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**GENDER, DEVELOPMENT, AND
POLICY:
TOWARD EQUITY AND
EMPOWERMENT**

VALENTINE M. MOGHADAM

WORLD INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS RESEARCH
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PREFACE

This study formally introduces WIDER's new research programme on women in development. The issues covered in this study are as wide-ranging as is the field of women in development itself: the impact of development on women's status; the gender dimension of public policy; the importance of paid employment in the advancement of women; gender bias in economic restructuring; the adverse effects of stabilisation and adjustment policies on women's livelihood and status; the need for remedial action.

The study is especially useful for its synthesis of theoretical debates around women and development, and for its elaboration of gender analysis. For too long development economists have had a 'gender blindspot'. This document calls for greater gender awareness on the part of planners and policy-makers, and shows why this is necessary. Among other reasons, the well-being of children and households is often tied to the well-being and income of women. We should, therefore, recognise the irrationality of excluding women from participation in economic and public life — but we must also improve the quality of women's lives and conditions of work.

In her comparative survey of women's employment and trends in the sexual division of labour within the household, Dr Moghadam finds that gains have been made by women in the process of industrialisation and through government intervention. She then provides a negative assessment of the impact of structural adjustment and of the likely impact of economic restructuring in Eastern Europe on women's work and on the sexual division of labour, in the absence of special financing and other facilities for dealing with the problem. Her argument is that the position of women is everywhere improved in the context of developmentalist, welfarist states.

In this connection Dr Moghadam endorses the concepts of 'socially necessary growth' and 'a system of development contracts' which have been evolved in the course of recent WIDER research as constituting a possible basis for a new aid relationship between developing countries and the donor community during the 1990s. The idea here is that each developing country needs to formulate a development strategy which incorporates minimum goals in respect of enhancing basic needs or human development, reducing unemployment, and improving income distribution. The socially necessary rate of growth of GDP deriving from these considerations alone ought then to be further corrected to provide for environmental protection. The resulting 5-10 year development plan should be supported on a medium-term basis by the donor community with both the necessary longer term assurances of aid and insurance

against export shortfalls, provided the developing country concerned adheres to a set of policy understandings concerning the maintenance of the required framework of *production* incentives. There would, under these circumstances, as an innovative departure from prevailing practice, be *foreign savings support* for basic needs purposes under the medium-term 'development contract' that the country would enter into with the donor community.

The underlying notion is to move away from the *ad hocism* attending today's aid relationship which, under the best circumstances, involves an annual meeting of an Aid Group and no more than a three-year policy framework paper (PFP) jointly negotiated with the IMF and the World Bank. There is an opportunity for the deployment within such a 'development contract' of what might be called 'self-reliant conditionality' where additional support beyond a certain baseline, possibly from the Nordic group of countries, might be linked to certain non-economic goals which a recipient country may wish to set for itself, such as a commitment to reducing its military budget, resolving internal conflicts, restoring human rights, and generally moving towards a pluralistic democratic political framework.

A comprehensive development contract of this kind which can accommodate a range of non-economic concerns alongside the concentration on socially necessary growth, and environmental protection, is in my view crucial for the integration of women into the development process in an effective manner.

Lal Jayawardena
Director

GENDER, DEVELOPMENT, AND POLICY: TOWARD EQUITY AND EMPOWERMENT

Introduction

At a time when certain parts of the world are experiencing momentous changes in their economic systems and political structures, and others are still struggling through debt repayment and structural adjustment in the wake of the “lost development decade”, it is important to take stock of the immediate and long-term impact of present policies — particularly with regard to vulnerable social groups — in order not to lose sight of both moral and practical concerns.¹ This study is concerned with the position of women in development processes, and emphasises the salience of gender in public policy. It aims to show that development analysis cannot be divorced from sex-specific observations, and that gender is inscribed in social policy and in macroeconomic policy. The study combines a WID approach — with its focus on the national development and international contexts as they affect women — and a feminist approach, which is concerned with the sexual division of labour and power relations within the household. The feminist approach also seeks to emphasise the gendered construction of social reality.

This study comes in three parts. We begin with a theoretical discussion of gender inequality, followed by a review of the debate on the impact of development processes on women and the significance of paid employment. In Part II, the specification of public policy’s impact on women’s work and women’s lives — including a review of the adverse impact of structural adjustment programmes on women — will illustrate: a) the integral (albeit often unintentional) role of gender in policy, b) the gender-specific impact of social and macroeconomic processes, and c) the need for gender-awareness on the part of development planners and policy-makers. The Conclusion focuses on action-oriented research.

¹ Policies do not operate in a political vacuum. Policies have political and social implications, reflecting existing power relations and affecting social groups differentially. There is also a moral and ethical dimension to policy, although this is generally neglected in the development literature and especially in neoclassical economics. Examples of authors who have sought to integrate ethics into discussions of development are Goulet (1978), Berger (1974), Kruijer (1987), Sen (1990). A normative and advocacy approach is also expressed by Charlton (1984), and in the DAWN analysis written by Sen and Grown (1987). See also UNICEF, *The State of the World’s Children 1989* for a strong statement on the politics and ethics of development and structural adjustment.

The summary by James Grant refers to the effects of the debt crisis as “an outrage”, and calls for “a new ethos.” The Report by the Commonwealth Secretariat (1989) on gender and adjustment states “Adjustment policies which fail to incorporate women’s concerns fully are not only unjust and cause unnecessary hardship but also imperil the effectiveness of the policies themselves.”

In sociology, an emerging theoretical current draws attention to contemporary social and moral dilemmas (Wolfe 1989), and raises moral questions in the operations of markets and states (Etzioni 1988).

Part I. Theoretical Considerations

a. Gender and Inequality

Over the past two decades, the changing status and roles of women combined with the rise of modern feminism to promote a dramatic increase in concern with the meaning and explanation of gender. Twenty years of feminist scholarship and women-in-development (WID) research has eventuated the consensus that gender is a fundamental organising principle in human societies and in cultural production. Analytically, it has reached the status of class, ethnicity, state, and world system in social theory. It is also widely accepted that gender — like class and race/ethnicity — is a source of inequality. That gender asymmetry is a universal fact of life is now a commonplace. In many societies around the world, women are discriminated against by law and by custom, rendering them among the vulnerable and disadvantaged social groups.² As Papanek (1989) puts it: “Gender differences, based on the social construction of biological sex distinctions, are one of the great ‘fault lines’ of societies — those marks of difference among categories of persons that govern the allocation of power, authority, and resources.”

At the same time, women’s role in economic production and in social reproduction is widely recognised — even when ignored in national accounts. Whether in the formal labour market, the urban informal sector, agricultural production, or housework, women contribute to the social surplus and the reproduction of society as producers of goods and services, as consumers, and as household managers. The essence of women’s distinctiveness lies in the multiplicity of their roles. Most men can confine themselves mainly to being producers. Most women, in addition to being heavily involved in economic production, take prime responsibility as home managers, child-bearers and rearers of children and the elderly (Commonwealth Secretariat 1989). In developing countries, much of this contribution is unremunerated; in the agricultural sector in developing countries, women provide substantial amounts of unpaid labour to the production and transformation of household crops controlled by the men of the family. In industrial countries, where the mass of women are salaried, domestic labour remains a primarily female responsibility, and this has critical implications for women’s

² Sociologist Janet Chafetz (1984) notes that sex stratification exists in degrees with one variable and one constant component. What varies is the extent of female disadvantage, while the constant is that females have never been more advantaged than males in any known society.

position in the labour market. Among other things, there is considerable occupational sex-typing and a wage gap.

Throughout the world, economic development (or “modernisation”) has been followed by changes in the composition of the labour force, and changes in family structure and patterns of fertility and mortality. Sociologists, demographers, and economists have studied these phenomena and linkages. The interrelationships between economic development and demographic changes have traditionally been of interest mainly to sociologists and demographers, but some economists have tackled these issues as well. Inevitably, they have applied neoclassical assumptions of individual tastes and preferences without regard to institutional constraints or external mechanisms that govern people’s choices. The neoclassical paradigm also treats the family or household as though it were an individual maximising a joint utility function subject to a time/budget constraint (Folbre 1988). Economic development has also entailed changes in systems of stratification and forms of inequality. Needless to say, whether neoclassical economists are studying employment patterns, fertility patterns, or access to productive assets, what is missing is a systematic consideration of conflicts, exploitation, and oppression. It has been principally Marxists and feminists — following Engels’ lead (1884/1972) — who have explored the sexual division of labour and theorised its links to the state, property rights, and the process of socialisation (including cultural understandings and prescriptions of sex roles). Stratification, conflict and inequality are also of interest to sociologists, whose contributions to our understanding of gender have included theoretical works and empirical studies. Since the 1970s, the sociology of gender has addressed the following questions about sexual inequality: how does it arise, why does it take different forms, why does it vary in degree across societies, what are the components that add up to gender inequality, how do various institutions and practices contribute to it, and how does it change?

What then is gender, and why is it relevant to social and economic policy? Gender is a cultural construct of sex roles, a definition of “masculine” and “feminine” and of the prerogatives of male and female.³ While culturally and historically-bound, gender commonly is a function of power relations and the social organisation of inequality. Feminist scholars define gender as the social organisation of sexual difference, or a system of unequal relationships between the sexes. De Lauretis (1987:5) has elaborated on the concept and the social fact of gender in the following way:

The cultural conceptions of male and female as two complementary yet mutually exclusive categories into which

all human beings are placed constitute within each culture a gender system, that correlates sex to cultural contents according to social values and hierarchies. Although the meanings vary with each concept, a sex-gender system is always intimately interconnected with political and economic factors in each society. In this light, the cultural construction of sex into gender and the asymmetry that characterises all gender systems cross-culturally (though each in its particular ways) are understood as systematically linked to the organisation of social inequality.

Like class, gender is a relational concept. In the same way that class implies a relationship between labour and capital, gender implies a relationship between men and women. Many social scientists unfamiliar with gender analysis assume that “women’s issues” are of concern to women only, and that these issues may be marginalised from “larger” considerations about political and economic processes. But again, to use the analogy to class, gender is not “only about women”: it refers to a structural relationship between the sexes which is linked to the state, the economy, and to other macro- and micro-processes and institutions. This relationship is asymmetrical; it is inscribed in law and finds expression in political processes and in economic structures. Another point about gender is that like class (and like ethnicity as well) gender is not a homogeneous category; it is internally differentiated and elaborated by class, race/ethnicity, age, region, education. To paraphrase the sociologist Michael Mann (1986:5), gender is stratified and stratification is gendered.

What perpetuates gender inequality? Gender distinctions are not accidental or a fact of nature but are reproduced institutionally (Epstein 1988). One of the most important institutions is the family, a principal site of the reproduction of gender. Chodorow (1978) is one feminist theorist who links gender inequality to the psychodynamics of mothering. Other feminists subscribe to the thesis

³ Sex refers to the attributes of men and women created by their biological characteristics, while *gender* refers to the distinctive qualities of men and women that are culturally created. Like class, gender is a relational concept. As an analytic concept referring to social ranking and ordering, gender is to be distinguished from *sexual division of labour*, which is a function and feature of gender, just as *social division of labour* is a product of class divisions.

The concept of gender differs from patriarchy — which has frequently been employed in a totalising and unhelpful way. Gender is a relational category; patriarchy best refers to kinship-based systems of male domination, resting on patrilineal or patrilocal arrangements (Mann 1986; Kandiyoti 1988; Moghadam 1990a), although this is a matter of debate (see Walby 1989).

that women's relative lack of economic power is the most important determinant of inequalities, including those of marriage, parenthood, and sexuality (Blumberg 1978; Chafetz 1984, 1990). Many feminist scholars use the terms "sexual division of labour" or "gender division of labour", and these refer to asymmetrical arrangements within the home/family and within the society. In most contemporary societal arrangements, "masculine" and "feminine" are defined by law and custom; men and women have differential access to political power and economic resources, and cultural images and representations of women are fundamentally distinct from those of men. This is the case even in societies formally committed to social (including gender) equality. Inequalities are learned and taught, and "the non-perception of disadvantages of a deprived group helps to perpetuate those disadvantages" (Kynch and Sen 1983, quoted in Papanek 1989). In addition to being imposed, inequalities are "internalized" (England and Brown 1990). The result (and reflection) of gender inequality is summed up in the now-famous formulation of the United Nations Decade for Women: While women account for half the world's population and perform two-thirds of the hours worked (though are recorded as working only one-third of those hours), they receive one-tenth of the world's income, and have one-hundredth of the world's property registered in their name. These gender inequities are either ignored in development planning and policy formulation, or reinforced through specific development projects and policies.

An example will suffice for now to show how gender bias operates not only to the detriment of women, but their children as well. In Sub-Saharan Africa, innovative husbandry practices are most often spread through extension agents. But in many cases farms managed by women alone are never visited by extension agents. It is ironic — or more accurately a reflection of gender bias — that in a continent where women bear so much responsibility for growing food, they receive so little help to improve their husbandry. Weil (forthcoming) observes that the immediate impact of this bias against women in the dissemination of knowledge is that women's income and economic security is reduced from what would be possible without the bias. And in the end, given women's crucial role as food producers, everyone pays.

In general, systems of social stratification are maintained through a combination of force and coercion, concession and legitimation — the latter achieved largely through socialisation, ideological manipulation, or welfare activities. But stratification systems are subject to challenges and change. The same is true of gender systems, which may be affected by changes in production and distribution, and changes in consciousness and political forces.

The gender division of labour may be affected by macro-level changes in demography, technology, and the economy. Historically, the transition from simple hunting-and-gathering communities to agrarian technology entailed a major shift in gender relations, what Engels called “the world-historical defeat of the female sex” and what Lerner (1986) has called “the creation of patriarchy.” More recent unintentional change processes — with unintended consequences for gender relations and the position of women — include industrialisation, urbanisation, the worldwide expansion of capitalism, warfare and political conflict (Chafetz 1990). Intentional changes in sex roles or gender constructs may come about in the course of revolutions or through government reforms. In general, therefore, changes affecting gender may be unintentional, with unintended consequences, or deliberate, the result of specific policies and political interventions.

Feminist theory and the worldwide women’s movement have been essential in bringing women to the mainstream if not the centre of inquiry. But mention must also be made of the pivotal role of the UN Decade for Women. The Decade’s focus on women reformulated development as a liberating and emancipatory project linking economic, political, cultural and ethical concerns. It legitimated a more holistic approach that emphasises human development and views economic growth as a necessary but not sufficient condition to foster human development (Tinker and Jaquette 1987). Another achievement of the Decade is that dialogue between Third World and First World women has improved.⁴ Third World women have incorporated feminism into their own realities rather than seeing it as a Western import (Jayawardena 1986), while women from the advanced capitalist countries have learned about the pressing basic needs facing the Third World in addition to gender issues (Boyd 1988). This is changing research questions and priorities at all levels.

b. Integration or Marginalisation? On Female Proletarianisation

But not everyone is agreed as to how to proceed in improving the situation and status of women around the world. A major conundrum in WID research remains whether economic development helps or harms the lot of women in developing countries. The goal of “integrating women in development” has come under attack by some feminist researchers of Latin America, Asia, and Africa. One

⁴ In this study I continue to use the term “Third World” even though it may soon be out of currency.

group argues that women have indeed been integrated into development projects — much to their disadvantage, as they have become the latest group of exploited workers, a source of cheap and expendable labour (Elson and Pearson 1981; Fuentes and Ehrenreich 1983; Nash and Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Jain 1990). Another group argues that development, especially modernisation of a capitalistic kind, has everywhere reduced the economic status of women, resulting in marginalisation and impoverishment (Ward 1984; Sen and Grown 1987).

Tiano (1987) has described three positions among WID researchers. The *integration* thesis shares many assumptions with modernisation theory, which itself is based on neoclassical economics and functionalism in sociology. According to this view, economic development involves women more centrally in public life as the expansion of jobs for women in industry and related services integrates them into the modern labour market. Wage work increases financial independence while developing productive skills and modern attitudes that enhance opportunities and motivation for advancement. Women also benefit from the undermining of patriarchal control. The *marginalisation* thesis, the most influential early theory of women-in-development, and compatible with dependency theory, holds that capitalist development isolates women from production and political control. Women in precapitalist societies, according to this view, are integral to household production; however, with capitalist modernisation, socially valued production is transferred from the household to the modern firm and factory. Men are drawn into wage labour while women are relegated to domestic and subsistence activities within the household, or in the informal sector. The *exploitation* thesis is consistent with Marxist feminist analyses of women's role in capitalist societies. This thesis assumes that development often makes Third World women more central to industrial production but that their involvement is more harmful than beneficial. According to this view, women provide cheap and easily expendable labour, which is particularly pronounced in the Third World. Thus development provides no benefits for women (Tiano 1987: 217-218).

It is true that the terms “development” and “modernisation” obscure the relations of exploitation, unequal distribution of wealth, and other disparities (not to mention environmental degradation) that ensue. But it is also true that within a national economy framework there is room to improve working women's lot: sex-segregated occupational distribution can be challenged and altered, as can gender-based wage differentials, inadequate support structures for working mothers, unfair labour legislation pertaining to women, and so on. Moreover, while the proletarianisation of women entails

labour control (as it does for men), wage work also provides prospects for women's autonomy — a not insignificant consideration in patriarchal contexts. For example, in many rural areas women's work and its products are generally defined as the property of men. In such a context, integrating women into development through paid employment would be emancipatory. However, one researcher notes that “a coincidence of interests between capital and male policy-makers has resulted in the creation of a female domain in subsistence agriculture responsible for reproducing and nurturing a large reserve army of cheap labour” (Afshar 1985a).

And what's so great about female proletarianisation? Here the evidence is quite contradictory, and the debate sharp. On one side there is the assumption that “the female labour force participation rate as the measure of women's economic status is . . . arguably the key one of the various indicators of the quality of life for women” (Joekes 1987: 21). On the other side is the assertion that “waged employment rarely represents a liberation for Third World women” (Mitter 1986: 63). All studies of Third World female employment recognise that women's pay and working conditions are inferior to men's, reflecting and reinforcing the relative social disadvantage of women. But is the answer to this a wholesale rejection of development, of technology, and of factory employment? Does not the answer lie in protecting the gains that women have made in the industrial sector, improving their conditions of work, and alleviating women's double work burden?

It might be useful to examine this debate further. Mitter (1986) situates women's participation in paid work in the context of a changing world economy, characterised by investment strategies of TNCs. She echoes the prevalent view that in the “runaway phase” of transnational capital, the object has been cheap labour, the cheapest being female. Ward (1984) argues that the more integrated a country is in the capitalist world system, the more likely that women's status will be an inferior one and fertility likely to increase. For her, foreign investment from and trade dependency on core nations lead to competition for access to productive resources in which women are disadvantaged vis-à-vis men. As a result of the intensification of their marginalisation from the productive process, women pursue strategies of childbearing either because they are unable consciously to choose fertility reduction or because they may find such a reduction economically disadvantageous. Stripped of their economic/productive role, women have to depend on motherhood performance for status and prestige and on their children's labour as a strategy for survival. Ward's conclusion is that the influence of the world economic system through investment and

dependency has been to decrease women's economic opportunities relative to men's and to maintain the value of children.

A further indictment of integration into development and into the world system is that recession and the debt crisis during the 1980s have placed disproportionate burdens on women, especially poor women but including working women.

Writing for INSTRAW, a UN agency dealing with women, Joeke (1987) proposes that women's social and economic positions are improved most directly by their involvement in paid work. Here Joeke explores the impact of export trade, international finance, and technology upon women's paid employment in agriculture, industry and services in Asia, Africa and South America. The study found a strong association between the growth of manufactured exports and the growth of female industrial employment where wages are higher than in agriculture or services. Thus women's improving economic position is directly related to international factors, including TNC investment. The study concludes with recommendations for policies to protect gains and improve women's conditions. Lim (1990) points out that the lower wages women receive in export industries than in manufacturing as a whole does not mean that these women workers are poorly paid relative to all others in the economy. She points out that in Mexico, women working in the maquiladoras along the U.S. border typically earn at least the legal minimum wage. "In a country where unemployment runs as high as 40% and barely half of those who have jobs earn the minimum wage, this puts them in the top quartile of the national income distribution. The same is true in Bangkok or Manila . . ." (Lim 1990: 109). According to one UN study, "Prima facie, one gets the impression that women employed by TNCs are better off than those employed by local enterprises, the level of their wages being higher than those of their counterparts employed by domestic firms. However, the average wages for women in TNCs are far less than those of male workers, ranging from 50% to 75% of male wages in comparable occupations" (*The CTC Reporter*, no. 26, Autumn 1988, p. 33).

The advantages to women of paid work are borne out by a recent sociological study of women, work and family in rural Dominican Republic. Finlay (1989) set out to understand the traditional division of labour and decision-making within rural Dominican households, and to see the changes that occur when women move from traditional roles into the market economy as wage earners. To that end, she conducted a survey of two groups of women in Azua: "community women" and women employees of the export-processing agribusinesses. Her interest was in the effects of this type

of wage work on the traditional division of labour, on family structure, and on the attitudes, level of living, and aspirations of the women themselves.

The results are intriguing. In the author's own words: "...the division of labour within the home seems to have undergone important changes within workers' families. The workers themselves were less likely to assume full responsibility for all domestic work than were the community sample women" (Finlay 1989:139). Significantly, the workers also had more power and control over resources within the family — with the effect that children and the family in general were better off — a conclusion also reached in a series of studies edited by Bruce and Dwyer (1988). And because workers were more likely to limit their fertility, the infant mortality rate was lower as a result. The workers also had higher aspirations for their children, in terms of both occupational and educational hopes. Similarly, Safa (forthcoming) reports that women factory workers in export manufacturing in the Caribbean use their earnings and the family's increased dependence on them to bargain for increased authority and sharing of responsibility within the household. This is in part linked to the failure of men to fulfil their role as economic providers, and the high rates of unemployment in the region. She further argues that women's increased ability to contribute to family income may challenge traditional patriarchal authority and lead to more egalitarian family structures. A UNU study of Households, Gender and Age (HGA), coordinated by Eleanora Masini, indicates that many aspects of household decision-making are changing in relation to women's participation in the family income (Masini 1990).

The contradictions of development and of technological change are that they both displace and provide additional employment for women. Weil (forthcoming) reports that in Sub-Saharan Africa, women have been displaced as imported lager beer has replaced the traditional beer brewed by women, and in West Africa, cheaper imported soap has taken over markets serviced by women who have long made soap from palm oil and wood ash. On the other hand, while still relatively rare in Africa, the export processing zone in Mauritius has provided additional employment for over 22,000 workers, some 80% of whom have been women.

A growing number of studies confirm that women do well when given opportunities to be independent and to earn income, and that they are generally better off in paid employment than in unpaid family labour, informal sector type activities, outwork, or "microenterprises" (small-scale income-generating activities favoured by certain aid agencies). The extent to which paid work enhances

women's social power depends very much on whether it provides for women the experience of being active agents in a public process. In this regard, opportunities for their self-organisation as women workers have been noted. Indeed, Mitter quotes the young woman vice-president of the Bangladesh Garment Workers Federation, referring to the expansion of export oriented garment production in Bangladesh: "These jobs have been catalysts for a bigger struggle for women's independence" (Mitter 1986: 75). Paid employment also has socially useful consequences: there are strong linkages between female education and employment on the one hand, and fertility rates and infant mortality rates (not to mention maternal mortality). (This would apply not only to the Third World, but to North American inner cities.) Many studies have found that fertility and labour force participation are negatively related (Anker et al. 1982; Anker 1985; Bodrova and Anker 1985; Sathar et al. 1988). The HGA study also found that fertility and labour force participation are negatively correlated, as are fertility and level of education. This was striking in Colombia and has been described in the study "The Demographic Transition in Colombia," directed by Carmen Elisa Florez of the UNU team.

But the structure of opportunities in the formal sector is limited by gender bias (which is the cause of the earnings gap), by the class context (work for middle class women is as a rule better than work for proletarian women), by the macroeconomic environment (which shapes the employment structure), by the state and legal system (which could act as facilitator or impediment), and by the specific form of paid work (i.e. factory work is very different from outwork). Another constraining factor is the nature of the transnational firm, which does not guarantee stable, long-term employment (for men or for women). Thus the work in a transnational or world market factory is often highly stressful and without benefits or advancement, or even assurance of a future. Nonetheless, the temporary improvements in self-image, economic independence, and feelings of solidarity with other workers may result, giving rise also to changes in family relations.

While the critics of TNC investment and female paid employment have some valuable insights, they tend to overstate the case. In the first instance, they tend to exaggerate both the "global reach" of TNCs and the cheap labour thesis. If cheap labour could really attract capital, there would no longer be economic underdevelopment or unemployment.⁵ Despite the increase in female industrial employment, the majority of African and Asian women are still located in the agricultural sector. Gordon (1988) has demonstrated that contrary to the conventional wisdom of the Left, the level of productive investment in the Third World has not been

high. Even at the “runaway phase” of capital, about three-quarters of direct foreign investment went to other developed countries. Multinational investment is selective and characterised by enclaves. The image of a more open global economy is therefore an exaggeration. Secondly, TNCs employ about 2 million women in developing countries, that is, less than 1% of the total female labour force in those countries and about 3% of the total world-wide employment of TNCs (*CTC Reporter*, 1988, p. 33). Of course there are wide variations among countries, but the focus on women in TNCs and the extensive literature on the subject is disproportionate to the relative importance of such employment for Third World women. As for whether working in a TNC or export factory is better or worse than peasant production or domestic labour is ultimately a normative judgement resting on different concepts of female autonomy and emancipation.⁶

Thirdly, it is now a truism that development has not traversed a linear path in the Third World; rather, there have been variations in the depth and scope of industrialisation, infrastructural development, class structure, and types of political regime. But the implications of this for women’s work and women’s lives are not properly appreciated, particularly for places where socio-economic development has been limited. It should be noted that the areas of the world with the highest fertility rates are the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa (Weeks 1988). It would appear that the areas of the world with the least integration into the world market in terms of trade, investment and exports, the lowest levels of female

⁵ Kari Polanyi Levitt (1990) points out that “Besides, in industrialised countries cheap labour is increasingly employed in service industries, and there seems to be no shortage of immigrants and ‘guest workers’, legal and illegal, employable and exploitable in this rapidly growing sector of the economies of OECD countries.” She adds that the successes of Asia are not principally due to cheap labour, “but to its organisation, management, work ethic, and the role of the state in enforcing labour discipline and rewarding successful capitalists.”

⁶ It is interesting to note that some of the most vocal critics of female industrial employment have been Marxist-feminists. In this regard they diverge from Marx’s view of the capitalist mode of production as an historical advance over feudal bondage (notwithstanding his trenchant critique in *Capital*). They also diverge from Engels’ view that women’s participation in factory wage labour emancipates them from domestic slavery and patriarchal arrangements. As Lim (1990) notes, Marx and Engels incorporated the concepts of dialecticism and contradiction into their thought, predicting the simultaneous existence of positive and negative, exploitative and liberating features and consequences of capitalist development. I have argued this for the Middle East and North Africa (Moghadam 1990b).

paid employment, and the lack of mass education, have the highest fertility rates.

Finally, the structure of pre-industrial relations, and women's pre-existing positions in their communities, provide important clues as to the impact of development on women's status. The mobility and autonomy women enjoyed in the Andes, south India, or in parts of sub-Saharan Africa prior to colonialism and modernisation stand in contrast to the situation of women in the belt of "classic patriarchy" (Kandiyoti 1988): North Africa, the Muslim Middle East (including Turkey and Iran), and South and East Asia (Pakistan, Afghanistan, India and China). In this region, patriarchal family structures remain strong in rural areas where women, though unveiled, are controlled (Keddie 1989).

An examination of the Middle East, North Africa, and parts of South Asia undermines notions of a uniform integration into the world system and similar consequences for labour and/or women. Many Middle Eastern countries are not well integrated into the world system — in terms of patterns of trade, investment, and exports — and yet they have among the highest fertility rates in the world today. Women are assigned a socially inferior position by law and by custom, and female labour force participation rates are the lowest in the world. This has less to do with capitalism or the adverse effects of development than with incomplete industrialisation and the weight of precapitalist ideologies — patriarchal kinship arrangements and Islamic family law. Paid employment for women in the modern sector would alter such a situation in women's favour. Those who assume the detrimental effects of socio-economic development on all women should study Afghanistan. Here there is a very low level of infrastructural development, and no experience of colonialism. The material and symbolic benefits of wage work have not reached women. Patriarchal structures remain strong and women's subordination is extreme (Moghadam 1989, 1990a). In Afghanistan, and elsewhere in South Asia and West Asia, demographic data reveal an inverse sex ratio and high maternal mortality.⁷ In this connection, Blau and Ferber (forthcoming) cite a recent study of 144 countries confirming earlier research that showed a positive relation between women's labour force participation and the ratio of women to men in the population. The paper points out that women, when they are in the main "only" wives and mothers, and

⁷ The systematic food deprivation of women vis-à-vis men in many societies (particularly that of girls vis-à-vis boys) in South Asia (Pakistan, northern India), West Asia, North Africa, and rural China is discussed in Miller (1981), Harriss (1986), Drèze and Sen (1989). These are areas where "classic patriarchy" is strongest.

not seen as economically active, are so short-changed in the allocation of resources that their chances for survival are reduced.

Mernissi's research confirms that the deterioration of women's social positions is tied to their pre-existing dependence on men. Her interviews with women working in various craft industries such as weaving textiles and rugs indicate how dependent women are upon men as intermediaries, a situation that only increases their precarious economic position. She concludes that the increasing capitalist penetration of such industries has had the consequence of further degrading women's status (Mernissi 1978, 1987). Research by Turkish and Iranian women scholars suggests the importance of cultural/ideological factors in shaping women's work and status, the salience of persistent patriarchal relations (especially in rural areas), and the complex and contradictory nature of the relationship between development and women's status (Kandiyoti 1977, 1984, 1988; Berik 1985, 1986; Isvan-Hayat 1986; Afshar 1985a; Moghadam 1989, 1990a). Kandiyoti's research comparing the status of Turkish women in nomadic tribes, peasant villages, rural towns, and cities reveals that the influence of the patrilineal extended household is pervasive in all sectors, but is less so in the towns and cities because of neolocal residence and the diminished importance of elders. It is true that compared to peasant and nomadic women, urban women play a sharply reduced role in the productive process, even though they are more likely to head their own households. But peasant and nomadic women do not receive recognition for their own labour, not even for their offspring, as these belong to the patrilineal extended family. In many parts of rural Turkey, women have been traditionally called the "enemy of the spoon," referring to the fact that they will share the food on the table without contributing economically to the household (Berik 1985). Berik's study of carpet weavers in rural Central Anatolia reveals that the labour power of the female weavers, and the wages that accrue to them, are controlled by male kin (Berik 1985, 1986). This pattern has also been found for Iran (Afshar 1985a) and Afghanistan (Moghadam 1989). Thus, because of the existence of "archaic and patriarchal family structures" (Abadan-Unat 1981: 127), "we cannot speak of a simple decline in women's status with the transition to an urban wage labour economy. Their diminished role in production may be offset by other factors, which are, however, increasingly specific to certain class sectors" (Kandiyoti 1977).

The contradictory and class-specific consequences of development for women's work are described in Papanek (1985). She notes that in many developing countries, such as the West Asian and South Asian countries she considers, educated women from the middle class have been entering modern-sector employment in increasing numbers. Many of these women come from families where

paid jobs for women were unacceptable in earlier generations. Papanek explains that

Their entry into the paid labour force has occurred in response to two factors. First, demand for educated female labour has increased as a result of the expansion of the modern sector [and the state]. Second, . . . aspirations have risen and now increasingly require cash incomes beyond those earned by adult male family members. . . . On the other hand, uneducated women — mostly poor — have lost their traditional earning opportunities, partly as a result of accelerated technological innovations and other changes brought about by development. (Papanek 1985: 134).

My studies of women's employment patterns in Muslim societies (Moghadam 1990b) and of women, work and ideology in Iran (Moghadam 1988, 1991) suggest the need for employment-creation policies designed specifically for women. Integration into paid employment in the formal/modern sector of the economy (as distinct from unpaid family labour and many forms of homework or informal sector-type work) is a precondition for women's empowerment. When paid work provides the only means for open female participation and interaction in a cultural milieu otherwise characterised by rigid sex roles, then the emancipatory potential of employment is self-evident. In places such as Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Algeria, among others, "integrating women in development" is therefore fairly revolutionary in its implications.

Whether wage work is "good" or "bad" for women, it should be clear that gender plays a role in the process of formation and utilisation of labour supply. But who decides if a woman will take up wage work? Here the conventional household economics literature has been unhelpful, as it tends to obscure power relations within the household (Folbre 1988; Wolf 1990). Some sociological research in Latin America and Central America suggests that greater marital instability can be a cause (as well as an effect) of female employment (Finlay 1989). A recent quantitative study of labour supply in rural Tanzania demonstrates the constraints on the supply of female labour resulting from marriage arrangements whereby men who own land acquire control over the labour of their wives and subsequently their children (Smith and Sender 1990: 1337). Thus women who enter wage work are typically unmarried, or divorced, or deserted, or a widow whose deceased husband did not leave her (or, more precisely, her sons) adequate resources, or does not undertake unpaid work for a man. The authors criticise the notion that "resistance to proletarianisation" enables peasant households

to enjoy a superior quality of life, for this implies that women enjoy a superior quality of life as a result of restrictions which confine their labour to household production. Their conclusion: "It is arguable that the reverse is more likely" (Smith and Sender 1990: 1340).⁸

A recent study of household decision-making regarding the factory employment of young female members suggests that seeking family employment is not necessarily made in tandem with parental visions of a daughter's role or a family economic plan (Wolf 1990). In her comparative study of Java and Taiwan, Wolf found young women who disobeyed and rebelled against parental control; she also found, mainly in Java, that most young women were motivated to seek factory employment for individual social and economic reasons, not for the betterment of the family economy. In Taiwan, however, she found that the patrilineal and patrilocal kinship system socialises daughters to be filial and to pay back what their parents incurred in bringing them up. This largely motivated female factory employment (Wolf 1990: 54).

One serious objection to the increasing incorporation of women into the labour force is that it may serve to weaken the power of organised labour. Standing (1989) has argued that global feminisation through flexible labour results from structural adjustment policies and the need to cut labour costs in order to meet increasing international competition from developing as well as advanced industrial societies. Standing cites a number of factors such as the growth of export processing, labour market deregulation through subcontracting and the informal sector, and cuts in government expenditure that contribute to the rising participation rates of women and the falling participation rates of men. If, as Standing suggests, women are being substituted for men in various occupational categories, then this is a reflection and contributing factor to the erosion of trade union strength in those regions.

It is true that in many places women constitute a cheap labour reserve who are difficult to organise, since many work in the informal economy or in areas like seasonal agriculture or export processing where labour unions are prohibited or politically

⁸ It has also been argued that the process of female proletarianisation differs from male proletarianisation. Unlike men, female proletarians do not undergo a process of separation or dispossession from the means of production, as they typically do not hold possession or control of it as precapitalist peasant producers. A proletarianised woman can sell her labour power to any capitalist whereas a female peasant producer labours under a particular configuration of male power relationships within the family (Bryceson 1985).

controlled. However, the onus should be on the trade unions to take women workers more seriously. Safa argues that at present women workers in many areas have no adequate vehicles through which to express their grievances or to transform their sense of exploitation (which is very real) into greater class solidarity. She concludes: "Until the claims of women workers are given the same legitimacy as those of men, and not regarded as supplementary or subsidiary, women will continue to be treated primarily as a source of cheap labour" (Safa forthcoming).

The debates surrounding the nature, causes, and consequences of women's wage employment in the developing countries will no doubt continue. What we need is more specific exploration (case studies and comparative research) of the conditions under which women's labour force participation represents an improvement, and those in which it represents a deterioration in women's position.

My own conclusion is that development entails integration, marginalisation, *and* exploitation — for male and female producers and workers. But the specificity of women's oppression is that (unlike male labour) their subjugation is rooted not in capitalism, which it long predates, but in patriarchy; not in the wage relations between capitalist and worker, to which gender is not central, but in the domestic relations between men and women; not in the workplace, where sexism is but one of many forms of division and discrimination, but in the patriarchal household (Kusterer 1990). Gender is not central to capitalism as class is, but gender bias is clearly present in all cases. It is present in policies that *exclude* women from economic participation, and in management strategies that *include* women as cheap labour and a divisive element. Capitalism of course exploits labour — that of men and of women — but it also provides the conditions for the eventual demise of patriarchy. As development increases, and as women are drawn in greater numbers into paid employment and public life, their subjugation *as women* is undermined and gender roles and constructs change. Thus development has long-term emancipatory effects (although these are largely unintended).

One indicator of this is that since the 1960s literacy and education among women worldwide has increased — even though male-female ratios in attainment remain very unequal in the Third World. The female share of the labour force has also increased everywhere — even though women tend to be clustered in "feminine" white-collar occupations and low-wage service jobs (ILO/INSTRAW 1985). But the evidence is strong that countries with higher levels of economic development, industrialisation, and urbanisation are

more likely to increase gender equality (Kim 1990). The status of women is enhanced as development expands and deepens, and as women are drawn into paid employment.

In the end the question is not “To develop or not to develop?”, but rather, “What kind of development”, and “development for whom and by whom?” A strong case can be made that Northern countries have not done enough to support human development and the advancement of women in the Third World.⁹ Within the Third World itself, development has all too often been an elite affair, out of touch with and disinterested in the welfare of the poor and the working classes. But this is not an argument against socio-economic development or the integration of women in development. Rather, it is an argument for the expansion and democratisation of the process. Women’s full participation in public life, particularly in the main sectors of economic activity and political decision-making, is a critical step toward societal democratisation.

Integration into the international capitalist economy, abiding by its “rules of the game” as policed by the IMF and the World Bank, has for a very small number of developing countries proved able to sustain such a rapid rate of accumulation that participation in paid work has improved living standards (Elson 1988). Opportunities for women to forge a new independence in the context of workers’ struggles have arisen as a result. But for the vast majority of poor women in the Third World, the main impact of increasing integration into the world economy has been to increase their vulnerability to the instability of that system. For other women, the absence of integration means few opportunities to loosen the hold of tradition and cultural prescriptions that bar female participation in public life. Clearly, there have been both positive and negative consequences for different groups of women in the countries of the Third World. The point is to identify and expand the positive trends.

Many of the critics of integration point out that in the advanced industrialised countries, wherever women work they experience discrimination and occupy at best a secondary position

⁹ In a thought-provoking article, Levitt (1990) argues that the era of international development assistance is over, that developing countries have been in a position of negative net transfers to the IMF since 1985, that the “centre” has no more need for a (Third World) periphery, and that self-reliance is squarely back on the agenda, not as an option (in the 1970s sense of voluntary delinking), but as a necessity of economic survival. This not only disproves some of the exaggerated claims about the globalisation of transnational capital, but suggests that the global restructuring taking place requires new theories and strategies of development and emancipation.

in the labour market. To me this is not a convincing argument against integrating women in the paid labour force and improving the conditions of work of all workers. Still, occupational sex-typing in the industrialised countries, the income gap between men and women, and the difficulties faced by working mothers all constitute serious problems which have to be addressed theoretically as well as through various policies. We now turn to the major explanations of women's continuing subordination in the labour market.

**c. Accounting for Women's Economic Disadvantage:
Theoretical Perspectives**

Labour analysts and feminist theoreticians have developed four theoretical models to analyse the causes and impact of occupational sex segregation. These are: status attainment; dual market; Marxist; Marxist-feminist. The *status attainment* model, a descendant of the economists' human capital theory, looks at what individuals bring to the marketplace — that is, occupational aspirations, education, values, attitudes, and experiences — and assesses which variables affect the attainment of high status (Stockard and Johnson 1980). It assumes that men and women compete in the same job market; the extent to which women lose is attributed to factors that make women less desirable as employees, that is, marital status, number of children, previous work experience, and so on. Once these factors are controlled, the model argues, lesser achievement by women in the marketplace can be attributed to discrimination. Thus the model assumes a "rational" marketplace; it does not address capitalism or patriarchy as cultural ideologies with structural consequences — the differential placement of men and women (Richardson 1988).

The *dual market* model argues that there are two distinct labour markets: one for men — the primary or core market — and one for women — the secondary or peripheral market. This model maintains that even if the "supply" characteristics of women were changed, unless the market structure were changed, women would see little relief (Acker 1980). As the economy is now, women are slotted into the less desirable secondary labour market, which is characterised by lower wages, fewer fringe benefits, less chance of promotion, higher turnover rates, and more non-union control. This dual market model views socialisation as an accommodation to limited job opportunity, rather than as a cause of it. However, it assumes that the dual market can be altered without destroying capitalism (Acker 1980; Richardson 1988).

The *Marxist* model also assumes a dual labour market; however, this model sees the dual market as a tool of monopolistic

capitalism that is used to divide the working class — men and women — and to inhibit its attempts to organise. Women become a ready pool of expandable and expendable workers (part of the reserve army), placed in seasonal slots and in newly developing sections of the economy. This secondary pool of workers lends greater stability to the primary sector and greater profits to capital. The inferior status of women in the labour market is thus understood as a special feature of capitalistic oppression and exploitation. Women's positions will be improved accordingly when capitalism is replaced by an egalitarian economic system.

Marxist feminism attempts to link women's domestic labour — nonsalaried work — to the class structure and job segregation. Women not only reproduce the next generation of labourers, but they also provide domestic services (cooking, cleaning, child rearing) to men in the work force. Both capitalists and male working class members benefit from this social arrangement (Hartmann 1976). Occupational sex segregation is the primary way in which the superiority of men over women is maintained in a capitalist society. Women are slotted into low-paying jobs, which keep them dependent on men and marriage. Married women perform domestic chores for their husbands. Thus men benefit from both higher wages and the domestic division of labour. This domestic division of labour, in turn, weakens women's positions in the labour market and increases capital's profits. Housework thus lowers the value of (female) labour power. Women's performance of domestic work, especially the care of children within the home, both expresses their dependence and subordination within the marriage (since men actively benefit from this work) and also weakens their position within the wage labour market, contributing to their lower wages and poor conditions as wage workers, including low-status, low-wage, part-time work (Mackintosh 1981). In the Marxist-feminist model, therefore, gender is an independent variable affecting alternatives in the labour market. The perpetuation of social and sexual stratification — the unique rights to distribute scarce resources and the unequal receipt of such resources — is explained in terms of the intersection of class and gender (Armstrong and Armstrong 1987).

It should be noted that these models have been formulated in and applied to advanced capitalist countries. What then of the majority of Third World countries, which are *developing* capitalist countries? (The major difficulty that women workers have faced under socialism in Eastern European and in the Soviet Union, namely the double burden of full-time employment and household chores, merits its own discussion.) In the Third World, the vast majority of women are not fully waged and therefore do not experience the

kind of labour market discrimination that exists in advanced industrial countries, but they are arguably even more oppressed.

The traditional (modernisation) view was that technological growth and industrialisation bring women to the cash economy through a series of changes in occupational structure, educational opportunities, and family composition. The emergence of modern economies associated with industrialisation is characterised by the rise of service industries and white-collar occupations which are “female-demanding.” The transformation of the economic structure, coupled with growing educational opportunities, declining fertility, and changing functions of the family from a producer unit to a consumer unit generate both greater demand for and greater supply of female workers (Oppenheimer 1970).

This “technological deterministic” perspective has been subject to rigorous interrogation. The WID pioneer Ester Boserup (1970) argued that the introduction of modern technology in developing countries benefited men more than women, as mechanisation tended to displace women even more than men. This perspective was echoed by Rogers (1980). In a similar vein, others have suggested that as industrialisation proceeds there is a withdrawal of women. A more plausible theory is that the effect of economic development on female labour force participation is curvilinear: development initially forces women out of the active labour force and increases participation at advanced levels (Durand 1975). With further development, therefore, women are increasingly drawn into market employment. Semyonov and Shenhav (1988) have argued that female labour force participation is determined both by internal characteristics of the social system and the impact of external constraints. The organisation of the family, social inequality, cultural prescriptions, state ideology and external constraints or economic dependence are important intervening variables in the relationship between development and female employment and economic status, according to this view. Feminists point out that the movement of women into high-tech assembly plants does not challenge the idea of a sexually segregated work force or the tacit understanding that women can be paid lower wages than men (Warren and Borque 1986: 16). This is based on the feminist argument that women’s work has been devalued by a universal ideological framework that regards them as inferior bearers of labour, whose principal function is that of mother, wife, or care-provider rather than serious employee/worker.

The development literature identifies three interrelated forces that condition and structure the position of women in the labour market: (1) supply factors that influence whether women are available for wage labour outside the household; (2) the specific structure of

the economy, which conditions the demand for workers in the labour market, (3) the implicit and explicit policies regarding the inclusion/exclusion of women in the labour market as reflected in hiring practices, segregation of jobs by sex, earnings/wage structure, etc. These three forces imply cultural, class, technical, and institutional determinants, all of which operate in a dynamic way. For example, cultural norms regarding women's role in society or in the family influence the supply of female labour; the unidimensional view of women as wives/mothers and assumptions about women workers (that they are less committed than men, etc.) affect policy formulation. In many countries, and especially in Muslim societies, women represent a mere fraction of the labour force. However, at a certain point in the process of economic transformation and societal change, the emerging structure of production undermines the existing social and sexual divisions of labour. This is particularly so during or following periods of modernisation, where modern industry and expanding public and private sectors create new labour markets, opening job opportunities for women. National development plans and state policies also govern women's work opportunities and conditions. And in some cases, the preference for cheap labour (and women's labour is invariably cheaper than men's) prompts policymakers to include women in their formulations or employers to hire women. The evidence, then, suggests that supply factors are more responsive to demand than vice versa (Semyonov and Scott 1983). For example, it has been observed that women with fewer children are more likely to enter the labour market. This has typically been assumed to constitute a major supply variable. Yet it appears that women choose to have fewer children when they are employed outside the home. Demand factors not only affect decisions about the number, spacing, and maternal care of children, they also affect the quantity and quality of domestic work (Chafetz 1990:123).

This being the case, feminist researchers and others concerned about women's economic status, social roles, and working conditions quite correctly direct their efforts toward studying policies that would benefit women, integrate them into development planning, provide support structures for them, and assure them compensation for their work that is comparable to that provided to men. This is particularly compelling as the phenomenon of female-headed households grows in the Third World, as indeed throughout the world.

Blau and Ferber (forthcoming) point out that universalistic egalitarian standards, such as are professed in socialist countries, generally appear to be positively related to women's role in the labour market. A more equal distribution of income and a larger share of resources allocated to social welfare have been found to be associated

with higher labour force participation of women, as for example, in the Scandinavian countries. Similarly, Marxist ideology, which strongly advocates women's entry into the work force, surely helps to explain the high participation ratios that have existed in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

A framework that recognises the intersection of gender, class, and state policy in the formation and utilisation of female labour best explains the contradictory patterns that have led to the sharp debates in the WID and feminist literature. Class and gender frame the structure of work opportunities, while state action constitutes a critical source of women's positions and legal status. In late-developing states the role of political elites is central, and this suggests an empirical relationship between government policy toward women and female access to the modern sector. Thus beyond the fundamental social determinants of class and gender, impacting factors are the nature and policies of the state and the type and level of economic development. International factors also enter into the equation. Each society is located within and subject to the influences of a global system of states and markets. Commodity prices, investment flows, trade policies, and capital flows are among the salient international factors which affect women's work opportunities within national settings.

Cultural concepts of feminine and masculine, and the ideology of gender, has meant that throughout the world, women continue to occupy disadvantaged positions in production, and are assumed to be primarily responsible for reproduction (biologically, but also in terms of socialisation). Not only do men and women allocate labour and receive income differently; they also consume, utilise, and receive resources, goods, and services quite distinctly. This suggests that the direct impact of given policies will differ for men and for women — as in the case of decollectivisation and the return to the family farm in rural China, which had the effect of reviving patriarchal relations (Stacey 1983). Given that in most societies women are among the vulnerable social groups, and given the expansion of female-headed households, attention must be directed to the gender impact of social policies and macroeconomic policies.¹⁰ We now turn to an examination of how gender figures into social policy.

¹⁰ Food distribution policies that do not account for inequality within the household/community will result in their own failure. Anti-female bias in the division of health care has also been noted, and this, too, must be considered in health policy.

Part II. The Gender Dimension of Policy

a. Gender and Social Policy

In modern societies, government policies lay the ground rules for the operations of gender. In various times and places, unlike their male peers, women have been *legally* barred from certain types of work; executed for adultery; required to assume “modest” attire; placed under special restrictions concerning their political behaviour; permitted to attend only inferior, gender-segregated schools; barred from establishing their own legal residences; denied the opportunity to gain credit or even to control their own income (Chafetz 1990:69). Because gender is so integral a part of social life, all policy is filtered through a gender lens; some policies serve to perpetuate gender inequality, and others tacitly or unintentionally serve to “decompose” or break down gender inequality. Examples are legal instruments which set the conditions and govern the terms for marriage and family formation, divorce and child custody; for rights within and outside marriage relating to assault and personal injury; women’s access to contraception, abortion, and other reproductive rights; for inheritance and individual property rights in general; for the provision of nurseries to ease the burden of working mothers. In many countries these instruments are strongly asymmetrical by sex.¹¹ Husbands often have the legal right of sexual intercourse, and the power to refuse or subvert contraception. Women are widely denied, by custom and by law, the right to control or manage their reproductive capacity. This may take the form of unavailability of contraception or laws against birth control and abortion. Conservative and pro-natalist governments tend to disfavour female control of sexuality and reproduction, with the consequence of high fertility, maternal mortality, and unsafe abortions. In the case of domestic or marital violence, asymmetrical legal instruments legitimise subordination of women at the most basic level (Joekes 1989). Violence against women is a global problem, reflecting deeply embedded structural relations of gender inequality and the

¹¹ Examples are laws prohibiting abortion in the United States until 1973; in Switzerland, women were barred from participating in federal affairs, and could not vote, until 1971. Muslim family law, sometimes referred to as the personal status code, also discriminates by sex, as it requires guardianship for women but not for men. Other examples are the prohibition of abortion and contraceptive use in the Islamic Republic of Iran until recently, compulsory veiling, and the lowering of the marriage age for girls to 13 (Nashat 1983; Afshar 1985a; Moghadam 1990a); the imposition in Pakistan of a Koranically-derived moral and sexual code, the *Hodoud Ordinance*, which was especially biased against women, and the perpetuation of inheritance laws which favour men (Mumtaz and Shaheed 1987; Weiss 1989).

oppression of women, fostered by family laws that make men the head of the household and women minors and dependents. Other policies affirm women's lesser rights both within and outside marriage in different dimensions, notably with respect to ownership and control of property, such as land rights in a peasant or rural context (Agarwal 1988a).

Throughout the Third World, women continue to suffer high rates of illiteracy and fertility. In many developing countries (and, it should be noted, in the U.S.), social policy inadequately provides health, education, and welfare for the population and especially for women¹². But the social benefits of increasing female education, especially at the primary level, are well known. Female education increases women's productivity and family nutrition and (above a certain level) reduces fertility. Leslie, Lycette and Buvinic (1986) conclude from their review of the literature that in general increased female education is associated with lower fertility. This finding is also related to the positive effect of maternal education on child health and survival (UNICEF 1989). A recent study demonstrated the importance of female education in reducing child mortality in rural Egypt (Aly and Grabowski 1990). In African countries, where high fertility rates are accompanied by high infant mortality and maternal mortality rates, increased literacy and education of girls should be a priority policy issue. The education of women must be seen as both a moral right and a practical social necessity.

Joeke (1989) has noted that the universality of marriage and the customary pattern that women's obligations to and expectations of her natal family cease (or are considerably less) thereafter, have important economic consequences for women's lifetime earning capacity, notably by reducing women's access to education and training, and the higher — but deferred — income available therefrom. This is one of the main mechanisms perpetuating women's inferior economic position, the other being the disproportionate costs of reproduction borne by women. In industrialised countries, too, gender inequality is sustained by assigning the child-rearing role and domestic labour almost exclusively to women. Without a major restructuring of this sexual division of labour, the gender hierarchy within the society will remain in place.

¹² Mair (1989) argues that those who promote population control and family planning programmes do not necessarily act in the best interest of women's autonomy and equity. "While population policies and programmes occupy a significant place on the geopolitical agenda of the developed world, and are relatively well-financed, women's health programmes have received much less support."

In socialist countries, the provision of services to the family was to be socialised because “petty housework crushes, strangles, stultifies and degrades [woman] and chains her to the kitchen and nursery” (Lenin). And yet, inadequate resources have been allocated for this purpose. This has been part of a more general pattern of neglect of consumer goods in the former socialist countries, but the gender-specific consequences of this is that women are made to assume responsibility for household (including many hours spent marketing) in addition to full-time employment. The dissatisfaction of women workers in the former socialist countries attests to the importance of including domestic work in any strategy for change. A study of women workers and fertility in socialist countries suggested that in East European countries many women are working for financial reasons, and that, given a choice, they would prefer to rely on their husbands’ income and withdraw from the labour force (Anker 1985). This attitude may be a result of the persistence of a gendered socialisation and, paradoxically, of generous maternity and child-care leaves.¹³ But it is more likely the consequence of women’s “double burden.” In the workplace, legal decrees and social programmes have gone a long way towards reducing inequality between men and women. In the home, however, the sexual division of labour remains similar to that found in the past and in other regions of the world. Journalistic reports and interviews with women throughout Eastern Europe suggest that the combination of full-time employment and the burden of domestic chores has led many women in the former socialist countries to prefer to withdraw from the labour force. What is unfortunately not being considered by the new governments in Eastern Europe is the formulation of policy to reduce women’s domestic responsibilities and to encourage men to share in them (Moghadam 1990c).

Sociological theories of family structure tend to emphasise the structural or institutional influence of the economy, policy, and patriarchy. Naturally, the structure of the family changes following industrialisation, urbanisation, geographic and social mobility, and especially female education and employment. But beyond these material factors, ideological forces operate to sustain the family and women’s place within it. This is why even in advanced industrial countries with full female employment, domestic work and childcare remain a woman’s and not a man’s responsibility. This means that women’s integration in public life, in development, and in the formal labour market is a necessary but not sufficient condition of equity, and that the sexual division of labour will have to be targeted

¹³ Such generous maternity leaves could also be motivated by a desire to raise birth rates in a situation of labour shortage and declining birth rate. The result in any event is the identification of childcare with women.

ideologically and culturally as well. In particular, campaigns to raise people's consciousness about domestic work and childcare are imperative.

Rules that appear gender-neutral have gender-specific consequences. An example is no-fault divorce in the United States. A seminal sociological study by Weitzman (1987) helped highlight gender inequalities in ostensibly equitable divorce. Weitzman found that when marriages terminate, women's income substantially declines while men's significantly rises. Spousal support has been awarded infrequently, and child support awards are inadequate and unenforced. Since mothers continue to obtain physical custody in about 90% of all cases, most divorced wives end up with a far greater share of family responsibilities and far fewer resources.

In the most general terms, and in most countries, social policies formalise and uphold women's inferior economic position and the pressures on them to enter into and stay within marriage in what is likely to be an economically dependent state. This is particularly true today in Third World and especially Muslim countries, where social policies (such as Islamic family law which renders women legal dependents of men) are said to give expression to the cultural values of society. Even so, they could be modified to influence those values in a more egalitarian direction, as took place in, for example, Turkey, Tunisia, and South Yemen.¹⁴ Some

¹⁴ Catholic Italy has undergone similar changes, resulting from the women's movement and government reforms. Policies now allow for divorce, abortion, birth control, maternity leave, parental leave, and state childcare.

The classic examples of conscious efforts to improve women's economic and cultural status through direct government intervention and legislation are Soviet Russia following the Bolshevik Revolution, China, Cuba, Nicaragua, and the GDR (Kruks, Rapp, Young 1989). Equality has always been a communist and socialist goal, and thus communist and socialist parties and governments have been ideologically committed to social policies that would raise women's status to parity with men. In the Third World, these government actions have yielded conspicuous returns (Molyneux 1982), with Cuba possibly providing the most audacious example of efforts to improve the status of women through mass education and employment coupled with legislation requiring men to assume 50% of household work (Cole 1986). Among the industrial socialist countries, there was uneven progress, with women's rights in the GDR and in Romania representing opposite ends of the spectrum. Relative to West Germany and many OECD countries, the economic, legal, and social status of women in the GDR as workers, as mothers, and as individuals was undeniably far in advance (Shaffer 1981; Einhorn 1989). In general, while there has been considerable progress in women's positions, equality was not achieved in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, particularly with regard to domestic work (Lapidus 1987; Kruks, Rapp, Young 1989).

of the former socialist countries are now introducing bills to legalise abortion; in Poland this is justified by Catholic members of parliament in cultural and religious terms. In Hungary, the new emphasis on the family may result in prohibition of abortion, a discouragement of full-time work by young mothers, and the closing down of state-funded nurseries — precisely what occurred in Iran following the Islamic revolt against the Shah. Whether in Iran, Poland or Hungary, such social policies serve to intensify gender inequality.

Does this mean that all social programmes instituted by states serve to perpetuate women's subordination? Of course not. Welfare state programmes in particular have shifted many responsibilities from women to the state. Still, some of the feminist literature of the last few years evinces an antipathy to the state and uses terms such as *social patriarchy* or *public patriarchy* to describe state policies, including welfare-state policies, that bear on the lives of women (Pateman 1989). Apart from the fact that welfare-state policies were often the result of popular movements, such social programmes strengthen the conviction that economic issues belong in political spheres, and that democratic rights include economic rights (Piven 1985). The critique of welfare-state social programmes is especially questionable when examining the United States, which has the least developed welfare state in the industrialised world and arguably the most serious social problems. In the U.S. there are much higher rates of childrearing, abortion and pregnancy, especially among teenagers and also among older women, than in nearly any other developed country. The under-five mortality rate, at 13 per 1,000, is higher than that of Hong Kong, Singapore, Ireland, and Spain; higher than nearly all other OECD industrialised countries (UNDP 1990, Table 4, pp. 134—5). The rate is about 18 for blacks and 9 for whites.

These disturbing trends are the result of complicated social conditions peculiar to the United States: first, the existence of black poverty; second, the absence of a unified system of primary health care provision, of which contraceptive services would be an integral and routine part; second, the severe social inequalities in the U.S., giving many poor women little reason to plan or hope (Petchesky 1990). In the U.S., welfare provisions are means-tested, creating the stigma of indignity to welfare. They also act as a disincentive to work, as funds are discontinued as soon as a woman begins a job, no matter how inadequate her salary. The result of this social policy (or lack thereof?) is to keep poor women, and especially Afro-American women, in a state of poverty and dependence. This, it would appear, is more “patriarchal” (if the term can even be meaningfully used

in such a socio-economic context) than the more advanced welfare systems of Europe and especially northern Europe.

Social policy is an inevitable part of modern life (as is the state), and gender is inscribed in it, either for or against women. The point is to recognise which policies benefit women and other vulnerable groups, and which serve to perpetuate their subordination.

b. Women Workers: A Comparative Overview

There are some similarities between women's labour force participation patterns in the industrialised countries of the North and in the developing countries of the South. For one thing, it appears that in every country there is a substantial gap between women's average earnings and men's. Nearly everywhere, women are found in a narrow band of occupations, due in part to the education they choose (or are permitted) to pursue (see Table 1, for details on the United States). Though countries of both the North and the South have instituted legal measures to outlaw sex discrimination, and 104 states are signatories (as of October 1990) to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), problems still exist, partly because of the rigid job segregation by sex found everywhere, and partly because of the continuation of the sexual division of labour in the home.

But there are notable differences, too. First, there are differences between women workers in the North and the South. There also exist patterns of female employment that have distinguished the (former) centrally planned economies (Eastern Europe and the USSR) from other industrialised countries, and from most Third World countries. And in the Third World, there are states and societies that remain patriarchal, and others that have less rigid gender arrangements (Kandiyoti 1988; Kabeer 1988; Moghadam 1990a). In terms of North-South differences, there are much higher percentages of salaried women in the labour force in the industrialised countries of the North compared with the countries of the South; similarly, the female share of the waged and salaried work force in the North is far higher than in the South. In terms of differences among the countries of the North, the United States has the widest recorded income gap between men and women, and Sweden the most narrow (Farley 1985). UN studies have indicated that differentials are lower in industrialised socialist countries than in industrialised market economy countries (Anker 1985: 6). Among socialist countries for which data were available during the 1970s and 1980s, Hungary apparently had the largest sex differential in income. As of the mid-1980s, more women of working age were

salaried employees in Eastern Europe and the USSR than among other industrial countries. Similarly, the male-female ratios of the paid labour force have been most equitable in the centrally planned economies (see Figure 1). And the only countries where women have made significant inroads into what are typically “masculine” occupations elsewhere, are the USSR and a number of East European countries (ILO/INSTRAW 1985).¹⁵ Still, the quality of employment there leaves much to be desired. There is also evidence that in the high-status professions, women tend to cluster in the lower-ranked jobs, and are generally absent from the highest decision-making circles.

In the OECD countries, women’s employment has increased significantly since the 1950s, but there exist wide wage differentials. Moreover, the vast majority of working women tend to be engaged in low-status and low-paying jobs. A study of working women in the European community reported that in 1985, women occupied 90% of Europe’s part-time jobs (Landau 1985). Such jobs do not carry the same benefits as full-time work. They rarely lead to promotion or a more responsible job. In West Germany, for example, 71% of all female employees in 1980 were in service occupations; 18.5% were in manufacturing; 6.9% in horticulture, fishery, and animal breeding; and only 1.6% in technical occupations (Schopp-Schilling 1985: 125). Women are still underrepresented in trade unions as well as in the Works Councils, which represent the employees’ interests within firms. There is unpaid parental leave with job guaranteed, but in practice maternity leave has been encouraged. A regressive tax on two-worker families serves as a disincentive to German women to work. The result is that the labour market remains highly sex-segregated (Schopp-Schilling 1985: 137).

In a recent study of GDR women in comparative perspective, it was noted that the *Britannica Book of the Year 1989* estimates the per capita GNP of the GDR at 92.5% of that in the FRG. A 32 percentage point difference between the female labour force participation rates of the two parts of Germany goes a long way toward explaining this development. Furthermore, the West German female labour participation rate has been declining, unlike most

¹⁵ In 1983, for Eastern Europe as a whole, thirty percent of all women workers were in industry, with large percentages in the engineering field. In the USSR, 40% of all industrial engineers and 43% of engineers and architects employed in construction were women. In 1982 in the USSR, the number of women with specialised training accounted for half of all workers engaged in agriculture. Around 30% of agronomists, 55% of experts in animal husbandry and 37.5% of veterinary surgeons working in State farms and kolkhozes were women (ILO/INSTRAW 1985: 140-145).

advanced capitalist countries, as unemployment has become a major problem in the FRG (Redhead, Shaffer, and Turgeon 1989; Turgeon 1989). The process of German unification will likely result in massive unemployment of GDR women, as well as the loss of their benefits and social services.¹⁶

Some have argued that in the OECD countries, working women are at a crossroads (Janjic 1985). On the one hand, the legal instruments and egalitarian set of institutions to promote women's rights are truly impressive. There are sufficient laws and enforcement mechanisms to extend and strengthen women's rights to equality.¹⁷ On the other hand there are economic constraints that work against equality in the workplace. Working women in socialist countries are also at a crossroads. The economic changes currently underway in Eastern Europe do not bode well for women's labour force participation or for equality in the labour market. It is highly likely that in a situation of male unemployment, governments will assume a pro-natalist position and/or encourage women to drop out of the labour force. In such a context, women in Eastern Europe will have to join their Western sisters in calling for a labour market policy targeting three fronts: against unemployment and sex discrimination in access to employment; against the ubiquitous male/female earnings differentials; and for adequate social mechanisms to enable women and men workers to cope with their family responsibilities.

c. Women and Domestic Work

The persistence of the traditional sexual division of labour within the home has important effects on fertility rates, on female

¹⁶ East German women workers are finding quite distinct employment patterns and labour policies in West Germany. In recent years the number of female part-time workers has risen, since many women regard part-time employment as a way of combining family responsibilities and work. But in West Germany statutory social security schemes do not cover part-time workers whose total number of hours worked per week is below a given minimum level. For many years now the level of unemployment among women has been two percentage points higher than that of men. Another difference is that in West Germany women have been prohibited from entering the construction industry; this raises problems for East German women whose occupational background was in the construction industry. (See CEDAW 1990).

¹⁷ Examples are laws against sexual harassment on the job in the United States; France's Roudy law of 1983 barring sex discrimination in employment; Italy's 1977 Law on Equality of Treatment of Men and Women with regard to Employment.

labour force participation rates, on male-female equality in the labour market, and on the effectiveness of government labour, population, social and economic policies. Besides the strain placed on a country's resources and on economic development, high fertility has also been linked to maternal mortality (Weeks 1988) and infant mortality (UNICEF 1989). Rising fertility rates negatively impact upon women's mobility, especially on educational attainment and labour force participation. While there continues to be debate regarding fertility determinants and differentials, there is strong evidence that female education appears to be an important determinant of the overall fertility rate (Masini 1990). Certainly this has been the experience in all the socialist countries, notably Cuba (Anker 1985). A vicious circle is created when the high rates of illiteracy and fertility among women in developing countries keep them tied to child care and domestic work, and perpetuates the sexual division of labour.

Throughout the world, child care and domestic work are considered women's work. This is true not only in the developing South but in the industrialised North, where full-time working women are invariably responsible also for housework. Even in Sweden, usually regarded as the model of social and gender relations, the number of hours spent by women on family work is approximately double the amount spent by men (Janjic 1985: 8). Moreover, a large proportion of working women in Sweden are engaged in part-time employment or in traditionally feminine occupations (Ericsson 1985: 141) — possibly a function of their preoccupation and association with household and domestic duties. Happily, Swedish feminists and social democrats have recognised and addressed this imbalance by instituting parental leave and paternity leave — as distinct from maternity leave — in order to include the role of the father in the care and upbringing of children.

In the past 15 years, economic recession and the technological revolution in the industrial countries have rendered many women's economic position precarious. Although women's right to employment is now fully recognised, the cultural and institutional support to enable them to exercise this right is still insufficient if they have children. Now that there is greater competition for employment, their situation is even more precarious. We can expect this to be especially salient in the case of the East European countries undergoing economic reform. If the costs of providing the social benefits for women workers once borne by the state are now to be assumed by employers, this will likely have the effect of limiting women's access to full-time employment and reducing their earnings in the formal sector.

states and by international agencies actually work to perpetuate the sexual division of labour and especially rural women's responsibility for domestic work. Attempts to increase rural women's productivity in the absence of parallel efforts to reduce their reproductive work merely result either in intolerable workloads, or in a redistribution of such tasks among women of different age groups within the same household (Kandiyoti 1990). A recent study of women in the economies of Sub-Saharan Africa concludes that the interactions of population growth, environmental deterioration, and some technological advances have tended to increase women's workloads; these women are likely to remain overburdened until men start to assume more of the reproductive chores (Weil 1990). Moreover, as long as women are economic dependents of male kin rather than owners themselves of productive assets, women will continue to be relegated to the sphere of reproduction and their productive work will continue to be devalued. In this regard, the elimination of legislation barring women from access to productive assets (in terms of inheritance, ownership and control of property) is a clear priority. Indeed, "there is a crucial overlap between women having direct access to land rights, and not just rights mediated via male members, and theirs and their children's social well-being" (Agarwal 1988a:570). Unfortunately, land reform that directly recognises and promotes the status of women is extremely rare.¹⁸

An analysis of development projects by Buvinic (1984) found that many WID programmes attempt to organise women into social groups, or provide training in stereotypical female skills such as sewing, cooking, knitting, and gardening, and involve group activities through which women attempt to apply the skills they have learned to income generation activities. Kandiyoti (1990) has argued that what is being called for in some WID projects is not simply an increase in women's labour productivity but an intensification and elaboration of their mothering and nurturing roles as well. For example, the so-called participatory strategies for health delivery are predicated upon women's willingness as mothers to adopt, administer and ultimately finance the GOBI technologies which have a decisive impact on child survival — growth monitoring, oral rehydration therapy, breast-feeding and improved weaning practices, and immunisation. Given the increasingly restricted availability of public funds in the health

¹⁸ An attempt was made by the Bolsheviks. The Soviet Land Code, ratified in 1922, combined peasant customary law with a new, revolutionary insistence on gender equality. It abolished private ownership and granted all citizens, "regardless of sex, religion, or nationality," rights to the land. Women had the right to full participation in the commune. If the household split, land and property were divided among all household members, not only the adult males. See Goldman (1989) for a full exposition.

sector, the onus is on women to extend their traditional responsibilities as the feeders and healers or their families to include the provision of basic health care — even though it is candidly acknowledged that this will make new demands on their time and financial resources (Kandiyoti 1990: 17). Clearly such policies do nothing to eliminate gender hierarchy, transform rigid sex roles, improve women's social positions, or bring about qualitative and meaningful social change. Where development policies reinforce women's reproductive and domestic roles, deliberately avoid the upsetting of "private/public" distinctions, and generally do not serve the goals of equity and empowerment, these policies must be vigorously challenged. And as we shall see below, structural adjustment programmes have added even more to women's responsibilities. Inevitably, women are the ones who have to cope and devise survival strategies when incomes fall.

d. Macroeconomic Policy and Women

Macroeconomic policies can reflect and perpetuate gender asymmetries. Different industrial strategies have distinct impacts on the employment structure. For example, import substitution industrialisation (ISI) and the past concentration on heavy industrialisation tended to discriminate against women in a number of ways. It led to an over capital-intensive production structure, relative to developing countries' resource endowment, which also discriminated against the use of female labour, led to a strongly male workforce in the formal industrial sector, and skewed income earnings in favour of men. Concomitantly, there was a partitioning of the labour force into the primary (male) established workforce, and a secondary, peripheral subcontracted workforce, mostly of women working out of small workshops or the home, and paid extremely low wages compared to those of the primary workforce (Joeke 1987). In Latin America and the Caribbean, the percentage of women factory workers remained relatively stable or even declined in some countries with the adoption of import substitution policies and increasingly capital-intensive techniques of production after 1950 (Safa 1990). Only in Sao Paulo, Brazil, did the spectacular industrial boom of the 1970s lead to an appreciable growth in female employment in manufacturing, increasing 181% between 1970 and 1980.

Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea had established locally owned import-substituting industries for their domestic markets, and these could penetrate developed country markets because the low wages characteristic of preindustrial and newly industrialising economies made them competitive in labour-intensive,

female-intensive industries such as textiles, garments, footwear, and toys (Lim 1990: 103). This situation was somewhat improved by the emergence of manufacturing in “export processing zones” and “free trade zones” in Third World countries, which resulted in a significant expansion of employment opportunities for women at relatively good wages in multinational firms (Joekes 1989; Lim 1990). Wages earned by women in export factories are usually higher than what they could earn as wage-earners in alternative low-skilled female occupations, such as farm labour, domestic service, most informal sector and other service sector activities, small-scale local industry, and, in some countries, even white-collar and so-called pink collar jobs such as hairdresser, beautician, or sales clerk. But women’s wages are invariably lower than the average wages for the manufacturing sector as a whole (Lim 1990:108—109; *CTC Reporter* 1988:33). A recent study on women’s work in Puerto Rico demonstrates that changes in the patterns of female employment were a function of the types of industrial policies implemented by the government and of the changes in the stages of economic development that Puerto Rico experienced. The evidence demonstrated that during the early stage of industrial development, which is characterised by the establishment of light industries, a significant percentage of women were employed in the manufacturing and service sectors of the economy. Female employment in agriculture, trade and public administration was relatively low. Conversely, during the second stage, characterised by the establishment of heavy industries, female employment grew significantly in the trade and public administration sectors (Acevedo 1990).

The gender impact of government expenditure has also been noted, particularly in four areas: public employment, capital versus recurrent expenditures, subsidies, services and other government-sponsored programmes (Joekes 1989). In many developing countries, and of course in the socialist countries, the public or state sector is the major employer of women. (In the United States, the public sector and civil service is an important source of black employment, and particularly of black female employment.) The public sector is in many cases much less discriminatory against women in its wage, recruitment and promotions policy than the private sector, although women employees remain concentrated in the lower grade positions. Often the shorter working hours in the public sector make it a favoured employer to women with family responsibilities (Joekes 1989: 10). In Iran, census data reveal that all the women in the public sector are salaried, while women workers in the private sector are predominantly unwaged (Moghadam 1991). In Algeria, too, the small percentage of women who are salaried are government employees (Moghadam 1990b). Cutbacks in the public sector wage bill under macroeconomic policy programmes are therefore obviously damaging

to women's labour market position, in Eastern Europe, in advanced capitalist societies, and in the Third World.

The impact of formal employment changes on women will depend on the distribution of the female labour force by sector and occupation. If cutbacks in the public sector are more severe than in other sectors, then women may lose out disproportionately in terms of both access to employment and access to relatively higher wages. (This would not necessarily be the case in private sector export production of Southeast Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean.) Economic restructuring is often employment-saving, generating unemployment of men and women. But restructuring, or "economic reforms," may have a distinct gender bias. An example is China. The new property laws in China have negative consequences for women, as the contract system has revived the concept of the male head of household. Davin (1987) has noted that "a peasant woman's access to the means of income generation . . . now depends on her relationship to a man. This contrasts sharply with the collective era when membership in the collective conferred use rights to the means of production."

In the 1980s, most developing countries experienced rising indebtedness and suffered substantial setbacks in growth and development. In some cases economic contraction and declines in living standards have reached astounding proportions. The response of the World Bank and IMF was to provide for both short-term relief and long-term restructuring of developing country economies through stabilisation and adjustment lending policies. Structural adjustment lending was defined as "non-project lending to support programmes of policy and institutional change necessary to modify the structure of an economy so that it can maintain both its growth rate and the viability of its balance of payment in the long term", and has come in the form of Structural Adjustment Loans (SALs) or Sectoral Adjustment Loans (SELs). Although these adjustment loans have different maturities, come from different sources, and are used in different ways, they all have policy conditions attached to them which have had direct impact on women's lives — on their workloads, and on their incomes. The main thrust of the IMF stabilisation programmes has been to cut back on expenditure, through controls on credit creation and public expenditure levels, reduction in subsidies, especially food subsidies, and cuts in real wages and public sector employment. In addition, the programmes include measures to encourage resource reallocation to more productive uses and the internationally traded sector, through devaluation, price decontrol and wage restraints. Longer-term measures include financial reforms. Clearly these programmes would

have implications for women as producers, consumers, household managers, mothers, and care-givers.

The emphasis away from project investments in favour of increased efficiency in public expenditure has had on the whole an adverse impact on inequality, poverty, and women's economic status. Indebtedness and the concomitant structural adjustment policies have resulted in greater reduced allocation of resources to social reproduction. In Jamaica, a decline in the ratio of health personnel to population has made it almost impossible for women to have access to important health services. A now classic study by UNICEF (1987) argues that adjustment policies in most cases have aggravated the situation of the poor, and that reductions in spending on social programmes have had a particularly detrimental effect on children. Real wages have dropped, access to health and to education has been reduced for the poor and the middle class, and in various countries the decline in infant mortality has slowed down or has stopped entirely. This has been the case where there have not been poverty-targeted measures to alleviate the impact of structural adjustment. (Zimbabwe provides an encouraging exception. See UNDP 1990, p. 35.) Countries with extreme inequality of income have been exacerbated by the dynamics of adjustment programmes, to the point where the society is truly fractured into two: the well-to-do middle and upper middle classes who have maintained in many cases and even improved their incomes in US dollar terms, and the rest of the population who have borne the brunt of the devaluations and the reduction of public expenditure on health and education (Levitt 1990:1593). One effect of the economic crisis has been to curtail opportunities in paid employment and to open up more self-employment activities. But the array of inform sector activities — street vending, petty commodity production, personal services, and small-scale transportation — is notoriously precarious. Returns are often minimal, people are overworked, and there is no security (Safa 1982; Sethuraman 1981; Portes 1983). Weil (1990) argues that the primary effect of adjustment programmes, through the contractionary aspects of stabilisation, has been to reduce the amount of credit available. Without special attention, women tend to be crowded out of formal credit markets. This is a vivid illustration of how free market policies are biased against women.

When attention turns to solving the economic problems that have afflicted the majority of developing nations over the past decade, only rarely is the impact on the lives of women taken into consideration by researchers (WID excepted) and policy-makers. Women's varied economic roles, contributions and voices remain largely invisible and ignored, a peripheral factor when it comes to addressing such macroeconomic issues as growth rates, foreign debt,

and trade. Yet evidence shows that in key respects women are more seriously affected than men by the on-going economic deterioration in scores of countries. A report by the Commonwealth Secretariat specifies the adverse impact on gender. The poverty-inducing aspect of adjustment results in downward social mobility for middle class women and an even more serious decline in the standard of living for poor women and their children. Constraints on government expenditure reduce programmes and services to integrate women into development and increase their employment and income opportunities. Poor women have become poorer, more women are poor, and women are now poorer in relation to men, as even the World Bank recognises. In its *World Development Report 1990*, which focuses on poverty, it is stated: "The plight of poor women is troubling in itself. It is even more troubling because the health and education of mothers greatly influence the well-being and future of their children" (from the Foreword by Barber Conable, p. iii).

The declines in per capita income so closely associated with the debt crisis, particularly in Latin America and Africa, have disrupted virtually all aspects of women's lives, forcing them to shoulder extra burdens to keep families afloat. Women have to work much longer hours in and outside the home and often suffer physically and emotionally as a result. This drain on women's time, resources and energy also inhibits their ability to participate in political life and hence in having an influence in changing the policies which affect them so adversely. The crisis has diminished educational and economic opportunities for young women, thus affecting their future ability to contribute to society on an equal basis with men. Reductions in public expenditure adjustment have more often than not included cuts in food subsidies, and devaluation leads to increases in all imported goods, including food. Certain groups of women, particularly women in poor urban households and female heads of households are especially adversely affected by increases in the price of food. So are women with special nutritional needs, i.e., pregnant and nursing women. This could and should be offset by food programmes for this group of women in the midst of austerity.

Austerity and structural adjustment have placed pressures on Third World women, forcing them to devise all manner of survival strategies. But these measures have also sparked public protests, initiated by women and by men. Bread riots and austerity protests, also known as "IMF riots", have occurred in numerous countries (Walton and Ragin 1990). Women have been present in all forms of collective protest and resistance, from the establishment of communal kitchens of Lima, Santiago and other Latin American cities to participation in organised movements and in street demonstrations (Eckstein 1989; Safa 1990). Indeed, Eckstein reports

that in Mexico City, women in the city's largest shanty town have protected their community against land developers attempting to evict families. In Brazil, women's community organisations have engaged in political campaigns to improve standards of living. In Asia, too, women have been involved in collective action in response to austerity and policies of stabilisation and adjustment. Thus, while structural adjustment has victimised women (and men, and children), it has also emboldened them to take action and to act politically.

Differential access to, and therefore consumption of, productive assets and resources between men and women has been discussed above. It has been argued that this is largely a result of cultural and economic biases which undervalue women's production — that is, constructions of gender. The resulting undercapitalisation of women's production, transformation, and marketing activities constrains national growth potentials. Structural adjustment further exacerbates this bias by overlooking, if not denying, women's access to and consumption of the type of productive resources and services such as extension, credit, and input subsidies that are targeted to export production. In so far as this limits women's productivity, adjustment policies are sabotaging their very goals of stable long-term growth (Joekes 1989:25; Commonwealth Secretariat 1989: 4). Strategic policy intervention will thus be required to prevent or at least reduce the adverse effects of adjustment on women and on national development.

Some of these strategic interventions have been suggested by the UNICEF report *Adjustment with a Human Face*. They include more expansionary macroeconomic policies aimed at sustaining levels of output, investment, and human need satisfaction over the adjustment period; the use of meso policies to determine the impact of policies toward taxation, government expenditure, foreign exchange, and credit (among others) on the distribution of income and resources; sectoral policies focusing on small farmers and informal sector producers in industry and services; improving the equity and efficiency of social sector spending; compensatory programmes to protect basic health and nutrition of the low-income; monitoring of the human situation. A WIDER project based on the adjustment experience of 18 countries has recently concluded that a "socially necessary growth rate" of 5.5% in GDP terms is needed to provide basic needs, reduce unemployment, and improve income distribution — but this requires a massive annual transfer of capital from the North (Taylor 1990).

Specifically, what the WIDER project envisages for the 1990s is a return of developing countries to a path of socially necessary growth which would seek to achieve at least three goals. First, the

damage done to basic needs objectives in the 1980s would be repaired and suitable targets in this area set for the year 2000. The second goal is to reduce the prevailing backlog of unemployment to manageable levels by the year 2000. A third desideratum is to bring about an improvement in income distribution. The WIDER/Taylor study pulls together the aggregative implications of the work for the Third World as a whole, by extrapolating the findings of the sample. A 1% faster capacity growth for all developing countries is estimated to require an additional external resource flow of US\$40 billion in 1990, rising to US\$60 billion by the year 2000 if this capacity growth is to be maintained throughout the decade. This growth in capacity turns out to be equivalent to a GDP growth rate over the decade 1990 to 2000, of at least 5.5% which would correspond in many cases to socially necessary growth in the sense of permitting minimum development goals to be achieved, although higher growth rates would be required in low-income countries. The task, in other words, is to raise the 1989 growth performance of the Third World of 3.5% by at least two percentage points for the decade of the 1990s. Of the initial amount of US\$40 billion, sub-Saharan Africa would require US\$7 billion; Asia (except the Middle East) US\$18 billion; Europe, the Middle East and North Africa US\$7 billion; and Latin America US\$8 billion. If this amount of US\$40 billion were to be forthcoming as Official Development Assistance (ODA) from the budgets of OECD countries, the task involved is that of doubling the present level of ODA from 0.35% of OECD GNP to reach the internationally agreed target of 0.7%.

WIDER has also endorsed the concept of “development contract”, proposed in 1989 by the then Foreign Minister of Norway, Thorvald Stoltenberg, now UN High Commissioner for Refugees. He has in effect argued that the adjustment programmes of the 1980s have failed because nothing was done to protect developing countries against adverse developments in their *external environment*, which “depends fundamentally on the trade and economic policies adopted in other countries” (Stoltenberg 1989). What is also new about the Stoltenberg formulation is that it explicitly provides for “bilateral grant elements for basic needs components” of a country’s plan which is entirely compatible with WIDER’s emphasis on minimum socially necessary growth rates by the year 2000.

WIDER Director Lal Jayawardena (1990) has elaborated the development contract in the following way. The developing country concerned would set for itself a minimum socially necessary rate of growth for GDP for the year 2000 having regard to its minimum development goals as in the Taylor framework. If it has a poverty alleviation programme, for example, that would be built into the plan because that is the country’s business and is part of its *national*

priorities.¹⁹ Since it would not be reasonable to expect a poor country that has already suffered declines in real wages and living standards to go through a further round of belt-tightening at the outset, the additional savings required for the support of its development programme must be foreign savings, i.e., aid from the donor community.

The implementation of a “socially necessary growth rate” and “development contract” not only entails a resource shift from North to South but requires changes in consumption patterns in the North. This would be necessary to allow for Third World growth and development without further jeopardising global ecology. Another implication of the plan is that it would end the monopoly of the IMF and World Bank and their policing role in the affairs of Third World countries — a necessary condition for the reinvigoration of Third World development and the advancement of women. As such both concepts are salutary and consistent with feminist strategies for development, such as “The Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women” adopted in 1985 at the end of the UN Decade for Women. That document calls for governments and international donor agencies to provide incentives for the economic betterment of women by working to release some of the structural and protectionist constraints against female employment. This includes employment-creation rather than employment-saving strategies. The plan is also consistent with the recommendations of the Commonwealth Secretariat report on gender and adjustment, which calls for social equity and economic growth as well as efficiency, and a supportive international environment.

Some development theorists continue to focus on the unequal system of states and markets, on power relations within the global economy and system of international relations, on class structures and power relations within developing countries, and on the fundamental disinterest of the North in elevating the position of the South. That these structural inequalities exist cannot be denied. Third World countries will certainly have to address the problem of domestic inequality; policies of income distribution will have to be implemented. But notwithstanding the recent structural shifts at the global and regional levels, ours is an interdependent world. Consequently, macroeconomic policy at the national level involves cooperation and assistance of other states and financial institutions. It also requires attention to ecology. The central point of the present study is that development and policy need to be especially attentive

¹⁹ Indeed, Levitt (1990) argues that income distribution is important if a country is to adjust successfully to adverse external circumstances. This no doubt explains the contrast between Latin American and East Asian countries.

to gender, because of the significance of gender in social relations and because of its multifarious effects and linkages.

e. **Feminist Strategies for Development**

Ultimately, and as mentioned above, there is a need to reconsider what development is all about. In my view, development encompasses more than GNP growth, more than income and wealth and more than producing commodities, accumulating capital, and balancing budgets. Development is about people and societies, about quality of life and the enlargement of human capabilities and people's choices.²⁰ The authors of the *Human Development Report* (UNDP 1990) argue that to live a long and healthy life, to be educated and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living are the most critical of human capabilities and choices. Additional choices include political freedom, guaranteed human rights and personal self-respect. Development enables people to have these choices, by creating a conducive environment for people, individually and collectively, to develop their full potential and to have a reasonable chance of leading productive and creative lives in accord with their needs and interests. "Development is ultimately . . . [a matter] of the capacity of a society to tap the root of popular creativity, to free up and empower people. . ." (Levitt 1990:1594). Proposing an improvement in the status and lives of the poor and working classes has often been viewed as a threat by those people who have more status, wealth, or power. But development *has* come about, and it has done so as a result of collective action, or through responsible state systems and popular participation. An external environment that is at least not hostile is also a prerequisite.

Since the political and social status of women is secondary to that of men in most societies, proposing an improvement in their status could similarly be viewed as a threat to the status quo. But women — as women and as workers — have demonstrated a capacity for collective action through their participation in movements and organisations for change. Women are not only victims of bad policies, but actors in their own right, and agents of social change. Moreover, as a result of women's movements and of the efforts of various UN

²⁰ The lesson to be learnt from the successes of the various Asian experiences is not one about economic liberalisation (Harriss 1986; Amdsen 1989). Rather, it pertains to societal coherence, literacy and education, balance of agriculture and industry, equitable income distribution, and symbiosis between state and private sector, combined with detailed governmental intervention and a degree of collective national consciousness which is essential to meaningful economic development (Levitt 1990).

agencies, elites are beginning to recognise the practical benefits of gender awareness and of increased attention to women's work and women's lives. They are more cognisant that women tend to spend a high proportion of earnings to improve family well-being, and that development programmes or changes in laws, regulations, and customs to build women's economic productivity and improve their earning capacity will have direct benefits for families as well. Both the imperatives of distributive justice and concerns about societal development call for women's access to productive resources (employment, training, credit, land, extension services, legal reform), access to basic goods and services (household needs, education, health), and external resource flows (such as debt reduction). In turn, these contribute to the long-term goals of gender equity and the empowerment of women.

"Integrating women into development" thus remains not only a valid goal but a radical one, as it challenges social and political structures, the distribution of wealth, and cultural mores (Charlton 1984). An effective strategy must integrate economic, political, legal, and cultural aspects at the domestic, regional, and international levels. Interventionist policies are needed to make more progress toward gender equity. The long-term goal of social equity and full participation of women in decision-making processes requires a number of concrete measures in the immediate and medium-term which are especially crucial in developing countries:

- The protection of women's existing sources of livelihood.
- The elimination of discriminatory legislation in the ownership and control of productive assets.
- Agricultural incentives.
- Investment in rural infrastructure and services.
- Land reform.
- The support of extra-household forms of organisation of women's labour and assisting with self-employment.
- Improving employment opportunities and work conditions of women in the formal sector.
- Public works programmes.
- Ensuring access to health and education services.
- Training women teachers who will serve as role models.
- General education on "women's issues."
- Shifting resources into primary health programmes.
- Action against the degradation of women through sex-related tourism and prostitution.
- The encouragement of an increased capacity for political empowerment and organisation.

The concept of development that emerges from this

endeavour is emancipatory; it advances a notion of modernisation that is liberating, and a strategy that places people's basic needs and human development first rather than last. A feminist strategy for development seeks to improve the quality of people's lives, including and especially that of the masses of poor Third World women; it seeks to end the chronic unemployment and underemployment of people, to valorise the work that women perform, and to make more equitable the sexual and social division of labour; and it seeks a redistribution of wealth and income at the global and societal levels.

Conclusion: Research for Action

Policy-related work on women has made crucial social contributions. Examples are research on domestic violence, divorce, childcare and parental leave, the earnings gap, and the impact on women of the foreign debt and structural adjustment. Continuing research is needed to keep up with changing economic and political contexts within which women find themselves, and which affect women's legal status, social positions, and economic situation. Questions include: What is the impact of changing trends in women's political participation on women's status, women-in-development policies, and development outcomes? What has been the impact on development processes of women's expanded political participation and involvement in the public sector? How have emerging national and international norms affected women's status with respect to legal and political rights, reproductive freedom, and access to and control over resources? How have these factors improved women's position within the household? What are the connections between women's economic empowerment and increased participation in both formal and informal economic sectors? In the context of economic crisis and structural change, migration, and changing roles within the household, what measures indicate increasing economic empowerment for women? Which organisational forms, policies and strategies most facilitate women's economic empowerment in the workplace, marketplace, and public policy spheres? How critical are formal and informal educational opportunities? How can we overcome obstacles such as household responsibilities, cost, discrimination, and the content of educational programmes, in relation to women's and girls' access to education? What are the connections between development and cultural practices relating to gender socialisation, sexuality, ageing, and changing religious values? How do different cultural practices impede or facilitate women's participation in development?

When undertaking case studies, these questions can be tackled empirically through a framework adapted from Giele (1977), which can guide concrete investigation of women's positions and the impact of policies on women. I suggest that when research is undertaken to assess the impact of social or macroeconomic policies on women, or to capture the dimensions of women's status, the following comprehensive sixfold list of different spheres is a good place to begin:

Political expression: What rights do women possess, formally and otherwise? Can they own property in their own right? Can they express any dissatisfactions in their own movements?

Work and mobility: How do women fare in the formal labour force? How mobile are they, how well are they paid, how are their jobs ranked, and what leisure do they get?

Family: formation, duration, and size: What is the age of marriage? Do women choose their own partners? Can they divorce them? What is the status of single women and widows? Do women have freedom of movement?

Education: What access do women have, how much can they attain, and is the curriculum the same for them as for men?

Health and sexual control: What is women's mortality, to what particular illnesses and stresses (physical and mental) are they exposed, and what control do they have over their own fertility?

Cultural expression: What images of women and their "place" are prevalent, and how far do these reflect or determine the reality? What can women do in the cultural field?

This is a useful way of specifying and delineating women's social roles, in the economy, the polity, and the cultural sphere. It enables the researcher (and activist) to move from generalities to specificities, to study the positive and negative trends, to identify the gains and setbacks, to assess the strengths and weaknesses of women's positions. The generation of this kind of knowledge is an integral part of the broader struggle for women's rights and well-being. At the same time, there is a need for more basic studies of the gender-related dynamics of decision-making, and financial responsibility within the household. Many countries still do not provide UN agencies with sex-disaggregated data. The ILO *Yearbook of Labour Statistics*, for example, often has inadequate or no data on female employment for many developing countries. INSTRAW has conducted workshops in a number of countries to stress methodological issues and the importance of sex disaggregation and time use surveys (*INSTRAW News* 1990). The United Nations Women's Indicators and Statistics (WISTAT) microcomputer database, released in 1988, contains data collected for or by the UN and its specialised agencies. These statistics have been disaggregated by sex and by age groupings in many cases. The qualitative and quantitative studies which generate gender-disaggregated data will be especially important for development projects and for public policy formulation.

WIDER is taking the problems and prospects of the Third World, the environment, and women very seriously in a number of its projects, and is generating action-oriented research. A WIDER project on development and the environment includes an assessment

by Bina Agarwal of the impact of environmental degradation on women, and advances an alternative, transformative approach to development which she calls “feminist environmentalism” (Agarwal 1990). WIDER’s new research programme on women underscores the salience of gender in development and in policy formulation, and addresses critical issues in the status and economic conditions of women around the world. Cognisant of the multi-faceted and complex nature of women’s encounter with development and state systems around the world, the research programme includes historical, comparative, and case studies on the impact of modernisation, political change, social movements, and changes in technology and the labour process on women’s work, women’s status, feminist strategies, and concepts of emancipation. The present author is undertaking a three-year project involving: a cross-national study of fundamentalism and women; an analysis of the impact of *perestroika* and economic reform in Eastern Europe on women’s work and women’s lives; and an historical-comparative study of the trajectories and intersection of patriarchy and development. The WIDER research programme on women combines scholarship and advocacy of women’s legal equality with men and the betterment of their economic status through a combination of appropriate policy measures, structural change, and women’s political action.

Gender is an inescapable feature of social reality. As such gender is inscribed in all policy, whether this be deliberate or unintentional, detrimental or beneficial to women. Gender relations have acted as an obstacle to women’s equal access to productive assets, human capital, and employment. As a consequence, women have not benefited to the same extent as men from development. Their workloads have not been reduced, and continue to be greater than men’s; their incomes have not grown substantially nor become secure. In my view, social policies are needed which enhance the status of women in the family, before the law, and in the workplace. Macroeconomic policies are needed to uplift women and the vulnerable social groups, and not degrade them through cutbacks in social spending which reduce their standard of living. Policy-makers must be persuaded of the moral and practical benefits of educating and employing women, and of making equity a national goal. In the long run, as socio-economic development proceeds, women’s social positions and legal status are enhanced. In the meantime, the subordination of women in the society, at the workplace, before the law, and in the family is being effectively challenged by women’s own activism. Whether through formal organisations, political parties, social movements, or spontaneous demonstrations, women are raising — and realising — the goals of equity and empowerment.

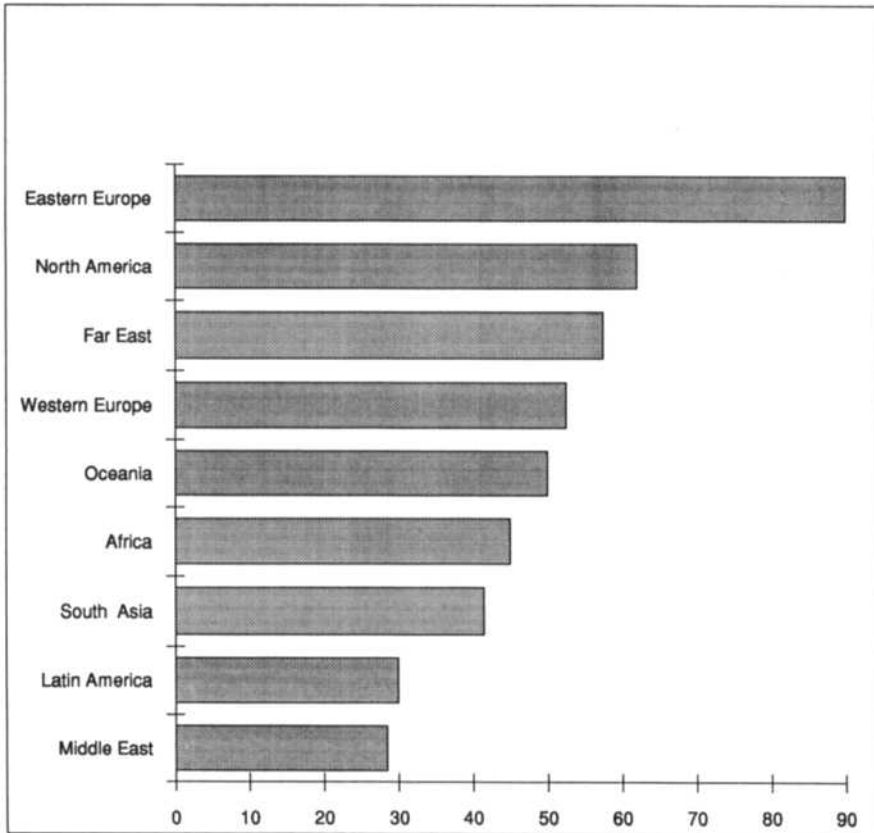
Table 1**Persons Employed in Selected Occupations,
Percentage Female, 1981**

Occupation	Percentage female
Secretaries	99.1
Child-care workers, except private household	95.5
Bank tellers	93.5
Telephone operators	92.9
Registered nurses, dietitians and therapists	92.6
Waiters	89.3
Billing clerks	88.2
Cashiers	86.2
File clerks	83.8
Elementary school teachers	83.6
Librarians, archivists, and curators	82.8
Sales clerks, retail trade	71.2
Social and recreation workers	62.4
Secondary school teachers	51.3
Real-estate agents and brokers	49.8
Writers, artists, and entertainers	39.8
Bank officers and financial managers	37.5
College and university teachers	35.2
Computer specialists	27.1
Sales managers	26.5
Life and physical scientists	21.9
Stock and bond sales agents	17.0
Post-office mail carriers	15.7
Lawyers and judges	14.1
Physicians, medical and osteopathic	13.7
Precision machine operatives	12.8
Police and detectives	5.7
Dentists	4.6
Engineers	4.4
Truck drivers	2.7
Construction labourers, including carpenters' helpers	2.2
Carpenters	1.9
Electricians	1.6
Automobile mechanics	0.6
Plumbers and pipe fitters	0.4

Source: United States Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1982-83*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982:388-390.

Figure 1

**Women as a Per Cent of Men in the Paid Labour Force,
by Region, 1980 (Ages 15-64)**



Source: Sivard (1985), p. 13.

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