifying women's participation in industrial policy formulation in Latin America and in development, the Workshop proposed the following objectives:

(a) Summary and analysis of the current and potential function and participation of women in industrial policy-making and decision-making in Latin America against the background of general, international and regional economic structures and trends;

(b) On the basis of this, the development of strategies to promote dynamic participation by women in industrial development in Latin America in the 1990s.

2. ORGANIZATION OF THE WORKSHOP

The Argentine Association of Business and Professional Women hosted the Workshop on Women's Participation in Industrial Policy- and decision-making in Latin America.

The Workshop was attended by Mrs. Ivette Swan, President of IFBPW, Mrs. Olga Margarita Ramirez de Rodriguez, Regional President of IFBPW, Mrs. Maria Alba Iriarte de Lofiego, IFBPW President in Argentina, and Mrs. Baerbel Chambalu, Coordinator of the Unit for the Integration of Women in Industrial Development, UNIDO, Vienna. The opening ceremony was also attended by representatives of the industrial, banking and commercial sectors in Argentina. A list of participants is attached to this report.

The welcoming address stressed the contribution of women in society and in the economy in general, particularly in Latin America, and the importance of supporting the work performed by them at all levels. Attention was also drawn to the importance of the Workshop as part of the activities of IFBPW and UNIDO, above all with regard to the promotion and integration of women in industrial policy formulation and their participation in industrial development in Latin America.

The agenda, annexed to this report, was adopted by the participants. The Workshop's programme covered the following:

- Presentation of the basic document on "The Latin American economic scenario and the role of women in development".
- Presentation of papers from the various participating countries on the general economic situation and women's participation in the education system. Each presentation was followed by discussion and questions.
- Presentation of the UNIDO technical cooperation programmes.
- Analysis and discussion in working groups on: the situation and problems of women as managers and the situation of women as independent entrepreneurs.
- Presentation in plenary of the issues, recommendations and a plan of action.
- Presentation and adoption of conclusions.

The Workshop was financed by the Government of Germany, through the Industrial Development Fund, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the Argentine Mercantile Bank, which provided the premises.

At the closing ceremony, Mrs. Jeanette Bouzon, Presidential Adviser and Under-Secretary of State, represented the President of the Republic of Argentina; Mr. Carlos Saul Menem.

3. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA: REGIONAL REPORTS

In spite of the problems of underestimation, it is clear that the increase in women's participation in the workforce in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean has been one of the most dynamic features of those societies since 1950. The proportion of women in the labour force in the region rose from 18 per cent in 1950 to 26 per cent in 1980. Although there was a drop in the level of women's participation in the labour force after 1980, there was an increase of 0.6 per cent in 1990 and the proportion will reach 27.5 per cent by the year 2000. In absolute terms, the number of women in the workforce in the region increased from 9.8 million in 1950 to 30.9 million in 1980 and 40.3 million in 1990. It is anticipated that, by the end of the century, the number of women in the workforce will be about 53 million; approximately 22 million women will be economically active between 1980 and the year 2000.

The increased participation of women in industry is due above all to improved education and changes in social attitudes. In some countries, this trend has also been the direct result of the growing pressure on women to assume responsibility for the economic well being of the family.

As mentioned earlier, women's participation in the workforce increased appreciably in the 1980s. This increase does not necessarily imply any improvement in their position in society. On the contrary, it means that large groups of women in the region are in additional situations of subordination. It must be remembered that this increase occurred during a severe period of economic crisis and, even though women are better prepared than in previous generations and have fewer children in their care, their place in the workforce is unstable, they receive low wages and they perform low-productivity tasks. In many cases they have to work a double working day ("productive" work and housekeeping) or they are unemployed.

The percentage of women in administrative and decision-making posts is very low. For instance, in 1985 the estimated percentage of women in the industrial workforce in Chile was 17.8 per cent, in Panama 33 per cent, in Venezuela 13.5 per cent and in Puerto Rico 22 per cent.

One of the consequences of the economic crises affecting the countries of Latin America, owing to the exorbitant external debt, high inflation and unemployment, has been a trend towards self employment. It would be advisable to provide women with basic bookkeeping training, access to markets, supplies of raw materials and use of appropriate technology, as well as some basic legal knowledge. It is extremely important for women to participate directly at all policy-making and decision-making levels. Consequently, efforts must be made to promote opportunities for women in all fields, to make Governments and organizations aware of the situation, to support training programmes and to mobilize funds and other resources to support women in industry in order to prepare them for various areas of activity.

The above gives a general idea of the situation of women in Latin America, reflected in the regional reports presented during the Workshop. These reports indicated the obstacles to women's participation in industry, the structural and cyclical economic situation in Latin America and the current and future participation of women in industrial policy-making and decision-making.

Most of the reports by the participating countries indicated a lack of specific data on women's participation in the industrial sector at the management and entrepreneur level. However, direct observations by the various organizations leads to the conclusion that high-level women's participation has increased. Some of the country reports mention measures, constitutional mandates and current legal provisions recently adopted by some Governments with a view to eliminating discrimination against women. As far as education is concerned, the data for some countries in the region show an increase in female participation at the school, higher, university and technical level, although there is still a priority need for technical and management training.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main outcome of the Workshop was a set of recommendations on policies and measures to strengthen and increase women's participation in industrial policy formulation in Latin America in the 1990s. These recommendations are directed to Governments, international and non-governmental organizations and women occupying decision-making posts in industry.

"Woman as managers" and "Woman as entrepreneurs" were the central subjects for discussion, and the participants defined the issues and formulated recommendations for the future.

It was stressed that women's contribution to date had been significant in spite of the obstacles and problems to be overcome. It was therefore necessary for those involved in policy-making and for society in general to recognize and bear in mind the need for focusing of efforts on and active participation in the creation of adequate conditions for women and support for women in the development of their full potential.

The problems and obstacles facing women as managers and entrepreneurs in Latin America were basically the same. However, the emphasis of the psychological, socio-cultural and economic factors involved is different, generating a different dynamic in the particular context concerned.

The main conclusions and recommendations formulated by the working groups at the Workshop can be summarized as follows.

4.1. Women as managers

Women working as managers in Latin America face problems of a specific type in their professional activities. The most important problems are:

4.1.1. Sex and age discrimination

The socio-cultural factors affecting equal treatment of men and women are particularly important as regards women's access to management positions and their functioning in these positions in Latin America. Discrimination against women is also an obstacle at enterprise level, disqualifying women for management vacancies, reducing their scope for participation and leading to wage discrimination. During the discussion, particular stress was laid on "self-discrimination" as a factor affecting the exercise by women of professional activities at management level; their self esteem is diminished and their professional development cut short.

Female participation in the modern industrial sector in developing countries has been characterized by a concentration of female employment in low-wage, low-skill jobs. Very few women are found at technical and managerial levels.

If the potential of women's contribution to industrial development is to be maximized, their integration at the professional level must be promoted in all sectors; cooperation is also needed between governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with industrial development and institutions responsible for education and training to identify special measures to promote greater participation of women in technical and managerial employment.

These aspects are fundamental and constitute the basis for women to be able to assume their own promotion in the labour market, making use of available resources both inside and outside the enterprise to achieve professional advancement and to respond better to the needs of the country. An active role for women as managers must constitute an important function of reoriented development in the countries of the region. The recommendation on this subject stresses that women must be ready to play an active part, to promote themselves and to compete on the labour market. This means that an important aspect is the effort of women to improve their personal conditions, to make a career within their enterprise, if they are at the beginning stages, and to invest in training and refresher courses if they already have experience.

4.1.2. Pregnancy and maternity

For biological and social reasons this affects women more than men; it is usually the woman who assumes responsibilities in the home. This obliges them to play two simultaneous roles or to opt for one and renounce the other. Both options lead to a number of limitations in regard to professional development and may result in inadequate working opportunities and frustration. There is no social awareness of the need for both parents to share responsibilities as far as care of the family is concerned, and looking after children is deemed to be a "women's matter".

In addition, enterprises do not have sufficient facilities to support and promote the professional development of women and to enable them to occupy high-level positions; this causes them to give up work or results in career stagnation.

Furthermore, there is no infrastructure to deal with the workplace implications of pregnancy and maternity.

Existing legislation does deal with these aspects, but there are no specific measures to support women's participation at management level, specifically in industrial policy-making and decision-making.

The following is recommended:

(a) Revision of the relevant legislation in the countries of Latin America to promote measures within enterprises to deal with the needs identified, such as temporary replacements to cover maternity leave without causing substantial additional expense for the employer, continuity of employment for the mother, etc.

(b) Promotion of social awareness regarding the need for both parents to share responsibilities through specific measures, such as the encouragement of shared leave and appropriate working hours, and provision of kindergartens in enterprises employing both men and women, the cost being borne by employers and employees, regardless of sex or civil status.

(c) In addition, it is recommended that young professional people should plan their lives with a view to leaving sufficient space and time for the various functions, a prerequisite for working efficiency.

4.1.3. Idiosyncratic attitudes and cultural barriers

All the above mentioned factors create an atmosphere of values and prejudices detrimental to women's participation at management level. There is a tendency not to evaluate men and women professionally with the same criteria and standards. In many cases sex is used to try to establish advantages in competitive situations. There are negative attitudes towards women who seek to advance their career even among women. Lack of security and self-confidence deters women from assuming posts with greater responsibilities, consigning them to subordination and marginalization.

The recommendations made stress the need for women to be aware of and able to deal with the socio-cultural aspects of the business world which restrict their professional development. The importance is emphasized of educating the family in equality of rights and the sharing of responsibilities, promoting a change of attitude in coming generations. Recommended as an essential part of this is the distribution of activities in order to promote the assumption of new functions by women, the establishment of systems to ensure that professional people of the two sexes are evaluated using the same criteria, efforts to eradicate prejudices against women and the promotion of professional competition under equal conditions, regardless of the sex of the individual concerned.

4.2. Women as independent entrepreneurs

4.2.1. Women's insecurity in coping with a competitive working environment is due to the lack of adequate preparation, since family upbringing does not coincide with the industrial philosophy and the education system does not meet these needs. Consequently, women are ill-prepared to assume an entrepreneurial role.

On top of this, in most cases women take on the role of independent entrepreneur because of external circumstances, such as legacies. Social values lead them to give priority to a professional course, above all in the social sector and the humanities, rather than business management training and manufacturing and craft activities.

In regard to the above, it was recommended that efforts be made to identify training needs for professional work and to mobilize available institutional resources to promote business training courses for women in line with the needs identified. Women should also perform a range of roles from childhood, in their upbringing in the family and their education in school, to promote mobility in the private and public spheres.

4.2.2. Family norms contradict business requirements: the biological and social condition of women means that they must divide their attention between their reproductive (family) role and their productive (work) role. Children and business management, particularly in the initial stages of their development, generate considerable demands and requirements that are difficult to satisfy simultaneously and adequately. The multiplication of roles (woman-mother-entrepreneur) thus places women in a situation in which their potential is wasted and fragmented, generating feelings of guilt and stress due to pressures from the workplace and the family.

With this in mind, the participants emphasized the need to share family responsibilities with men so that the multifarious pressures from the workplace and the family might be shared fairly. This should be reflected in a redefinition of the roles of men and women.

4.2.3. As described above, the multiplicity of functions assumed by the woman entrepreneur, the influence of social values on career decisions, sex discrimination in the business world and the effect of traditional norms, which do not coincide with the current needs and requirements of women's tasks, give rise to problems in working relations within the enterprise.

The general situation is mirrored in the very few opportunities for women to penetrate the business world and the few possibilities for advice and assistance of a technical, economic and legal nature because of the lack of government policies to guide action and open up possibilities for independent women entrepreneurs.

Difficulty in gaining access to credit, inadequate knowledge of project preparation and administration and insufficient information about markets are the reasons for the very small number of independent women entrepreneurs in the countries of Latin America.

Here again stress is laid on the need for training, facilities for specialization, the promotion of collaboration and exchange of information on credit, technology and access to technical assistance and specific advice within a framework of appropriate legislation.

The recommendations focus on four areas: family, education, institutions and government. From these recommendations is derived a plan of action outlining practical measures to increase and enhance women's participation as independent entrepreneurs in national industrial policy formulation.

5. PLAN OF ACTION

As already mentioned, the Workshop was to draw up strategies to promote dynamic participation by women in the development of Latin America.

Hence, a proposal for concrete action at the different levels involved therefore is the most important contribution of the Workshop. It was also agreed that IFBPW and UNIDO would endeavour jointly to organize training programmes for women in connection with the project proposal entitled "Preparation, evaluation and financing of industrial projects and promotion of investment".

The working groups produced two proposals concerning women as managers and women as independent entrepreneurs, which have some common and some particular aspects. The following proposals were agreed by consensus:

5.1. Plan of action for women as managers

- Public and private institutions should establish training programmes to provide young women with the necessary instruments for participation at the highest business level.

- Enterprises should adopt policies for the investment of resources in personnel training.
- Efforts should be made to stimulate the participation of women in trade unions.
- Enterprises should be made aware of the need for them to grant students and new employees periods of practical training or internships as part of their professional training in business management.
- Non-governmental organizations should recommend to Governments that they review labour legislation and adapt it to the current situation.
- Orientation programmes should be promoted at secondary and university level to enable young women to obtain better preparation to assist them in planning their lives and careers.
- Discussion sessions or dissemination programmes should be encouraged, both for men and for women, to explore views on these matters.
- The National Federations should organize seminars similar to this Workshop, extending them to include industrial enterprises, educational establishments, government agencies and the public.

5.2. Plan of action for women as independent entrepreneurs

Action to be taken focuses on four areas: family attitudes, education, non-governmental institutions and government action.

- The preparation of the following should be promoted:
 - (a) Training programmes of all kinds for women entrepreneurs at different levels, particularly in project design;
 - (b) Training programmes for women trainers;
 - (c) On-going education programmes to provide training throughout the year.
- IFBPW, at national level, should approach multilateral and bilateral agencies for assistance of a technical and economic nature.
- The National Federations should set up a data bank to collect relevant information on Latin American enterprises, a project that could be called "Network for Latin American Commercial Integration", sponsored by professional and business women.
- The National Federations should approach business associations and chambers of commerce with a view to the representation of women in such bodies.
- Formal proposals should be submitted to the respective Governments for the inclusion of women in official business delegations and missions.

- The National Federations should provide an information service for women entrepreneurs on matters relating to banking, credit, legislation and technology.

In order to implement the plan of action drawn up by the participants during the Workshop, the affiliates of IFBPW should organize similar workshops in their own countries. Alongside this, they should organize meetings with government representatives, with entrepreneurs and people engaged in commerce, with non-governmental agencies and with other institutions to look at the obstacles and problems that women face in making their due contribution to the economy in their respective countries, and to seek their cooperation in eliminating such obstacles and thus enabling women to be of full benefit to the economies and social development of their countries.

The objective of these extension workshops is to bring about an awareness in the various media of the importance of establishing strategies to strengthen the role of women in policy-making and decision-making in the industrial sector in the Latin American region.

AGENDA (AND TIMETABLE)

Monday, 13 May

- 9.30 a.m. Opening ceremony
- 11 a.m. Presentation of the basic document on women's participation
in industrial development in Latin America
Questions
- 1 p.m. Lunch
- 2 p.m. Presentation of papers from the various countries on:
Women's participation in development
Policies, participation and the education system
Problems and opportunities for women in business management
Questions and discussions after each presentation
- 5.30 p.m. Close
- 7 p.m. Welcoming cocktail party

Tuesday, 14 May

- 9 a.m. Presentation of papers from each country (continued)
Questions and discussion
- 1 p.m. Lunch
- 2 p.m. Presentation of the UNIDO technical cooperation programmes
- 5 p.m. Close

Wednesday, 15 May

- 9 a.m. Organization of working groups and working group meetings on:
Women as independent entrepreneurs (groups 1 and 2)
Women as managers (group 3)
- 1 p.m. Lunch
- 2 p.m. Analysis and discussion in working groups (continued)
- 5 p.m. Plenary meeting
- 6.30 p.m. Close

Thursday, 16 May

- 9 a.m. Working groups (continued)
Recommendations and drafting of a plant of action
- 1 p.m. Lunch
- 2 p.m. Plenary meeting: presentation of the conclusions of each group
- 5 p.m. Evaluation session
- 6.30 p.m. Close

Friday, 17 May

- 9 a.m. Presentation and approval of recommendations and plans of action concerning:
- Women as managers
 - Women as independent entrepreneurs
- 11 a.m. Closing ceremony
- 1 p.m. Lunch
- 6 p.m. Farewell cocktail party

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