



The United Nations
University

WIDER

World Institute for Development
Economics Research

World Development Studies 4

Economic Reforms, Women's Employment, and Social Policies

Valentine M. Moghadam, Editor



August 1995

UNU World Institute for
Development Economics Research
(UNU/WIDER)

World Development Studies 4

Economic Reforms, Women's Employment, and Social Policies

Case Studies of China, Viet Nam, Egypt, and Cuba

Edited by

Valentine M. Moghadam

UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU/WIDER)
A research and training centre of the United Nations University

The Board of UNU/WIDER

Philip Ndegwa
Sylvia Ostry
Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, Chairperson
Antti Tanskanen
George Vassiliou
Ruben Yevstigneyev
Masaru Yoshitomi

Ex Officio

Heitor Gurgulino de Souza, Rector of UNU
Mihály Simai, Director of UNU/WIDER

UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU/WIDER) was established by the United Nations University as its first research and training centre and started work in Helsinki, Finland in 1985. The principal purpose of the Institute is policy-oriented research on the main strategic issues of development and international cooperation, as well as on the interaction between domestic and global changes. Its work is carried out by staff researchers and visiting scholars in Helsinki and through networks of collaborating institutions and scholars around the world.

Copyright © UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU/WIDER)

Cover photograph: Coal seller in Viet Nam, 1993, copyright Ulla Lemberg/MIRA/Gorilla

Camera-ready typescript prepared by Anne Ruohonen at UNU/WIDER
Printed at KP Paino Oy, 1995

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s). Publication does not imply endorsement by the Institute or the United Nations University of any of the views expressed.

ISSN 1238-1896
ISBN 952-9520-27-1

CONTENTS

	page
LIST OF TABLES	v
LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS	vii
PREFACE by <i>Mihály Simai</i>	ix
FOREWORD by <i>Valentine M. Moghadam</i>	xi
 CHAPTER I	
INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW: ECONOMIC REFORMS, WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT, AND SOCIAL POLICIES	1
by <i>Valentine M. Moghadam</i>	
1. Globalization, female employment, and conditions of work	1
2. Female unemployment	2
3. Production and reproduction: Working women and social policies	3
4. Women's organizations	4
5. Gender ideology and economic policies	6
6. A way forward	8
 CHAPTER II	
ECONOMIC REFORM AND WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN SHANGHAI: A STUDY OF RURAL AND URBAN INDUSTRIAL CHANGES	10
by <i>Juanhong Fei</i>	
1. China's economic reform	10
2. Changes to Shanghai women's employment in the reform	15
3. Women's employment and social protection	32
4. Conclusions	37
5. Annexe – Excerpts from the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women	40
 CHAPTER III	
DOI MOI AND FEMALE WORKERS: A CASE STUDY OF HANOI	44
by <i>Le Thi</i>	
1. Organization of the economy in Viet Nam	44
2. Women workers in the ANH SAO private electronic company (SEL) in Hanoi	55

3. The Chien Thang garments company in Hanoi	61
4. Concluding remarks	66
5. References	67

CHAPTER IV

THE PRESENT SITUATION OF WOMEN WORKERS IN SOME FOREIGN-INVESTED ENTERPRISES IN HO CHI MINH CITY by <i>Bui Thi Kim Quy</i>	68
---	----

1. Background on the birth of foreign-invested enterprises in Viet Nam and Ho Chi Minh City	68
2. The present situation of women workers in some foreign- invested enterprises in Ho Chi Minh City	71
3. Reflections on the future situation and proposals for policies towards foreign investment in joint ventures	87
4. Annexe - Excerpts from the Labour Code of Viet Nam	90

CHAPTER V

ECONOMIC REFORM AND WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN EGYPT by <i>Valentine M. Moghadam</i>	94
--	----

1. Introduction	94
2. The demographic context	95
3. The economic reform and structural adjustment programme	98
4. Women in the formal labour force	103
5. Current initiatives in support of women in the formal labour force	117
6. Conclusions and recommendations	119
7. References	122

CHAPTER VI

ECONOMIC CRISIS: EMPLOYMENT AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN CUBA by <i>Elena Díaz González</i>	125
--	-----

1. Historical background	125
2. Social policies and the quality of life	135
3. A closer approach	139
4. Conclusions	142
5. References	143
6. Annexe - Excerpts from the Family Code of Cuba	144

LIST OF TABLES

	page
Table 2.1 Shanghai female population, 1949-92	16
Table 2.2 Shanghai female staff and workers, 1957-91	17
Table 2.3 Shanghai employment rates, ages 15-64, 1982 and 1990	18
Table 2.4 Shanghai employed women by economic sector, 1982 and 1990	21
Table 2.5 Shanghai employed women by occupation, 1982 and 1990	22
Table 2.6 Shanghai employment by industry, 1982 and 1990	24
Table 2.7 Shanghai female staff and workers by type of enterprise, 1986 and 1992	25
Table 2.8 Income comparison between sexes in Shanghai, 1990	28
Table 2.9 Average annual wage of staff and workers by trade, 1992	29
Table 2.10 Comparison of family status of Shanghai rural women	30
Table 3.1 Percentage of female workers within occupations, Viet Nam	49
Table 3.2 Percentage of women in industrial branches, Viet Nam	49
Table 3.3 Percentage of women working as scientists, engineers and technicians, Viet Nam	50
Table 3.4 Educational attainment by sex, 10 years old and above	52
Table 3.5 Qualified working population, 16 years of age and above, by sex, 1989, Viet Nam	53
Table 4.1 Percentage of women workers in EPZs, various Asian countries	70
Table 4.2 Number of questionnaires distributed in four industrial sectors in Ho Chi Minh City	71
Table 4.3 Age of women workers by industrial sector, Ho Chi Minh City, 1994	73
Table 4.4 Educational level of women workers by age bracket, HCMC	73
Table 4.5 Foreign languages used by women workers in foreign-investment firms	74
Table 4.6 Marital status of women workers, by age bracket, HCMC	74
Table 4.7 Length of employment of women workers, by industrial sector	75
Table 4.8 Women workers' attitudes towards their jobs, by age bracket	75

Table 4.9	Monthly wages of women workers, by origin of foreign-invested enterprise	76
Table 4.10	Monthly wages of women workers, according to duration of workweek	76
Table 4.11	Job satisfaction of women workers, by industrial sector	77
Table 4.12	Result of the study of the working environment of the garments industry enterprise Han Joo - Viet Thang Co. Ltd	79
Table 4.13	Result of the study of the working environment of the cotton spinning Enterprise Coats Tootal – Phong Phu	80
Table 4.14	Result of the study of the working environment of the enterprise Seaprimfco - Dong Lanh 6	80
Table 4.15	Result of the study of the working environment of the footwear enterprise Son Quan - Binh Tien	81
Table 4.16	Difficulties in personal life, by age bracket	82
Table 4.17	Women workers' family life aspirations, by marital status	83
Table 4.18	Women workers' contribution to the family budget, by monthly salary	83
Table 4.19	Financial status of women workers' families (according to their own perception), by industrial sector	84
Table 4.20	Women workers' employment plans, by industrial sector	84
Table 4.21	Women workers' attitudes towards their own situation, by monthly salary	86
Table 4.22	Women workers' aspirations	86
Table 5.1	Economically active population by occupation and per cent female, 1986 and 1989, Egypt	107
Table 5.2	Economically active population by industry and per cent female, 1986 and 1989, Egypt	108
Table 5.3	Permanent employees in Egyptian public sector industry, by sex and educational status, 1988	110
Table 5.4	Wages in manufacturing, 1985-87, Egypt	111
Table 6.1	Women in leadership positions in the Cuban Communist Party	127
Table 6.2	Female civil state workers in occupational groups	130
Table 6.3	Proportion of women according to medical specialities	132
Table 6.4	Women's participation in fields of study and as teachers, 1991-92	133
Table 6.5	Selected social indicators, Cuba 1959 and 1989	136
Table 6.6	Female employment at the University of Havana	140
Table 6.7	Workers by occupational category and by sex in the enterprise Primero de Mayo	141

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

DR VALENTINE M. MOGHADAM

Senior Research Fellow

UNU/WIDER

Helsinki, Finland

DR JUANHONG FEI

Sociology Institute

Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences

Shanghai, People's Republic of China

PROFESSOR LE THI

Director

Centre for Family and Women's Studies

Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

PROFESSOR BUI THI KIM QUY

Director

Centre for Women's Studies

Institute for Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City

Ho Chi Minh City, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

DR ELENA DÍAZ GONZÁLEZ

Programa FLACSO-Cuba

Universidad de la Habana

La Habana, Cuba

PREFACE

The papers in this volume emanate from a research project of UNU/WIDER on 'Economic Reforms, Women's Employment and Social Policies'. This project is part of the Institute's programme on the human dimension of the global development process.

Economic reforms in general terms imply important changes in macroeconomic policies and management. If they are sufficiently profound and far-reaching, they can change the functioning of the given economy and also have important social, institutional, and very often international consequences. Reforms are introduced 'from above' with the goal of introducing improvements in an economic structure or in any segment of it. They may be the consequence of major domestic economic problems, internal, or external imbalances. The introduction of counter-cyclical measures in the market economies during the earlier decades of this century has probably been the most far-reaching reform ever implemented in a market system. The concept of economic reforms in the world of the 1990s has been more or less reserved for those measures which have been part of the structural adjustment programmes: liberalization, minimizing government expenditures, deregulation, privatization, and greater international openness. All the economic reforms have considerable social consequences. The liberal reforms strengthen the role of the market forces, with all their inherent characteristics. Not many countries have been able and/or ready to moderate the adverse consequences on employment, health, education, child care, and other social services. The liberal reforms influence also the distribution and redistribution of incomes. The incidence of the different reform measures depends, to a large extent, on a number of factors and the adverse effects may be particularly great in the case of those social groups which are already marginalized or discriminated against in the given societies. Women belong in this category.

This volume, while focusing on the consequences of the reforms, also deals with those structural changes which are taking place as the consequence of the increasing export orientation in the economies, and their dual impact on women in the environment of four countries: China, Viet Nam, Egypt, and Cuba. The papers selected for this volume are case studies reflecting different situations and realities, and are especially relevant for the drawing of some general conclusions. Many of the new job openings, even in China for example, have been offered specifically to women because they learn fast and can become highly productive. At the same time, the number of unemployed women is quickly increasing basically due to the lack of sufficient skills. The example of Viet Nam is an important positive proof for the impact of policies which can promote not only the increasing participation of women in productive employment, but also their overall social position. There is also a general problem everywhere, related especially (but not exclusively) to certain export processing industries, where a new gender segregation may be emerging in the labour markets, concentrating women into low or unskilled jobs with low wages. In other cases, gender inequality allows highly qualified

women in occupations on the lower levels of the social pyramid only. These examples support two very important conclusions of this volume: (a) that gender-blind economic policies undercut women's labour market position and could increase the social subordination women face, and (b) that such social policies are necessary which would allow women to compete fairly in the labour market.

I express my thanks to Dr Val Moghadam and her colleagues for their commitment, and present this volume to the participants of the Fourth World Conference on Women as UNU/WIDER's contribution, in the hope that the ideas and empirical results of this project may contribute not only to the dialogue of the conference, but to the development of new policies in this area of global importance.

Mihály Simai
Director, UNU/WIDER

FOREWORD

The research project from which this publication derives examines the process of economic restructuring in seven developing countries (Iran, Turkey, Tunisia, Egypt, Malaysia, Mexico, Zimbabwe) and seven transition economies (Russia, Poland, Bulgaria, Uzbekistan, China, Viet Nam, Cuba). The focus is on the impact of globalization and market reforms on patterns of women's employment (sectoral and occupational distribution, employment status, unemployment) and on social policies pertaining to women, work, and family (labour code provisions on maternity leave, childcare centres, and treatment of women workers; family codes; and social expenditures such as family allowances). Similarities and differences between restructuring in the developing countries and in the transition economies are explored; differences among the transition economies (socialist and non-socialist countries) and among the developing countries (e.g., Muslim and non-Muslim countries) are also being investigated.

This project is the culmination of a five-year multi-stage research programme on women in development, which was launched early 1990 to investigate gender aspects of major political, cultural, and economic changes which were underway at the time. These changes included Islamization in the Middle East and fundamentalist movements elsewhere, the growing involvement of women in the development process across the globe, and the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.¹ The present research project, which was initiated in early 1994, continues the work undertaken earlier on the gender dimension of democratization and marketization, but expands the scope and the comparative perspective to include a sample of developing countries and a sample of Asian transition economies. Research methods have combined fieldwork by the principal investigator (V. M. Moghadam), analysis of secondary sources and available data, and country studies commissioned from national researchers in the transition economies.

Apart from the study on Egypt, the chapters in this publication are among eight papers that were commissioned in order to provide a clearer picture of how economic reforms are affecting women's employment and those social policies that have allowed women to combine productive and reproductive activities.² For the purposes of a UNU/WIDER contribution to the Fourth World Conference on Women, I have selected the studies of China, Viet Nam, Egypt, and Cuba. These four countries constitute an appropriate sample because they include both developing and transition economies, because of their geographic and cultural scope, and because they represent different stages in the implementation of economic reforms.

Of the four countries under consideration, China was the first to begin the process of economic restructuring (in 1978), and was followed by Viet Nam (beginning in the mid-1980s). Today, both countries are pursuing market reforms with their own

distinctive characteristics, including the continuation of a state-socialist orientation. Egypt began to shift from a socialist to an open-door policy in the mid-1970s, but concerted privatization and economic liberalization have been in place only since 1990. Unlike China and Viet Nam, foreign investments in Egypt have been limited. Global realities have forced Cuba to experiment with market reforms; a government decree in 1993 allowed Cubans to start up private businesses, and self-employment is now encouraged. But Cuba remains committed to a socialist welfare system. In all four countries, the reforms are far-reaching and their expected effects profound. As such, an examination of these four countries allows us to discern commonalities and differences in the impact of market reforms on the socio-economic status of women in developing and transition economies.

Valentine M. Moghadam
Senior Research Fellow, UNU/WIDER

¹ On the subject of comparative fundamentalisms, Islamization, and women and development in the Middle East, see *Identity Politics and Women: Cultural Reassertions and Feminisms in International Perspective*, edited by V. M. Moghadam (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1994); *Gender and National Identity: Women and Politics in Muslim Societies*, edited by V. M. Moghadam (London and Tokyo: Zed Books and UNU Press, 1994); 'Patriarchy and the Politics of Gender in Modernizing Societies: Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan', by V. M. Moghadam, in *South Asia Bulletin*, Vol. III, Nos. 1, 2, 1993; *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East*, by V. M. Moghadam (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993); *Gender and Development in the Arab World*, edited by Nabil Khoury and V. M. Moghadam (London and Tokyo: Zed Books and UNU Press, 1995). In addition, the following commissioned papers on Algeria were completed in 1995: 'Evolution of the Women's Movement in Contemporary Algeria: Organization, Objectives, and Prospects' (Cherifa Bouatta), and 'Women's Employment in Algeria: The Reality and the Stakes' (Doria Cherifati-Merabatine).

On the subject of gender and the transition economies, see *Democratic Reforms and the Position of Women in Transitional Economies*, edited by V. M. Moghadam (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), and the following UNU/WIDER booklets by V. M. Moghadam: 'Gender and Restructuring: Perestroika, the 1989 Revolutions, and Women' (1990); 'Privatization and Democratization in Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union: The Gender Dimension' (1992); 'Market Reforms and Women Workers in Vietnam: A Case Study of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City' (1994).

For a comparative study of women in the global economy see *Patriarchy and Economic Development: Women's Positions at the End of the Twentieth Century*, edited by V. M. Moghadam (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995). See also the following UNU/WIDER booklets by V. M. Moghadam: 'Gender, Development, and Policy: Toward Equity and Empowerment' (1990); 'Gender and the Development Process in a Changing Global Environment' (1993); 'Social Protection and Women Workers in Asia' (1993).

² In addition to the four commissioned papers included in this publication, country studies have been written for Bulgaria (Dobrinka Kostova), Russia (Valentina Bodrova), Poland (Renata Siemienska), and Uzbekistan (Marfua Tokhtakhodjaeva).

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW: ECONOMIC REFORMS, WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT, AND SOCIAL POLICIES

Valentine M. Moghadam

Ongoing research shows that although there is variation in the timing, pace, and scope of economic reforms, in both developing countries and the transition economies these reforms entail the following: contraction of the public sector; encouragement of foreign investment, growth of the private sector, and exports; and a reassessment of labour codes, social policies and, in some countries, of family codes.¹ Such changes necessarily have social- and gender-specific effects. In both sets of countries, although some women (and men) are benefiting from the reforms, most women seem to be adversely affected by economic restructuring.

Why is this the case? Why should effects of economic reform be differentiated by gender? Why should women be more vulnerable than men? There are many reasons for this, but they may be distilled into two major causes, one 'cultural' (that is, the persistence of traditional gender ideology regarding men's and women's roles) and the other 'economic' (that is, the nature of the reforms themselves and the assumptions behind neoclassical economic theory, which inform the policies). But before elaborating on these causes for women's disadvantaged position, it may be useful first to examine some of the trends found in developing and transition economies, including the four case-study countries.²

1. Globalization, female employment, and conditions of work

Since the 1970s, women's labour-force participation rates have been rising, and women's share in the labour force has increased. These gains were especially noticeable in Latin America, the Caribbean, Western Europe, South Asia, and North Africa. The labour-force attachment of married women and women with children that was once regarded as unique to state-socialist countries (Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union) is now a growing global trend.

¹ In this study, 'social policy' refers to the broad gamut of national legislation encompassing labour standards, employment policy, social protection (including social security or social insurance programmes), and family codes, particularly as these laws and policies pertain to women's ability to enter and remain within the labour force.

² In this Introduction, reference is made to the 14 countries within the UNU/WIDER research project (see Foreword), including the four countries analysed in this volume. For purposes of comparison, there may be references to other countries as well.

The services sector is responsible for most of the recent increases in female labour-force participation, and it is here that female employment is concentrated in most countries. Governments are the largest employers of women in many countries (e.g., Egypt, Iran, Cuba), and here women are found mainly in the social sectors. But industrial employment has also increased among women, especially in East and Southeast Asia and in North Africa (Tunisia and Morocco), where the female share of the manufacturing work force is as high as 30-40 per cent. Export-led strategies have increased demand for female labour in many developing countries, including Mexico, Malaysia, Tunisia, and Turkey. As Juanhong Fei shows in her chapter on China, economic restructuring has opened up many new kinds of occupations for women, especially in the services sector. In rural areas, economic reforms and especially the emergence of township enterprises have allowed women to shift from a concentration in agriculture to the industrial and services sectors.

The rise in female labour-force participation has a number of causes, among them globalization of the economy, technological transformation, labour-market flexibilization, and economic restructuring. Where stabilization measures, structural adjustment, or recession have increased financial pressures on households, women are compelled to seek jobs or some income-generating activity, and this may be a contributing factor in the increases in female labour-force participation in many developing countries during the 1980s. In many countries, much of the increase in female employment has taken place in the informal sector, or takes the form of homework through subcontracting arrangements. In countries such as Tunisia and Turkey, foreign investments contributing to increases in female employment represent an advance for women, but labour-force data suggest that much of the work is precarious, badly remunerated, and without benefits. In Mexico, although the *maquiladoras* have employed many women, studies have documented the problematical labour conditions of these border economic zones.

As seen in the chapter on Hanoi by Le Thi and the chapter on Ho Chi Minh City by Bui Thi Kim Quy, Viet Nam's industrial sector, both state-owned and joint-venture, relies heavily on female labour, and women are playing an active role in the country's industrial development. Yet the intensity of industrial work and the demand for higher productivity are affecting women's health and family life. At the same time, retrenchments due to enterprise restructuring have led to major job losses for women workers.

2. Female unemployment

In East and Southeast Asia, export-led growth combined with human resource investments are factors in the region's success, compared with most of Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. But even there, women workers remain vulnerable to retrenchment and unemployment. They are also most vulnerable to public-sector contraction. In countries where the government sector, public administration, or public services recruited most of the educated women seeking employment, and where the private sector is not highly developed (e.g., countries of the

Middle East and North Africa, but also Viet Nam and China), cuts in public-sector employment disproportionately affect women's access to formal-sector employment.

In many countries implementing economic reforms, formal employment opportunities are limited, and this has led to high unemployment rates for women. In the early 1990s, female unemployment has been as high as 25 per cent in Egypt and Iran, and 16 per cent in Poland and Bulgaria. In 1994 in Bulgaria, 328,000 women were unemployed compared with 303,000 men. Recent research conducted in Russia and Central and Eastern Europe indicates rising levels of poverty (especially among women pensioners and within women-headed households) and unemployment levels that are higher for women than for men everywhere but Slovenia and Hungary.

Female unemployment has also resulted from enterprise restructuring, for example in Malaysia, China, Viet Nam, Russia, Poland, and Bulgaria. Although men have similarly lost jobs, available evidence suggests that women are more likely to be retrenched first, and in proportionately larger numbers, than men. This is because of women's concentration in direct production, in sectors most vulnerable to international demand, and in overstuffed clerical/administrative occupations, combined with attitudes towards women as secondary earners and less deserving than men of jobs.

In Cuba, Elena Díaz shows that women's employment has not been adversely affected by the economic reforms. This is because of women's concentration in the health and education sectors, which thus far have been protected from restructuring. It is likely, however, that as in China, Viet Nam, and Egypt, economic reforms and the creation of a market for labour will bring about competition between men and women for good jobs that provide security and benefits.

3. Production and reproduction: Working women and social policies

Working women bridge the productive and reproductive spheres of activity. They are engaged in producing goods and services, and as such are contributors to economic growth. They are also centrally involved in biological and social reproduction. Their roles as workers, household managers, and community participants require appropriate social policies. Across various countries, these have included maternity-leave benefits with job-back guarantees at workplaces, family allowances, childcare facilities, and other support structures for mothers and children, inscribed in labour legislation and social insurance programmes.³

³ National labour legislation may or may not include ILO conventions and recommendations, such as the following that specifically refer to women workers: Equal Remuneration (Convention 100, 1951), Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) (111, 1958), Workers with Family Responsibilities (156, 1981), Employment Policy (122, 1964), Human Resources Development (142, 1975), Maternity Protection (3, 1919; revised, 103, 1952), Night Work (Women) (Revised) (89, 1948; 171, 1990). According to the ILO, as of June 1993, only 31 countries had ratified the maternity protection convention, and only 21 the convention on workers with family responsibilities.

In the former state-socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and in socialist Cuba today, these social policies derived from an ideological commitment to social and gender equality and a corresponding economic policy driven by human-resources development, which included the mobilization of female labour. In more recent years, the shift from a centrally-planned economy and full-employment policy towards a mixed economy with a market for labour seems to have attenuated the need to mobilize female labour through support structures for mothers and children. This is a factor behind the closure or privatization of nurseries and daycare centres in Poland and Bulgaria.

In developing countries where the government sector was the largest employer of women (e.g., Egypt, Iran), economic reforms threaten women's access to employment that provides benefits. In these and other countries, the private sector seems to be much less woman-friendly than the public sector, and less inclined to support or subsidize women's reproductive activities and needs. Neoliberal economic thinking labels protective legislation, including mandated maternity leaves, as a 'labour-market distortion', an additional cost to employers, and a disincentive to the hiring of women. That women constitute 'expensive labour' may be heard in countries as different as Egypt and Poland, and contributes to recruitment discrimination. This despite the fact that women are generally concentrated in lower-paying and lower-status occupations.

Women in the transition economies have represented a great human resource over the past few decades. Any marginalization from gainful employment and the withdrawal of entitlements such as maternity leaves and childcare centres may constitute a 'gender shock' in at least two ways – a shock to the displaced women and a shock to long-term human and social development prospects.

What is required is a recognition that such social policies are necessary in order that women be able to compete fairly in the labour market, and as compensation for women's contributions to social reproduction. The financial mechanisms need to be located and put in place. Indeed, in both the developing countries and the transition economies, these policies will need to be implemented if women are to enter, seek employment, and remain in the private sector, in fair competition with men.

In some countries institutions exist that allow women to participate in economic and political decision-making, or that are more conducive to a better socio-economic position for women. These may be independent labour unions in which women play a prominent role (as in the Scandinavian countries), women's committees of trade unions or ruling parties, or women's organizations with support from the government and formal links with key ministries.

4. Women's organizations

The ability of women's organizations, prominent women researchers, or female politicians to criticize economic policies, influence decision-making, or push for legislation favourable to women varies considerably across countries. Few countries

integrate women in national development plans or in labour-market and employment policies, although Malaysia's Seven-Year Plan has a chapter on Women in Development. In some countries the national machinery for women is weak (Zimbabwe, Malaysia, Mexico, Turkey) or focussed on charitable or mother-and-child issues (Iran and Egypt), or recently disenfranchised (Poland, Bulgaria, Russia). In countries where women's organizations are neither institutionalized nor influential (such as Iran), issues pertaining to women workers and social policies to improve the socio-economic status of women have been neglected. In Egypt, women's organizations have been unable to challenge conservative clauses within the Family Code that require women to obtain permission of the husband before seeking employment or undertaking travel. They are, however, currently protesting moves towards the unification of the Labour Code, which they feel will result in fewer rights for women in the formal labour force.

By contrast, in China, Viet Nam, and Cuba, the women's organizations are well-funded and are participants, at least formally, in the decision-making process. They are also concerned about the interests of women during the period of economic restructuring. The All-China Women's Federation and the Viet Nam Women's Union support their respective country's economic reforms, but they are monitoring the process and pushing for legislation favourable to working women. One result in China was the 1988 Women's Protection Law, which provided a minimum of 3 months' maternity leave and additional childcare benefits for urban employed women. In response to the discriminatory side-effects of the Law, the government passed the 1992 Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests, which specifically outlaws discrimination in hiring or firing based on pregnancy, maternity leave, or childcare considerations.⁴

In Viet Nam, the issue of women workers' rights is being analysed and promoted by the Viet Nam Women's Union (VWU) and by researchers at the Centre for Women's Studies in Ho Chi Minh City and the Centre for Women's Studies in Hanoi – including the two authors in this volume, Professors Le Thi and Bui Thi Kim Quy. The VWU was responsible for the Council of Ministers' Decision No. 163 of October 1988, which stipulates the right of the VWU to participate in decision-making at all levels of government and especially on matters that impinge upon women and children. Moreover, Viet Nam's Labour Code has a lengthy and impressive chapter entitled Separate Provisions on Female Employees.⁵ The VWU fought hard to protect the maternity-leave right of women workers, although this was reduced from six months to four months.

The Federation of Cuban Women is monitoring the status of women during the present period of crisis and reform, and continues to support the audacious Family Code, which, among other things, stipulates the responsibilities of the man in

⁴ Excerpts from the 1992 Law are included as an Annexe to the chapter by Juanhong Fei on China/Shanghai.

⁵ Chapter 10 of Viet Nam's Labour Code has been reproduced, and is included in this publication as an Annexe to the chapter by Bui Thi Kim Quy.

housework and childcare.⁶ As Elena Díaz states, Cuba's social policies have facilitated women's economic and political participation and have decreased inequalities of opportunity between men and women. Nevertheless, women are not found at the pinnacles of power, and the burden of domestic work still falls on women. Traditional gender ideology persists in Cuba as in other countries, and could result in an adverse outcome for women as market reforms proceed.

In the section below, we return to our initial question of why it is that women are especially vulnerable to market reforms.

5. Gender ideology and economic policies

Although neoliberal economic policies are hurting male workers in developing and transition economies, women seem to be losing ground more quickly and more seriously. The two principal causes of women's disadvantaged position are traditional gender ideology and perceptions of men's and women's roles, and the nature of the economic reforms themselves.

Traditional gender ideology has rendered women's reproductive capacity into a subordinated social position for women and a privileged position for men in productive spheres. The precise form taken by gender ideology – and the resultant gender asymmetry – varies across cultures, historical eras, and systems of production, but its existence is fairly universal. The persistence of traditional gender ideology explains why women have lower-paid and lower-status jobs compared with men, why women are most vulnerable to workplace retrenchment, and why there is so much resistance to measures that allow women to combine work and family responsibilities. During times of crisis or austerity which necessitate cutbacks in social spending or public services, gender ideology holds that women will extend their care-giving inclinations to compensate for the losses. Where economic restructuring entails job losses, hiring freezes, new jobs that are precarious and low-paid, and other measures to cut costs and increase efficiency, gender ideology renders women an expendable or cheap supply of labour.

The second cause of women's disadvantage lies in the nature of the economic reforms themselves, the neoliberal policy regime upon which they are based, and the assumptions behind neoclassical economic theory, which inform the policies. Feminist economists have pointed out that despite some important advances in a number of areas in neoclassical economics, the failure of economists to adequately incorporate gender into their models and concerns remains a fundamental weakness.⁷ For example, it is well-known that the allocation of resources – be it allocation of food, healthcare, and education within a household or the allocation of human resources between the non-monetized domestic sphere and the monetized market sector – is highly correlated with

⁶ Excerpts from Cuba's Family Code have been reproduced, as an Annexe to the chapter on Cuba by Elena Díaz.

⁷ See especially the various writings of Diane Elson, Ingrid Palmer, Nancy Folbre, and Lorraine Corner.

gender. Inattention to gender-differentiated allocations and related facts regarding women's economic roles and activity results in inaccurate analysis and inappropriate policies. Feminist economists argue that the theory and practice of current neoliberal economics are gender-blind, or gender-biased, in a number of ways:

- the neoliberal policy regime does not recognize legal, cultural (institutional) and reproductive constraints on women's mobility between sectors, jobs, and employers; it assumes that men and women compete fairly in the labour market, that women's labour-market disadvantages are explained entirely in human capital terms, and that compensatory measures are not necessary;
- it undercounts women's productive contributions and does not recognize or count women's unpaid reproductive contributions in national accounts; this leads to the production of data that are inadequate and not disaggregated by sex, perpetuating poor planning;
- it does not recognize the opportunity costs of women's time, but instead assumes that women's time is elastic and can be over-stretched. For example, early on in the history of structural adjustment policies, disinvestments in human resources were regarded as 'efficient', but they merely transferred the burden of meeting basic needs away from the public sector and back into the household;
- the true opportunity costs of women's labour are not reflected in the wages women are offered in the labour market.

Economic policies (and social policies) may serve to attenuate or intensify gender ideology and may lessen or increase asymmetrical relations between men and women. For example, a human-resource-driven strategy for economic and social development may recognize the significance of women and lead to investments in women's education and training, along with various forms of childcare and family support. Such a strategy is associated with the Nordic countries and the former state-socialist countries, and led to high female labour-force participation, a rise in the age of marriage, lower fertility rates, important economic and social contributions by women, and a lessening of gender inequality.

Conversely, a strategy for economic growth that calls for cutbacks in the areas of health, education, and welfare could constrain the availability of women for work, limit their productive capacity, or over-extend their labour-time, as has been documented for Mexico. It could also revive traditional gender ideology and increase rather than decrease gender asymmetry. Because of household-based gender biases in many countries, public education and health services are key resources for female human-resources development. Any negative impact of public expenditure cutbacks on these sectors will have a stronger negative impact on female than male human-resources development. Recent evidence from Viet Nam, China, and Egypt suggests that the introduction of user fees in healthcare and schooling forces a resurgence of son-preference among poor rural families.

The under-enumeration of women's economic activity in many countries is a reflection of gender perceptions about men's and women's roles, but it also perpetuates such perceptions and leads to inattention to women by policy-makers and planners. Gender-blind economic policies undercut women's labour-market position and could increase the social subordination women face as a result of traditional gender ideology. The end result of both traditional gender ideology and contemporary economic theory and practice is that women's paid and unpaid contributions to 'the wealth and well-being of nations' (Rae Lesser Blumberg's apt term) are ignored, and women are marginalized or otherwise disadvantaged during the present period of economic restructuring.

6. A way forward

Economic restructuring has led to what some have called labour re-regulation and others have called labour deregulation. Labour laws are being revised to be made more flexible, and questions have been raised concerning protective legislation for working women, such as mandated maternity-leave benefits. Social protection – previously the entitlement of only that small percentage of the working population employed in the formal sector of the economy – is being criticized for its limited scope rather than being extended to cover the larger labour force. It is said that economic efficiency and productivity increase when labour legislation and social policies are substantially revised, although the evidence for this is mixed. Meanwhile, privatization, enterprise restructuring, and a reduced role for the state have led to job losses or reduced incomes for working people, and especially for women workers.

There is a solution to this state of affairs, but it requires a fundamental change in the definition of economic development, the approach to economic restructuring, and the objectives of economic growth. A conceptual change is needed which puts people at the centre of these definitions and strategies, which acknowledges the centrality of women's role in what is variously called economic, social, and human development, and which recognizes labour standards.

New economic policies should be subject to socio-economic and gender analysis and evaluated in terms of their impact on human development and gender equity. Important questions include: What would be the impact of the privatization or closure of nurseries and kindergartens on the long-term health and educational development of children? In the short- and medium-term, how would it affect women's capacity to enter and remain in the labour force, and to compete fairly with men in the labour market? What may be required is nothing less than a paradigmatic shift in economic thinking, one which includes a conception of children as a 'public good' rather than a private investment, a recognition of gender specificities and the human rights of women, and a longer-term view of desired developmental outcomes.

Such a paradigmatic shift may be a long-term prospect, but in the shorter term, policies, measures, and instruments exist which should be adopted and enforced by countries. An important one is the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, particularly Article 11, which concerns

equality in employment and labour rights. This Article includes reference to 'the right to protection of health and to safety in working conditions, including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction'. Article 11 also calls on States Parties:

- (a) to prohibit, subject to the imposition of sanctions, dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy or of maternity leave and discrimination in dismissals on the basis of marital status;
- (b) to introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances;
- (c) to encourage the provision of the necessary supporting social services to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life, in particular through promoting the establishment and development of a network of child-care facilities; [...]

Also important are the various ILO conventions, especially those pertaining to women workers' rights. These conventions encompass maternity protection, occupational health and safety, equal remuneration, discrimination in employment and occupation, employment policy, human resources development, workers with family responsibilities, and termination of employment. Other actions may be taken. Countries with outdated family codes should modernize them, to remove cultural constraints on women's mobility and economic participation. The national machinery for women should be upgraded, filled with competent and dedicated women, and given a decision-making role with respect to economic and social policies. In this respect, attention to Commitment 5 of the Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development (March 1995) is relevant:

We commit ourselves to achieving full equality between women and men and to recognizing and enhancing the participation of women in social progress and development.

To this end, at the national level, we shall:

- (a) promote changes in attitudes, policies and practices in order to eliminate all obstacles to full gender equity and equality; and promote full participation of urban and rural women in social, economic and political life, including the formulation and implementation of public policies;
- (b) establish policies, objectives and measurable goals to enhance gender balance in decision-making processes at all levels and broaden women's economic opportunities and support the empowerment of women; [...]

These steps are needed if economic reforms are to have a positive rather than negative effect on social development generally, and on the socio-economic status of women more specifically.

CHAPTER II

ECONOMIC REFORM AND WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN SHANGHAI: A STUDY OF RURAL AND URBAN INDUSTRIAL CHANGES

Juanhong Fei

The success of China's economic reform starting from 1978 has attracted worldwide attention. In the years 1979-92, China achieved an annual GNP growth rate of 9 per cent which is three times the world average. Per capita national income increased from 346 yuan to 1703 yuan with an annual growth rate of 8.8 per cent.¹ The average number of college students per million people increased 109 per cent from 8.9 to 18.6 students.² Economic reforms are bringing about modernization with Chinese characteristics. They are also affecting women's living conditions and employment in significant ways. Before examining these changes, however, we provide a brief introduction to China's economic reform.

1. China's economic reform

In 1978, the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Party Congress made a comprehensive review of the past and proposed a series of new policies, the main ideas of which were to shift the focus from class struggles to the development of productive forces, to replace the closed-door policy with the open-door policy, to get out of stagnation and to carry out reforms throughout the economy.

1.1 The procedure of the reform and key measures

Thus far, there have been three phases in the economic reform process. China began reform in the countryside where 80 per cent of the population live. The first phase (1978-83) set up 'the household responsibility system'. Diversification of ownership, household management, autonomy in production and distribution according to output aroused the peasants' once dormant enthusiasm and creativity. With the enhancement of productivity, peasants are no longer confined to the fields, labour division in rural economy is promoted, and rural industrial structure becomes more diversified and rational. With the ban on the field of circulation lifted, the rural market economy is invigorated. Township enterprises have propelled the countryside on the road to modernization and industrialization.

¹ *Statistical Yearbook of China 1993* (Beijing: China Statistics Publishing House, 1993), pp. 31, 35.

² *Idem*, p. 727.

In 1984, following the success of rural reform, China turned its attention to urban reform and came into the second phase of the reform – comprehensive reform of the economic system. The Third Plenary Session of the Twelfth Party Congress passed a programmatic resolution, The Party Central Committee's Decision on Economic System Reform. This resolution went beyond the traditional ideas which set planned economy against commodity economy. It advocated a socialist economy system which is a public-ownership based commodity economy in a planned way.

In October 1992, the Third Plenary Session of the Fourteenth Party Congress made a clearer statement: 'The aim of our economic reform is to construct a socialist market economy system that can facilitate further emancipation and development of productive forces'. Hence, after planned economy and commodity economy in a planned way, China finally adopted the socialist market economy system, and entered its third and crucial phase of reform. The main objective of this reform phase is to allocate resources according to the market forces instead of a government plan. In constructing the socialist market economy, two rules should be observed: 'put public-ownership economy at a leading place', and 'take the road of common prosperity, avoid the emergence of a polarization of the rich and the poor'.³

In the past 15 years, the Chinese government has adopted a series of effective measures which mainly deal with the diversification of the ownership system, commercialization and market-orientation. First, the government encouraged the peasants to set up the 'agricultural production responsibility system'. Each group, household or person is responsible for an amount of output, established by contract, and receives rewards linked to the actual output.

Meanwhile, the government also helped and supported the development of various types of individual economy as auxiliary economic forms, declaring: 'Family plots, privately owned livestock, household side-line production and rural fair trade are all an appendage and supplement to socialist economy. Therefore, they can not be criticized as the remnants of capitalism', and 'individual economy on certain scale is a necessary complement to socialist public economy'.⁴ As a result, self-employed labourers, husband-and-wife stores and private enterprises proliferated.

Under the open-door policy, many active measures are adopted to attract foreign capital, such as setting up special economic zones. By 1992, there were 2,012 projects with foreign investment of USD 3,357 million in Shanghai.⁵

In order to change the natural rural economy into a commodity economy, diversified management has been greatly encouraged after reform. On the one hand, the government encouraged household side-line production, family plot planting and specialized households (households specializing in a particular product or operation) to

³ Selections from *Deng Ziaoping*, Vol. 3, p. 149.

⁴ *Idem*.

⁵ *Statistical Annual Report of Shanghai Pudong New Area, 1992* (Beijing: China Statistics Publishing House, 1993), p. 8.

lay material foundation for the development of rural commodity economy. On the other hand, the government tried in every possible way to reform and open up the old channels for circulation of commodities and establish new ones, thereby greatly enlivening the previously stagnant rural economy.

At the same time, the government also gave great support to the development of township enterprises by preferential treatment, which not only absorbed a great number of surplus rural labourers but also brought about fundamental changes in the industrial structure of the rural economy. In the suburbs of Shanghai, industry's contribution to GNP rose from 23.1 per cent in 1971 to 61.3 per cent in 1992.⁶

In the socialist market economy system, enterprises are the main body of the market. Since 1979, China has sped up the establishment of a modern enterprise system with measures such as introducing competition, giving more autonomy to enterprises, abolishing the 'iron rice bowl' and the practice of 'eating from the common pot', tying economic benefits to productivity and output, creating a market for labour through a contract labour system, and transforming the distribution system from a government-controlled to a market-controlled one.

China is currently transforming the traditional social security system with its emphasis on 'employment security' into a new one that corresponds to the market economy system.

1.2 The impact of the reform on women's employment

The Chinese economic reform is a complex social project involving hundreds of millions of people, prompting a series of deep social changes. With the break up of long standing egalitarian, economic and social patterns, some new problems are emerging, including problems specific to women.

First, the reform has emancipated women to a large extent from the old production relations. The purpose of China's reform is to liberate the productive forces. In the process of modernization and industrialization, advances have been made first in the economy of the countryside where the reform was initiated. The women there have benefited considerably from the reform. Rural women's economic role has changed far more significantly than that of urban women.

After liberation in 1949, the Chinese rural women acquired land and enjoyed the right to participate in social production in which their economic role was established. However, for decades peasants were organized rigidly into the people's commune, and this dampened rural women's production enthusiasm and put them in the position of an auxiliary labour force. The dismantling of the old production relations in the 1980s has led to a new relationship between the labourer and land. Women, like men, have become the contractor of means of production and claim the equal right to own and

⁶ *Shanghai Economy (1949-1982)* (Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1983), p. 394 (for 1971) and *Shanghai Economic Yearbook 1992* (Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, 1992).

utilize resources. With the rapid increase in productivity, the improvement in rural economic structure and the flourishing of rural commodity economy, rural women have taken up a wider variety of jobs in which their potential is further tapped. Therefore, women owe it to the reform that they have become the main force in agricultural production, a new force in township enterprises as well as in the production and circulation of commodities.

The household responsibility system has improved the social and economic environment for rural women to undertake social production. With the initiative in their own hands, they have made their modes, schedule and content of labour flexible and can effectively mete out the amount of labour in accordance with specific conditions of individuals, households and farm work. Undoubtedly this system is capable of increasing productivity and in the meantime, speeding up the tendency to transfer the labour force to non-agricultural production. In turn, the development of non-agricultural production provides necessary funds for the mechanization, specialization, socialization and modernization of agriculture, which are material and technical prerequisites to qualify women for farm work. The 1990 national census reveals that in the suburbs of Shanghai about 900,000 people were engaged in agriculture, forestry, and animal husbandry of whom 60 per cent were women (520,000) and in the case of farming, 64 per cent were women. It is evident that women have superseded men as the main role in agriculture.

But women engaged in agriculture are only a small part. As a large number of peasants are freed from the land, the rural industry of Shanghai is developing rapidly with the help of its developed urban industry. In 1981, Shanghai had 5,646 commune-run factories in which 735,600 commune members created the industrial output value of 34.16 billion yuan. In 1992, it had 26,000 township enterprises in which 1.7 million workers created an output valued at 582.57 billion yuan, an amount equal to the city's total output value of industry before 1949.⁷ Township enterprises have become a favourite workplace of Shanghai rural women, because they do not have to leave their home village or go to the city. In 1990, about half of them worked there.

The reform has reinvigorated household production and women have both the habits and skills to handle household production with facility. Rural women in Shanghai take advantage of their courtyards and any open space around their houses for all sorts of commodity production, ranging from planting, breeding and processing to various services. Since the reform has changed the nature of women's household production from purely private housework to the production of marketable commodities, the family which confined women to their depreciated labour in the past is now an outlet for their talent.

With their active participation in the diversified economy, Shanghai rural women's incomes have increased, and in many cases, they receive a higher income than men. In 1992, Shanghai rural family's annual income was 2,580.73 yuan per head, in

⁷ Data from *Shanghai Economy (1949-1982)*, p. 394; and from *Statistical Yearbook of Shanghai Suburbs 1993* (Shanghai Statistical Bureau and Shanghai Agricultural Bureau, 1993), p. 147.

which 1,220.30 yuan came from the collective and 1,086.19 yuan was earned through household production.⁸

Second, the reform has transformed the traditional employment mechanism and brought much pressure of competition upon women. Under the planned economy, rural women were employed by the production team as soon as they reached the working age. In towns and cities, women were assigned to work by the labour departments. Traditionally, all Chinese women were employed for life, and they faced no risk of being dismissed, but rather, were fully entitled to all forms of socialist welfare whenever they were ill or gave birth to a child.

Today there is a labour market, and the government's monopoly has given way to the two-way selection between demand and supply, the lifelong employment system to the contracted labour system, the distribution system based on egalitarianism to diversified distribution system linked to output, and the social security system guaranteed by the work unit to a socialized social security system. Market-oriented employment has brought about a fundamental change in the mode, pattern, structure and income of women's employment. Economic reform has introduced competition not only to the enterprises but also between the sexes. Enterprises tend to employ men and lay off women with a view to reducing cost and pursuing the largest profits. Hence new problems keep arising with the modernization drive: women have difficulties in seeking jobs, which lack stability even if they succeed; they are offered low-paid and low level occupations; they are not adequately protected in some enterprises, especially foreign-invested ones; a vast number of women have to be laid off in the course of the readjustment of the industrial structure. Under the market economy, women depend solely on their own abilities to compete for employment with men in the labour market. This state of affairs is too much for most women who are accustomed to preferential treatment.

Third, the reform has created a wide range of opportunities for women. Although women have to live with the pressure of competition, they are also provided with freedom of employment. Competition has above all cultivated an unprecedented sense of urgency and self-reliance in women who have finally forsaken their sense of inferiority and dependence. After the breaking of the 'iron rice bowl', many women are laid off, some of them are thrown into confusion, but soon they try to learn new professional skills and then find new jobs, some choose to risk their fortune in business, starting from small dealings and ending up in their own businesses. Women have come to learn to be independent.

The market economy means self-selection, self-development, self-fulfilment and self-protection. Many women prefer to give up their present secure jobs and bid for the positions of heavy responsibilities or big earnings. By challenging themselves and society, Chinese women become more capable and creative, and have achieved unprecedented success. A large number of outstanding talented women are emerging, including modern administrators, able and efficient merchants, scientists with rich

⁸ *Statistical Yearbook of Shanghai Suburbs 1993* (ibid.), p. 211.

achievements, entrepreneurs possessing the pioneer spirit, and good workers in commodity production.

Fourth, the reform has sparked women's enthusiasm for studying. In order to meet the requirements of the labour market and ever-emerging technical innovations, they find it imperative to study science and raise their educational level. They go to evening schools or training classes, and buy various academic books to advance in the competitive labour market. According to the third and fourth national censuses, Shanghai in 1990 had 161,400 more women who had graduated from colleges or universities than in 1982. The number of female technical personnel and experts increased by 4 per cent. Even in the outskirts of Shanghai, 98.5 per cent of the women under 45 years old were literate in 1992.⁹

All in all, China's economic reform has unleashed women's productive forces and tapped their great potentialities. For 15 years, Chinese women have been playing an active role in the reform practice and 'have made greater contributions in terms of wealth to the country, collective and their family than ever'.¹⁰ The reform has also led women to the labour market where much pressure of competition is involved, and brought about radical changes in women's employment. The following intends to examine these changes with a focus on Shanghai women.

2. Changes to Shanghai women's employment in the reform

Shanghai is the largest industrial and commercial city in China. Since Shanghai was opened as a port in 1843, foreign capital was imported in succession; national industry and commerce rose rapidly. As the earliest industrial base in China, Shanghai has produced a long line of industrial workers, among them, textile women workers. Before liberation, Shanghai predominated in light and textile industry. The 1947 output value of heavy industry only made up 11.8 per cent of Shanghai total output value of industry. According to the data from statistical office of Kuomintang government in Shanghai, at the end of 1947, 352,000 workers worked in 3,045 factories, of which 1,403 were textile factories and 183,000 workers were female. At the end of 1947, employed women were only 19 per cent of the total employed population in Shanghai.¹¹ Women's employment in Shanghai increased considerably in the years following liberation.

Shanghai's 1992 GNP was 30 times the 1952 figure, and its GNP per capita rose from 426 yuan to 8,179 yuan during the period. With the development of production, the national income of Shanghai also showed an increase from 3.3 billion of 1952 to 88.1 billion of 1992. In 1992, the proportion of heavy industry in total output value of Shanghai industry rose to 52.1 per cent. Some traditional industries are transformed, and

⁹ Zhang Bohua, *Working Report on the 10th Women's Representative Assembly of Shanghai*, 6 June 1993.

¹⁰ *Shanghai Economic Yearbook* 1993, p. 435.

¹¹ Data from *Shanghai Economy (1949-1982)*, pp. 50, 51, 85.

some new ones are rising. The tertiary sector has developed such that in the short period of 1988-92, 40 billion yuan were invested. The proportion of tertiary industry in Shanghai's 1992 GNP rose to 33.1 per cent from 18.6 per cent of 1978. In 1992, the proportions of secondary and tertiary sectors in the GNP of Shanghai's suburbs reached 61.3 and 25.5 per cent respectively.¹²

All these have given an enormous impetus to the formation and development of Shanghai women's labour force. Shanghai employed women have not only covered all trades and professions, but their proportion in Shanghai's employed population has risen to 45.6 per cent, or 3.6 million in 1990.¹³

Between 1982 and 1990, half of the rural women engaging in agricultural production in Shanghai suburbs were liberated from the yellow earth and transferred to non-agricultural production.¹⁴ The following will discuss these changes from six aspects.

TABLE 2.1
SHANGHAI FEMALE POPULATION, 1949-92

Year	Total	Female	Unit: ten thousand
			Female share (%)
1949	502.92	228.05	45.4
1978	1,098.28	555.58	50.6
1982	1,180.51	591.69	50.1
1990*	1,334.18	653.57	49.0
1992**	1,289.37	639.40	49.6

Sources: *Statistical Yearbook of Shanghai 1987*, p. 71.

* The Fourth National Census Data

** *Statistical Yearbook of Shanghai 1993*, p. 63.

2.1 Rate of women in employment

From 1981 to 1992, Shanghai's GNP grew at the annual rate of 7.9 per cent.¹⁵ With the steady growth of the economy, the number of employed women in Shanghai increased to 3.7 million in 1990.

¹² The data in this paragraph are from the following sources: *Shanghai Economic Yearbook 1993*, pp. 57, 435, 547-548; *Statistical Yearbook of Shanghai 1993* (Beijing: China Statistics Publishing House, 1993), p. 39; *Statistical Yearbook of Shanghai 1987*, p. 39; *Statistical Yearbook of Shanghai Suburbs 1993*, p. 1.

¹³ Calculated from the Fourth National Census Data.

¹⁴ Idem.

¹⁵ *Shanghai Economic Yearbook 1993*, p. 543.

Shanghai industry has developed rapidly, the total output value of industry of 1981-92 grew at an annual rate of 8.5 per cent, higher than the growth rate of its GNP, and the growth rate of 1991-92 even reached 17.1 per cent.¹⁶ What is worth mentioning is the sudden rise and rapid development of township enterprises. From 1978 to 1992, the output value of industry in Shanghai suburbs increased by 105.67 times and its labour force in industry sector increased 768,800.¹⁷ All these have brought about the great expansion of the ranks of female staff and workers. In 1978-91, female staff and workers of Shanghai grew from 1.8 million to 2.1 million with an increase of 19.8 per cent (see Table 2.2) which was higher than that of Shanghai women employed in the same period.

While the population of working women is growing, the rate of Shanghai women in employment is rising too. In 1990, 93.6 per cent of Shanghai women aged 15-54 years old were employed. It was 1.8 percentage points more than the figure of 1982. Meanwhile, the proportion of women in unemployment dropped from 61.4 per cent of 1982 to 58.6 of 1990. It can be further discovered from Table 2.3, in the age groups 15-44, the rates of men and women in employment were very close, but above 50 years old, the rates of women in employment were lower than men's. It shows that the work life of Shanghai women is about more than 10 years shorter than men's. Besides, in the age groups 15-19 and 20-24, the rates of women in employment of 1990 decreased 20-10 per cent than that of 1982. This period of age is exactly the period to study in middle school. In 1985, Shanghai was the first to begin the nine-years compulsory education in our country.

TABLE 2.2
SHANGHAI FEMALE STAFF AND WORKERS, 1957-91

Unit: ten thousand			
Year	Total	Female	Female share (%)
1957	211.3	51.13	24.2
1965	271.2	62.7	29.7
1978*	421.0	181.5	43.1
1985**	492.55	205.7	41.8
1991***	517.73	217.41	42.0

Sources: *Shanghai Economy (1949-1982)*, pp. 86, 88.
 * *Labour Yearbook of China*, pp. 545-546.
 ** *Statistics on Chinese Women (1949-1989)*, p. 249.
 *** *Statistical Yearbook of Shanghai 1992*, p. 91.

¹⁶ Idem.

¹⁷ *Statistical Yearbook of Shanghai Suburbs 1993*, pp. 9, 27; *Statistical Yearbook of Shanghai 1982*, p. 66; *Statistical Yearbook of Shanghai 1991*, p. 220.

TABLE 2.3
SHANGHAI EMPLOYMENT RATES, AGES 15-64
1982 AND 1990

	Unit: %									
Age group	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64
1982										
Men	56.4	92.1	97.8	98.1	98.5	99.0	98.7	91.4	77.7	
Women	58.8	94.6	98.9	99.0	99.0	98.6	83.1	44.4	36.2	
1990										
Men	38.1	81.9	93.7	95.9	97.4	98.1	98.3	95.8	82.9	37.4
Women	39.6	85.4	95.1	97.9	98.3	98.4	95.0	56.0	33.8	20.6

Sources: Calculated from the Third and Fourth National Census Data.

During this eight year period, the female proportion to the total employed population of Shanghai dropped a little from 47.2 per cent to 45.6 per cent, 0.3 percentage points decrease in urban districts and 1.9 percentage points in rural areas. This is somewhat related with the fact that the proportion of Shanghai women's population to the total decreased 1.1 percentage points in this period, especially the proportion of women 15 years old and over decreased 1.8 percentage points. But compared with other large cities in China, the rate of Shanghai women in employment in 1990 was higher than the figures of Beijing (42.8 per cent), Tianjing (43.2 per cent), and the average level of the whole country (44.9 per cent).¹⁸ It still occupied the first place in China.

To examine from the angle of town and country, Shanghai had a population of 4.6 million women aged 15-64 in 1990, 60.6 per cent of them living in the town and 39.4 per cent living in the countryside. The population of urban women in employment was 383,000 more than the figure of rural women, while the rate of rural women in the employed population was 6.0 percentage points higher than that of urban women, and the rate of rural women in employment was even 17.1 percentage points higher than that of urban women.

2.2 *The employment pattern*

The goal of China's economic reform is to establish socialist market economic system. In the process, changes are occurring in various aspects of employment. First, there is a change from planned deployment to market-oriented employment. Under the system of planned economy, although the individual had to accept the job assigned by the state and had little freedom to choose jobs, the Chinese people enjoyed the superiority of 'full employment' and 'iron rice bowl', and women fully enjoyed the right of equal employment with men. After reform, enterprises are free to recruit, and labourers can choose their own workplace. The deployment of the labour force is no longer decided by the state plan but by the labour market.

¹⁸ *China Population Statistics Yearbook 1992*, p. 164.

What are the implications of this change to women? First, women can choose their job, workplace, employment pattern, and employment form suited to them, they can choose to work or stay at home. Secondly, while women have the right to choose a job, they lose their special protection and have to compete with men for employment in the labour market. Thirdly, women have to accept unequal employment competition between men and women. This is because there is still a big difference between the family roles of men and women, and women's reproduction is basically considered a matter of women's obligation to society and family without compensation. This puts women at a disadvantage in the competition for jobs. At present, one of the most obvious phenomenon is that some women face difficulties in finding jobs. It is easy to find such terms as 'men only' and 'below 30 years old' in many advertisements.

A second change is in the employment pattern: from life-long and full-time to contracted and diversified employment. Since liberation, Chinese women's employment pattern has assumed a form of continuity whereby they take on a job and remain with it until retirement age. They would not resign and return home for marriage or child-bearing, and they enjoyed maternity leave and marriage leave at full wage. Chinese women usually work full-time as do men and their working lives tend to be longer than those of Western women.

The economic reform alters women's employment patterns. Some enterprises are not willing to employ female workers, especially the women who are older who might bear children, or who may be low-skilled. These women are also more vulnerable to redundancies. Full-time employment in a certain enterprise for a long period is no longer the only pattern of employment. Alternative employment and unemployment, temporary employment and part time work will become common.

Women's employment could become less stable than men's, more likely to be discontinuous and varied. For example, at the beginning of the 1980s, some construction units and shipyards began to try out the system of long leaves with partial wages for women labourers who were pregnant or nursed babies. Now more enterprises are implementing the system of long leave to nurse babies.

What is also new is the choices that women have. In a field investigation of Shanghai suburbs in 1990, the author found two young women workers who had resigned their jobs. One wanted to learn driving to make more money; the other was at odds with her leader and preferred to stay at home and wait for another employment opportunity. This would never happen before the reform.

Third, there is a change in the employment form: from single occupation to multi-occupation. Before the reform, people engaged in one occupation, usually the same one for their whole lives. For instance, there are many middle-aged and older women in Shanghai who have worked in textile factories all their lives. The reform gives people more freedom of employment and their employment form has become diversified. Labourers can not only choose jobs but also hold more posts concurrently. In order to increase income or give full play to one's abilities, now it is not rare to do several jobs concurrently with one as primary. Teachers concurrently become spare-time

tutors; technicians in state-run enterprises concurrently become technical consultant to township enterprises; news reporters concurrently become spare-time lawyers. In the process of industrialization, a large number of marginal or part-time peasants appear in Shanghai suburbs. With the rising commercialization of agriculture, many rural women 'work at the factory by day, do farm labour in the morning and evening, snatch time to engage in sideline activities and do housework in the lamplight'.

2.3 *Employment structure*

Since the reform, with rising socialization of production, social divisions, and the industrial restructuring, Shanghai women's employment structure has changed accordingly. First, there has been a change in the sectoral concentration of women workers. Between 81.4 and 85.8 per cent of Shanghai's employed women are concentrated in industry, agriculture, and various services (see Table 2.4). The majority of Shanghai employed women are industrial labourers. In 1990, 56.7 per cent of its population worked in industry, accounting for 2.1 million in which textile and machinery workers constituted the main part numbering just under one million.

The main change between 1982-90 was that employment was increasing in industry and decreasing in agriculture. The latter dropped from 31.9 per cent to 15.4 per cent, as 552,600 women shifted from agricultural production to non-agricultural production, of which 79.0 per cent entered the industry sector. The proportion of industry went up from 47 per cent to 56.7 per cent with an added population of 436,600 and its growth rate (26.5 per cent) surpassed not only men's (19.1 per cent), but also the growth rate of employed female population (4.8 per cent) in the same period. This change was more obvious in the suburbs of Shanghai.

Before the reform, most of the labour force in Shanghai suburbs consisted of agricultural labourers. In 1978, 76.1 per cent of its labour force were in the trade of agriculture, and forestry.¹⁹ With the rapid industrialization of Shanghai suburbs after reform, this proportion in employed women in Shanghai suburbs went down from 59.3 per cent of 1982 to 31.7 per cent of 1990, and 584 thousand of rural women shifted to non-agriculture production (in 1990, a part of rural areas were incorporated into urban district). This fact essentially changed women's long-existing engagement in agricultural production, as more and more rural women became the first generation of workers in township enterprises. In eight years, the population of rural women workers increased from 600,000 to 904,400 with a growth rate of 50.7 per cent. Thus it is very clear that reform and industrialization have both provided many new employment opportunities for women and greatly improved their employment structure.

¹⁹ *Statistical Yearbook of Shanghai 1982*, p. 173.

TABLE 2.4

SHANGHAI EMPLOYED WOMEN BY ECONOMIC SECTOR, 1982 AND 1990

Unit: ten thousand

Trade	Total		Female		Female share (%)		% of Female	
	1982	1990	1982	1990	1982	1990	1982	1990
1	190.95	98.85	112.17	56.91	58.8	57.6	32.0	15.5
2	346.80	425.22	164.93	208.59	47.6	49.1	47.0	56.7
3	0.33	0.46	0.05	0.08	13.7	16.6	0.01	0.02
4	32.76	45.34	4.76	5.44	14.5	12.0	1.4	1.5
5	35.92	34.42	7.73	6.63	21.5	19.3	2.2	1.8
6	53.87	72.99	23.98	33.81	44.5	46.3	6.8	9.2
7	14.16	34.21	6.23	14.08	44.0	41.2	1.8	3.8
8	13.59	16.71	8.73	11.35	64.2	68.0	2.5	3.1
9	28.76	34.88	13.97	17.95	48.6	51.5	4.0	4.9
10	7.66	9.85	2.64	3.46	34.4	35.1	0.8	0.9
11	2.10	3.58	0.86	1.69	40.9	47.2	0.2	0.5
12	16.66	29.14	4.86	7.78	29.2	26.7	1.4	2.1
Other	0.07	0.20	0.04	0.06	50.5	33.0	0.01	0.02
Total	743.63	805.85	350.95	367.83	47.2	45.6	100.0	100.0

- Notes: 1 = Agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, fishery and water conservancy
 2 = Industry
 3 = Geological survey and prospecting
 4 = Construction
 5 = Traffic and transport, postal and telecommunication services
 6 = Retail, catering, goods supply and storage
 7 = Real estate, public utilities, services for residents and consultation
 8 = Public health, sports and social welfare undertakings
 9 = Education, culture, arts, broadcast and television
 10 = Scientific research and comprehensive services of technology
 11 = Finance and insurance
 12 = Institutions of government, parties and associations

Source: Calculated from the Third and Fourth National Census Data.

Women in urban districts have experienced another important change in that some traditional female trades, such as light and textile industry, came to a standstill, and some new trades, such as real estate, finance and retail, grew. In 1990, the textile industry still had the largest number of urban women, but its growth rate slowed down to only 5.4 per cent from 1982 to 1990. Shanghai Textile Bureau reduced about 100,000 staff and workers, 18 per cent of its total population, in the period 1991-93.

In contrast, from 1982 to 1990, real estate and public utilities had the highest growth rate with an increase of 133.6 per cent; and finance and insurance increased 110.2 per cent. Retail/catering and real estate/public utilities added about 70,000 female labourers each.

In 1990, there were only three out of twelve occupations in which women predominated, and female proportions in five occupations were below one-third. In contrast, there was only one sector in which the male proportion was below one-third. This shows that the employment range of Shanghai women is narrower than the men's. But in the period 1982-90, female employment in finance and insurance grew fastest,

from 40.9 per cent to 47.2 per cent. According to the information from the department concerned, the share of the female employees in the Shanghai banking sector reached 51 per cent in 1993.

Second, there has been a change in the structure of occupation. Table 2.5 shows that at 43.7-47.8 per cent in 1982-90, production workers predominated among Shanghai's employed women and among all the occupations. But the occupation with the highest growth rate was service personnel, which increased 84.4 per cent. Meanwhile, women's employment in agriculture decreased by 50 per cent.

TABLE 2.5
SHANGHAI EMPLOYED WOMEN BY OCCUPATION, 1982 AND 1990

Unit: ten thousand

Occupation	Total		Female		Female share (%)		% of Female	
	1982	1990	1982	1990	1982	1990	1982	1990
1	79.28	107.52	36.38	53.90	45.9	50.1	10.4	14.7
2	23.57	29.57	4.08	5.52	17.3	18.7	1.2	1.5
3	22.91	46.50	7.99	14.73	34.9	31.7	2.3	4.0
4	29.91	52.42	13.44	22.81	45.0	43.5	3.8	6.2
5	55.64	69.91	29.96	39.43	53.9	56.4	8.5	10.7
6	177.00	92.91	105.29	55.72	59.5	60.0	30.0	15.2
7	354.40	406.85	153.44	175.64	43.3	43.2	43.7	47.8
Other	0.92	0.17	0.37	0.08	40.4	47.8	0.1	0.02
Total	743.63	805.85	350.95	367.83	47.2	45.6	100.0	100.0

Notes: 1 = Specialized personnel and technicians of all kinds

2 = Leading cadres in government institutions, organizations of parties and mass, and enterprises

3 = Office members and persons concerned

4 = Commercial personnel

5 = Service personnel

6 = Labourers in agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, fishery and water conservancy

7 = Workers in production, transport and other related persons

Source: Calculated from the Third and Fourth National Census Data

A far smaller percentage of the Shanghai female work force are employed as leading cadres in government institutions, party and mass organizations, and enterprises; only 1.5 per cent in 1990 compared with 5.5 per cent for men.

As the above has demonstrated, the characteristics of Shanghai employed women in their occupational structure is that they are mainly engaged in the occupations involving physical labour and with lower status and skills. The higher the position and education requirements of the occupation, the lower the female proportion in it. Take the example of education personnel in 1990. The proportion of female teachers in kindergartens was 99.7 per cent, in primary school was 69.2 per cent, in middle school was 44.7 per cent and in institutions of higher learning was only 30.3 per cent.

The economic reform has brought about positive trends. This is the first time in history that such a great number (about 500,000) and a large proportion (47 per cent) of rural women have been liberated from the labour 'with the back to the blue sky and the face to the yellow earth', and shifted to light physical and mental work. It is necessary to mention that in 1982-90, besides the two occupations of 'production workers' and 'various specialized personnel and technicians' which added 222,000 and 175,000 people respectively, other two occupations of 'service personnel' and 'commercial personnel' also absorbed 90,000 people respectively. In recent years, many high-class hotels and luxury shops have appeared in Shanghai. According to the press, restaurants in Shanghai have increased from 2,000 in the 1980s to 30,000 in the 1990s.²⁰ Waitresses, saleswomen, ladies in charge of public relations, etc., have become popular female occupations.

There has been a large increase in the numbers and growth rates of female specialized personnel and technicians. During 1982-90, various specialized personnel and technicians in the population of Shanghai employed women increased 107,200; that is, 1.63 times as much as men's. In 1990, women made up 50.1 per cent of this occupation.

China's economic reform has aroused Shanghai women's great enthusiasm for production and forced them to know the importance of good labour qualities in market economy. They learn to read and write, study scientific knowledge, and master new skills to raise their educational level and increase professional knowledge with great efforts while participating in economic development. In 1990, 67.9 per cent of Shanghai employed women had intermediate educational level, while 5.4 per cent with higher educational level. Even in the suburbs of Shanghai, many rural women get technical titles in the reform. According to the 1990 investigation conducted in Hua Cao township in Shanghai suburbs, there were 149 specialized personnel and technicians with a technical title in primary or middle ranks, 20.1 per cent of them were female, while in 1983 it was only 7.5 per cent. Undoubtedly, the increase in the number of female specialized personnel and technicians will give an enormous impetus to the rise in the occupation level of Shanghai women.

Third, industrial restructuring in Shanghai has led to a tremendous decrease in agricultural employment and an increase in employment in industry and services. Table 2.6 illustrates the feminization of agriculture. In the primary sector, the female share topped that of men's by 15 percentage points, and the proportion of females employed in agriculture was 6 percentage points higher than the proportion of men. The 1990 investigation of Shen Geng Lang production team confirmed this trend. The team had 31 peasants cultivating contracted land, 29 of whom were women. This shows that the speed of non-agriculturalization of women is behind men's, that men have become the first beneficiary in the process of modernization, and that women are in the position of a reserve labour force to fill the vacancies left by the men. Table 2.6 also shows that although the tertiary sector employs more women than the primary sector, its growth rate and its proportion are much lower than those of the secondary sector.

²⁰ Han Lin, 'Don't take the Branch for the Root', *Xinming Evening Newspaper*, 28 July 1994.

TABLE 2.6

SHANGHAI EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY, 1982 and 1990

Unit: %

Industry	Employment share				% of Male		% of Female	
	1982		1990		1982	1990	1982	1990
	Men	Women	Men	Women				
Primary	41.25	58.75	42.43	57.57	20.1	9.6	32.0	15.5
Secondary	52.44	47.56	50.95	49.05	46.3	49.5	47.0	56.7
Tertiary	64.13	35.87	63.69	36.31	33.6	41.0	21.0	27.8

Source: Calculated according to the Third and Fourth National Census Data.

An additional point is that the tertiary sector puts men first. The tertiary sector is usually considered to be more suitable to women as it does not require physical strength. But the female proportion was 27.4 per cent lower than the male's, and the proportion of employed women in the tertiary sector was also 13 per cent lower than the proportion of employed men engaged in this sector in 1990.

According to the 1990 national census, the proportions of employed population with educational level above senior high school in the first, secondary and tertiary industries are 5.2 per cent, 34.4 per cent and 46.4 per cent respectively. In finance and insurance, scientific research, education and culture the proportion of educated employees are as high as 81.4 per cent, 78.7 per cent and 77.1 per cent. To improve Shanghai women's industrial structure, it is necessary to raise their educational level.

Fourth, the structure of ownership has changed. In 1992, state-owned economy occupied 65.3 per cent of Shanghai's national economy, 20.6 per cent lower than the figure of 1980; collective economy made up 20 per cent with an increase of 7.1 per cent. Other economic forms accounted for 14.7 per cent and topped the 1980 figure by 13.5 per cent; private enterprises grew from zero at the beginning of the reform to 4,213 registered enterprises in 1992. Individual, registered businessmen have doubled to 126,113 in 1992, 15.2 times of the figure of 1978.²¹

The economic reform allows labourers the freedom to choose the form of employment. They can seek salaried employment or be self-employed. They can choose to work at state-run or collective units, or foreign-funded enterprises, or other private enterprises.

Table 2.7 shows that at present, most Shanghai women still work at state-run units but from 1986 to 1992, the proportion of collective units went down 3.8 per cent and the proportion of other units went up 2.5 per cent with an increase of more than 50,000 in population.

²¹ *Shanghai Economic Yearbook 1993*, p. 438.

TABLE 2.7

SHANGHAI FEMALE STAFF AND WORKERS BY TYPE OF ENTERPRISE, 1986 AND 1992

Unit: ten thousand

Year	State-run			Collective-run			Others		
	Number of women	% of total	% of women	Number of women	% of total	% of women	Number of women	% of total	% of women
1986	148.08	37.8	71.4	57.58	55.1	27.8	1.64	44.6	0.8
1992	155.89	39.3	72.7	51.53	52.7	24.0	7.12	42.6	3.3

Sources: *Statistical Yearbook of Shanghai 1987*, pp. 87-88 (for 1986).

Statistical Yearbook of Shanghai 1993, pp. 77, 80 (for 1992).

Economic reform has encouraged Shanghai women to seek jobs on their own, or to become self-employed. Some of them begin as peddlers or retailers, then contract a counter in a shop, eventually own an enterprise. According to the investigation of Shen Geng Lang production team in 1990, the team had 214 females joining in economic activities, seven of them were individual business-owners. The statistics of Song Jiang county in Shanghai suburbs show that by October 1993, the county had 7,122 registered individual businessmen, 3,279 of them were females. The female proportion in private enterprises and individual businessmen of the whole city of Shanghai was about 35 per cent in 1992.

2.4 Labour mobility

For a long time, the Chinese government had special policies to control population mobility and social mobility such as household register system and personnel system. Under the system of market economy, in order to rationalize the allocation of labour resources, labour force should move freely according to the signal of market prices. Economic reforms have accelerated social mobility, especially the mobility of labour, in at least three ways.

First, there has been occupational mobility, divided into structural mobility and free mobility. In the reform, Shanghai economy has sped up the step to readjust its industrial structure, technical structure and the distribution of industry, it has brought about the structural mobility of employed population. In recent years, the most obvious structural mobility of Shanghai women was the mobility of rural women to non-agricultural production and the mobility of urban women to the tertiary sector. From 1982 to 1990, 47 per cent of Shanghai rural women in agricultural production moved to industry and services.

The attraction of state-run units and 'iron rice bowl' is no longer so great as before; instead, higher income, better work environment and full self-realization are more attractive. It has become very common to get a better new job. In the state-run enterprises, so many young textile workers have left their posts to find a better new job that the enterprises have had to employ non-local labourers to compensate. According to a 1990 survey of the status of Shanghai women, 52.3 per cent of Shanghai urban women have changed their jobs; in the rural areas, this figure is 67.4 per cent. Some of them

even have changed their jobs more than five times.²² At present, many women gravitate toward foreign-invested enterprises, and service sector occupations that offer high incomes are especially sought after by women.

Second, there is more mobility between town and country. The Chinese economic reforms have broken the wall between the identities of workers and peasants, and have accelerated the mobility of labour force between town and country. On one hand, the rapid development of Shanghai rural economy has freed a large number of surplus agricultural labourers from the farmland. On the other hand, the development of Shanghai urban economy also needs and attracts rural labour. For example, in recent years, construction in Shanghai has been on a big scale and at a rapid speed, and its present labour force in construction cannot meet the new needs. Meanwhile some occupations where the work is dirty, hard, or low-paid, such as environmental sanitation department, are greatly short of labourers. Thus peasants enter into towns to work in these enterprises by contract or as temporary workers. With the rising living standard, urban shops and restaurants frequently go up-market, creating a niche for peasants to sell lower-priced commodities, foods, and services.

With rising income and work pressure, Shanghai residents are once again interested in hiring housekeepers and even wet nurses. There are now several hundred 'institutes for housekeeper recommendation' in Shanghai. Having disappeared for 40 years, these occupations are becoming popular again and absorb a great number of rural women.

With the expansion of foreign-invested enterprises and township enterprises in Shanghai suburbs in recent years, some redundant female workers or young women waiting for jobs are turning to the countryside for work. Some women who cannot find ample scope for their abilities in urban district go to the countryside and become 'useful persons' there. Also there are some retired women invited to be technical directors or advisers in township enterprises. This kind of mobility is limited, however.

Third, there is more regional mobility. Whether before or after reform, Shanghai is always in the front line of the Chinese economy. Since reform and liberalization, a large number of labour force in the areas outside of Shanghai pour into the city. According to a survey of Shanghai Public Security Bureau and Statistics Bureau, there were 1.66 million non-local people coming into Shanghai for work or business in December 1993, 28.8 per cent of whom were females.²³ There were more than 1.07 million registered non-local people from January to November 1993, of whom 29.6 per cent were women.²⁴

Most of these female labourers coming from the outside areas are unmarried young women. A sample survey of about one thousand of these female workers in the enterprises at levels of district, county, and neighbourhood shows that 65 per cent of

²² Chen Yuexin, *An Analysis of Shanghai Urban and Rural Women's Employment*.

²³ *Bulletin in Women Studies and Marriage and Family* (Shanghai), Vol. 32, 15 July 1994.

²⁴ 'Give Non-Local Female Labourers a Place to Speak', *Xinming Evening Newspaper*, 5 August 1994.

them are of the educational level of junior high school and 23 per cent of them are of the level of primary school. While 24 per cent of them work in the textile factories, 23 per cent work at food stalls, 6 per cent are tailors, 5.6 per cent are housekeepers.²⁵ In these years, they have made contributions to the construction of Shanghai and to the textile industry. Forty per cent of the first line workers in Shanghai textile factories are non-local girls making up one-ninth of the staff and workers.

Even in the suburbs of Shanghai, there is also a great number of non-local labourers. According to the investigation of Hua Cao village in Shanghai's suburb, because many local labourers have moved into the enterprises at levels of township, county and city, non-local labourers are introduced. In 1990, in four factories run by the village, the proportion of non-local labourers was as high as 45 per cent, and 96 per cent of them were non-local women. The women lived in the dormitories free of charge. Some of them got married to local people, while others saved money for their dowry, to be taken back home. Although the mobility of non-local women is frequent, the factories like employing them, and go to the countryside outside Shanghai for recruitment. The leaders of the factories said that the young women were all graduates of junior high school, quick-witted, learned techniques fast, and were easy to manage without the complicated social relationships of local people.

With the rapid development of Shanghai's suburban industry, men and young women have moved into non-agricultural production, leaving middle-aged and older women to work in the fields. For instance, the average age of the 29 women cultivating contracted lands in Shen Geng Lang production team is 50.1 years. Shanghai suburbs lack successors to farming. Non-local labourers are part of the situation.

2.5 *Employment income*

Before reform, China carried out the policy of 'full employment and low income' and the national unified and fixed-wage system. The income distribution of labourers was not linked with the units' economic benefit and labourers' contribution in labour but decided by a series of wage standards about job, length of service, technical rank, educational level, etc. Therefore, income differences both in or between enterprises, and between individuals or trades were all very small. Under the distribution rules of egalitarianism and equality between sexes, sexual difference in employment income was minimized.

But a socialist market economy requires that income distribution should be decided by market mechanism, labour income should be in direct proportion to the unit's economic benefit, and competition mechanism should be introduced into their labour payment. Since the reform breaks the egalitarian practice of 'eating from the common pot', income differences among labourers have been expanded rapidly. In 1992, the average wage of staff and workers in Shanghai was 4,250 yuan, but the highest one was

²⁵ Fu Xuan, 'How High Educational Level is, What Kind of Occupation is – Non-local Female Labourers in Shanghai', *Xinming Evening Newspaper*, 24 August 1994.

above ten thousand yuan while the lower only more than two thousand yuan.²⁶ The market orientation of income distribution has not only expanded the differences of individual income, but also has a particular impact on women's employment income.

First, the income gap between men and women has widened. A 1990 survey of Shanghai women's status shows that Shanghai women's income is lower than men's. In urban districts, women's average income is 80.7 per cent of men's, in rural area, the sexual ratio of income is 100 : 66.37 (men = 100).²⁷ Table 2.8 indicates that among the labourers with middle and high income levels, men's proportion is higher than women's, while among the labourers with low income, men's proportion is lower than women's.

TABLE 2.8
INCOME COMPARISON BETWEEN SEXES IN SHANGHAI, 1990

Monthly income	Urban district		Annual income	Rural area	
	men %	women %		men %	women %
Below 150 yuan	16.1	36.3	Below 1000 yuan	21.1	43.5
150-300 yuan	71.2	58.8	1000-2000 yuan	45.1	43.5
Above 300 yuan	12.7	4.9	Above 2000 yuan	33.9	13.1

Sources: Zheng Guizhen and Tang Xiaoping, *Research on the Relationship between Shanghai Women's Status and the Fertility Rate*.

Under the old distribution system, length of service and educational level were the main factors influencing individual income. Now factors such as the unit's form of ownership and economic benefit become important. Table 2.9 shows that in 1992, the three occupations with the highest average wage were geological survey and prospecting, traffic and transport, and construction. The three with the lowest wage levels were education and culture, public health, and agriculture. The lowest average wage is only half of the highest one. Men occupy a dominant position in the three occupations with the highest wage, while women predominate in the three occupations with the lowest wage. Table 2.9 also shows that the 1992 Shanghai's average wages of collective-run, state-run, and other economic units are in a ratio of 0.8 : 1.04 : 1.27. Most collective-run enterprises are labour-intensive, and their average wage is the lowest. Among all the enterprises, the female proportion in collective-run enterprises is the largest. So these are the two new factors which help to widen the income gap between men and women and make women low-waged.

Second, the introduction of market mechanism into income distribution system has not only widened the distance between men and women, it has also differentiated

²⁶ *Shanghai Economic Yearbook 1993*, p. 445.
²⁷ See Zheng Guizhen and Tan Xiaoping, *Research on the Relationship between Women's Status and Fertility Rate*.

earnings among women. Their incomes are based on 'market needs', and many new phenomena appear: the mother's salary as a professor is lower than her daughter's as an attendant at a high-class hotel, a female worker of ten years' standing earns less than a young girl who just began to work. The present tendency of employment income is that women in agriculture sector are inferior to those in industry sector, women in industry sector are inferior to those in commercial sector, women in foreign-funded enterprises are inferior to those in state and collective-run enterprises. A recent visit to one state-run garments factory and one joint-venture garments factory in downtown Shanghai shows that the average income of the latter in 1994 is 1,000-2,000 yuans more than that of the former. The joint-venture factory adopts the system of the piece rate wage which links employees' wages to their work.

TABLE 2.9

AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGE OF STAFF AND WORKERS BY TRADE, 1992

Trade	Total	State-run	Collective-run	Unit: yuan
				Others
Agriculture, etc.	3,790	3,797	3,449	
Industry	4,410	4,585	3,430	5,457
Geological surveying, etc.	7,090	7,090		
Construction	4,469	4,567	3,567	4,828
Traffic and transport, etc.	4,535	4,870	3,040	
Retail, catering, etc.	4,366	4,994	3,738	3,962
Real estate, etc.	3,953	4,200	2,795	8,397
Public health, etc.	3,786	3,899	3,584	
Education, etc.	3,515	3,515	3,501	
Scientific research, etc.	4,061	4,050	3,269	5,594
Finance and insurance	4,401	4,345	4,643	
Institutions of government	3,813	4,015	3,025	
Total	4,350	4,532	3,468	550

Sources: *Statistical Yearbook of Shanghai 1993*, p. 442.

Third, the income of rural women sees a great rise, and some even exceed men's. Before reform, the distribution rule in the countryside of 'ten work-points a day for men and eight for women' made women's employment income always lower than men's. Since reform, under the household responsibility system, rewards are linked to the actual output of every labourer regardless of sex. Rural women take an active part in various economic activities, the gap in income between men and women is narrowed a great deal, and many women earn more than men relying on their own talents. Sen Geng Lang production team would be a good example. In 1990, the team had 198 couples of whom there were 61 wives whose income was more than their husbands' in the very year. This had never happened before and is another historic break brought by the reform. Raising rural women's income improves their status greatly, especially family status. A 1990 investigation of Shanghai women's status shows that female workers earn more and enjoy more family power than peasant women in Shanghai suburbs (see Table 2.10).

TABLE 2.10

COMPARISON OF FAMILY STATUS OF SHANGHAI RURAL WOMEN

Unit: %

Rural women	Economic status			Family power		
	Income > husband's	equal	income < husband's	husband	equal	wife
Peasant	8.4	32.4	59.6	24.3	16.2	59.6
Worker	9.4	41.8	48.8	17.4	15.5	67.1

Source: Lu Jianming, *Status Quo and Features of Shanghai Women's Self-Consciousness*, pp. 9, 11.

2.6 Unemployment

While the reform gives labourers more freedom in employment, it also makes them take the risk of unemployment.

Since the second half of the 1980s, the number of people waiting for jobs in the city and town of Shanghai has been rising. In 1982, it was only 0.2 per cent, then rose to 1.7 per cent in 1992, and in 1993 further increased to 2.4 per cent; in absolute numbers from 12,000 to 129,700. In 1992, Shanghai unemployed women were 43,600 which represents 46.9 per cent of the total. Although the female proportion does not exceed half of the unemployed population, it is somewhat larger than the female proportion in the employed population: in 1990, the female proportion in employed population was 45.6 per cent; in 1991, female staff and workers made up 42.0 per cent of the total.²⁸

Shanghai unemployed women have the following characteristics. First, the main proportion has shifted from graduates in the same year to people who have lost their jobs. In 1990, this proportion in female unemployed population was 69.4 per cent accounting for 24,900. In 1992, this proportion in Shanghai unemployment population was 62 per cent, which rose to 82.6 per cent in 1993.²⁹

Second, the age structure of Shanghai unemployed women tends to be older. The 1982 national census data show that Shanghai unemployed women over 25 years old was only 1.7 per cent of the total. But at the end of September, 1991, 57.6 per cent of Shanghai women from employment to unemployment are over 26 years old.³⁰

²⁸ The data in this paragraph are from: *Statistical Yearbook of Shanghai 1992*, p. 100; *Statistical Yearbook of Shanghai 1993*, p. 435; 'The Basic Conditions of Shanghai Social Development in 1993', *Sociology*, No. 3, 1994, p. 10.

²⁹ Chen Rufeng and Fan Xiaoli, 'The Characteristics and Trends of Women Unemployed in the 1990s', *Shanghai Women*, No. 2, 1992, p. 16; *Statistical Yearbook of Shanghai 1993*, p. 436; 'The Basic Conditions of Shanghai Social Development in 1993', (op. cit.), p. 10.

³⁰ Zhao Yunging, 'New Problems and Countermeasures of Shanghai Women's Employment in Urban and Town', *Shanghai Women*, No. 9, 1992, p. 9.

Third, the educational background of unemployed people is poorer, and a very small part of them are skilled. In 1992, only three per cent of Shanghai unemployed people were expert in a special field of technology, and five per cent of the people looking for a job were at a higher education level.³¹ According to a survey of unemployed women in 120 neighbourhoods made by Shanghai Federation of Trade Unions in 1990, only 1.1 per cent of them were at a higher education level, and 36.5 per cent were skilled workers.³²

Shanghai's unemployed women can be divided into two kinds. One is the redundancies produced in the process of optimization of labour force in enterprises. The economic reforms promote enterprises to dispose their labour force according to the needs of market, and many people who are redundant or unqualified are laid off. For example, at the time of unified employment and distribution of labour force, some women were assigned, together with men, to the working units such as construction which were not suitable to women, so they could work only in the second or third production lines with the result that it was busy in the first production line, relaxed in the second line and swollen in the third line. According to the information from the departments concerned, from the fourth quarter of 1990 to the end of 1993, there were 200,000 staff and workers in Shanghai who were laid off, and 36 per cent of them were women.

Another kind of unemployed women are those laid off in the process of restructuring when some enterprises are forced to close, stop their production, to be merged into other enterprises or change their lines of production. For instance, in recent years, spindles and textile machines in China are surplus. As a result, Shanghai textile industry has to shrink. In the 1990s, 65 textile enterprises have been closed or merged, 110,000 textile labourers have shifted and 20,000 have been compelled to leave their jobs.³³ And in the Bureau of Instruments and Meters and the Bureau of Light Industry in which women are concentrated, there are also a large number of labour force laid off. From the fourth quarter of 1990 to the end of 1993, this kind of unemployment in Shanghai numbered 124,000, of whom 70 per cent were women.

Modern enterprises usually need the labour force at young age, high educational level, and with some specialized skill. The labour force which can't meet these demands are more vulnerable to elimination. The structure of Shanghai female labour force is not quite up to these standards. Sometimes the enterprise's requirements for recruitment are too high, while labourers often expect so much of their job that they can only find a job in a very narrow range. With the fast mobility of labour force after reform, a great number of young and cheap labourers from the countryside and the areas outside pour into Shanghai, and become a threat to Shanghai employed women at older age and lower educational level, or with poor health and low skill.

³¹ *Statistical Yearbook of Shanghai 1993*, p. 436.

³² Huang Weide, 'Economic Reform and Women's Employment', *Shanghai Women*, No. 9, 1992, p. 4.

³³ 'The Rising of Two Million of Staff and Workers in Studying Culture, Science and Technology', *Xinming Evening Newspaper*, 6 July 1994.

3. Women's employment and social protection

The goal of the economic reforms in China is to develop the productive forces and promote living standards through common prosperity. Since market competition necessarily results in polarization between the rich and the poor, the government has mitigate this outcome by establishing an effective system of social security so that social stability can be maintained. In the process of transition from planned economy to market economy, women are more easily put in a disadvantaged position than men for a variety of reasons. Therefore, the Chinese government has always emphasized that women workers should be given additional social protection.

3.1 Law and policy

The establishment of the PRC brought about fundamental laws to guarantee legal equality of women. But the reform and especially enterprise restructuring have changed relations between enterprises and workers, between labour and capital and in women's legal rights and interests concerned with their labour. For example, in the recruitment of workers, women are discriminated for their sexuality and age. Also, in some enterprises, women employees are arbitrarily asked to retire ahead of legal age. Therefore, our government promulgated a series of laws and policies to protect women's rights and interests. Among them are the PRC Law of Women's Rights and Interests Security (Women's Law) and the PRC Labour Law (Labour Law), promulgated in 1992 and in 1994 respectively. The former is the first special law in our country to protect women's rights and interests. In it the existing regulations in the Constitution and other laws concerning the principles of equality between men and women and protection of women's legal rights and interests are systematized, specified and institutionalized. The latter is the first fundamental law on labour which specifies the rights of women to be employed, to enjoy equal pay for equal work, to rest, to get safety and health security and special labour protection and to have social insurance and welfare. In 1990, a national institution for the protection of women's right and interests was established in the State Council, namely, the 'Commission for Coordinating Work about Women and Children'.

3.1.1 Rights and interests of labour

In order to mitigate problems of women's employment during the reform, especially the problem of surplus labour in enterprises, the State Economic Commission and the Ministry of Labour pointed out in 1983 that female surplus labour, especially pregnant women and nursing mothers, should be given special consideration. Temporary Regulations about Recruitment of Workers in the State-owned Enterprises published by the State Council in 1986 claimed that 'when the enterprises recruit workers, jobs suitable for women should be filled by them as much as possible'. The 1994 Labour Law specifies more clearly: 'Women enjoy equal right to be employed with men. In recruiting employees, except the types of work and positions which are not suitable for women as regulated by the state, it will not be permitted to deny recruitment of women or raise the standard of recruitment for women on the basis of sexuality'. Chapter 4 of the Women's Law also makes some regulations to secure women's labour rights.

3.1.2 Labour protection

Since the reform was initiated, with the diversification of ownership, those non-state-owned enterprises such as township enterprises, foreign-invested enterprises and private enterprises, often have not implemented fully the regulations concerning labour protection of women employees. In some notorious cases, women's health and personality have been violated. Therefore, in 1986 the Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Labour and Personnel, National Labour Union and the All-China Women's Federation jointly published Temporary Provisions on Health Care of Female Employees, pertaining to health care of women during menstruation, pregnancy, giving birth and breastfeeding babies. In 1988, the State Council declared Regulations on Labour Protection of Women. The Women's Law and the Labour Law after this also set definite regulations. For example, the Law of Labour states, 'It is not permitted to ask the women employees who have been pregnant for seven months or more to extend their working hours and work on night shift' and 'Maternity leave should not be less than ninety days'.

3.1.3 Social insurance and welfare

Under the system of planned economy, the expenses of women employees during the period of giving birth to their children were all covered by their enterprises. Furthermore, those work units with more women employees set up various facilities for women and children, such as rooms for breastfeeding babies, nurseries, kindergartens and women's rest room. With the growth of socialist market economy, more and more clearly exposed are the disadvantages of this security system which makes enterprises the main support for women and responsible for related expenditures. For instance, there is one steel plant and a textile factory in Shanghai respectively with more than 7,000 employees. The yearly expenditure for welfare in this field for the steel plant is about 58,000 yuan, while it is as much as 340,000 yuan for the textile factory. This has affected the ability of the enterprises to compete, also making some enterprises unwilling to recruit women employees and to discharge them with any excuse. Therefore, Nantong City in Jiansu Province proposed and tried first to reform the maternity-related social protection system. It transformed the payment of such expenditure by individual enterprises into one by the society as a whole. Now, there have been sixteen provinces and municipalities carrying out this reform. Shanghai is one of them.

At the same time, nurseries and kindergartens which were formerly based on individual enterprises have been closed down or merged. Nurseries and kindergartens run by communities, local governments and individuals have been set up. At present, the supply of nurseries and kindergarten in Shanghai exceeds the demand but those with better equipment and higher quality are still needed.

Since the early 1980s, the system of long leaves for women nursing their babies has been adopted in some Shanghai enterprises. This allows women employees to stay at home for one or two years, even longer, on a voluntary basis. Generally speaking, the women who belong to the 'white collar' stratum or the work units with better economic benefits prefer to put their babies in nurseries or hire baby-sitters. In the banking sector,

the demand for well-known nurseries and kindergartens such as those of Shanghai Welfare Union are often greater than the demand for apartments.

Besides the laws promulgated by the state, some local laws and regulations concerned have also been enacted in Shanghai. For example, Shanghai People's Congress passed Several Regulations of Shanghai on Protection of Woman and Children's Legal Rights and Interests in 1985. Shanghai Municipal Government issued Temporary Regulations of Shanghai on Labour Protection of Women Employees in 1987. On the basis of the two documents, the Regulations of Shanghai on Protection of Women and Children and the Means of Shanghai on Labour Protection of Women Employees were published in 1990. Moreover, a special institution 'Shanghai Commission of Protection of Women and Children' was set up in March of the same year, and is responsible for examining, supervising and coordinating the implementation of the above laws and regulations.

3.2 *Trade unions and women's organizations*

The All-China Women's Federation, established in April 1949, is the biggest women's organization in the world. It has an organizational network at five levels, namely national, provincial (municipal), prefectural, county (district) and township (neighbourhood) levels. At the grassroots level, there are committees of women's representatives and women groups.

Since 1949, the Department of Women Workers has been affiliated with the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. With the rise in the number of women employees in the process of reform, its 11th National Congress in 1988 made a decision that committees of women employees should be established in labour unions at the grassroots level.

Under the new situation of reform and opening-up, committees of women employees and women's federations at different levels occupy their special positions and play their special roles in helping the mass of women to adjust themselves to the principles of market economy, the new environment and requirements of rapidly changing society, and in protecting women's rights and interests. They have made great contributions to women in two fields: participation in drafting of legislation, and safeguarding women's legal rights.

In the process of establishing socialist market economy, the mass organizations representing women's interests such as committees of women employees and women's federations have actively participated in the enactment of laws, especially with respect to women's employment. For instance, in 1985 the Department of Women Workers in Shanghai Federation of Trade Unions carried out investigations on labour protection of Shanghai women workers in the new situation of reform and liberalization, discovering that some women were doing heavy physical work or the work which was harmful to women's health, and that protection of women was not implemented in some enterprises. In order to protect women and promote the qualities of young generation, they made an appeal to the relevant departments and sections of Shanghai municipal

government that the female labour force should be protected more effectively, that this should be integrated into the whole project of establishing a market economy, and that maternity leave should be extended from 56 days to 90 days. These suggestions were accepted. And in 1987, Shanghai Federation of Trade Unions with other units concerned were involved in enactment of the Temporary Regulations of Shanghai on Labour Protection of Women Employees which was published in the name of the Municipal Government of Shanghai then.

The economic reform has also called into question the unreasonable phenomenon of 'ten work-points a day for men and eight for women' which continued to exist in some township enterprises in the suburbs of Shanghai. On the basis of a comprehensive and thoroughgoing investigation, the Shanghai Women's Federation and Agriculture Committee of municipal government jointly issued in 1988 'Opinions on Further Implementation of the Principle of Equal Pay for Equal Work in Shanghai Rural Area'. By the end of 1991, this goal was basically achieved in all township enterprises.

There is often some distance between promulgation of law and its implementation. Committees of women employees and women's federations have done much work in safeguarding women's rights and interests according to the relevant laws. Firstly, they teach the masses of women to know and understand these laws and heighten their consciousness to utilize the law. At the same time, they deal with women's written appeals and visits carefully and present them with legal advice. During the past five years, Shanghai Women's Federation at the levels of municipality, district and county have dealt with more than 30,000 women's letters and visits.

Secondly, the women's organizations have waged struggles against various violations of women's rights and interests. Since the beginning of the reform, foreign businessmen have come to invest in Shanghai one after another. Thus far there are 9,000 foreign-invested enterprises operating in Shanghai. Trade unions have been established only in about 1,300 of these enterprises.³⁴ Many foreign-invested enterprises have not fully implemented the laws and regulations relevant to the protection of women's rights and interests in our country. A recent visit to one joint-venture garments factory revealed that almost everyday workers put in extra hours. In order to safeguard women's legal rights and interests, the Shanghai Federation of Trade Unions has arranged the establishment of trade unions in all foreign-invested enterprises. Moreover, it will establish or improve the system of consultation and negotiation between employers and employees in private enterprises. To counter discrimination against women, higher recruitment standards for women, or dismissal of women employees, committees of women employees and the Women's Federation act to safeguard their legal rights and interests. They even have established special reception centre in factories to help women employees.

Thirdly, women's committees take care of the women who are laid off in the process of enterprise restructuring. The organizations may do the following:

³⁴ Xi Huize, 'The Trade Unions in Foreign-invested Enterprises are over 1300', *Xinming Evening Newspaper*, 4 August 1994.

- i) Ask their enterprises to establish new services and provide laid-off workers with new job opportunities. For instance, Shanghai Gaochiao Petroleum and Chemistry Company set up 108 labour service enterprises in two years, allowing more than 4,000 laid-off workers to obtain new jobs.
- ii) Provide occupational training to the women who are laid off to assist in their re-employment. Shanghai Women's Federation established a women's education and training centre. The trade unions in the various industry bureaus also initiated many different classes to train these women in the necessary skills. One example is the trade union in Shanghai Textile Bureau which opened a flower designing class.
- iii) Organize vocational placement and exchanges of qualified personnel. The Shanghai Labour Bureau and Shanghai Federation of Trade Unions established 'Shanghai Fu Yu General Company', the biggest institution of vocational training and placement, and helped 20,000 people who had been laid off to get a job in two years. Women's Federations at various levels also established 279 economic entities such as 'service companies on hour-work', 'institutions of job introduction and recommendation', increasing opportunities of re-employment for these women.
- iv) Establish a network for the women who are laid off, promoting various activities to help them dispel worries and overcome difficulties. Because of the loss of income, these women are often looked down upon by their family members, and even by their husbands. According to 'Weierfu Psychological Hot-line for Women and Children', during the recent six months, the rate of phone calls pertaining to women's problems rose to 72 per cent of the total from 49 per cent in the past.³⁵ The Shanghai Women's Federation set up a 'Foundation for Women and Children in Difficulties and Urgent Needs'.

Fourthly, the women's committees have made great efforts to improve the labour qualities of women. The committees of women employees at different levels have tried to educate women employees to understand the new situation under the market economy system, to improve their skills, and to enhance their contributions to the economy. For example, the All-China Women's Federation launched a programme of 'studying culture and technology, competing with each other in achievements and contributions' among rural women in 1989. It then launched another programme among urban women of 'making contributions' in 1991. The goal is to encourage the broad masses of women to carry forward the spirit of self-respect, self-confidence, self-support and self-improvement, and to be new women with lofty ideal and morals, culture and sense of discipline. These programmes have helped to raise the labour qualities of women and strengthened their competitive capabilities in the labour market.

³⁵ Song Zheng, 'The Women's Federation in Jiangning Neighbourhood Enjoys to Help the Women who are Laid off', *Xinming Evening Newspaper*, 12 September 1994.

4. Conclusions

4.1 *Summary*

Economic reforms in China have brought about dramatic changes in the pattern of socio-economic development, and have had quite distinct implications for women. First, a free and liberal environment for employment has appeared. Industrialization, non-agriculturalization, services, businesses, and diversified management and economic elements provide new job opportunities for women. Economic reforms in Shanghai have increased the number of women employees, unleashed women's productive zeal and creative capabilities, and allowed them to be involved in every occupation and profession. Economic reforms have also sped up the occupational mobility of Shanghai women.

Secondly, the pressure of competition has been imposed on women, partly as a result of the loss of traditional employment assurance. It is more difficult for women to be employed and easier to be laid off. They are still in a position of a reserve labour force in the labour market. Moreover, compared with men, women's occupational ranks are lower, and their occupational distribution still skewed in favour of agriculture and production. Moreover, with the increase of foreign-invested enterprises and other private enterprises, cases in which legal rights and interests of women are violated are on the rise.

Thirdly, women face a complicated psychological conflict. Economic reforms have brought about radical social changes, tough competition and a not very relaxed work environment. Women yearn for equality between men and women, but are afraid of tough competition; they appreciate today's freedom in choosing jobs, but are reluctant to leave the 'iron rice bowl'.

Fourthly, Chinese women have responded to the imperatives of the economic reform. They now study culture, technology, and science, to improve and enhance their position in the market economy.

4.2 *Future trends*

The developmental goal of Shanghai is to be a major internationalized city, a centre of international economy, finance and trade. Therefore, the industrial structure of Shanghai economy will be adjusted strategically toward more rationalization and more advancement, to give priority to the development of the tertiary sector, adjust industry and stabilize agriculture. Under this background, trends in Shanghai women's employment will have the following five characteristics:

First, priority accorded to services and the opening up of Shanghai Pudong new area will provide numerous new employment opportunities. According to the working report of municipal government of Shanghai in 1992, at the end of this century, the output value of the tertiary sector will be more than 40 per cent of Shanghai GNP.

Besides, Pudong is an important symbol of China's reform and liberalization in the 1990s.

Secondly, the women who are young, skilled, and flexible will be the most needed talented personnel. The structure of women's employment will develop toward the direction of 'white-collar'. In the future economic construction of Shanghai, it will more rely on the progress of science and technology, and the improvement of labour qualities. Finance, commerce, real estate, and tourism will be developed. In industry, sectors such as cars and communication facilities will be oriented towards export.

Thirdly, the number of unemployed women will continue to increase. The development of Shanghai economy requires a kind of structural adjustment. The labour-intensive and capital-intensive sectors will give way to the knowledge-intensive and technology-intensive sectors. Some traditional trades which women are concentrated in will be transformed. For instance, Shanghai Textile Bureau will have 104 enterprises to be transformed, 160 enterprises to be closed or merged, and 100,000 workers to be made redundant.³⁶ The state has asked unprofitable state-owned enterprises to reduce their losses to the minimum. In this case, women workers will be laid off more easily than men. It can be predicted that the number of unemployed women will increase by a wide margin in the coming years.

Fourthly, it is difficult to mitigate the fact that women will not be able to find jobs easily. Quantitatively, the supply of the labour force in Shanghai is overabundant, and more women than men are lacking in skills. These factors will make women's employment more difficult.

Fifthly, some women will choose to be employed at intervals. Moreover, with the polarization between the poor and the rich, a rich stratum of housewives will be formed gradually.

4.3 *Suggestions*

In order to achieve the socialist goal of common prosperity and avoid the phenomena in the Western countries such as the feminization of poverty, the government should improve the environment of women's employment in market economy through macro-adjustment and control, to perfect the social security of women employment to the maximum, and try to achieve equal opportunities and fair competition in employment between men and women. Specifically, our government should:

- i) Formulate practical and detailed rules and regulations to carry out the concerned laws, putting the laws of safeguarding of women's rights and interests and protecting female labour into real play. Today, the most urgent task is not drafting of laws, but making the existing laws more operational.

³⁶ Yao Dongmei, 'The Textile Department Lights a Lamp', *Xinming Evening Newspaper*, 6 October 1994.

- ii) Pay enough attention to maintain employees, especially women employees' rights and interests in foreign-invested enterprises, taking this as an important component in the whole project of importing foreign investment. For the developed countries, the main aim in exporting capital to Third World countries, is to use their local cheap labour forces and resources. Women often belong to the main part of these cheap labour forces. With further reform and opening up in our country, this problem has become more and more prominent.
- iii) Take some necessary measures to encourage enterprises to employ female labourers, and make the system of maternity insurance for female staff and workers legalized as soon as possible, bringing this into the system of social security.
- iv) Raise women's skills. This is the fundamental means to protect women's rights and interests. For this aim, occupational training of women should be standardized on the basis of obligatory education, making occupational education of women an integrated system. Moreover, a set of short-term and long-term plan should be drafted for training of women labour forces. This plan should be in conformity with female characteristics and the demands of market.
- v) Speed up the establishment and the improvement of employment services. The relatively small number of job training and placement centres cannot meet the needs of expanding groups of people who seek employment.

5. Annexe – Excerpts from the Law of The People's Republic of China on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women

CHAPTER I – GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1 In accordance with the Constitution and the actual conditions of the county, this Law is formulated to protect women's lawful rights and interests, promote the equality between men and women and allow full play to women's role in socialist modernization.

Article 2 Women shall enjoy equal rights with men in all aspects of political, economic, cultural, social and family life.

The state shall protect the special rights and interests enjoyed by women according to law, and gradually perfect its social security system with respect to women.

Discrimination against, maltreatment of, or cruel treatment in any manner causing injury or death of women shall be prohibited.

Article 3 The protection of women's lawful rights and interests is a common responsibility of the whole society. State organs, public organizations, enterprises and institutions as well as urban and rural mass organizations of self-government at the grass-roots level shall, in accordance with the provisions of this Law and other relevant laws, protect women's rights and interests.

The state shall take effective measures to provide necessary conditions for women to exercise their rights according to law.

Article 4 The State Council and the people's governments of provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government shall, by taking organizational measures, coordinate with relevant departments in ensuring the protection of women's rights and interests. The specific organs shall be designated by the State Council and the people's governments of provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government.

Article 5 The All-China Women's Federation and women's federations at various levels shall represent and uphold the rights of women of all nationalities and all walks of life, and strive for the protection of women's rights and interests.

The trade unions and the Communist Youth League organizations shall also, within the scope of their respective work, strive for the protection of women's rights and interests.

Article 6 The state shall encourage women to cultivate a sense of self-respect, self-confidence, self-reliance and self-strengthening, and to safeguard their own lawful rights and interests by utilizing law. Women shall abide by the laws of the state, respect social morality and perform their obligations prescribed by law.

Article 7 People's governments at various levels and relevant departments shall commend and award the organizations and individuals that have made notable achievements in the protection of women's lawful rights and interests.

[CHAPTER II – POLITICAL RIGHTS, Articles 8-13]

CHAPTER III – RIGHTS AND INTERESTS RELATING TO CULTURE AND EDUCATION

[Articles 14-20]

Article 17 Parents or other guardians must perform their duty of ensuring that female school-age children or adolescents receive the compulsory education.

Where parents or other guardians fail to send female school-age children or adolescents to school, the local people's governments shall admonish and criticize them and, by adopting effective measures, order them to send their female school-age children or adolescents to school, with the exception of those who, on account of illness or other special circumstances, are allowed by the local people's governments not to go to school.

The governments, society and schools shall, in the light of the actual difficulties of female school-age children or adolescents in schooling, take effective measures to ensure that female school-age children or adolescents receive compulsory education for the number of years locally prescribed.

[...]

Article 19 People's governments at various levels and departments concerned shall take measures to organize women in receiving vocational education and technological training.

CHAPTER IV – RIGHTS AND INTERESTS RELATING TO WORK

Article 21 The state shall guarantee that women enjoy the equal right, with men, to work.

Article 22 With the exception of the special types of work and post unsuitable to women, no unit may, in employing staff and workers, refuse to employ women by reason of sex or raise the employment standards for women.

Recruitment of female workers under the age of sixteen shall be prohibited.

Article 23 Equal pay for equal work shall be applied to men and women alike.

Women shall be equal with men in the allotment of housing and enjoyment of welfare benefits.

Article 24 In such aspects as promotion in post or in rank, evaluation and determination of professional and technological titles, the principle of equality between men and women shall be upheld and discrimination against women shall not be allowed

Article 25 All units shall, in line with women's characteristics and according to law, protect women's safety and health during their work or physical labour, and shall not assign them any work or physical labour not suitable to women.

Article 26 No unit may dismiss woman staff and workers or unilaterally terminate labour contracts with them by reason of marriage, pregnancy, maternity leave or baby-nursing.

Article 27 The state shall develop social insurance, social relief and medical and health services to create conditions allowing old, ill or disabled women to obtain material assistance.

CHAPTER V – RIGHTS AND INTERESTS RELATING TO PROPERTY

Article 28 The state shall guarantee that women enjoy the equal right, with men, to property.

Article 29 In joint property relationship derived from marriage or family, the rights and interests enjoyed by women according to law may not be infringed upon.

Article 30 Women shall enjoy equal rights with men in the allotment of responsibility farmland, or grain ration farmland and in the approval of housing sites in rural areas, and women's lawful rights thereto shall not be infringed upon.

After marriage or divorce, women's responsibility farmland, grain ration farmland and housing sites shall be secured.

Article 31 Women's equal right, with men, of succession to property shall be protected by law. Among the statutory successors in the same order, women shall not be discriminated against. Widowed women have the rights to dispose of the property inherited by them, and no one may interfere with the disposition thereof.

Article 32 Widowed women who have made the predominant contributions in maintaining their parents-in-law shall be regarded as the statutory successors first in order, and their rights of succession thereto shall not be affected by inheritance in subrogation.

[CHAPTER VI – RIGHTS RELATING TO THE PERSON, Articles 33-39]

CHAPTER VII – RIGHTS AND INTERESTS RELATING TO MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

[Articles 40-47]

Article 47 Women have the right to child-bearing in accordance with relevant regulations of the state as well as the freedom not to bear any child.

Where a couple of child-bearing age practise family planning according to the relevant regulations of the state, the departments concerned shall provide safe and effective contraceptives and techniques, and ensure the health and safety of the woman receiving any birth-control operation.

CHAPTER VIII – LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY

[Articles 48-52]

Article 48 When a woman's lawful rights and interests are infringed upon, she has the right to request the competent department concerned for a disposition or bring a lawsuit in a people's court according to law.

When a woman's lawful rights and interests are infringed upon, she may file a complaint with a women's organization, which shall request the relevant department or unit to investigate and deal with the case so as to protect the lawful rights and interests of the complainant.

Article 49 Where punishments are prescribed by other laws or regulations for the infringement upon the lawful rights and interests of women in violation of the provisions of this Law, punishments prescribed in such laws or regulations shall apply.

Article 50 Anyone who commits any of the following infringements upon the lawful rights and interests of a woman shall be ordered to make corrections by his or her unit or by an organ at a higher level, and the person who is held directly responsible may, in light of the specific circumstances, be subjected to administrative sanctions:

(1) evading, delaying or suppressing the investigation and disposition of a complaint, a charge or an exposure regarding an infringement upon the rights and interests of a woman;

(2) refusing to employ women or raising the employment standards for women where women shall be employed in accordance with the provisions of relevant laws or regulations;

(3) infringing upon women's rights and interests by violating the principle of equality between men and women in such aspects as allotment of housing, promotion in post or in rank, evaluation and determination of professional and technological titles;

(4) dismissing female staff and workers by reason of their marriage, pregnancy, maternity leave, or baby-nursing;

(5) infringing upon women's rights and interests by violating the principle of equality between men and women in the allotment of responsibility farmland or grain ration farmland or the approval of housing sites; or

(6) infringing upon women's rights and interests by violating the principle of equality between men and women in such aspects as starting school, entering a higher school, job assignment upon graduation, conferment of academic degrees or dispatch for study abroad.

Anyone who retaliates against a person making a complaint, a charge or an exposure regarding an infringement upon a woman's rights and interests shall be ordered to make corrections or be subjected to administrative sanctions by his or her unit or an organ at a higher level. If a state functionary commits retaliation, which constitutes a crime, the offender shall be investigated for criminal responsibility in accordance with the provisions in Article 146 of the Criminal Law.

CHAPTER III

DOI MOI AND FEMALE WORKERS: A CASE STUDY OF HANOI

Le Thi

Since 1986, and especially after 1988, the Vietnamese state has implemented a strategy of all-sided renovation, in order to overcome the difficulties created by the weak and slow socio-economic development of the country. Economically, this is a shift from the system of central planning with state subsidies to a market mechanism, and the development of the commodity economy, with many different sectors: state sector, collective sector, individual and private sectors, with market-determined prices but within an overall socialist framework. State subsidies for medical, educational, cultural activities are being reduced in favour of encouragement of private enterprises in social service. State investment and the encouragement of private investment will develop new techniques and technology, and accelerate the process of industrialization and modernization of production. *Doi moi* also entails development of democratic activities in the economic, political, legal, cultural, and social dimensions of the country.

Implementation of the open-door policy expands relations in different fields between Viet Nam and other countries in the world, welcomes direct foreign investment in Viet Nam, and strengthens the cooperation between Viet Nam and many other countries in economic, cultural, scientific and technical fields. The reorganization of the economy has positive and negative implications for women workers.

1. Organization of the economy in Viet Nam

Prior to *doi moi*, Viet Nam's economy – including material and non-material production – consisted of two sectors: state sector and the collective sector (cooperatives with collective ownership of means of production). *Doi moi* strives towards a mixed economy with various sectors and different forms of ownership. Attention has been paid to the development of the private sector, aiming at mobilizing the capital existing among the population, creating jobs and solving the problem of unemployment, increasing the population's incomes and the state's budget. Since 1988, the state economic sector has restricted the scope of its activity, state subsidies have been abolished and enterprises have been reorganized. Meanwhile, the private economic sector has been recovered and is developing strongly. The state economic sector, managed by the state, with state ownership of basic means of production, has been reorganized. State enterprises are now responsible for all processes of production and business, and carry out their activities in accordance with the market mechanism. State enterprises may privatize management while the state remains the owner of the

enterprise or they may privatize ownership, partly or totally. The private economic sector has many different forms of organization, including individual enterprises in urban and in rural areas, cooperatives following the new pattern (with capital collected from many people), private companies with many shareholders, joint businesses, buying and selling of homes and land. The informal sector contains micro-enterprises with many individuals selling goods or offering services on the street pavement, without being officially registered. One characteristic of the informal sector is the great number of poor women active in it.

In 1988, the proportion of the state sector and the old collective sector has decreased, while the proportion of the private sector in each branch and in all the Vietnamese economy has been increasing. According to the General Statistical Office, in 1988 the proportion of the state economic sector was only 30.5 per cent, while the proportion of the private economic sector was 69.5 per cent. In 1991, the proportion of the state economic sector was 37 per cent, while the proportion of the private economic sector was 63 per cent (the proportion of state economic sector has increased due to the development of electricity and oil industry).

In 1986, the Vietnamese National Income amounted to 394.8 billion Vietnamese *dong*, of which 29.8 per cent came from the state economic sector and 70.2 per cent from the private economic sector. The figures for 1988 are: state sector 22.5 per cent and private sector 77 per cent. In 1991, the state economic sector provided 29 per cent and the private sector 71 per cent of the National Income.¹

Until the end of 1992, the Vietnamese economic referee office (which issues licences for industrial, service and commercial enterprises) had issued licenses for 2,796 private enterprises, 191 limited companies, 74 companies with many shareholders; the capital invested in the above firms and companies amounted to 700 billion Vietnamese *dong*.²

The private economic sector has an important position, contributing greatly to the state budget and creating jobs for many workers, especially in industry and commerce. Private industrial enterprises have attracted lots of workers and helped reduce the number of unemployed people. According to the General Statistical Office, up to 1 January 1991, the number of workers in private enterprises was 1,507,111 accounting for 67 per cent of total number of industrial workers. On 1 January 1992, the output of private enterprises accounted for 69 per cent of the total output of Vietnamese industry. In commerce in 1986, private enterprises were in charge of 60.2 per cent of the total number of goods sold by retail, this figure increased to 68.4 per cent in 1990, and more than 70 per cent in 1992. Commercial activities attracted a great number of people: in 1992 more than 9,000 people registered to undertake commercial services, and there were more than one million small traders doing their business without being officially registered. In Hanoi, 40 per cent of workers and employees who left state

¹ Gross National Product: total value of goods produced, including expenditures for production. National Income: the above value, exclusive of expenditures for production. See Nguyen Ngoc Lam (1994), p. 15.

² Data derived from Do Hoai Nam (1993), p. 134.

enterprises and offices during the time of reorganization and reduction of staff (mostly women) have shifted to small trade.

At present, private commercial enterprises account for 90 per cent of the commercial network, including wholesale and retail, as well as illicit trade. Private capitals have been invested in commerce and services more than in production (70 per cent of private capitals have been invested in commerce and services) because those branches need less capital, produce more profits and complete their activities in shorter time.

Meanwhile, the household economy has been revived. Each household has 3 or 5 workers, and 10 to 15 million *dong* to invest in production and business. Not including households doing agriculture, the number of households doing individual business in 1991 increased to 500,000, and in 1992 to 700,000, mobilizing 3,000 billion *dong* of capital and about two million workers. Investigations in one locality of Hanoi in 1993 showed that 23.5 per cent of workers there have created jobs themselves by developing household economy; among them 64.4 per cent were female workers.

Since 1988, changes have been made in the land management policy of the state. Land remains the nation's property but land has been allotted to peasant families for production for a long period. Now, peasant households become basic units of production responsible themselves for input and output. We can note a clear development of agriculture and rural areas, with increase of productivity and income, the development of various non-agricultural occupations, the alleviation of poverty and the eradication of hunger in many localities. In Viet Nam, 80 per cent of the population live in rural areas (11 million households among the total number of 13 million households in the whole country in 1992). The renovation of agriculture and rural areas has an effect on the whole national economy. Viet Nam, once a country which imported food, has become a food exporting country since 1989.³

1.1 Foreign investment, exports and new technologies

Since 1988 when the Law on Foreign Investment was formulated, we noted an increase of joint-business enterprises with the participation of foreign capital in Viet Nam, a stronger tendency of foreign capitalists to invest in Viet Nam, although the US embargo on Viet Nam had not yet been cancelled. According to the Committee for Cooperation and Investment, up to 25 December 1993, licenses were issued to 836 investment projects, with a capital amounting to USD 7.5 billion. Three branches have

³ The State decision to entrust peasant families with the right to use land for a long period to develop household economy has created favourable conditions for the development of non agricultural occupations. Besides agricultural works, many rural women are doing small trade, food processing, handicraft... right in their villages. The people who leave the countryside to go to find jobs in cities and towns are mostly men. There are a number of young women who leave their villages to come to urban areas to work as peddlers, waitresses in restaurants, housemaids while continuing to have their part of land at home. We have no data on those female workers.

attracted much foreign capital: industry USD 3 billion; oil and gas USD 1.2 billion; tourism and hotel trade USD 1.5 billion.⁴

The renovation programme of Viet Nam has underlined the increase and diversification of export, and in fact Vietnamese export has increased sharply in 1989 and 1990, about 27 per cent each year. The value of exported goods in 1990 was USD 2.2 billion. In 1991 and 1992 the export value increased by 25 per cent each year. The value of export goods in 1992 was USD 2.5 billion. The most important products exported in 1992 were oil (USD 790 million) and rice (USD 420 million). Viet Nam also exports sea products, industrial products, agricultural products such as various fruits, rubber, and coffee.

The success of Viet Nam has been the increase of export value to an extent allowing the country to maintain the level of import during the time of readjustment of the national economy. In 1992 the value of imported goods was USD 2.5 billion. The Vietnamese balance of trade in 1991 and 1992 was basically well-proportioned.⁵

The renovation of skills and technology is considered by the Vietnamese state a central task in the process of industrialization and modernization on the country. The combination of half-mechanized and mechanized means with new technology, modern equipment and new materials, together with the speeding up of automation in the production stages of different branches have been underlined as important measures to increase the productivity, improve the quality of products, as well as to reduce the costs of production and the pollution of the environment. Modernization has occurred in a number of braches, including (i) electronics, with products sold inside the country and a number of assembly workshops to produce foods for export; (ii) weaving and dressmaking industry, with a great number of products of improved quality for internal consumption and many high quality products for export; (iii) post and communications, meeting in time new demands of the national economy's development, and the large relations between Viet Nam and other countries in the world; (iv) banking with in-time service for the internal monetary market and for foreign investment; (v) food processing with products for internal consumption and an increasing number of products for export; and, (vi) oil and gas, with modern equipment for different stages, from extraction to products, processing, with a capital resting mainly on foreign investment.

During the recent years of *doi moi*, reform and readjustment, the Vietnamese economy has developed strongly. According to the World Bank's evaluation, although from 1989 to 1992, Viet Nam no longer had major aid from the USSR, or major foreign investment, its economic development decreased only slightly, and that was an unexpected outcome. The Gross National Product of Viet Nam has increased by 8 per cent in 1989, 5.2 per cent in 1990, and 6 per cent in 1991. The year 1992 was a very good year for Viet Nam: its GNP increased by 8.3 per cent (mainly due to the development of oil production and rice growing). From 1989 to 1992, the rate of investment has not decreased, although foreign aid was cut down. Viet Nam has

⁴ See Do Hoai Nam (1993), p. 9.

⁵ World Bank (1994), p. 18.

replaced savings from foreign funds by savings from internal funds. However, the structure of investment is changing. The state investment from 6.7 per cent of GNP in 1989 decreased to 3.1 per cent in 1991, and 5.6 per cent in 1992. Meanwhile private investment has increased.⁶

The financial situation of Viet Nam has been much improved from 1989 to 1992. The national deficit amounting to 11.4 per cent of GNP in 1989 was reduced to 3.8 per cent of GNP in 1992. The income increase was due to the selling of oil and the expansion of taxes. Viet Nam also achieved big progress in the control of inflation. The inflation rate in area of consumption-food prices decreased from 70 per cent in 1990-1991 to 17 per cent in 1992, and 10 per cent in 1993.⁷

1.2 On female employment

What changes have renovation, reform and readjustment of the economy brought in the areas of employment, working conditions, income and living standard of female labourers in different economic sectors, branches and occupations? Generally speaking, much progress has been noted in the area of women's employment, with the development of a great number of diversified occupations and branches in the private economic sector, and with the development of household economy in rural areas. At the same time, female labourers face not a few difficulties and losses in the market mechanism and the labour market, being forced to compete with male labourers.

In Viet Nam, women's labour-force participation has been high. Among the total population aged 13 and above working in different branches of the national economy, in 1989 (year of the population census), women accounted for 51.9 per cent. In industry, the percentage of women was 43.2 per cent; in construction 26 per cent; in agriculture 53.2 per cent; in forestry 41.7 per cent; in communication and transport 15.4 per cent; in post and communication 46.4 per cent; in commerce 70.8 per cent; in social services and tourism 48.2 per cent; in sciences 37.7 per cent; in education and training 67.1 per cent; in culture and arts 34.3 per cent; in health care, social insurance and sports 63.7 per cent; in finance and credit 54.5 per cent; and, in state management 28.7 per cent.⁸ Women outnumber men in agriculture, commerce, education and training, finance and credit, and health care. In commerce and among private retail dealers women predominate.

Table 3.1 compares the situation in 1985, when economic reforms had not yet been carried out, with the situation in 1992, when the economy had entered the period of market mechanism.

⁶ World Bank (1994), pp. 15-16.

⁷ World Bank (1994), pp. 16-19.

⁸ Data from the 1989 Population Census: 'Selected Indicators on Women's Status in Vietnam 1975-1989', the Statistical Publishing House.

TABLE 3.1

PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE WORKERS WITHIN OCCUPATIONS, VIET NAM

Occupations	Percentage of female workers	
	1985	1992
Professional technical	49.8	53
Managerial, administrative	30.85	35.4
Sales	67.52	68.7
Services	48.82	52.7
Agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, fishery	56.47	52.68
Industry, construction, mining	46.74	46.16
Other occupations	43.68	55.5

Source: The General Statistical Office

In general, the percentage of female workers increased in many occupations, except for agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery, where the percentage of female workers decreased between 1985 and 1992.

Table 3.2 illustrates and compares the percentage of women wage-earners in industry in 1989 and 1992.

TABLE 3.2

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN INDUSTRIAL BRANCHES, VIET NAM

	Percentage of women	
	1989	1992
Textile industry	78.0	79.8
Food processing	56.6	56.5
Garments	71.0	71.0
Shoes, leather goods	43.0	47.0
Electronics	19.0	17.0
Other branches	43.9	47.2

Source: The General Statistical Office

The figures show that those branches attracting a great number of female workers are still the traditional branches such as textiles, industry, garments and food processing, where renovation of technology has taken place but slowly. In electronics, a new branch with new technology, the percentage of female workers is still low.

Table 3.3 shows the percentage of women among the total number of scientists, engineers and technicians working in different branches.

TABLE 3.3

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN WORKING AS SCIENTISTS, ENGINEERS
AND TECHNICIANS, VIET NAM

	Percentage of women	
	1989 (%)	1992 (%)
Natural sciences	35.49	36.8
Engineers, technicians, technique researchers	30.95	38.5
Medicine	58.9	49.0
Agronomy	23.66	40.5
Social sciences	49.35	39.0
Total number	37.35	38.27

Source: The General Statistical Office

In the contingent of scientific workers, the percentage of women in comparison with men is not low. In general, however, the level of workers in Viet Nam is low, and among the total number of female workers, the percentage of professionals is low. The number of women having the level of doctor, candidate-doctor, professor first-degree or second-degree is still too low. In Viet Nam, there are 393 doctors among them 5.82 per cent are women, 421 candidate doctors among them 11.16 per cent are women; 2801 professors first degree, among them 4.24 per cent are women, 601 professors second degree, among them 3.99 per cent are women (figures of April 1992).

Through economic reform and readjustment in recent years, the state economic sector has restricted its scope of activity, while the private economic sector has been developed and has attracted lots of labourers. However, lack of employment and unemployment remain a difficult problem to be solved. This is the result of a *high* increase of population: the birth rate was 3.13 per cent in 1989, 3 per cent in 1992; the natural increase of population was 2.29 per cent in 1989 and 2.26 per cent in 1992. Every year there are in Viet Nam about 1.1 million people who reach the working age. In urban areas each year 300,000 people reach the working age, among them 51.25 per cent are women. Besides there are lots of rural people without jobs who come to cities and towns from time to time to find jobs.

During the time of reorganization of state enterprises and offices, many workers and employees had to leave their jobs. In 1991 and 1992 more than 8,000 people had to leave their jobs in state enterprises and organs, and 60 per cent of them were women. During the process of readjustment and reorganization of enterprises, the situation of employment was not stable; many female workers could not find jobs and a number of them had to stay home.

Many enterprises – especially old cooperatives of handicraft and small industry – have gone bankrupt or have been forced to restrict the scope of their activity, since they cannot adapt themselves with the new market conditions. Hence, lots of workers, among them a great number of women, became unemployed. Meanwhile many enterprises able

to stand firm and to develop production and business in the new situation, refuse to recruit women or recruit very few women.

In urban areas, a number of state enterprises have become private enterprises or joint ventures. This move has affected women's employment, their income, their working conditions, as well as work safety. With readjustment of work in enterprises, many female workers had to change jobs, a number of them found the new jobs not suitable to their own conditions, and 40 per cent of them wished to receive other jobs. This percentage is higher than that of male workers.

A number of women have stable jobs and rather high incomes. For instance, in the Hanoi Electro-mechanical engineering plant, female workers are earning 500,000 to 700,000 Vietnamese *dong* every month. Other women have irregular jobs and low incomes. Among women who have been interviewed, 42 per cent said they did not earn enough for their families. In general, women's income is lower than men's income, since workers receive their pay according to the number and quality of their products, and women usually have less strength than men, they have lower professional level, they must take leave when they give birth to their children, when their children are ill, and so on.

In administrative and non-productive branches, the percentage of women is very high, for instance in health care and education. However, they work mainly at low levels and have low incomes. In Ho Chi Minh City, women who are teachers of first grade classes are earning only one-half or even one-fifth of the income earned by female workers in economic establishments. That is why 80 per cent of female teachers do not work with satisfaction; they work rather perfunctorily, and their tendency to leave their jobs is developing.

In recent years private enterprises have attracted a great number of female labourers in urban areas. Investigations show that 22 per cent of women working there have been state workers and employees. Those women have mainly irregular working times; sometimes when the enterprises have lots of work, they work 13 or 14 hours per day, other times they may have to stay home or work only 4 or 5 hours per day. They do not have stable income; sometimes they earn monthly 500,000 *dong*, other times they earn only 60,000 *dong*. Hence, the average salary of female workers in private enterprises is lower than that of female workers in state enterprises. Eighty per cent of women working in private enterprises are doing extra jobs to increase their income.

In the private economic sector, social policies concerning female workers (maternity leave, allowances etc.) are still implemented in a casual way, they are well put into practice in some enterprises and not implemented in others; more concrete legal regulations are still lacking and the implementation of social policies still depends on each enterprise's owner. The new Labour Code of Vietnam, put in force in early 1995, should correct this.

In general, women's employment is closely linked with their knowledge and skills. Thus it is useful to consider their working conditions and their health in the new situation.

1.3 Education and training

To keep pace with the new economic mechanism, to find jobs and have jobs bringing rather high incomes, female workers must have cultural knowledge and professional levels that meet the needs of the new labour market. This is a function of both formal education and self-improvement.

In the past, with the system of state subsidies for educational activities, students of all schools, general education schools as well as colleges and universities, did not have to pay a school-fee. Most children in rural as well as in urban areas have finished the 7th form (second grade of the old educational system). At present, students are required to pay school-fees when they enter the second-grade classes. Along with the development of the economy of the households, we note an increasing number of children who leave school prematurely, especially in the countryside. Among the children who drop out, the percentage of girls is higher than that of boys. This situation is due firstly to the costs families have to pay to allow their children to continue going to school: purchase of books and note-books, school-fees, contributions to a number of funds in the school, etc. Many families having three or four children at school face many difficulties. At the same time, the poor quality of education in many localities and poor study habits of many children who have no one to guide them in learning at home are also important causes of dropping out of school.

The 1989 population census showed that the percentage of men and women having a high educational attainment level was very low.

TABLE 3.4
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY SEX, 10 YEARS OLD AND ABOVE

Cultural level	Percentage of men	Percentage of women
No schooling	7.8	16.7
Primary school	80.4	74.4
Secondary school and university	11.8	8.9
Total	100.0	100.0

In general, the professional technical level of workers in different branches of the economy is rather low, particularly many female workers have very low professional level. This is affecting women's employment and income in the present competition on the labour market.

TABLE 3.5

QUALIFIED WORKING POPULATION, 16 YEARS OF AGE AND ABOVE,
BY SEX, 1989, VIET NAM

	Women (%)	Men (%)	Total
Technical workers with diploma	19.8	80.2	100
Technical workers without diploma	36.0	64.0	100
Secondary professional school	58.7	41.3	100
College, University, post-graduate	39.0	51.0	100
Total number: 2,794,778	40.9	59.1	100

Source: *Statistical data on labour and social affairs, 1992*. The Statistical Publishing House, 1993.

When the Vietnamese economy was under central planning, the training of women in order to improve their professional level was realized with the help of state subsidies. At present in the new economic system, business men and women pay attention to direct economic effects and many of them ignore long-term social effects. In different enterprises, efforts are being made to reduce various kinds of costs as much as possible, paying usually only the costs which will bring about direct profits (such as raw materials and pay for workers), while suppressing or reducing as much as possible all other expenditures which cannot bring about immediate profits, such as some kinds of allowances, subsidies, and expenses for the training and retraining of workers. This situation is common in various economic branches and sectors, especially in private enterprises, and is affecting the professional level of workers, particularly women.

In state enterprises, managers are paying attention to the training and retraining of workers more than in private enterprises. During an investigation made in Nam Dinh City, 71 per cent of female workers in state enterprises who had been interviewed said that their managers regularly paid attention to help them improve their professional level, 23.6 per cent said that their managers paid attention to this problem from time to time, and 5 per cent said their manager never paid attention to the improvement of their skill. In private enterprises, the figures were 17 per cent, 48 per cent and 35 per cent respectively. It is clear that owners of private enterprises do not care for the training and retraining of workers. The latter must themselves pay for their formation before receiving jobs in these enterprises, and they must cover the costs of retraining if they want to get a job with higher pay.

1.4 Women's health and working conditions

Generally speaking, women who work in state enterprises have better working conditions and labour security than those who work in private enterprises. Managers of state enterprises, due to their close connection with the state and with the intervention of trade unions, try to improve the working conditions in their enterprises. However, they have not achieved enough results. An investigation made in 1993 in three industrial centres: Hanoi, Ha Dong, and Nam Dinh showed that many female workers still

complain about their working conditions. In heavy industry, 71 per cent of female workers complain about noise, 38.8 per cent about dust, and 38.8 per cent about heat. In food and foodstuff processing, 65 per cent of female workers complain about noise, 35 per cent about dust, 40 per cent about heat.

The situation is even worse in light industry, where 70 per cent of workers are women. For instance, in the Nam Dinh Silk Weaving Factory, 91.7 per cent of female workers interviewed complain about heat, 89 per cent about dust, 84.8 per cent about noise. Due to those factors (heat, noise, dust) workers feel more tired and together with the constant walk and repetition of the same movements, they suffer from tense nerves, especially in night shifts. Occupational diseases are developing: headache, deafness, lung diseases.

An investigation showed that 36 per cent of female workers interviewed say that in their working places there is enough equipment to protect workers from injury. Heavy industry is the economic branch which has the best measures for occupation safety. The worst branch in this matter is light industry, for instance in the weaving factories where female workers have no caps to protect their hair and prevent it from being wound in the machines; they have no gauge masks, no equipment to protect them from the noise.

In private enterprises, especially small industry and handicraft establishments, occupational safety is badly implemented, since managers are launching into the building of material basis, the signing of contracts, the search for markets, and do not invest much in the improvement of working conditions. Many women are complaining about their too narrow working places, where they suffer from noise, oppressive heat, and harmful dust. An investigation made with 120 female handicraft workers and 30 private enterprises in 1993 showed that 67 per cent of female workers had bad working conditions that could damage their health.

Among the 30 private enterprises investigated, only 10.7 per cent have measures to protect workers from noise, providing them with ear-plugs. Eighty per cent of these enterprises provide workers with gauge masks and other equipment to prevent dust; 46 per cent provide equipment to protect workers from bad effects of toxic chemicals; 10.7 per cent have measures to prevent stress such as time for rests, exercises in the middle of the working-day; 25 per cent have fanning systems and protective clothing. However, female workers in general do not like to use them since the equipment is in bad quality, their sizes do not fit the women, and their form is not nice.

Private enterprises having no labour safety measures explain that they have transferred all expenses for labour protection to product prices, to wages for workers, and many female workers agree with them, seeing only an immediate increase of income but not understanding long-term bad effects on their health. Many women who urgently need jobs agree to work in places harmful to their health and affecting their reproductive function, such as in enterprises producing chemicals or rubber.

State subsidies for health care and free medical service for the population have been reduced. People who go to public hospitals don't have to pay for medical

examination, but they have to pay for medicines (especially expensive or precious ones) if they stay in the hospital for treatment, they must pay hospital-fees. Families often have financial difficulties when a family member falls seriously ill. With a high population growth rate, the increase in the state budget for health care cannot meet the population's demand for preventing and treating diseases. This is affecting mainly children, but also pregnant women. There are not enough state medical services and private medical services are very expensive.

Although the campaign for family planning has been launched in Viet Nam some time ago, the crude birth rate is still high: 2.97 per cent in 1992 in the whole country. For female workers, the majority have three children or more, women with two children are still in small number. Many women have to care for a large family. A number of them have their old parents living with them and helping them in household chores and child-care, but others live far from their parents who remain in the countryside or live in other provinces. Viet Nam's family planning policy seeks to reduce the birth-rate, encourages two-child families, and allows enterprises to provide incentives and disincentives towards this goal.

Against this background, we consider the situation of women workers in two enterprises: one, a privately-owned electronics factory and the other, a state-owned garments enterprise.

2. Women workers in the ANH SAO private electronic company (SEL) in Hanoi

The electronic industry is a new economic branch developing strongly in recent years in Viet Nam, having modern equipment and new technologies. There are still few women in this branch, which acquires young and strong workers, with a rather high level of skills. SEL company is a private company which has successful activities and is developing its production. In 1994, a visit was made to the factory for the purposes of this study. Some ten female workers were interviewed: workers of first, second and third grades, married and single, women who worked in the company since 1987 and newcomers.

The ANH SAO private electronic company (SEL) was founded in July, 1987, and become the ANH SAO (SEL) Private Electronic Company Ltd in February 1992. It has a large range of activities, and the number of workers has increased from ten to 400 at present. SEL produces, imports and exports electronic goods, and has cooperative relations with companies in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Thailand. It produces and assembles electronic equipment, colour television sets, video headsets, and radio cassettes. Equipment is purchased mainly from Japan and spare parts mainly from South Korea. In 1993, 60 per cent of SEL products were sold within the country, and 40 per cent exported to Russia and Denmark.

In 1994 there were 400 workers in the company, two-thirds of whom were men, and only one-third were women. The reason stated by the company is the higher

professional level of men in comparison with women. Eighty per cent are production workers, while the remaining 20 per cent are active in the marketing bureau. and the import-export bureau. The company's management of four persons includes one woman.

In 1994 company had not yet received invested foreign capital, but was cooperating with foreign companies in the purchase of equipment. Foreign companies selling their equipment to SEL company are responsible for the professional training of SEL workers.

SEL company is now expanding its activities, building a new factory in the outskirts of Hanoi, on an area of 23,000 square meters, to attract more workers to assemble refrigerators and air-conditioners.

2.1 The situation of female workers in SEL company

SEL company has 400 workers, among them 140 women. Most workers and employees here are young, only two are 55 years old and have worked for the company for many years. The majority of workers are aged 20 to 25, a small number of people aged 35 are working in administrative and managerial sections. Members of the management are aged 30 to 40. Most workers and employees are native of Hanoi, since the company recruits its staff through the Hanoi Job Introducing Service.

Many female workers graduated from secondary general education schools, a number have graduated from universities (polytechnic college, national economy's university, finance college) and some have graduated from technical workers' schools. Educational attainment is therefore high. Twenty-three persons have university education; 30 are secondary technical school graduates; and 43 are secondary general education school graduates, and 44, although not graduated, have third grade of general education school. Skill grades are one to five. Most of workers are now at the second or third grade, particularly directly in the assembly of electronic products (120 workers). A number of workers are operating modern equipment and applying advanced technologies.

In addition to the woman manager, three women are bureau heads (import-export bureau; storage bureau, quality control bureau) and two women are bureau vice-chief (in the storage bureau and the quality control bureau).

Each workshop is divided into working groups according to different stages of production, and women account for 50 per cent of the total number of heads of working groups. Most heads of the workshops are men, who must have at least the educational level of an engineer.

Work is done in two shifts: the first shift is from 6 am to 2 pm while the second shift is from 2 pm to 10 pm. There is a fifteen-minute rest break in the middle of the shift and at noon workers stop for lunch. Employees indirectly involved in production work from 8 am to 12 noon daily, with an hour for a lunch break and then resume work from 1 pm to 5 pm. There is a weekly rotation of shift work.

Female workers say that their productivity depends on the following factors: (i) the factory's technology: if advanced technology is applied, the productivity will increase; (ii) technical and professional level of each worker; and (iii) productivity of the whole working-group, since group members work on the same line and depend on each other.

Many women think that they have a light job, if they can sit in clean, cool rooms when they work, which is totally different from heavy manual labour in the open air. However, Ms. B. N., an engineer in the control section for product quality, says that the labour-intensity for women working in assembly-lines is very high, while workers in other sections have a medium labour-intensity.

Ms. N. B., 24 years old confides: 'Working in assembly lines, we must continuously concentrate our attention on the work for eight hours; we must have a good eyesight, we must be active and prompt, we often have tense nerves and cannot slow down our process of work because on the line we depend on each other. Sometimes when we are tired, or we have had to care for ill children at night, the work here is very tense work'.

After concluding their daily work at the factory, many women cannot do any other job because they are too tired. In addition, for many women the pay they receive from the company is enough for their living. Health and youth are very important characteristics for female workers here.

Since most workers are on production lines and depend on each other, labour discipline is very severe. Workers cannot arrive late or leave the factory before the end of the working day. They cannot ask for leave whenever they want. According to the company's regulation, anyone who wants to take leave must inform the company in advance so that the company find another worker to replace the absentee. Anyone arriving 15 minutes late must pay a fine of 6,000 Vietnamese *dong* (about USD 0.6). Anyone arriving more than 15 minutes late does not receive any pay for that particular workday. A number of women have been forced to leave their jobs in the factory since they cannot comply with this labour discipline.

On production lines where new technology is generally applied, industrial hygiene is also taken into considerable. This can mean suitable seats for the workers, good lighting, clean environment with less noise or dust, and equipment in sufficient numbers for all the workers. Workers are ergonomically more favourable placed, for instance, consideration is given to whether the worker is more dextrous left-handed or right-handed. Every year, each worker receives two sets of work garments complete with caps and shoes that are compulsory during the working hours. Workers have been provided with basic knowledge to ensure labour safety when they work on production lines.

2.2 *Training and retraining of workers*

When they begin to work for the company, workers receive professional guidance and their wages reflect that they are employed on a probationary basis for three months. Female workers claim that they in fact need only a week or two of study to be able to successfully carry out their tasks because the steps are simple and most female workers are young with a comparatively good level of skills. After a short training period, the young women can quickly learn the production phases needed for new product models, patterns, new technology and equipment. At times, the company also invites foreign experts from the supplier companies to teach workers on the spot.

For many years the company has had a system of retraining workers and employees with in-service university courses (each year workers leave their jobs for a number of days to attend school) or with short-termed professional training courses at universities, secondary schools or foreign organizations. All school-fees are paid by the company. The main objective of retraining workers is to help them understand the technical features of each kind of electronic product.

Ms. Ng. T., 29 years old and single, graduated from the secondary radio transmission technical school and has worked for SEL company since 1987. She is currently enrolled in the in-service training courses at the Hanoi Polytechnic and has studied computer science for six months. Previously she worked for the assembly workshop, but since taking the courses she has been transferred to the technical bureau and receives 70 per cent of her wage during the time she goes to school. She has a grade three worker's wage, which is 600,000 Vietnamese *dong* every month (about USD 60). Her school fees are paid by the company. She is also attending an evening class in English, C programme (for people who can speak a little English).

At present many female workers of the company are attending evening English classes, paying their school fees themselves. Those working in the secretariat already speak English, as do engineers who work with foreign experts. According to Ms. Ng. T. even though the number of women allowed by the company to attend training courses in universities is increasing, it does not yet meet the needs of female workers. To be selected for the courses, workers need to have noticeable contributions to the factory, they should work well and have graduated from secondary school.

Ms. T. N. N., 23 years old, already married and mother of a 2-year-old boy, has worked for the company since November 1991 in the loudspeaker workshop. She was sent by the company to attend a training course on the repair of electronic machines opened by the Hanoi Polytechnics. During her training period, she received the wage of a first grade worker (9,600 Vietnamese *dong* per day), and her school-fees have been paid by the company. After the training course, she was transferred to the assembly workshop and promoted to a second grade worker.

2.3 *Income and life of female workers*

The company has general regulations on the recruitment of workers and all sign a labour contract. During the three-month probationary period, a worker receives 7,700 *dong* each day (about 150,000 to 200,000 *dong* each month, or USD 15 to 20). A worker who achieves an A-criterion is promoted to grade one with the wage of 9,600 *dong* per day, about 400,000 to 500,000 *dong* per month. Workers who increase their productivity and exceed the target can earn 800,000 *dong* each month (USD 80). After nine months of work with the grade one wage, workers who attain an A-criterion are promoted to grade two and receive a wage of 800,000 to 1 million *dong* per month (USD 100). The pay for workers depends on the number of products completed. If the worker makes a mistake in assembling spare parts, the worker should pay a fine of 3,000 *dong* (USD 0.3).

Overtime pay is 150 per cent of the worker's basic wage. On Sundays, the worker receives compensation amounting to 200 per cent of the worker's basic wage.

The monthly incomes of workers and employees at SEL company are higher than that of state workers and employees. The drawback, however, is that the factory may lay off workers or put them on a level at, for example, 75 per cent of their wages during a slow period.

Only 30 to 40 per cent of female workers are married. The majority are single, young women who want to devote themselves to their work and get a rather high pay before starting a family. The women who are married do not want to bear children early and do not want many children because they are afraid that it would affect their productivity in work.

In our investigation, the ten female workers interviewed, both married and unmarried, say that their incomes are sufficient for their living expenses, and that they can save a little money. For example, Ms. N. T. H., who was married in 1989, got a divorce in 1990 when her child was only four months old. She is living now with her parents. She confides that with the monthly income of 1 million *dong* she has had enough money to give a little to her parents and each month she can save a small amount. She has now savings in the amount of 500,000 *dong* and plans to continue so to be able to purchase a private flat to live with her child. Working for SEL company, she always attains A-criterion, however, her health is currently declining; she often has a headache and she reflects sadly on her unhappy and unsuccessful marriage to a man who drank, gambled and beat her.

Ms. N. T. H. has worked for SEL company since 1992. She immediately received a job in the assembly workshop, since she had graduated from a three-month radio training course. Now a grade two worker, she is preparing for an examination for grade three. She says she tries to work overtime in order to supplement her regular monthly wage.

SEL tends to adhere to the labour entitlements of state-owned enterprises. For example, SEL workers and employees, like state workers and employees, have holidays for the new year and *Tet* (lunar new year), 1 May, 2 September. On 8 March, International Women's Day, the company organizes a party and has gifts for all female workers. Workers who have served the company for three years may take a ten-day leave with full pay. Grade five and grade six workers receive allowances when they take their annual leave. Workers receive full pay up to three days of sick leave; beyond that sick leave is deducted from annual leave (for those who have worked for the company for at least three years). During the period of convalescence, from 15 days to 1 month, workers receive 75 per cent of their basic wage. In the past female workers were entitled to a six-month maternity leave; now according to the new general regulation, women have a four-month maternity leave, and receive 75 per cent of their basic wage. Every summer the company organizes a beach holiday for its workers. Each worker is entitled to spend four days on the beach, and all expenses are paid by the company. People not interested in going to the beach do not receive any allowance, except in cases of illness or business done at the request of the company.

The company has a subsidized cafeteria with room for 300 people. The company has rooms for siesta, separate rooms for male and female workers to change their clothes; and it is improving its bathrooms. Finally, there is a canteen where workers can purchase various kinds of goods at prices cheaper than on the market.

When the company was visited in 1994, it had not yet organized annual medical examinations for its workers but was planning to so in 1995. Nor had the company purchased medical insurance cards for the workers. When they are ill, workers must themselves pay for medicines and hospital fees.

At present there are no mass organizations at the company, neither a trade union nor a youth union. Female workers say that all opinions and ideas of workers are gathered by the chiefs of the work group who convey them to the company's management. The director general of SEL company, who is a man, has full powers to decide on all affairs concerning the company. According to Ms. B. N. workers do not participate in the management of the enterprise. All decisions are made by the company's management and, all workers and employees have to act according to those decisions.

The woman, who is chief of the bookkeeping bureau, says that there have no complaints since the pay for each worker depends clearly on productivity and the labour discipline is strict and clear.

Asked about their aspirations, female workers say that although they are generally satisfied at SEL company, they would like to have guarantees of stable employment, the opportunity to study regularly to improve their professional level, and a library with books that the workers could borrow.

Female workers say that in the company, the success of each worker depends on individual efforts, since working conditions are the same for all people; those who are hard working and who have good health and training will progress.

2.4 *Some remarks*

In SEL company, workers in the assembly lines think that they have light work, but in fact their labour-intensity is high, they must concentrate on assembling spare parts for the entire day. They often have tense nerves and declining eyesight. Meanwhile, sufficient attention has not focused on protecting the health of the workers. Female workers are striving to work extra hours to increase their incomes as they continue to be more or less responsible for family affairs. In the long run this dual role will adversely affect their health; their situation becomes more difficult as they become older and weaker, when the company has no medical insurance for workers.

Due to high labour-intensity and severe labour discipline, many women dare not get married, or if they are already married, they dare not have children. There is thus a contradiction between the two functions of the woman – participation in productive activities, and reproduction of human beings.

The application of advanced technologies is compelling female workers to attain higher levels of education and training, to understand foreign languages, and to use new technologies. As Viet Nam pursues export-led industrialization, we will need to monitor its impact on the labour force in general, and on women workers in particular.

3. **The Chien Thang garments company in Hanoi**

The Chien Thang (Victory) garments company is a state enterprise founded in 1986 that has recently been reorganized. During the time of reorganization, only a small number of female workers had to leave their jobs. The garments industry deploys a great number of women. At present in the Chien Thang garments company, the majority of workers are women. In the company, one workshop has become a joint state and private undertaking with Korean capital. The factory was visited to hear reports made by the head of the Committee for Women's Affairs of the company; to interview a sample interview of ten female workers; and to interview one woman who is vice-director of the company.

The Chien Thang enterprise used to specialize in protective clothing to be exported to the former Soviet Union and East European countries. At that time, the patterns were monotonous, and the enterprise passively carried out all plans received from the state without its own initiative. Physically the factory was old and backward, lacking new equipment and even hygienic conditions. In the past a Soviet company had invested capital in the factory. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, that company withdrew its capital from the enterprise.

There were 900 workers in the factory, among them many female workers who came from various units of the Army, from young volunteers' teams of different provinces. Their average age was more than 30, they had low educational attainment and poor professional skills. Most of them were grade two workers (in the wage ladder of 7 grades). Many of the older women developed occupational illnesses such as worsening eyesight in addition to gynaecological problems they had acquired earlier.⁹

Implementing the new state policy, the enterprise has to keep itself in business and to be responsible for input and output. The enterprise had to reorganize its production and business, to invest more capital in the purchase of new machines, to apply new technologies, in order to produce new kinds of goods, and to be able to compete in the market. This was at first difficult but the factory managed to sell its old equipment and to cooperate with foreign companies to import new equipment and technologies. Its workshops have been reorganized, and its workers retrained.

To avoid massive redundancies, the factory transferred female workers not able to serve on new production lines to other jobs, mainly various services in the company. However, there were a number of women who chose to leave the factory, to set up their own businesses or to engage in commerce.

Gradually with the new organization of production, with capital borrowed from the state, with the help of sixteen other companies who gave it loans, the Chien Thang company expended its activities, organized more production lines, and recruited many new workers aged 18-25. At present the company has nearly 3,000 workers, and 80 per cent of them are women.

In 1993, the enterprise recruited 250 workers for the production of leather gloves and 200 workers for the production of leather jackets. To meet the needs of the market, in addition to simple clothes, the factory is producing different kinds of embroidered clothes. In the factory, each workshop maintains its own business account.

The Chien Thang company has now three main factories – the Chien Thang garments factory, the Thanh Cong garments factory, and the embroidered clothes factory. The company has also a factory member: the Dong Da carpet weaving factory. In the company, there are 12 workshops, and one of these workshops has become a joint venture with South Korean companies to produce leather gloves. Seventy per cent of the capital comes from South Korea, equipment and materials are imported from South Korea, while production lines, workers and managers are Vietnamese.

There are four people in the upper management of the Chien Thang company, among them two women, including a woman director-general. The company has three professional bureaux, with three women as chiefs: chief of the secretariat, chief of the bookkeeping bureau, and chief of the import-export bureau. The educational level of the

⁹ Many of the older female workers suffered gynaecological diseases acquired during the time they participated in the struggle against American aggressors in localities where hygienic conditions were very poor.

female managers is rather high: the director-general is attending a post-graduate training course on management, the other woman in the company's management has a university degree, and two women chiefs of bureau have graduated from university.

After a period of unstable work due to the reorganization of the company, female workers have now stable work, their incomes are increasing, and the company's welfare fund is also increasing.

The company has signed many contracts with foreign companies in Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Sweden, and recently in the USA. The company organizes regular guidance and professional retraining for female workers, some of whom produce hand-made embroidered goods, while others use new technology such as computers.

Many female workers are now grade three workers (in the wage ladder of 7 grades). A number of women have graduated from secondary technical schools, university level evening classes, and other technical and management training courses. Recently recruited female workers are young and have higher educational attainment than the older female workers.

The company has focused on the training and retraining of workers, especially in technical, economic, managerial, and foreign trade issues. Many classes have been held on the company grounds itself, and at times foreign experts have been brought in to guide workers in the application of new technologies. A number of workers have been sent to short-term or long-term training courses outside the company. The company sends female managers to technical classes. Those who are already technical cadres, the company sends them to managerial classes. In 1993, three female cadres were sent to training courses on management; five workers (three women and two men) were sent to the technical college.

3.1 Working hours, labour-intensity, industrial hygiene, labour security

Everyone works eight hours a day. Although there may be overtime called for, some sections work in one shift, some other sections work in two shifts. The pay for workers depends on the number of items produced, the labour-intensity is high, and workers must be in good health to ensure production.

Ms. B. T., chief of a dressmaking group, informed us that from July to September every year, the company has many urgent orders to fill, and people must work ten hours a day. Returning home after the long workday, female workers are very tired, tense, and do not have the time or patience for anything extra such as a training course.

Attention has been paid to the problem of industrial hygiene, not only to protect the health of the workers but also to ensure the quality of products. For instance, cold rooms are necessary for the production of leather gloves because they become mouldy in the humid and hot atmosphere of Viet Nam. Where the material used is feather, the company must put in air conditioners instead of ventilators to avoid dust. To ensure

industrial hygiene, the company has purchased equipment such dust-sucking machines and air conditioners, and has built many bathrooms and toilets. Since 80 per cent of workers are women, the problem of clean water and hygienic projects for women is imperative to ensure the workers' health.

The company has taken many measures to ensure physical protection and safety of the workers, especially in sections using modern equipment and machines. Together with the installation of various systems of ovens and kilns, the company has established specialized teams to prevent and fight against fire, specialized teams on safety and hygiene. The company organizes training courses for all new workers to help them grasp the necessary knowledge of safety measures, to avoid labour accidents, to prevent fire, and generally to learn to manage crises and accidents.

Every year the company provides workers with protective clothing, mainly aprons, but female workers say they rarely use them in the summer because it is too hot to wear them. In sections where workers are in contact with toxic substances (leather smell, feather processing, printing flowers on cloth etc.) workers receive allowances amounting to 10 or 12 per cent of their wage, according to the degree of harm these substances may cause to the health of the workers.

In comparison to the past, the health of the workers has improved because of better living and working conditions; occupational diseases (mainly eye-diseases) have been reduced considerably. However, in the feather workshop, there are not enough dust-sucking machines and a number of female workers have developed angina. In the leather workshop, many women are developing allergies with skin irritation and because this affects their sleep, they have to take anti-allergy medication. Some women feel very tired after the work day, when they have had to work ten hours or twelve hours continuously. Many workshops are still too noisy, and headaches are common. Due to poor health and worsening eyesight, some women are forced to leave their jobs on the main productions lines for new assignments on auxiliary lines.

The average wage of workers is 350,000 Vietnamese *dong* (about USD 35) per month. During some months the average wage is 500,000 Vietnamese *dong* (USD 50). Female workers say that their income was about the same in 1993 and 1994, but that the cost of living has increased in 1994, making life more difficult for them.

Ms. N. confides for overtime, the pay for each item produced is the same as the pay for the item manufactured during the normal working hours which is why women do not like to do overtime. They prefer to work only eight hours a day. The pay for each item produced in 1994 was the same as it was in 1993. Meanwhile there are many new patterns, and during the period the female workers are learning the new patterns, their productivity decreases, thus affecting their income. Ms. N. is married and has one child. She is afraid that after her second child is born, she will not have enough strength to continue her present job. In the past, women who were hospitalized for IUD enjoyed paid leave, and received medicines and allowances. At present these privileges have been abolished. A small number of women regularly have extra jobs making clothes at home and on the average they earn extra income in the amount of 200,000 *dong* per

month. But the majority of women feel too tired after their working day and thus do not have extra jobs.

The company says it adheres to workers' entitlements and benefits as defined in state regulations on maternity-leave, annual leave, sick leave, and so on. Every year the company sends its workers to sanatoriums and rest homes, also paying for the workers' transport there. Each worker is entitled to 1-5 days of rest with an allowance of 50,000 *dong* given by the company. With its welfare fund, the company has a rest home near the Noi Coc Lake, with 27 individual apartments on an area of 2,000 square meters for workers and their families.

The company has purchased medical insurance cards for its workers. To implement the state population policy, the company asks each worker to comply with the contract which clearly stipulates that female workers can give birth to children only after working for the company for two years, and that the period between the first and the second child should be five years.

The company has set aside a part of its profits to make savings cards for its workers. After working for the company for one year, each worker receives a savings card. In 1992, the savings card was worth 500,000 *dong*. In 1993, each worker received a savings card worth 500,000 *dong* plus the interest accrued on the 1992 savings card.

The Trade Union and the Committee for Women's Affairs have an important role in monitoring the implementation of worker rights and in conveying to the management the difficulties or concerns of the women workers. The director-general, who is a woman, pays close attention to the female workers' activities.

Enjoying their right to participate in the production's management, female workers are currently more actively involved than in the past because their individual interests are closely linked to the mutual goals of the company, a situation that is totally different from the period of state subsidy system. Because each workshop must now keep its own business account, each worker must have a high sense of discipline to fulfil the production plans both quantitatively and qualitatively, in order to gain high profits and increase the workers' incomes. Consequently, creativeness and initiative on the part of the workers has increased. For instance, when patterns are improved to increase the value of the products, workers receive 50 per cent of the profits achieved from the production of the new patterns. At the same time, workers have increased thriftiness, as well as protection of common property. Female workers are more eager to learn to raise their professional standard.

During the renovation of the company, the director-general (a woman) has played a very important role. Under her guidance, the company has grown from a 900 worker enterprise with major difficulties leading to an impasse, to an enterprise with 3,000 workers which can ensure regular jobs for its workers, and create job opportunities for a number of satellite enterprises, such as the dressmaking workshop in Bac Thai province, or the enterprise for invalids in Ha Tay province.

In order to reduce the amount of imported materials, the company is making an effort to use various kinds of local material. For instance, it continues to import leather from South Korea but has found local substitutes for cloth and thread, materials which now can be purchased in Viet Nam at lower prices.

3.2 *Aspirations of female workers*

The female workers who were interviewed expressed a number of aspirations. They prefer not to work overtime, or if they must, they should be paid at higher rates. Some women proposed to reduce the number of working hours per day, since they think the labour-intensity is too high. They say that more attention should be paid to the problem of industrial hygiene in each workshop to ensure good health for female workers. They would like the company to organize artistic and sportive activities.

Ms. T. H., 21 years old and single, has worked for the company for three years. She is now in the workshop making clothes for export to South Korea. She says that in this workshop the patterns change very often. When there are new patterns, she must learn new techniques, and at the beginning her productivity decreases and she earns less income. She thinks the labour-intensity is too high, she often has to take on extra jobs even at night, and she feels very tired. For instance in 1993 during one particular period, she had to work 10-12 hours a day for 50 consecutive days.

4. **Concluding remarks**

The Chien Thang garments company, a state enterprise which is going through the process of reorganization and renovation of its economic management, has not only maintained but developed its production, attracting more and more workers, and creating many jobs for women.

The company is cooperating with foreign companies but the selling price of Chien Thang products is still rather low. The income of female workers has been increased, but they feel that this increase is not yet comparable with the efforts they have made while the cost of living continues to increase. Substantial measures have been taken to transform the Chien Thang company from an enterprise with poor material basis and old equipment to a big enterprise with modern equipment and new technologies. However, the capital invested by the state is still insufficient (state support is provided in the form of loans with an interest rate of 0.7 per cent), while the company has no reserve funds. Thus the workshops are overcrowded, there is not enough equipment to combat dust, noise and heat, and hygiene is not adequate. Consequently workers feel uncomfortable, especially female workers who after the normal workday, must put in overtime to complete the production plans. Attention should be paid to the female workers' health and the problem of occupational illnesses. The high labour-intensity creates difficulties for women to fulfil their dual functions of worker and mother. Single women will eventually marry and management and government should take their needs and interests into account. Married women with children find it very difficult to complete their work in the factory and their housework at home.

5. References

- Do Hoai Nam [Chief author]. 1993. *Renovation and development of all economic sectors*. Institute of Economics, Hanoi: National Political Publishing House.
- Labour Code of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam*. 1994. Hanoi: Ministry of Labour, Invalids, and Social Affairs.
- Labour regulations for enterprises with foreign invested capital*. 1991. Ministry of Labour, Invalids, and Social Affairs.
- Law on domestic investment encouragement*. 1994. Hanoi: National Political Publishing House.
- Law on foreign investment*. 1994. Hanoi: National Political Publishing House.
- Law on private enterprises*. 1991. Hanoi: Juridical Publishing House.
- Laws and regulations on individual economy, private capitalist economy and companies, Volume 1*. 1992. Hanoi: Juridical Publishing House.
- Le Thi (ed.). 1993. *Job creation and income generation for women*. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House.
- Nguyen Ngoc Lam [Chief author]. 1994. *Renovation in business management of Vietnam*. Hanoi: National Political Publishing House.
- Socio-labour policy on non-state economic sectors*. 1993. Hanoi: National Political Publishing House.
- Statistical data on Labour and Social Affairs 1992*. 1993. Hanoi: Statistical Publishing House.
- Statistical Yearbook 1992*. 1993. Hanoi: Statistical Publishing House.
- Tran Thi Van Anh [Project director]. 'Scientific basis for social policies on women and families', Outcome of the Project KX 0408.
- World Bank. 1994. *The shift of Vietnam into market economy*. Hanoi: National Political Publishing House.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRESENT SITUATION OF WOMEN WORKERS IN SOME FOREIGN-INVESTED ENTERPRISES IN HO CHI MINH CITY

Bui Thi Kim Quy

1. Background on the birth of foreign-invested enterprises in Viet Nam and Ho Chi Minh City

Viet Nam's policy of renovation, or *doi moi*, started in the latter half of the 1980s with the transformation from a command and subsidized economy to a market economy. The new and distinctive feature of the socio-economic transformation is the call for foreign investment in different sectors from industrial manufacture to tourism, hotel industry, services and so on. Only five years after 20 December 1987, when Viet Nam's National Assembly passed the Law on Foreign Investment, albeit still under the siege of the US embargo, the State of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam issued 836 permits, attracting USD 7,456 million with the participation of more than 300 firms, companies, and groups of companies from over 40 countries. Most were from Taiwan, Hong Kong, France, Australia, Republic of Korea, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Japan, Singapore, Germany, Malaysia, Thailand.

Foreign investment has increased since the United States lifted its embargo in February 1994. Up to August 1994, there were 957 projects with the registered capital of USD 9.4 billion coming from over 600 companies of 51 countries in the world.¹ In 1994, ten countries had big investment capital in Viet Nam: Taiwan, 127 projects with a capital of USD 1,629 million; Hong Kong, 144 projects with a capital of USD 1,246 million; the Republic of Korea, 62 projects with a capital of USD 679 million; Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, France, the Netherlands, and Great Britain, ranging from 12 to 37 projects with a capital of USD 303 million to 636 million. Many large corporations have come from the United States, including Pepsi Cola, Coca Cola, Kodak, General Electric, American Express, United Airlines, Bank of America and Citibank.

Ho Chi Minh City, where foreign investment came earliest and in greatest amount, was still in the lead with 396 projects and a registered capital of USD 3.6 billion. Only for the first six months of 1994, up to 137 projects were granted the permits with a capital of nearly USD 1.8 billion, which accounted for 64 per cent of the expected registered capital for the whole year.

¹ It is predicted that by the year 2000 there will be thousands of investment projects with a total capital of USD 32 to 35 billion (*Thanh Nien* [Young People] Magazine, 23 August 1994).

Foreign-invested capital in joint ventures with state-owned or privately-owned enterprises falls under the following three cases:

- i) In joint ventures where foreign capital makes up 100 per cent of the enterprise's total capital, the managerial staff is selected by the foreign investors. If there is a Vietnamese deputy manager, this is only nominal because this deputy does not have much say in the management of the business. In many cases, the Vietnamese deputy takes sides with the foreign owner rather than expressing support to the workers' interests.
- ii) This is the case in which foreign capital contributions are higher than those of the domestic investors (for example, 70 per cent versus 30 per cent), but the head of the enterprise remains to be Vietnamese due to the favourable conditions that the local enterprise possessed when it entered the joint venture with the foreign partner: available establishments, machinery, management, a state of good business, and a strong trade union. In such joint ventures the purpose is to boost business and expand markets for their products to foreign countries. The workers in these businesses willingly accept stricter requirements on work discipline and behaviour in return for higher wages.²
- iii) The joint-venturing under this category only consists of *assembly work* done for a foreign country. Here there is nothing new with reference to factory establishments, machinery, or technology. What is new is the higher number of articles required for each piece-work, which leads to frequent overtime work and thus exhausts the women workers. Their increased wages cannot compensate for what they lose in overworking.

It is fair to say that with the birth of the foreign-invested joint ventures, the chances of solving the pressing problems of Viet Nam's economic development have become more realistic. First of all, the positive aspects of foreign investment in Viet Nam can be seen not only in the availability of large invested capital (foreign capital makes up 50 - 100 per cent of the total capital of most joint ventures) but also in other things such as solving urgent social problems. These include providing employment for labourers, bringing in new machinery and technology, initiating new effective management, training industrial style of work for workers, and especially producing a considerable amount of goods for export and consumption. Moreover, there is no denying the fact that, thanks to foreign-invested capital, several factories have been able to upgrade their workplaces. For example, the enterprise Vinabico, a joint venture with Japan, introduced greenery into the surroundings of its workplaces. This is said to have contributed to worker productivity and to the company's 1992 turnover of 20 billion VND and its 1993 turnover of 30 billion VND. The board of directors of the enterprise has remarked, 'up to 75 per cent of the workers here are women, and this success is their achievement'.

² This is the case of the enterprise Vinabico Kotobuki, a joint venture with Japan, producing cakes and candies for domestic consumption and export.

Nevertheless, it is easy to see that the industrial projects with foreign-invested capital are still on a small scale, in which the amount of capital is small or medium-sized, and the machinery is not very modern or advanced. But in contrast, the foreign investors enjoy many benefits: cheap labour, high profit, quick capital retrieval through their control of the input (taking advantage of the lack of access to world market on the Vietnamese side, some foreign investors pushed the prices of machinery and materials up to 5-7 times higher than the real prices) and the output (exported goods bear the trade-mark of the parent company and their selling prices on foreign market are not made known to Vietnamese partners). Moreover, foreign investors have only focused their investment on light industry, like textiles, garments, footwear and leather products, food processing, and assembly of electronics. These require little invested capital but bring in big profits. They can employ a great number of women workers, who are hard-working, painstaking, ready to accept meticulous and repetitive jobs in return for low wages and stable employment.

This is not something new or unique to Viet Nam. The situation in Viet Nam is similar to that of the export-processing zones (EPZs) in Asia, about which it has been remarked: 'Women commonly make up three-fourths of the total number of workers in these places and concentrate in textile industry and assembly of electronics, which require no special skills'. Some evidence is shown in the table below:

TABLE 4.1
PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN WORKERS IN EPZS, VARIOUS ASIAN COUNTRIES

Country	Percentage of women workers in the EPZs
India	48%
Malaysia	70%
The Philippines	74%
Taiwan	75% (average age: 27)
Republic of Korea	77%
Indonesia	89% (78% are under 25 years of age)

Source: Asia Monitor Resource Centre, Hong Kong, January 1995

In our opinion, this is also the trend of globalization in the development of the transnational companies (TNC), which is directed towards the agricultural and underdeveloped countries in the 'South', including Viet Nam. Therefore, this research on women workers in some foreign-invested enterprises in Ho Chi Minh City will make a small contribution to the understanding of a common phenomenon existing in the countries where some form of socio-economic transformation is under way.

2. The present situation of women workers in some foreign-invested enterprises in Ho Chi Minh City

This paper reports on a survey carried out in October 1993 under the direction of the Centre for Scientific Research on Women and Family, together with researchers from the Institute of Social Sciences and other academic organizations in Ho Chi Minh City. The survey was of 13 enterprises belonging to four industrial branches – textile, garments, footwear and leather products, and food processing – that employ a great number of women workers (from 55 to 87 per cent). There was an additional survey in March 1994 as well as in-depth interviews. The bulk of information on the working environment at four enterprises (Viet Thang Textile, Phong Phn Cotton Spinning, Seaprimfico, and Son Quan-Binh Tien) are results of the survey conducted by collaborators from the Sub-department of Labour Protection in Ho Chi Minh City, who measured working conditions, work regulations, productivity as well as the level of tension that the women workers in these four joint ventures experience every day.

Out of 360 questionnaires sent out, 325 properly filled-out ones were returned to us. Distribution of the questionnaires across industrial sectors may be seen in Table 4.2.

TABLE 4.2

NUMBER OF QUESTIONNAIRES DISTRIBUTED IN FOUR INDUSTRIAL SECTORS IN HO CHI MINH CITY

Number of questionnaires	
Textile industry	
Choong Nam enterprise	29
Garments industry	
Bicar enterprise	28
Hanjoo enterprise	27
Sasanga enterprise	14
Sing Viet enterprise	30
Vitexco enterprise	28
Footwear and leather products industry	
Anjil enterprise	24
Lac Ty enterprise	24
Loutech enterprise	23
Food processing industry	
Orsan enterprise	7
Seaprimfico enterprise	33
Vinabico enterprise	31

Source: October 1993 Survey results.

In our study, we first pay attention to the recruitment of the women workers to the joint ventures, most of which are in the light industry. Here there are objective and subjective factors which interact with one another in the relationship between the different people involved: on one side are the investors who employ labourers, and on the other side are the wage-earners. It can be said that while the reorganizing of the economy during the first phase of the country's transformation to a market economy makes women workers 'redundant' due to their low level of job skills or qualifications, the foreign-invested joint ventures when established, on the contrary, are interested in recruiting women workers. It is not, of course, that investors want to employ all those redundancies. In fact, most of the newly employed women workers are young (from 18 to 25 years of age). Those who are over 30 years old are required to have good skills as a condition for employment, most of whom are transferred from the state sector and receive somewhat higher wages. These skilled women workers are employed in newly established joint ventures to guide the younger, novice workers. At the same time, foreign investors who take on a whole production line or workshop of a particular factory (this is the case of Choong Nam enterprise or Hanjoo enterprise, which belong to Viet Thang Textile Company), impose such tense work regulations that the workers choose to quit their jobs.³

In addition, it is typical of small and medium-sized investors to invest in light industries which are lucrative, do not require high-tech machinery, enable investors to quickly retrieve capital invested as well as to employ unskilled women workers with low wages. These women are hard workers and quick to learn, and thus can be trained in a short time. They demand little from their boss, and are ready to accept meticulous or monotonous work in an assembly line. Moreover, being young and healthy, they have a quick mind and nimble fingers, which enables them to produce high-quality goods and reach high productivity. Due to the recent relaxation of regulations on residence brought about by the market mechanism, many young women have come to Ho Chi Minh City from the North, the Central part, or the Mekong Delta to seek employment. For these women, to be employed in a joint venture is a good chance to make a living and support their family. Therefore, they are ready to accept all the strains at work. Many of them are even unaware of the existing labour-protection regulations.⁴

In the 325 returned questionnaires, we had asked about the woman worker's *age*. The ages are shown in Table 4.3. The number of women workers in the age bracket 18-30 years accounts for 69.5 per cent of the total. As can be seen, the number of those who are over 40 makes up only 4.3 per cent. This means that, at the age of over 40, women workers are no longer the right people for the kinds of jobs offered at the enterprises under discussion; it implies that these workers must be ready to transfer to other jobs which are less strenuous. Their educational levels are shown in Table 4.4.

³ At Choong Nam Enterprise, in only a short period of time, hundreds of women workers quit.

⁴ See Article 113, Chapter X of the Law on Labour, annexed to this chapter.

TABLE 4.3

AGE OF WOMEN WORKERS BY INDUSTRIAL SECTOR, HO CHI MINH CITY, 1994
(IN NUMBERS AND PER CENT)

Age bracket	Industrial sector					Total
		Food processing	Textile	Footwear and leather products	Garments	
18-25	No.	13	9	34	65	121
	%	18.3	31.0	47.9	42.2	37.2
26-30	No.	21	6	30	48	105
	%	29.6	20.7	42.3	31.2	32.3
31-40	No.	27	14	7	37	85
	%	38.0	48.3	9.9	24.0	26.2
Over 40	No.	10	0	0	4	14
	%	14.1	0	0	2.6	4.3

TABLE 4.4

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF WOMEN WORKERS BY AGE BRACKET, HCMC
(IN NUMBERS AND PER CENT)

Level		Age bracket			Total
		18-25	26.30	over 30	
Primary school	No.	2	0	6	8
	%	1.7	0	6.1	2.5
Junior high school	No.	43	43	42	128
	%	35.5	41.0	42.4	39.4
Senior high school	No.	74	61	46	181
	%	61.2	58.1	46.5	55.7
Junior college or college	No.	2	1	5	8
	%	1.7	1.0	5.1	2.6

These figures show that most of the workers are junior high school, or senior high school graduates, although their jobs only require simple movements. A foreign language is also a requirement in many cases. The foreign languages that the women workers use at work, categorized according to the investing countries, are given in Table 4.5. It should be noted here that in most cases, the women workers with a knowledge of a foreign language had learnt the language before they came to the enterprise. Their work load at the enterprise leaves them no time for learning, except for a very small number of women who are single, in good health, and free from housework responsibilities because their parents do the chores for them.

TABLE 4.5

**FOREIGN LANGUAGES USED BY WOMEN WORKERS IN FOREIGN-INVESTMENT FIRMS
(IN NUMBERS AND PER CENT)**

		Taiwan, Hong Kong	Republic of Korea	Japan	Singapore	Western countries (France, Belgium, Germany)	Russia
English	No.	21	37	6	9	15	5
	%	17.6	46.3	19.4	32.1	44.1	15.2
French	No.	6	4	3	1	0	1
	%	5.0	5.0	9.7	3.6	0	3
Chinese	No.	4	0	1	2	2	0
	%	3.4	0	3.2	7.1	4.9	0
Other languages	No.	0	2	0	0	0	0
	%	0	2.5	0	0	0	0
None	No.	88	37	21	16	17	27
	%	73.9	46.3	67.6	57.1	50.0	81.1

The women workers' marital status is shown in the following table according to the age brackets:

TABLE 4.6

**MARITAL STATUS OF WOMEN WORKERS, BY AGE BRACKET, HCMC
(IN NUMBERS AND PER CENT)**

Marital status		Age bracket		
		18-25	26-30	Over 30
Single	No.	105	62	19
	%	86.8	59.0	19.2
Married	No.	16	40	72
	%	13.2	38.1	72.7
Divorced	No.	0	3	4
	%	0	2.9	4.0
Widowed	No.	0	0	4
	%	0	0	4.0

There exists a social problem that is fairly subtle: one-fourth of the women workers (25 years of age and older) are considered as having reached an age at which it is difficult to find a husband, when they have no opportunities to engage in social contacts due to their long working hours (usually 10 or 11 hours a day)

A question was also posed as to *how long* the women workers had been working at their present foreign-invested enterprise:

TABLE 4.7

LENGTH OF EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN WORKERS, BY INDUSTRIAL SECTOR
(IN NUMBERS AND PER CENT)

		Food processing	Textile	Footwear and leather products	Garments	Total
Less than 6 months	No.	2	1	13	1	17
	%	2.8	3.4	18.3	6	5.2
6-12 months	No.	31	27	15	51	124
	%	43.7	93.1	21.1	33.1	38.2
1-2 years	No.	6	1	21	56	84
	%	8.5	3.4	29.6	36.4	25.8
Over 2 years	No.	32	0	22	46	100
	%	45.1	0	31.0	29.9	30.8

Two-thirds (65.8 per cent) of those asked told us that they did not have to be trained because they had practised their trade before starting their present work, especially those in the garments industry (77.3 per cent).

Of those who had to be trained, 63.1 per cent received the training given by the enterprise, and 35.1 per cent had to pay for a training course elsewhere.

Basically, most workers (82.5 per cent) replied that they were able to complete the assigned work. A smaller number (12.6 per cent) said that their work load was too much and difficult to finish. 2.5 per cent of the workers asked replied that they found it difficult to complete the required load because of their poor skills. As a result of this difference in performance at work, the women workers differ in their ideas on the observance of job regulations. The following table shows the difference among workers of three age brackets:

TABLE 4.8

WOMEN WORKERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEIR JOBS, BY AGE BRACKET
(IN NUMBERS AND PER CENT)

		Age bracket		
		18-25	26-30	Over 30
Finding it normal	No.	49	49	56
	%	40.5	46.7	56.6
Finding it difficult at first but now having adjusted to it	No.	52	43	36
	%	43.0	41.0	36.4
Still finding it difficult	No.	20	13	7
	%	16.5	12.4	7.1

Concerning the monthly wages, we have the following table, which is categorized according to the investing countries:

TABLE 4.9

MONTHLY WAGES OF WOMEN WORKERS, BY ORIGIN OF FOREIGN-INVESTED ENTERPRISE (IN NUMBERS AND PER CENT)

Wages per month (000s VND)		Taiwan, Hong Kong	Republic of Korea	Japan	Singapore	Western countries (France, Belgium, Germany)	Russia
300 and less	No	13	3	0	23	1	30
	%	10.9	3.8	0	82.1	2.9	90.9
300-500	No.	60	71	6	5	26	3
	%	50.4	88.8	19.4	17.9	76.5	9.1
500-700	No.	42	6	9	0	6	0
	%	35.5	7.5	29.0	0	17.6	0
Over 700	No.	4	0	16	0	1	0
	%	3.4	0	51.6	0	2.9	0

If the wages are classified according to the working hours per week, we have the following table:

TABLE 4.10

MONTHLY WAGES OF WOMEN WORKERS, ACCORDING TO DURATION OF WORKWEEK (IN NUMBERS AND PER CENT)

Wages per month (000s VND)		48 hours and less	49-60 hours	Over 60 hours	Total
300 and less	No	25	25	20	70
	%	13.3	32.5	33.3	21.5
300-500	No.	116	35	20	171
	%	71.7	45.5	33.3	52.6
500-700	No	30	16	17	63
	%	16.0	20.8	28.3	19.4
Over 700	No.	17	1	3	21
	%	9.0	1.3	5.0	6.5

We have found that the percentage of women workers who find their work satisfying is very small: 3.7 per cent, which is nearly 10 times smaller than the number of women workers who do not find their work satisfying: 36.3 per cent.

TABLE 4.11

JOB SATISFACTION OF WOMEN WORKERS, BY INDUSTRIAL SECTOR
(IN NUMBERS AND PER CENT)

Job satisfaction		Food processing	Textile	Footwear and leather products	Garments	Total
Completely satisfied	No.	3	1	2	6	12
	%	4.2	3.4	2.8	3.9	3.7
Satisfied	No.	18	0	13	8	39
	%	25.4	0	18.3	5.2	12.0
Moderately satisfied	No.	23	14	44	75	156
	%	32.4	48.3	62.0	48.7	48.0
Dissatisfied	No.	21	13	11	49	94
	%	29.6	44.8	15.5	31.8	28.9
Totally dissatisfied	No.	6	1	1	16	24
	%	8.5	3.4	1.4	10.4	7.4

There is a common phenomenon in all the places where foreign-invested joint ventures are found: in the Republic of Korea in the 1970s, in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, etc. In these enterprises, working hours are always a strain: working overtime, or taking no day off, even on a holiday or Sunday. It is extremely difficult to ask for leave of absence, even to attend a wedding, family gathering, or funeral. Viet Nam nowadays is not an exception to this common practice. Here, there are enterprises which require workers to work overtime every two days, from seven in the morning to nine in the evening. There are women workers fainting on the job. In addition to the sufferings from the humidity, noise, heat, dirt and noxious gases, a great number of women workers suffer from the excessively strict discipline imposed by many foreign managers. There even exists a regulation which allows women workers to leave work to use the bathroom only three times a day, not more than 5 minutes each time. Therefore, while there are many women who try to accept severe working conditions in order to have a stable job, there are also women workers who quit their job at foreign-invested enterprises and become market or street traders or just stay home doing the housework.

Also of concern are the women working in the food processing industry, who sometimes have to stay idle at work due to the short supply of raw materials, but at other times have to work hurriedly late into the night with fresh fish, shrimps, or squids and receive an average wage of only 250,000 VND a month, less than the minimum wage required by law (USD 35 a month).

Following is the evaluation made by our collaborators from the Sub-Department of Labour Protection in Ho Chi Minh City concerning the working conditions, work regulations, and the level of tension experienced by women workers in four foreign-invested joint ventures.

2.1 *At the joint venture Hanjoo - Viet Thang Co. Ltd*

This garments industry enterprise is a joint venture between Viet Thang Textile Company and a corporation from the Republic of Korea. The monitoring and management of the production are taken care of by the managers, supervisors, and technicians of Korean nationality. There is a vice-director and an office worker who are Vietnamese. The number of the regular sewing workers is 120, over 100 of whom are women. 70 of these women workers are under 25 years of age and employed in the clothes cutting and sewing line. Those who are older (from 35 to 45 years of age), transferred from the cloth weaving job, are given simpler work with lower wages. All the production activities from cutting, sewing, and ironing to packaging are carried out in one large room which is stuffy and the ceiling of which is too low. The room is not big enough for the production activities, therefore, its temperature is 2-4°C higher than the outside temperature. The level of dust in the air is beyond the allowable level, which sometimes makes it stifling. The amount of energy spent on production here is greater than that of any other garments industry enterprise in the country. The usual indexes of the energy consumption for Vietnamese workers are as follows:

Cloth weaving	920 Kcal / 8 hours / worker
Cotton spinning	960 Kcal / 8 hours / worker
Sewing	620 Kcal / 8 hours / worker

At the Hanjoo enterprise, the indexes of energy consumption for its three principal jobs are as follows:

Simple, little skill-requiring job	920 Kcal / 8 hours / worker
Sewing or selvage making	1205 Kcal / 8 hours / worker
Ironing	1345 Kcal / 8 hours / worker

Moreover, women workers suffer from the strain of long working hours (overtime is usually two or three hours a day and is explained to be necessary because workers do not reach the required productivity, although the investor has never made known what the required productivity is). The consequence is that the workers are even reluctant to spend time drinking water and therefore are easy to contract constipation.

The study of these women workers' physical condition shows that their pulse rate is up 30-40 beats a minute at the end of their work shift as compared with the beginning (from 60-70 beats a minute in the morning to 90-100 beats a minute in the late afternoon). Their concentration power decreases by 20-25 per cent. They are then prone to make mistakes due to slow eye reflexes and nervous tension.

Their productivity is at its best from 8:00 am to 10:00 am. At the end of their working day, due to the pile of work to be done for the day, they have to speed up the working rate, which causes fatigue and may lead to a stroke when they are hungry. Even young women workers of the ages 18-20 find it difficult to adapt to this work style; therefore, the number of workers here fluctuates every day, up to 5 per cent of the total.

TABLE 4.12

RESULT OF THE STUDY OF THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT OF THE GARMENTS
INDUSTRY ENTERPRISE HAN JOO - VIET THANG CO. LTD

Areas measured	Heat °C	Humidity %	Wind m/s	Coefficient of light %	Noise dBA	Dirt mg/m ³
Outdoors	31.5	75	1.5		68	4.0
Doorway	33.0	70	0.5	2.2	73	5.6
Corner where the compressor is located	33.5	76	0.5	1.6	86	6.3
Cutting board	34.2	72	0.3	1.5	75	6.8
Ironing board	35.6	68	0.3	1.3	73	6.3
Rear of room	34.0	75	0.2	1.4	72	5.8

2.2 *At the joint venture Coats Tootal - Phong Phu*

This cotton spinning enterprise is a joint venture between Phong Phu Textile Company and a British corporation. All production activities are monitored by the Vietnamese management. The British director and technical experts come to work only periodically.

Equipment here is not totally new. The workplaces are too small. Eighty per cent of the machine-operating workers are women. Temperature is beyond the allowable level. Ventilation is poor. Light in many areas is not enough for workers to discover any broken thread. Noise level is especially high. Technicians are provided with earplugs; so are workers, but on the one hand the number of earplugs is not sufficient for all of them, and on the other hand many of them complain about the discomfort of wearing earplugs. The dirt-sucking system is not good enough. Workers stand at work or have to go back and forth frequently. They have to work in shifts, including the night shift, and often change shifts, which causes biological disturbance to their body as well as irregularity to their family life.

Although the psychological environment is pretty comfortable due to the harmony between workers and the management, including the chairman of the trade union, the bad working conditions, especially the heat and noise, have clearly affected the workers' physical conditions. Their hard work is not yet properly rewarded. The wages and salaries of the workers and management are still pretty low.

TABLE 4.13

RESULT OF THE STUDY OF THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT OF THE COTTON
SPINNING ENTERPRISE COATS TOOTAL – PHONG PHU

Areas measured	Heat °C	Humidity %	Wind m/s	Coefficient of light %	Noise dBA	Dirt mg/m ³
Outdoors	32	65	0.5			
Stamping board	33	70	0.5	1.2	86-88	5.2
Between the two machines Heavy III - Heavy IV	33.8	75	0.3	1.5	92-94	6.8
Between the two rows of Heavy II machines	33.5	73	0.2	1.5	94-96	73
Between the machines with cooling fans	32	68	0.8	1.6	95-96	8.1

2.3 *At the joint venture Seaprimfico - Dong Lanh 6*

This joint venture with a French corporation produces semi-finished jewels. Raw materials are oyster shells. Shells are cut and ground into thin round pieces, holed, and then threaded on a string to make necklaces. 70 per cent of all the workers are women, who work on the sawing, polishing, and threading.

The temperature at work is about 1-1.5°C higher than the outdoor temperature. The workplace is cool due to its location near a river, but the humidity level is high. The most harmful factors here are the noise and dirt caused by the sawing of oyster shells (see Table 4.14). The result of the study shows that workers' vision, hearing and concentration ability considerably diminish at the end of a day's work. Moreover, they all feel weary in their back, head, and neck due to their sedentary position at work all day long.

TABLE 4.14

RESULT OF THE STUDY OF THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT OF THE ENTERPRISE
SEAPRIMFICO - DONG LANH 6

Areas measured	Heat °C	Humidity %	Wind m/s	Coefficient of light %	Noise dBA	Dirt mg/m ³
Big power saw	33	82	1.0		99	19.7
Medium-sized power saw	33	83	1.0	2.8	101	14.3
Square-cutters	33.2	80	0.7	1.5	92	8.5
Sieving and grinding machines	33.5	78	0.6	2.4	94	9.7
Polishing machine	33	79	0.6	2.5	91	5.6
Area for threading work	27	73	0.4	1.2	70	2.2
Outdoors	32	75	2.0		72	5.3

Like the case of Coats Tootal enterprise, the French partner at the joint venture under discussion only contributes investment capital, and finds markets for its products, and carries out periodical inspections. All the managerial work is done by the Vietnamese side. This is a favourable thing for the workers. However, the pressure of the work at the joint venture is really great, and the workers' wages are still low as compared with their contributions to the profits of the enterprise.

2.4 *The joint venture Son Quan - Binh Tien*

This is a joint venture between a Vietnamese limited liability company and a corporation from Taiwan. The vice-director, personnel manager, technicians, and most of the workers are ethnic Chinese. Of the 200 workers at the enterprise, women workers make up 75 per cent. The enterprise is located in a fairly big two-storey new building. However, ventilation is decreased by the great quantity of equipment, raw materials and finished products found in the building. Dirt from rubber processing is poisonous. The hot, dry atmosphere and the strong smell of the glue produce a bad effect on workers' health. The decrease of visual and auditory reflexes as well as the excessive increase of pulse rate, up to 110 beats per minute, at the end of the first work shift (i.e. at 2:00 PM) are also observed.

TABLE 4.15

RESULT OF THE STUDY OF THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT OF THE FOOTWEAR ENTERPRISE SON QUAN - BINH TIEN

Areas measured	Heat °C	Humidity %	Wind m/s	Coefficient of light %	Noise dBA	Dirt mg/m ³
Outdoors	33	62	0.5			
Blending Machines	35	64	0.3	1.2	85	18.3
Laminating and cutting*	35	59	1.8	1.4	78	13.2
Mass cutting	35	67	0.8	1.4	78	12.3
Sulfurization	34.5	68	0.3	1.3	78	10.4
Whittling	33	72	0.5	1.5	78	11.3
Gluing	33	70	0.5	1.6	94	12.5

Note: * have fans

2.5 *Work environment and health: An assessment*

Discussed above are the details of our investigation made through the measurement of the environment indices: heat, humidity, wind, noise, dirt, toxic gas, light as compared with the allowable limits; through indirect measurement of energy consumption at work, through the physiological and psychological tests given before and after work shifts; through the study of working hours and hours off, and the observation of posture at work; and through the initial measurement of productivity on the basis of the amount produced per time unit. In our opinion, because of the short existence of foreign-invested joint ventures in Viet Nam, it is too soon to have a full

evaluation of all their positive and negative aspects in the development of the country, especially their long-term effects on the health of the majority of women workers.

2.6 *Women, work, and family*

If women in general, in modern times, usually have to take a double responsibility to society and family, women workers bear a heavier responsibility due to their working conditions: working overtime and working in shifts, especially for those whose working shifts change frequently, even for every few days. These women workers do not have time for the regular activities of their family. Whereas family is a cozy place and a source of psychological security for a worker after the tiring working hours, many women workers complain that they do not have enough time for their family life (18.5 per cent of the married women workers). They feel that they do not spend enough time taking care of children or taking an interest in their husband's career, and that this neglect could lead to their children's malnutrition or slow progress in school, or to the family break-up.

That is one of the reasons for single women workers to be reluctant to get married, in addition to the fact that they have few opportunities to make friends due to their tense working schedules (48 per cent of the women workers are single).

In the course of our survey, we discovered the discrepancy between those who are single and those who are married in their amount of time spent on recreation and cultural activities. The activities were the following: reading books; listening to radio and cassette recorder; watching television; watching video films; going to the movies; going to concerts; going to theatre; going to the traditional 'cai luong' theatre; other recreations. In all cases, single women workers were clearly more likely than married women workers to enjoy or engage in recreation and cultural activities.

The women workers expressed the difficulties that they met with their emotional life as follows, classified according to age brackets:

TABLE 4.16

DIFFICULTIES IN PERSONAL LIFE, BY AGE BRACKET (IN NUMBERS AND PER CENT)

		18-25	26-30	over 30	Sub-total
Refuse to answer	No.	8	5	9	22
	%	29.6	16.1	39.1	27.2
Have no time to take care of family	No.	3	6	6	15
	%	11.1	19.4	26.1	18.5
Have no time for studies or recreations	No.	1	1	0	2
	%	3.7	3.2	0	2.5
Have no time for social contacts	No.	10	11	4	25
	%	37.0	35.5	17.4	30.9
Other difficulties	No.	5	8	4	17
	%	18.5	25.5	17.4	21.0
Total	No.	27	31	23	81

With regard to their family life, the women workers' aspirations are shown as follows, according to the marital status:

TABLE 4.17

WOMEN WORKERS' FAMILY LIFE ASPIRATIONS, BY MARITAL STATUS
(IN NUMBERS AND PER CENT)

		Single	Married	Sub-total
A harmonious family	No.	17	28	47
	%	17.0	30.4	23.4
A secure life	No.	42	45	92
	%	42.0	48.9	45.8
Able to take care of family	No.	28	9	37
	%	28.0	9.8	18.4
Getting married	No.	6	0	6
	%	6.0	0	3.0
Other wishes	No.	7	10	19
	%	7.0	10.9	9.5
Total	No.	100	92	201

In order to better understand the women workers' family life, we paid attention to the contributions that their income made to their common family budget, which are shown as follows according to the income brackets:

TABLE 4.18

WOMEN WORKERS' CONTRIBUTION TO THE FAMILY BUDGET, BY MONTHLY SALARY
(IN NUMBERS AND PER CENT, 000'S VND)

		300 and less	300-500	500-700	over 700	Total
As the main income	No.	18	46	23	14	101
	%	25.7	26.9	36.5	66.7	31.1
As an important income	No.	17	49	10	4	80
	%	24.3	28.7	15.9	19.0	24.6
As a small contribution only	No.	35	76	30	3	144
	%	50.0	44.4	47.6	14.3	44.3

Following are the women workers' remarks on their own family's living standard, arranged according to the four industries:

TABLE 4.19

FINANCIAL STATUS OF WOMEN WORKERS' FAMILIES (ACCORDING TO THEIR OWN PERCEPTION), BY INDUSTRIAL SECTOR (IN NUMBERS AND PER CENT)

		Food processing	Textile	Footwear and leather products	Garments	Total
Relatively well off	No.	2	0	1	3	6
	%	2.8	0	1.4	1.9	1.8
Financially adequate	No.	36	15	52	85	188
	%	50.7	51.7	73.2	55.2	57.8
In financial difficulties	No.	30	13	18	47	108
	%	42.3	44.8	25.4	30.5	33.2
In serious financial constraints	No.	3	1	0	19	23
	%	4.2	3.4	0	12.3	7.1

It is interesting for us to find out that the majority of women workers do not want to stay home even when their family is financially better off (61.5 per cent). The percentage of workers who want to stop working when possible is 38.5 per cent.

TABLE 4.20

WOMEN WORKERS' EMPLOYMENT PLANS, BY INDUSTRIAL SECTOR
(IN NUMBERS AND PER CENT)

		Food processing	Textile	Footwear and leather products	Garments	Total
Will stay home when financially better off	N.o	23	14	16	72	125
	%	32.4	48.3	22.5	46.8	38.5
Will continue working even when financially better off	No.	48	15	55	82	200
	%	67.6	51.7	77.5	53.2	61.5

However, as compared with our survey on attitudes towards work among female teachers of elementary school and women workers at the enterprise Legamex, in which only 3.1 per cent of those asked were willing to stay home when possible, the result of our survey under discussion may show a backward move among women workers in their attitude towards work: possibly now more women accept to stay home and do the housework than before. In addition to the burden of taking two responsibilities, i.e., home and society, on the part of the woman worker, which explains her readiness to stop work, we believe that there is in this case a psychological factor that is still common to a number of Vietnamese women. These women want to give in to their husbands' wishes in order to protect their 'cozy nest' when their husband wants to go back to the former conception of male domination in family life and of the wife's natural role as a housewife and mother.

One of the important things for the worker is the social insurance policies: extra pay for laborious work or work that has harmful effects on the worker's health, payment for sick leave and compensation for accident at work. For women workers, there are other policies: leave of absence for prenatal check-ups, childbirth, breast feeding, and when the worker's child still needs maternal care or gets sick, etc. All these policies are clearly stated in the following state legal documents:

- The Law on Labour (which has a separate chapter on female employees) was passed by the National Assembly in June 1994 and will be effective from 1 January 1995 onwards.
- Article 37 of the Regulations on Labour in Foreign-Invested Enterprises, promulgated by the Council of Ministers on 22 June 1990.
- Article 23 of the Ordinance on Labour Contract, promulgated by the State Council on 10 September 1990.
- Detailed Regulations proclaimed by the Ministry of Health, which specifically focus on small children's health and mothers' health before and after childbirth.

It can be said that, although there are already clearly-stated regulations on postnatal leave, their enforcement is not the same in all enterprises. Some enterprises give three months' leave with full payment; others give shorter leave, from 4 to 6 weeks. In addition, in order to avoid the enforcement of the regulation on postnatal leave, many enterprises apply a kind of 'unwritten law' which implies a required agreement on the part of the woman job applicant not to give birth for the first 3 to 5 years of employment at the enterprise. Some foreign directors are at a loss to understand Viet Nam's laws on postnatal leave, family planning leave, or leave when the woman worker's small child gets sick.⁵ They state that in some Asian countries like the Republic of Korea, Japan, and so on, a single young woman worker earns good wages and can save up for her future marriage. When she has a child, she can afford to stay home to take care of her baby. This new mother does not come to work, and thus her enterprise is free from the responsibility of setting up nurseries and kindergartens.

Most of the women workers in the joint ventures are young and newly employed; therefore, they do not pay much attention to such social benefits as postnatal leave, sick leave, compensation for accident at work, or extra pay for jobs with harmful effects on health, etc. The proportions of the workers saying that they are unaware of these benefits are, respectively, 50.5 per cent, 19.1 per cent, 51.9 per cent, and 51.8 per cent.

On the contrary, more than half of the women working in foreign-invested enterprises say they consider themselves fortunate. The following table shows the numbers of these women workers in different income brackets:

⁵ See Articles 114, 115, 117, Chapter X of the Law on Labour, annexed to this chapter.

TABLE 4.21

WOMEN WORKERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEIR OWN SITUATION,
BY MONTHLY SALARY (IN NUMBERS AND PER CENT)

		300 and less	300-500	500-700	over 700	Total
Fortunate	No.	21	91	40	20	172
	%	30.0	53.2	63.5	95.2	52.9
Not fortunate	No.	49	80	23	1	153
	%	70.0	46.8	36.5	4.8	47.1

The women workers who answered our questionnaires expressed varied wishes and aspirations. Some wished to get a reasonable pay raise over time; others wanted to get the labour policies enforced effectively. Their differences in this matter are shown in the following table, according to the manufacturing branches:

TABLE 4.22

WOMEN WORKERS' ASPIRATIONS

		Food processing	Textile	Footwear and leather products	Garments	Total
Society developed, to be employed	No.	26	0	11	17	54
	%	37.1	0	19.6	13.7	19.9
Reasonable raise in pay	No.	22	9	7	48	86
	%	31.4	42.9	12.5	38.7	31.7
Labour policies enforced	No.	1	0	2	11	14
	%	1.4	0	3.6	8.9	5.2
Improvement of skills	No.	11	0	9	3	23
	%	15.7	0	16.1	2.4	8.5
Not much overtime work	No.	3	4	7	13	27
	%	4.3	19.0	12.5	10.5	10.0
Long-term employment at the present enterprise	No.	4	1	3	2	10
	%	5.7	4.8	5.4	1.6	3.7
Other wishes	No.	3	7	17	30	57
	%	4.3	33.3	30.4	24.2	21.0
Total	No.	70	21	56	124	271

For the women professionals, most of them work in the product-quality inspection, laboratory, or technical and research office. Three-fourths of them had worked at their former enterprise for about 10 years when it entered the present joint venture. Most of these women professionals find their job monotonous, with no prospect for occupational development because it gives them no chance to fully use their skills and initiative. Possibly because the joint ventures, which are newly established during the last one or two years, have a tendency to make full use of the available equipment and only start to produce a small amount of goods for market trial purposes,

they still do not find it necessary to spend more money on training for the professionals that they are employing. Therefore, in the 'collective labour contracts' (signed by the board of the directors and workers' representatives), besides the regulations on work discipline, social insurance, or wages, etc., there are no clauses stating the training or skills betterment for workers and professionals.

2.7 On the role of trade unions in joint ventures

It is true that the workers' organization in foreign-invested enterprises still does not have much say. It even does not exist in several joint-ventures due to the reluctance on the part of the foreign investor. 34.8 per cent of the 325 women workers asked replied that they were unaware of the presence of this organization. 18.2 per cent remarked that the trade union did not fulfil its duty as a protector of workers' interests.

In reality, in the enterprises where the trade union shows diligence in its activities, the cultural life and social benefits of the workers have become better. A few examples of these are footwear enterprise Lac Ty, a joint venture with Taiwan; Vietronic enterprise, a joint venture with Japan; and Roussel, a joint venture with France. On several occasions, the trade unions in these enterprises have cooperated with the board of directors to organize sight-seeing tours for workers, thus giving them opportunities to make social contacts. The company Vinabico, on the Children's Day, gave presents to the workers' children who had done well at school. Anyway, these good practices are a continuation of the activities of the trade unions during the period of the subsidized economy, and are found in the joint ventures, which used to be state enterprises. Most of the workers at the joint ventures, which used to be privately-owned enterprises have not enjoyed the said benefits, even at the joint ventures, where there already exists a trade union. In this case, workers have spontaneously embarked on negotiations with factory owners, requesting punctual payment and the wages in accordance with law, asking for stopping the forced overtime working, requiring a more decent lunch at work, or requesting the management to stop shouting at, and finding fault with workers.

3. Reflections on the future situation and proposals for policies towards foreign investment in joint ventures

In this section we consider future developments and suggest policies to be taken in order to promote economic growth while also ensuring social benefits for workers. Such policies must aim at:

- attracting more foreign investment capital;
- increasing goods of high quality for consumption and export;
- job-creation;
- protecting cultural and material interests of workers, including providing training to develop their capacities, and facilitating balance in work and family life.

In the years to come, more and more women will join the job market. At the beginning of the year 2000, working women will probably make up 56 per cent of all the people in the working age. Small- and medium-sized investors will continue to focus their activities on light industries and to employ a great number of women workers, who are young, healthy, nimble, tolerant of monotonous jobs or jobs requiring no high skills. Thus, investors can continue to pay low wages.

In this situation, it is necessary to have principles guaranteeing the harmony of interests between employers and employees, such as the Law on Labour, Law on Investment, and derivative regulations, which must be as detailed as possible. Detailed regulations aim at preventing employers from avoiding the implementation of social policies for workers, such as wages, fringe benefits, working conditions and environment, working hours, responsibilities of training workers for the requirements of new technology, seniority, and social benefits for women workers.

In return, the state needs to apply policies which encourage the employment of women workers by reducing corporation tax and income tax for enterprises using a great number of women workers, by giving priority over other enterprises in terms of work area, vocational instructor, baby-sitter, electricity and water costs, equipment of medical instruments, etc., to any enterprise, which can open training or retraining courses for women workers and is serious about opening kindergartens for women workers' children, providing housing for women workers, etc.

The most effective way to avoid conflicts between employers and workers, like repeated strikes or threats imposed on workers by employers, is to persuade employers to spend money or cooperate with the state and the labour union in the implementation of social benefits for women workers. If this fails, both employers and employees will suffer loss. Harmony of interests between bosses and workers should be obtained based on official regulations or laws, not on the role of intermediaries, who are often bought over by employers.

With regard to the retirement age of workers, there should not be rigid regulations, but it should depend on the kind of manufacturing branch. For the women working in light industries, their work is in fact very demanding and not carried out very well after age 40 or so. In the textile industry, workers go back and forth almost 20 km a day; in garment making, they sit with a bent back for long hours; in needlework, they have to fix their eyes on the embroidery the whole day. These women workers should consider changing their jobs, but this raises the problem of retraining them. Can foreign-invested enterprises take care of this problem or do they need support from the state and the trade union?

The final issue concerns the choice of Vietnamese people for the co-management of the enterprise. These people must be good at a foreign language, have expertise, and at the same time be of good moral standing. The trade union activists must be enthusiastic, have sympathy for women workers, and be good at negotiations with employers as well as teaching workers industrial way of working and work discipline.

The cooperation of the enterprise, the trade union, and the state in solving any possible problem faced by women workers reflects the concern of the whole society for the well-being of women workers, who wish to establish a respectable position for themselves in society and in family through their contributions to the development of their country.

4. Annexe – Excerpts from the Labour Code of Viet Nam

CHAPTER X - SEPARATE PROVISIONS ON FEMALE EMPLOYEES

Article 109

1. The State shall, on the basis of equality of the sexes, protect the right to work of women. It shall establish policies to encourage employers to create conditions for women to work on a regular basis and it shall apply widely the regime of casual part-time employment and work carried out at home.

2. The State shall progressively establish policies and implement measures to expand employment opportunities, improve working conditions, increase professional level, improve health, and strengthen the material welfare of female workers for the purpose of assisting women to achieve their full professional potential and to combine harmoniously work and family life.

Article 110

1. State bodies shall be responsible for the expansion of various forms of training which are favourable to female workers in order to enable women to gain an additional skill or trade for the purposes of giving employers more incentives to employ female workers and women more opportunities to find work which is suitable to their biological and physiological characteristics as well as their role as a mother.

2. The State shall establish policies on preferential treatment, and reduction of taxes for business enterprises which employ a high number of female employees.

Article 111

1. Employers are prohibited from conduct which is discriminatory towards a female employee or conduct which degrades the dignity and honour of a female employee.

An employer must implement the principle of equality of males and females in respect of recruitment, usage, salary increase, and wages.

2. An employer must give preference to a female who satisfies all the recruitment criteria for a vacant position in an enterprise.

3. An employer shall be prohibited from dismissing a female employee or unilaterally terminating the labour contract of a female employee who is getting married, pregnant, taking maternity leave, or raising a child under twelve (12) months old except where the enterprise ceases its operation.

Article 112

Where there is a doctor's certificate which states that continued employment would affect her womb, a pregnant female employee may unilaterally terminate the labour contract and not be liable for payment of the compensation stipulated in article 42 of this Code. In such cases, the period in which the female employee must give notice to the employer shall depend on the period determined by the doctor.

Article 113

1. An employer must not assign a female employee to heavy, dangerous, or toxic and poisonous works which might have adverse effects on her ability to bear and raise a child, in accordance with the list of works issued by the Ministry of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Health.

Enterprises which currently employ female employees in works referred to above must formulate plans to train and gradually transfer those female employees to other suitable work. These enterprises must also carry out measures to protect the health of female workers, improve working conditions, or reduce the number of working hours.

2. Regardless of her age, an employer must not employ a female to work regularly in mines or in deep water.

Article 114

1. A female employee shall be entitled to maternity leave prior to and after the birth of her child for a total period of four to six months as determined by the Government on the basis of the working conditions and nature of the work (whether the work is heavy, harmful, or in remote locations). Where a female gives birth to more than one child at one time, she shall be entitled to an additional thirty (30) days leave for every additional child calculated from the second child onwards. The rights and benefits of a female employee during her maternity leave shall be as stipulated in articles 141 and 144 of this Code.

2. Where required and with the permission of the employer, a female employee may take additional leave without pay at the end of the maternity leave stipulated in clause 1 of this article. Provided that the employer is given notice, a female employee may return to work prior to the expiry of her maternity leave if she has at least two months rest after birth and a doctor's certificate confirming that early resumption of work does not affect her health. In such a case, the female employee shall still be entitled to the maternity leave allowance as well as the normal wages for the days worked.

Article 115

1. An employer must not allow a female employee who is seven months pregnant or currently raising a child under twelve (12) months old to work overtime, at night, or in distant locations.

2. A female employee who is employed in heavy work and is in her seventh month of pregnancy shall be either transferred to lighter duties or entitled to work one hour less and still receive the same wage.

3. During her menstruation, a female employee shall be entitled to a thirty (30) minutes break every day, and during the period of raising a child under twelve (12) months old, a female employee shall be entitled to sixty (60) minutes break every day, and still receive the same wage.

Article 116

1. Enterprises which employ female workers must have changing rooms, shower facilities, and toilets.
2. Enterprises which employ a high number of female employees must organize child minding centres and kindergartens, or assist female employees with young children with a portion of the costs of child minding or kindergarten.

Article 117

1. When taking leave of absence to attend pregnancy examinations; to carry out family planning programmes, or to have medical treatment for miscarriage; to attend to a sick child under seven years of age; or to adopt a newly born baby, a female employee shall be entitled to social insurance benefits or be paid by the employer a sum equal to the amount of social insurance benefits. The duration of the leave of absence and the allowance entitlement stipulated in this clause shall be determined by the Government. Where another person looks after the sick child instead of the mother, the mother shall still be entitled to social insurance benefits.

2. At the end of normal maternity leave with additional unpaid days off, a female employee shall be guaranteed employment upon her return to work.

Article 118

1. In enterprises where a high number of female employees are employed, a member of management of the enterprise must be assigned the duty of monitoring all issues relating to female employees. Where a decision is made which affects the rights and benefits of females or children, the representative of the female employees must be consulted.

2. Within the labour inspection team, an appropriate proportion must be female inspectors.

CHAPTER XII - SOCIAL INSURANCE

Article 141

1. Compulsory forms of social insurance shall apply to business enterprises which employ ten (10) or more employees. In these enterprises, the employer and the employees must make contributions in social insurance funds in accordance with the provisions of article 149 of this Code and the employees shall be entitled to social insurance benefits and allowances in the event of illness, work-related accidents and occupational disease, pregnancy, retirement, and death.

2. In respect of an employee who works in an enterprise which employs less than ten (10) employees, in jobs which have a duration of less than three months, in seasonal jobs, or in jobs which are temporary, social insurance contributions shall be included in the wage paid by the employer to enable the employee to participate in social insurance on a voluntary or self funding basis.

Article 144

1. During maternity leave stipulated in article 114 of this Code, a female employee who has paid social insurance contributions shall be entitled to a social insurance allowance equal to one hundred (100) per cent of her wage and an additional allowance of one month's wage if it is her first or second birth.

2. All other regimes which apply to female employees shall be governed by the provisions of article 117 of this Code.

Article 150

The Government shall, with the co-operation of the Trade Union Federation of Viet Nam, promulgate regulations on social insurance, and establish an organizational system of social insurance and issue regulations on the organization and operation of social insurance funds.

(Draft, official English translation)

CHAPTER V

ECONOMIC REFORM AND WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN EGYPT

Valentine M. Moghadam

1. Introduction

Under a programme called Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Programme (ERSAP), Egypt has committed itself to the transformation of its economy from a state-dominated model with a small formal private sector to a decentralized, market-based, open, outward-oriented economy. As with other countries undergoing economic reform, this process has significant social ramifications.

The government's plan to contract the civil service (the principal formal-sector employer of women), end the system of guaranteed jobs for graduates (through which the vast majority of Egyptian women found jobs), restructure and privatize public-sector enterprises, and unify the labour law (which at present provides generous benefits for women in the public sector and the large private enterprises), will affect women's participation in the labour force. Nasserist reforms and the expansion of education steadily increased job opportunities for women (see Hatem 1992, 1994), but these remain largely limited to the government sector. In more recent years, it appears that 'women are being crowded out of the labour market'.¹

In the past, Egypt's economy was carried by revenues from oil, the Suez Canal, workers' remittances, and tourism. These revenues allowed the government to guarantee employment to graduates but also relieved it of responsibility for fully developing the country's human resources, especially those of women. That era being over, the country's current economic orientation requires not only restructuring of the labour force and adjustment of the labour market, but attention to a most underutilized resource base: the female population. This necessitates investments in female human resource development and policies to identify and eliminate gender bias in labour market processes and private sector practices.

This article examines the labour-force implications of the economic reform programme from a gender perspective, and seeks to determine how ERSAP might affect women's employment opportunities by analysing current labour-market constraints faced by Egyptian women. The article addresses the following questions: how will plans to promote private-sector development affect women's employment? Will ERSAP lead to a greater demand for female labour and more job opportunities for women? What kinds of jobs are likely to be available to women? What initiatives exist to support

¹ Interview with Nader Fergany, Cairo, 25 January 1995.

women in the labour force? What additional interventions may enhance their participation in the economy and in the labour force, and thereby contribute to the development process?

The study is based on fieldwork conducted in Egypt during a period of four weeks in January-February 1995. Primary data were obtained through extensive interviews with officials of government agencies, donor agencies, and NGOs, business owners and enterprise managers, women workers and professionals, economists, sociologists, and legal experts; and through site visits to factories, workplaces, and businesses in Cairo, Alexandria, El-Mahallah, and Qena Governorate. Due to the paucity of sources on economic restructuring and women's economic status in Egypt available outside Egypt, an array of secondary sources was collected in Egypt. Statistical sources include those of the Egyptian government's Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA), and the International Labour Office (ILO).²

To put the discussion of the economic reform programme and its implications for women's employment into perspective, we begin with a consideration of the demographic pressures.

2. The demographic context

Egypt's large and growing population (53.6 million in 1991, according to World Bank figures) and labour force (16 million in 1990) are fuelled by a decreasing but still relatively high population growth rate (2.4 per annum during 1985-90, according to ESCWA figures). The urban population in particular is expanding as a result of migration and lowering mortality levels. Mortality in Egypt has declined substantially while commensurate reductions in the birth rate have lagged, resulting in a high rate of population growth.

Total fertility rates are declining but are still high (4.5 during 1985-90 and 4.1 during 1990-95), and they are linked to (i) a high percentage of married females in the age groups 20-24 (58.3 per cent) and 25-44 (85.9 per cent), (ii) a contraceptive prevalence rate of under 50 per cent for women in the age group 15-49 in 1991, and (iii) a continuing high rate of adult illiteracy, especially among females (10.5 million women over the age of 15 in 1990), and particularly among rural residents and the urban poor and migrant population. The government of Egypt, USAID and other donors have formally identified rapid population growth as a key constraint to development, although a comprehensive public sector programme for delivering family planning services has emerged (USAID 1992, p. 3; UNFPA n.d.). The 1992-97 Development Plan predicts that fertility will decline, leading to a birthrate of 29 per thousand by the

² The fieldwork was part of a mission sponsored by Coopers & Lybrand, Consulting, of Arlington, Virginia. The author served as external consultant and team leader, and gratefully acknowledges the support of Coopers & Lybrand. Sincere thanks are also due to Ms. Aziza Helmy, WID focal point for USAID in Cairo, who made possible many of the site visits.

end of the plan period, and an annual population growth rate of 2.2 per cent by 1997 (INP 1994, p. 16). At present, fertility patterns translate into rapid growth of the working-age population.

A growing number of households are maintained by women. The Labour Force Sample Survey of 1988 estimated that 18 per cent of all families in Egypt were headed by women. The main causes are widowhood (in 60 per cent of the cases), divorce, husband's absence for military service or emigration (Fergany, 1993). Illiteracy is widespread among female-headed households, while female economic activity rates and child labour are also higher, and the average income 37 per cent lower, than in households maintained by men (NCCM, 1994, p. 19).

There is some evidence of an increase in levels of poverty, especially since the structural adjustment programme began and some subsidies were eliminated (Fergany, 1994a, 1994b; Korayem, 1993; CAPMAS/UNICEF n.d., p. 9). According to one report: 'The problems facing poor families, in general, and women-headed households in particular, have constantly increased, particularly because of the extreme inadequacy of the Social Relief Programmes (The Social Security System and Sadat's Pension Scheme)' (Soliman 1994, p. 11). Soliman also cites the 'increase in the ratio of women-headed households and non-wage working women inside and outside the household' as related to the economic reform process (Soliman 1994, p. 27).

Related to the rise in poverty is the increase in child labour, which has grown from 3.5 per cent in 1979 to 5.5 per cent in 1980 to 7 per cent in 1984, mostly in rural areas (CAPMAS/UNICEF, n.d., p. 121). According to the Third Five Year Plan, 'Data indicate that the ratio of employing children in the age of 6-15 years has risen. The employment of children is due to the increased economic pressure on some classes, the emigration of a large number of trained manpower to the outer work markets and to escape of children [sic] from schools' (Arab Republic of Egypt, 1992, p. 82).

The mean years of schooling is 4.1, and disaggregates into a mean years of schooling for women aged 25 and above of 2 years in the governorates of Upper and Lower Egypt, and 4.2 years in the urban areas (INP 1994, p. 40). There has been a tremendous increase in enrollment and access, particularly in the primary level. In 1990, enrollments stood at 7 million in the primary level (44 per cent female), 3.8 million preparatory (44 per cent female), and 1.8 million secondary (42 per cent female).

These impressive figures have not, however, been accompanied by an increase in educational quality. Teachers are underpaid, leading to the widespread and costly phenomenon (costly to parents) of private lessons offered by teachers in an effort to supplement their low incomes. The physical state of many of the schools is poor, and many school buildings are used by several 'shifts' of students. The introduction of 'cost recovery' in the field of primary education and the introduction of user fees has contributed to increasing drop-out rates, especially for girls.³ According to economist

³ Curriculum changes, which are underway, need to be strengthened to emphasize creative analytical thinking and problem solving rather than rote learning (INP, 1994, p. 25). The education sector itself

Nader Fergany, 'The quality of human capital being developed in this country is low and is deteriorating.'⁴

A positive trend is the rising enrollment of women at the tertiary level – 37 per cent of total enrollments in 1990. Female shares remain close to half in the traditional female fields of study: education science, humanities and religion, fine and applied arts, social and behavioural sciences, and medical and health-related sciences, while women dominate the enrollment rates in home economics/domestic sciences, mass communications, and services trades (respectively, 78.4 per cent, 65 per cent, and 57 per cent female in 1990). Their shares are growing in the following fields of study: law (23.9 per cent), commercial and business administration (33.3 per cent), natural sciences (39.6 per cent), math and computer science (21.9 per cent), engineering (14.4 per cent), and agriculture (31.6 per cent).⁵

Although the population is increasing and the number of job-seeking graduates growing, the traditional labour-absorption sectors – the government, public enterprises, international migration, and the informal sector – have become saturated. Egypt has an economically active population of 16 million (out of a total population of 30 million over the age of 15) and a total activity rate of 51.25 per cent, much of it accounted for by the male population (with a 71.7 per cent activity rate), indicating considerable inactivity (or considerable undercounting) of the female population (with a 30 per cent activity rate, according to the 1989 LFSS). Women's labour-force participation rates remain relatively low, reflecting a long-standing pattern of under-utilization of female human resources. Nevertheless, as Mona Hammam pointed out in the early 1980s, women are actively engaged in the urban informal sector, the result of economic need and household survival strategies.

Most of the total labour force is in agriculture (6.2 million), followed by workers in public and private services (5 million) and production and related workers (3.6 million). The government is by far the largest employer of those in the services sector and/or in the professional, technical, and related occupations, accounting for 21.4 per cent of total employment in 1986. Public enterprises absorbed 10.8 per cent of the labour force in 1986, while the private sector absorbed 67.6 per cent (INP, 1994, p. 49).

Demographic and economic pressures are reflected in growing open unemployment, which according to official figures is about 1 million but which according to economists Nader Fergany and Ragui Assaad is closer to 2.8 million and rising. The World Bank (1994) has adopted the higher unemployment figure. Unemployment in Egypt appears to have doubled between 1981 and 1986, increasing at a rate of 2.5 per cent per year to reach 17.5 per cent at the end of 1992 (Fergany, cited in Assaad 1993, p. 7; see also Fergany 1994b). About 90 per cent of the unemployed are

needs revamping in order to prepare for the 21st century, for a market- and outward-oriented economy, and for technological changes. The World Bank and other sources identify a 'mismatch between the skills supplied by the educational system and the skills needed in the labour market' (World Bank, 1994, p. 34).

⁴ Interview with Nader Fergany, Cairo, 25 January 1995.

⁵ Figures from ESCWA (1994).

under the age of 30 and a higher rate is found among young females (25 per cent) than among young males (10 per cent), especially in the urban areas. The vast majority of the unemployed have an intermediate-level (secondary) education or higher. The higher unemployment rate among secondary school graduates than among university graduates shows their difficulty in finding private-sector employment comparable to government work. Underemployment affects an estimated one-third to one-half of Egyptian workers. Some 2.5 million Egyptians currently work overseas.

3. The economic reform and structural adjustment programme

Against this demographic backdrop and overview of the labour-force and employment situation, we turn our attention to the economic reform programme itself, the reasons for its adoption, its labour-force implications, and its successes and weaknesses to date.

Following the 1990-91 Gulf War, Egypt embarked on a major economic restructuring, assisted by the IMF and the World Bank and by a programme of debt reduction, in which the United States played a major role by forgiving military debt of \$6.7 billion. Egypt's economy had begun to suffer from serious structural problems during the 1980s for a number of reasons including the decline of petroleum prices and the rise of U.S. interest rates, which turned Egypt into one of the most severely indebted countries in the world. A government fiscal deficit of about 20 per cent of GDP led to a deterioration of the standard of living.⁶

Egypt also developed a severe employment problem characterized by inadequate labour absorption and an underutilization of human resources. Additional problems are overstaffing and inefficiency in the public sector (the civil service more than the public enterprises), coupled with declining real wages, with negative implications for employees' productivity and morale (Assaad 1993). Government wages have also been eroded by inflation (21 per cent in 1992, about 11 per cent in 1993, and about 7 per cent in 1994). Because of this, and because of the relatively short working day, government employees tend to minimize their work and seek supplementary private employment (see World Bank 1994, p. 28.) Shocks such as the sudden return of migrants from Iraq after the Gulf War and the collapse of the tourism industry after terrorist attacks in late 1992 curtailed two of the most dynamic labour absorption sectors and thereby contributed to the employment crisis. In addition, fiscal problems led to a slowdown in the hiring of graduates by the civil service and the public enterprises (INP, 1994: 18).

Along with stabilization and financial and trade liberalization, the government initiated a major programme of restructuring and privatization of public enterprises, including the passage of Law 203/1991, to encompass the 314 public enterprises that will eventually be restructured or privatized. One-half of the 314 public enterprises brought under the control of the Public Enterprise Office and reorganized into 17

⁶ For an elaboration of the reasons behind the economic reform programme, see Niblock (1993) and Springborg (1993).

holding companies are targeted for privatization within five years, including those which will require a prior restructuring to be saleable. In 1995, only three companies had been wholly sold. One may conclude that whereas stabilization has been achieved rapidly in the last few years, structural reform – to tackle rising open unemployment, to establish a social safety net, to restructure and privatize public enterprises and to develop the private sector – has barely begun.

3.1 *The informal sector: no panacea*

Development and expansion of the private sector is a central objective of ERSAP. The formal private sector, while doubling during the 1980s, still constituted only 5 per cent of total non-agricultural employment by the early 1990s. It is the informal private sector, composed overwhelmingly of firms with less than 10 employees, that encompasses up to 90 per cent of total private sector employment outside of agriculture. The vast majority of these small businesses are in the areas of commerce, restaurants and hotels, personal services, transport, and small-scale manufacturing (World Bank, 1994; Handoussa and Potter, 1992). They are overwhelmingly informal and unregulated.

Fieldwork in Egypt included visits to microenterprises and CIDA-supported small businesses in Qena district (Upper Egypt) and in Alexandria (the ABA/SME programme supported by USAID). Some of these enterprises appeared successful, especially the three visited in Alexandria on 30 January 1995 – two garment-making enterprises owned and managed by women, and one wood-working and carpentry enterprise owned by a man. However, given that Egyptian banks tend not to give loans to new enterprises without a track record, one wonders about the viability and lifespan of the micro and small enterprises that are not the beneficiaries of external funding.

Characteristic features of micro and small enterprises are low visibility, no taxation because of unreporting of income, casual hiring and firing, and general lack of regulation, even when registered or licensed. Even when fully regulated, these small firms operate in the same unregulated markets, depend on informal sources of credit, employ largely uneducated family members, relatives, or community members, and rely on horizontal networks for information and marketing within the local community. According to the World Bank, 'Micro and small enterprises face size-specific constraints. The lack of formal credit, of market access and of physical space, and the overall weight of the regulatory system relative to these firms' size, hold back private micro and small enterprises growth. Crucially, they are by far the most significant private employers in the economy and, hence, seemingly the sector most capable of rapidly carving into the unemployment pool' (World Bank, 1994, p. 41). Handoussa (1991, p. 17) similarly writes that compared with 1976, the 1986 census results 'point to a significant increase in employment (2.8 per cent per annum) in this huge sector... '.

However, according to the study *Egypt: Human Development Report 1994*, the contribution to labour absorption of the non-agricultural private sector has been 'very limited'. The report adds that 'the 1980s witnessed a limitation of job creation in the informal sector. The first half of the 1980s witnessed a lower share of labour force for

the informal sector than in the 1970s' (INP, 1994, p. 18). Soliman similarly notes that structural adjustment has brought about 'the withdrawal of the private sector in the investment process which caused the decline of women employment rates in the economic activity, since the execution of the programme affected negatively the purchasing power within the economy. Accordingly, the private sector faced difficulties marketing its products and forwarding them to foreign markets, as it had been planned for the success of the economic reform programme. Moreover, the rise of the interest rate resulted in the suspension of the private sector's investment decisions' (Soliman 1994, p. 29).

Many authors cite the poor working conditions of the informal sector, including absence of social insurance, long working hours of 50 hours or more, absence of minimal sanitary and safety regulations, and frequent use of child labour. The use of casual labour is widespread in the private sector, as one study found: 'a look at contracts in construction reveals, as expected, a dual market. At least 90 per cent of public sector workers have formal contractual arrangements, with over 70 per cent guaranteed permanent employment. In contrast, 97 per cent of private sector workers are hired on a casual basis without any formal contractual arrangement. It is these workers who carry most of the brunt of adjustment' (Assaad and Commander, 1990, p. 22).

The informal sector has long been the subject of debate in the development literature. In the context of current global restructuring and withdrawal of the state as employer and provider of social services, there is renewed interest in it as a labour-absorption sector. However, from the perspective of social justice and gender equity, the informal sector has structural deficiencies and cannot be regarded as a panacea for unemployment or poverty. Many microenterprises do not improve the quality of life of producers, while household enterprises often remain at a subsistence level, overstretching the labour-time of women.

An example is the case of Mona Goma'a, a wife and mother of two young children, and a home-based seamstress in Qena district.⁷ Along with her husband, she obtained a loan from the National Bank for Development's Luxor branch in order to set up a garment-making business in her home. (The NBD provides credits for poor women in the informal sector.) With the NBD loan, Mrs. Goma'a purchased a sewing machine in order to make fancy dresses geared to tourists. The dresses are marketed by Mr. Goma'a to local retailers. The dresses are covered with embroidery and sparkles, and Mrs. Goma'a said it takes her about a week to make one. But they are sold to the retailer at a profit of only 20 Egyptian pounds. Her labour time and the amount of electricity used are not calculated in the cost. The retailer then sells her work to female tourists – to be worn at parties on, for example, Luxor luxury cruise boats – for four times the price.

Mrs. Goma'a works in the outer room of the family's small and sparsely-furnished home, located on an unpaved street in Qena. She wakes at 6 in the morning and does housework until about 9. Thereafter she begins her sewing, working often until 10 at night. Mrs. Goma'a makes a monthly repayment on her loan of 170 EL per month,

⁷ Interview and visit conducted 25 January 1995.

with a flat interest rate of 2 per cent per month. Mrs. Goma'a and her husband feel that the repayment terms were too quick. Clearly, the business is not growing, and the repayments are being made only with difficulty, but Mrs. Goma'a and her husband would like another loan to keep the operation going.

The situation of Mona Goma'a exemplifies the case made by feminist economists that prices for women's products or wages for their labour do not reflect the true opportunity costs of a woman's labour and time, particularly as her long working day spans the productive and reproductive spheres of activity. Moreover, being involved in household maintenance and childcare inevitably affects her productivity and probably the quality of her product.

3.2 *An assessment of ERSAP*

Structural adjustment everywhere has been a painful and controversial process. In Egypt, the staunchest supporters are the World Bank and U.S. Embassy/USAID officials. Within the government, those charged with implementing or monitoring the economic reform exhibit reluctance to accelerate the process.⁸ Egyptian economists express reservations or strong criticisms. In a study prepared for ESCWA, Professor Karima Korayem concluded that there had been some achievements, but many new problems. She noted that the deficit in the balance of trade continued, but was reduced to a lower level, mainly due to the cut in imports. The main positive impact on the current account balance came from the significant increase in tourism revenues. At the same time, the budget deficit fell to 7.2 per cent of GDP in 1991/92, as compared to 17.2 per cent of GDP in 1990/91. However, 'the impact of ERSAP on inflation has not been impressive.' Her conclusions regarding investments, social sector spending, employment, and income, are especially pertinent:

- The contractionary fiscal and monetary measures contained in ERSAP are expected to reduce public and private investment in the short-run, causing a slowdown in economic growth and job creation. The public enterprise reforms and privatization will probably aggravate the unemployment problem.
- In spite of the reduction in government expenditures advocated by ERSAP, Government investment in social services – education and health – have increased in nominal terms in 1991/92. However, in real terms, they have remained below their level in 1988/89; and on a per capita basis, the downward trend in government investment in social services has continued.
- In the short-run, ERSAP has negative implications for the poor mainly because of its tendency to raise prices and reduce employment opportunities. The impact on the poor in the medium-term will depend on how successful ERSAP will be in stabilizing prices, increasing total investment, and raising output.

⁸ This is based on comments by directors of the Social Fund, at a USAID seminar in Cairo, 8 February 1995.

- Regarding income distribution, one may conclude that ERSAP has a negative impact on wage earners, while its impact on non-wage earners is not clear-cut. (Korayem, 1993, pp. 66-68).

Unsurprisingly, many analysts and advocates predict adverse outcomes for women. A joint CAPMAS/UNICEF study bluntly asserts: 'Egypt may be heading towards one of the worst 'transitional phases' with increased privatization and the Structural Adjustment Programme worsening rather than improving women's working conditions.' (CAPMAS/UNICEF n.d., p. 104).

3.3 *ERSAP and women's employment*

In theory – and given the experience of Morocco and Tunisia, as well as Mexico and of course the east and southeast Asian first- and second-generation NICs – economic liberalization and the transition to a more outward-looking and modern market economy should raise the demand for female labour in the emerging private sector, particularly in the export manufacturing industries that tend to be traditionally female-intensive (see, e.g., Standing, 1989; Perkins 1992). Economic reform should also break down culturally-prescribed barriers to occupations, including tourism-related sales and services occupations, in which women are at present not strongly represented. Economic liberalization and private sector development should also create opportunities for women to start or expand their own businesses. Moreover, as the Egyptian government gradually shifts from engagement in production relations to a focus on expanding and upgrading health, education, and social services, this, too, should enhance the participation of women in the social sectors of the economy. One would also expect restructuring of the public-sector enterprises and/or their privatization to affect male workers more than women, given the small female share in this sector.

And yet almost all interviews conducted during the fieldwork in Egypt indicate extreme pessimism in this respect, and suggest that men will be privileged in the new recruitment and hiring practices. A notable exception is Prof. Heba Handoussa, who is more optimistic about the social and employment outcomes of the economic reform process, including job prospects for women in the growing industrial sectors and in the informal and small business sectors. More typical is the view of Mahallah industrialist El-Messiri: 'We need first an industrial strategy, then policies, then laws and a regulatory system, then exports, then women [will benefit]'.⁹

The experience of women during periods of personnel reduction may confirm the pessimistic scenario. The Principal Bank for Development and Agricultural Credit (PBDAC) has been undergoing conversion to a commercial bank, with support from USAID. Of the nearly 9,000 employees made redundant, 6,000 were expected to separate voluntarily. Women, who represented 10.5 per cent of Bank employment at the end of 1992, were nearly twice (1.8 times) as likely to accept early retirement than men. Over the two-year period 1993-94, some 11.7 per cent of total female employees, but only 6.4 per cent of males, left Bank employment. Although incentives for early

⁹ Interview, Cairo, 3 February 1995.

retirement included grants for training and a lending programme for starting new businesses, it is not clear if the women took advantage of these.

At present (during the 1990s), the economic policy of private-sector promotion and contraction of the public sector wage bill seems to have resulted in a growing perception of women as most vulnerable and a widespread expectation that they are more likely than men to be made redundant in the public sector enterprises, and least likely to be hired as employees in the private sector. If the PBDAC scenario is repeated during the privatization of public enterprises, which is likely, and civil service employment remains stalled, there will certainly occur a substantial net reduction in female employment in the formal economy over the medium term. This expression of the bleak prospects for women in the course of labour adjustment was repeated again and again in interviews during the fieldwork in Egypt.¹⁰ It was felt that in the anticipated public sector redundancies, the percentage of women would be high, especially among the overstaffed public relations, administrative, and support staff, as well as unskilled production workers. Economist and gender specialist Nadia Ramsis Farah does not expect opportunities for women in the private sector – far from it, women will be more adversely affected because (1) they are the clericals, secretaries, and unskilled production workers who will lose jobs first, and (2) gender bias holds that men are more deserving of available jobs.

4. Women in the formal labour force

What accounts for this pessimism regarding women's employment prospects under ERSAP? The answer lies in the current position of women in the labour force. Job opportunities for women have been almost exclusively concentrated in the government sector and, to a lesser degree, in public sector enterprises. Men are more evenly distributed across the sectors and they represent the majority of the workforce. Unemployment rates are extremely high for women, indicating that although the supply of job-seeking women is growing, the demand for female labour remains limited.

In general, women are squeezed or 'crowded into' a limited number of bottom-rung occupations. Gender ideology continues to make an unfavourable distinction between men and women. Perceptions of women as less attached to the labour force and more attached to the family, along with the very real burdens non-elite women face in balancing jobs and family responsibilities (including the absence of quality childcare or longer school days), result in the 'glass ceiling' phenomenon, whereby women face barriers to promotions to management and higher administrative positions.

Egypt's labour market is highly segmented, with differentiation along a number of axes: public sector/private sector, formal sector/informal sector, workers with social

¹⁰ For example, Professor Azza A. Soliman of the Gender Unit, Department of Regional Planning, Institute of National Planning, in an interview on 21 January 1995; Dr. Hussein El Gammal and Dr. Omar Farouk of the Social Fund for Development, in interviews on 25 January and 8 February 1995; Dr. Nadia Ramsis Farah, in an interview on 30 January 1995.

insurance/workers without any coverage, high-income/low-income workers, male workers/ female workers, graduates/workers without education or literacy.¹¹ Although much of the literature has emphasized the public/private axis as the main characteristic of the Egyptian labour market and the principal source of its problems, it is our contention that gender is a central source of differentiation and inequality (including occupational sex-typing in the formal sector, barriers to entry in the private sector, and lower wages for women), and that a process of 'feminization' has been occurring in the government sector – in the double sense of an increasing number of female civil service employees and a deterioration of the income and status associated with government employment.¹²

In the past, the public-sector wage bill constituted a high percentage of government current revenue (32.7 per cent in 1975-80) and of GDP (10.4 per cent in 1981-85), resulting in comfortable lifestyles and prestige for government employees. Furthermore, the public sector was an important source of employment and livelihood for women. During the fieldwork in Egypt, interviewees frequently stressed the opportunities for women in the government sector and the lack of overt discrimination there as compared with the private sector. In recent years, however, incomes have fallen such that real wages of government employees in 1992 were 51 per cent of those in 1976 (Said 1994, Table 5). In wage terms, therefore, the public sector/private sector distinction may be diminishing, although there remains a large difference in terms of access to social insurance, coverage by labour regulations (including availability of contracts and compliance with the minimum wage), and presence of trade unions.

In Egypt, as elsewhere, gender differences in the labour force are a function of both cultural and economic determinants, and these put women workers at a distinct disadvantage compared with male workers. Women's occupations are labeled as low-skilled, low-waged, weak-commitment, and high-turnover employment. Married women in particular are perceived to be less reliable and committed employees due to their 'natural preoccupation' with family responsibilities. Employers widely believe that women's productivity declines after marriage and childbearing, and that their absenteeism is higher than men's, especially when they have children. Interviews conducted during the fieldwork in Egypt confirmed that employers appear to be very much opposed to lengthy maternity leaves.¹³ A CAPMAS study states: '...there seems to be implicit discrimination against female employment, especially in the private sector, mainly because of women's work discontinuity due to childbearing and rearing' (CAPMAS, 1990, p. 118).

Protective legislation for women workers seems to contribute to these attitudes and practices. Other than the Family Law (which in its current interpretation is

¹¹ These divisions exist in other MENA countries too; in some countries the national/non-national axis is especially strong.

¹² For a discussion of the 'feminization of the labour market', including increases in female public service employment, declining wages, and increasing flexibilization to raise competitiveness and reduce costs, see Standing, 1989.

¹³ These views were expressed during interviews at Misr Spinning and Weaving, 23 January 1995; and by Prof. Azza A. Soliman, INP, in an interview on 21 January 1995.

conservative and discriminatory), and the barring of women from judgeships, Egyptian law, including labour law, is equitable and favourable to women. Labour legislation provides for the protection of women from hazardous work and night work. Where night work is allowed, such as in health-related or tourism-related workplaces, the law requires employers to provide transportation for women employees after 8 p.m. The law also provides for maternity leaves, childcare centers, and nursing breaks.¹⁴ For the private sector, Law 137 of 1981 allows for one year's unpaid maternity leave in the private sector; this was an attempt to bring private-sector benefits in line with those in the civil service and public-enterprise sector, whereby women workers are entitled to three months' paid maternity leave and up to two years unpaid maternity leave, available up to three times. Law 137 also requires employers having 100 or more female employees to set up a nursery close to the workplace but far from noise, pollution, wastes, and so on and to allow for breastfeeding breaks twice a day for not less than one half-hour each (CAPMAS, 1990, pp. 115-116).¹⁵ The number of nurseries has increased from 2,355 in 1982/83 servicing 165,328 children, to 4,400 in 1990-91 for 382,000 children, an increase of 187 per cent (NCCM, 1994, p. 20). Article 152 of the same law exempts women from working between 8 p.m. and 7 a.m., except in conditions, jobs, and occasions to be determined by the Minister of Manpower and Training. In practice, this law excludes tourism-related and health-related occupations, but requires employers to provide transportation for female workers. In the public sector, women also have the right to work half the time at half-pay (CAPMAS, 1990, p. 167).

The problem for women in the formal labour force seems to be twofold: first, many of the progressive ILO conventions signed by the Egyptian government over the years, and the pro-women articles in the labour law, are not properly implemented or enforced. Thus many private-sector employers find ways of circumventing the maternity leave and childcare provisions, and are not pursued legally. The second problem is that as a result of the generous entitlements provided by the labour law, women are regarded as 'expensive labour'. As a result, some employers deliberately hire under 100 women.¹⁶ Thus there are far fewer nurseries in the private sector than in public sector enterprises (Zaalouk, 1990; El-Deeb, 1993, p. 16).

There is a view among Egyptian women professionals that this perception of the family-attachment of women and their presumed unreliability is a pretext to reserve jobs for men, and that in recent years and as a result of the economic crisis, women workers are not taking lengthy unpaid maternity leaves because they cannot afford to do so.¹⁷ It may very well be that women are being unfairly singled out as 'expensive labour'; benefits such as the one-month pilgrimage leave for all employees (invariably taken by male employees, once in their lifetime and at full salary) and rights to lengthy leaves

¹⁴ The text of various labour laws may be obtained in English translation from the Middle East Library for Economic Services. See MELES, 1994.

¹⁵ The text of Decree No. 30 (1982) concerning workplace nurseries is contained in MELES, n.d., p. 48.

¹⁶ UNIDO, 1993, p. 4; interview with Nadia Ramsis Farah, 30 January 1995; interview with Bothaina El-Deeb, CAPMAS, 4 February 1995; see also CAPMAS 1990, p. 27.

¹⁷ This is pointed out by some women government officials, e.g., Mrs. Eslah Amin, Department of International Relations, Ministry of Manpower and Employment, in an interview on 9 February 1995.

with job-back guarantees are rarely articulated as problematical in labour-market or human-capital terms.

At present, the labour law is being revised and unified to bring the public-sector benefits in line with private-sector benefits. For women this will entail the reduction of maternity leave benefits to one year unpaid in both public and private sectors, taken twice instead of three times, and available to a woman employee after 10 months of service. Although there is some criticism of this by Egyptian women activists, it is possible that the streamlining of the maternity leave benefits would help to accomplish the following: (a) create a more equitable entitlements package for public-sector and private-sector women employees alike, and (b) gradually eliminate the perception of working mothers as uncommitted participants in the labour force, while also retaining the rights of mothers to, and the social need for, maternity leave and childcare.

4.1 Characteristics of the female labour force

At the outset, it should be noted that definitions of the labour force and of the unemployed population have not been unified, and there are differences between the 1986 Census and the 1988 Labour Force Sample Survey (and subsequent LFSS's). For example, and as seen in Tables 5.1 and 5.2, the 1986 Census and the 1989 LFSS report wildly varying numbers for women in agriculture, in wholesale and retail trade/sales work, and in the unemployed population. Because the female economically active population differs across the different data sets, the various sources of labour force data are not, strictly speaking, comparable.

In 1976, the Census showed that women constituted 8 per cent of the labour force, while the 1986 Census indicated a 2 per cent increase. The LFSS of 1988, however, showed higher figures, because it counted women in the urban informal sector (thus raising the percentage of women in sales occupations) and in the agricultural sector (as unpaid family workers). This has had implications for the reported employment status of Egyptian women, and the type of sector in which they are concentrated (modern or traditional). The Census data would indicate a majority of working women to be salaried and working in the modern sector, whereas the LFSS would indicate higher percentages of unpaid family workers and non-salaried female workers, engaged in the traditional sectors.

At 4.6 million, the female economically active population now constitutes 28 per cent of the total economically active population, largely concentrated in professional and technical occupations (where they represent about 30 per cent of the total), and agricultural workers (where they represent about 41 per cent of the total). Figures vary across the labour force sample surveys, but it appears that women's share of the other major occupational groups is as follows: 10.3 - 15.8 per cent administrative and managerial; 20.5 - 34.8 per cent clerical, sales, and services; and 8.9 production and transportation workers. With the exception of agricultural employment, the vast majority of female employment is urban-based.

Tables 5.1 and 5.2 provide details on the economically active population by occupation and industry, and per cent female, for the years 1986 and 1989. Note the changes in the figures for sales workers and agricultural workers. It is unclear whether the increase in the figure for manufacturing (Table 5.2) is due to inclusion of home-based garment workers, or if women have been obtaining more jobs in the formal industrial sectors.

According to CAPMAS labour force statistics for 1988, the female share of employment in the public and private sectors is as follows:

<u>Economic sector</u>	<u>Female share %</u>
Government sector	30
Public enterprises	13
Private agriculture	51.4
Private non-agricultural	19.9
Other and unaccounted for	15.7

TABLE 5.1

ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION BY OCCUPATION AND PER CENT FEMALE,
1986 AND 1989, EGYPT

	1986 (C, 15+)		1989 (LFSS, 12-64)	
	No.	% F	No.	% F
Professional, technical and rel. workers	1,495,848		1,850,000	
Female	422,092	28.2	525,100	28.4
Administrative and managerial workers	92,205		126,600	
Female	10,523	11.4	13,100	10.3
Clerical and related workers	998,992		1,169,700	
Female	339,027	33.9	407,400	34.8
Sales workers	620,819		964,700	
Female	36,759	5.9	200,200	20.8
Workers in services	807,493		1,053,500	
Female	48,724	6.0	84,400	8.0
Agriculture, animal husbandry, w. fisher	4,302,166		6,261,700	
Female	63,634	1.5	2,586,000	41.3
Product. rel. work, transport, operator	2,769,172		3,593,000	
Female	67,537	2.4	311,800	8.7
Workers not classifiable by occupation	299,031		1,500	
Female	53,586	17.9	1,500	100.0
Unemployed, not previously employed	1,148,860		1,012,900	
Female	346,428	30.2	480,200	47.4
Unemployed/previously employed	260,559		95,000	
Female	9,839	3.8	11,800	12.4
Total EAP	11,406,835		16,033,600	
Female EAP	1,398,149	12.3	4,609,700	28.8

Source: ILO, Yearbook of Labour Statistics 1991, Table 2 B (for 1986), Table 2 C (for 1989).

TABLE 5.2

**ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION BY INDUSTRY AND
PER CENT FEMALE, 1986 AND 1989, EGYPT**

	1986 (C, 15+)		1989 (LFSS, 12-64)	
	No.	% F	No.	% F
Agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing	4,766,513		6,335,200	
Female	113,561	2.4	2,600,600	41.1
Mining and quarrying	42,430		43,300	
Female	3,032	7.1	1,400	3.2
Manufacturing	1,513,086		1,958,700	
Female	109,557	7.2	344,600	17.6
Electricity, gas and water	95,946		99,900	
Female	8,470	8.8	11,200	11.2
Construction	864,004		990,200	
Female	11,284	1.3	17,200	1.7
Wholesale and retail trade: restaurants and hotels	860,455		1,340,000	
Female	62,968	7.3	237,400	17.7
Transport, storage and communication	655,682		780,200	
Female	33,830	5.2	45,900	5.9
Financing, insurance, real estate and business services	236,513		255,300	
Female	41,037	17.4	46,300	18.1
Community, social and personal services	2,632,382		3,115,500	
Female	666,173	25.3	813,100	26.1
Others and NAD	252,276		7,400	
Female	51,278	20.3	-	
Unemployed/not previously employed	1,159,558		1,012,900	
Female	348,408	30.0	480,200	47.4
Unemployed/previously employed	270,398		95,000	
Female	9,839	3.6	11,800	12.4
Total EAP	13,349,243		16,033,600	
Total Female EAP	1,459,437	10.9	4,609,700	28.8

Source: ILO, Yearbook of Labour Statistics 1991, Table 2 A (for 1986) and 1994, Table 2 A (for 1989).

In public enterprises, women are found largely in the following industrial branches: spinning and weaving (over 40,000 in 1988), supply and internal trade (over 20,000), and pharmaceuticals (11,000). Only in pharmaceuticals do women come close to achieving gender equity (39.5 per cent). (See Table 5.3.)

Employment in private, non-agricultural enterprises is male-intensive. The female share in 1990 was only 11.9 per cent (World Bank, 1994, Table 4, p. 40), suggesting either a loss of employment by women since the 1988 CAPMAS LFSS, or a different enumeration method. On the other hand, women's share of the total number of owners of enterprises has increased from 5.5 per cent in 1984 to 17.1 per cent in 1988 (NCCM, 1994, p. 4), an interesting development that should be further studied.

4.2 *Gender-based differences*

These are pervasive in Egypt's labour market, and are found in patterns of recruitment, income, wage differentials, sectoral and occupational distribution, attitudes towards female employment, perceptions of women workers, and unemployment levels. Women are clearly better off in government employment than in the private sector, where little if any protection exists for them.

Work in the government sector is the major employment source for women – and there was a tremendous increase in female employment in the government sector between the 1976 and 1986 censuses – whereas for men it is the private sector (CAPMAS, 1990, p. 37). Social services – teaching, nursing, medical services – employ women more than other fields. Their share of these occupations are high: 68 per cent of nursing, 40 per cent of teaching jobs, 27 per cent of medical doctors (Soliman, 1994, p. 18). Women are expected to dominate the medical field in the future, given that they are nearing 50 per cent of the graduates of faculties of medicine, pharmacy, and dentistry (NCCM, 1994, Table 22, p. 26).

The 'equal opportunity' environment prevailing in the government sector (the result of the policy of guaranteed employment for graduates) has resulted in some progress for women in access to decision-making positions. According to the official Egyptian report to the Beijing conference, 'of the total number of governmental posts, the percentage of women has increased from 5.7 per cent in 1980 to 11.8 per cent in 1992. Women's percentage of all heads of ministerial departments has increased from 13.7 per cent in 1984 to 20 per cent in 1988.' Women have made tremendous advances in the public sector compared with the private sector, as Nadia Ramsis Farah stated in an interview, 'The private sector is worst in terms of women'.¹⁸ However, according to Nadia Farah, a higher percentage of women employees at higher government levels are older women, suggesting that in more recent years there have been barriers to promotion of women.

¹⁸ Interview with Nadia Ramsis Farah, Cairo, 30 January 1995.

TABLE 5.3
PERMANENT EMPLOYEES IN EGYPTIAN PUBLIC SECTOR INDUSTRY, BY SEX AND EDUCATIONAL STATUS, 1988

No.	Sector	No. of employees	Sex		Educational status		Less than 4 years schooling
			male	Female	university degree or 2 years degree	Preparatory - high school graduate	
1	Metal industries	141,587	132,525	9,062	9,062	56,819	75,607
2	Chemical industries	77,003	72,614	4,389	6,083	23,640	47,280
3	Food industries	96,117	88,502	9,615	6,279	21,292	70,548
4	Spinning & weaving	334,095	293,669	40,426	9,021	73,835	251,239
5	Mining & thermal	27,324	25,903	1,421	1,530	5,601	20,193
6	Military production	59,615	55,203	4,412	3,338	32,491	23,786
7	Communication	1,242	1,052	190	99	667	476
8	Petroleum	36,018	33,821	2,197	5,151	15,624	15,343
9	Electricity	47,196	42,146	5,050	4,163	22,891	20,152
10	Pharmaceuticals	29,807	18,004	11,803	3,905	12,996	12,906
11	Cotton	18,631	16,880	1,751	3,260	5,384	9,987
12	Internal transportation	53,405	49,453	3,952	2,723	13,992	36,690
13	Maritime transportation	18,631	16,544	2,087	2,366	6,111	10,154
14	Tourism & aviation	26,082	21,805	4,277	5,242	9,859	10,981
15	Agriculture & irrigation	50,922	47,408	3,514	5,652	10,541	34,729
16	Housing, public utilities & building materials	38,501	35,844	2,657	3,388	9,933	25,180
17	Construction	19,872	17,289	2,583	3,101	6,835	9,936
18	Reconstruction	11,178	10,194	984	3,141	3,488	4,549
19	Foreign trade	23,597	19,680	3,917	4,082	8,991	10,524
20	Insurance	11,178	7,534	3,614	2,291	6,517	2,370
21	Supply & internal trade	117,989	97,813	20,176	8,731	41,414	67,844
TOTAL		1,241,990	1,103,883	138,077	92,598	388,821	760,472

Integrated Development Consultants (1990), Table 4.1, p. 23, based on sample study by CAPMAS, June 1988.

In the manufacturing sector, women constitute 17.6 per cent of the total, and are concentrated in textiles and garments, food processing, pharmaceuticals, and chemicals (although precise data on their participation are not available at this time). Recent ILO data show some 344,600 women out of nearly 2 million manufacturing workers, but only 125,200 are salaried. The rest are, presumably, homeworkers or unpaid family workers.¹⁹ In the factories, most of the female industry workers are unskilled or semi-skilled, performing repetitive tasks. They are located at the bottom of the hierarchy levels and rarely become supervisors. Lack of education and inferior status in the labour market results in and is reinforced by limited access to technical, vocational, and entrepreneurial training. For these reasons, women's wages are far below men's in the same industrial branches (see Table 5.4).

TABLE 5.4
WAGES IN MANUFACTURING, 1985-87, EGYPT

(Earnings/week) Pounds ¹

		1985	1986	1987
Males				
311-312	Food	28.00	30.00	33.00
313	Beverage	30.00	29.00	37.00
314	Tobacco	34.00	46.00	45.00
321	Textiles	27.00	30.00	36.00
322	Apparel	30.00	33.00	31.00
Females				
311-312	Food	17.00	21.00	21.00
313	Beverage	21.00	28.00	28.00
314	Tobacco	22.00	35.00	32.00
321	Textiles	18.00	21.00	25.00
322	Apparel	33.00 ²	18.00	20.00

Notes: ¹ Establishments with 10 or more persons employed.

² This appears to be an anomaly.

Source: ILO, Yearbook of Labour Statistics 1993, Table 17 B, p. 861.

Women's participation in the Egyptian Trade Union Federation, whether as rank-and-file members or as elected officers, is similarly limited. It is interesting to note, however, that women officers are represented in all 23 unions of the Federation, although in 1990/91 they represented 621 officers out of a total of 18,062 officers.²⁰ The largest numbers of women union officers were found in public administration (94),

¹⁹ This is common throughout the Middle East and North Africa. See Moghadam (1995).

²⁰ Interview with Mr. Hussein Hassan, International Labour Relations Department, ETUF, Cairo, 9 February 1995.

education (55), commerce (42), public utilities (38), and tourism and hotels (37). The ETUF has a Women's Unit, currently headed by Mrs. Ayse Abdel Hadi. Outside the formal sector, however, there are no associations of women workers. There is no equivalent of India's Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in Egypt.

In Egypt, wage workers are predominantly male, especially outside of the government sector, and about two-thirds of all working women in Egypt are unpaid family workers (INP, 1994, p. 72). The LFSS of 1988 found a higher rate of female economic activity than did the 1986 Census, but also found that 60 per cent of the working women were not paid for their work, compared to only 14 per cent of the working men.²¹ The rate of rural women working without compensation is as high as 74 per cent, as opposed to 21 per cent of rural working men. In urban regions 23 per cent of the working women work without pay, compared to only 4 per cent of the working men.²²

Although Egyptian labour law provides for equal pay for equal work, women's wages are generally lower than men's because women are not found in the high-status, high-income occupations and professions (Zaytoun, 1991). Wage disparities are especially wide in the private sector, whereas the public sector conforms to pay scales and seniority. Said (1994, p. 11) observes that wage differences appear to have been increasing in the private enterprises during 1980-1987 while they remained almost stable in public enterprises. 'In 1987, average private sector wages for males were 47 per cent higher than those for females while the difference was only 24 per cent in public enterprises.' According to Zaytoun (1991), women in blue-collar private sector occupations received, on average, about half of men's remuneration in 1987. Also relevant is that females at low educational levels receive much lower wages than males at the same educational level and that the wage gaps declines, but does not disappear altogether, at higher levels of education.

Unemployment trends similarly reveal gender-based differences. Increases in female labour-force participation rates between 1976 and 1986 in all age groups, but especially the age groups 25-29 and 30-34, are attributed to increases in female educational attainment, especially of intermediate and university education (CAPMAS, 1990, p. 26, and Table 2.3, p. 53). Yet increased educational attainment has been a mixed blessing for women. Not only are employed women generally more educated and more literate than employed men (CAPMAS, 1990, p. 35), suggesting fewer barriers to male entry than to female, but more and more educated women have joined the ranks of the unemployed.

Why is women's unemployment so high? One theory is that it is a function of the economic crisis and of gender discrimination.²³ Although the supply of job-seeking

²¹ See, for example, Fergany, 1990, Table A-9.

²² NCCM 1994, p. 35, citing results of the final report of the Labour Force Information System Project, coordinated by Nader Fergany.

²³ Nadia Ramsis Farah, interview, Cairo, 30 January 1995.

women is growing, women are at a disadvantage because the demand for them is insufficient, especially in a situation of an abundant pool of male labour, and in a situation of relatively little foreign investment in Egypt (as compared with, for example, Morocco). There is some evidence to suggest discrimination against women in hiring in the private sector, apparently due to Labour Law stipulations on maternity leave.²⁴ At the same time, the trend away from permanent employment and towards short-term contracts may deter women from applying for jobs. This has been occurring in an overall environment where, as Nadia Farah notes, there have been calls made in the Parliament and media for women to return home and give jobs back to men.²⁵

Unemployment rates may also be high because women prefer not to seek jobs, given the current situation of deteriorating real incomes in the public sector and poor job quality and lack of employment security in the private sector. Assaad and Commander (1990) propose that the female unemployment rate is strongly correlated with the recruitment of graduates in the public sector, in view of the limited opportunities for the educated females elsewhere in the economy. In other words, women prefer to queue for government jobs (despite the erosion of wages) because working conditions are more conducive in the government sector and because there may exist discriminatory practices in the private sector.

It remains unclear whether the high female unemployment rates are a function of specific preferences on the part of females (which would affect their labour supply), or barriers to entry into particular areas of the economy or occupational structure (which would indicate problems in the availability of opportunities and in the demand for female labour). Is the problem one of human capital – a deficiency of skills that women workers offer employers? Or is it on the demand side, with 'bad' jobs and wages being offered by employers, as well as insufficient capital investments? The explanation may lie in a combination of biases and preferences on the part of private sector employers, and personal preference (that is, preference for the security and entitlements associated with government jobs, including more flexible hours that would be more conducive to balancing a career and family responsibilities).

What is clear is that because of the significance of government employment for women, ERSAP will have a disproportionately negative effect on women's access to formal employment.

4.3 *Constraints to women in the formal labour force*

The sections above have described characteristics of the female labour force and gender-based differences in employment. These characteristics suggest that women are at a decided disadvantage in the labour market, and that during economic reform, unless special steps are taken to protect female employment, it is very likely that women will

²⁴ This view was expressed by Dr. Bothaina El-Deeb and Mr. Mohamed Shawky Hassan, in an interview at CAPMAS, 4 February 1995.

²⁵ Interview with Nadia Ramsis Farah, Cairo, 30 January 1995.

be disproportionately displaced or marginalized. Apart from reasons given above, the constraints faced by Egyptian women constitute another set of significant factors in their present and future vulnerability.

In Egypt, past constraints to increased participation by women in the formal labour force have included an *étatist* development strategy based on revenues from oil, the Suez Canal, workers' remittances, and tourism, administered by a large public sector, and industrial development that favoured male-intensive employment; inferior education and training of girls and women; unavailability of support services for women workers with family responsibilities and the cultural expectation that women raise children; and barriers to entry into the (relatively small, formal) private sector. The cumulative effect of female disadvantages makes women very vulnerable to market forces.

A further constraint pertains to the state of the urban transportation system and the difficulties (for women) of travelling to and from work in frightfully crowded buses filled with men. Many women employees find private transport costly (Zaalouk, 1990). Women are also less mobile than men, in two senses. First, legally, the permission of father or husband is required for travel, including business travel. Second, working women are constrained by family and household responsibilities in a way that men are not. As one employer bluntly put it: 'The man does not get pregnant. The man can work 12 hours. He can work on Fridays.'²⁶ An unmarried businesswoman may have an advantage here, but even so, she is likely to depend on a brother or father for certain negotiations. For example, at a successful baby clothing enterprise in Mahallah owned by three sisters and a brother, the women deal with clients but the brother and male agents do the marketing and collection of payments. In an interview during a site visit, one of the sisters said that 'people take the business more seriously' because of the brother's presence.²⁷

Private sector employment practices are considered a constraint. According to Egyptian WID specialist Sawsan El-Messiri, the private sector 'avoids the employment of women; employers in small-sized workshops exploit them, deprive them of their legal rights and terminate their employment in cases of marriage and childbearing. Furthermore, they are employed for short terms with temporary contracts, which deprives them of the practical professional experience which is an asset in the labour market.'²⁸

Constraints have also been identified as regards the entrepreneurial role of women, especially in the small sector. These constraints fall in several categories: behavioral (low self-confidence); educational (including a very high rate of illiteracy among women, and high drop-out rates among schoolgirls); occupational; legal; infrastructural (access to credit, support, information); and social and cultural.²⁹ There

²⁶ M. El-Messiri, Cairo, 3 February 1995.

²⁷ Interview with Mrs. Amany, Mahallah, 23 January 1995.

²⁸ Sawsan El-Messiri, personal communication, Cairo, February 1995.

²⁹ See El Deeb, 1993, p. 20; see also Zaalouk, 1990.

is also the absence of an entrepreneurial and risk-taking cultural environment in Egypt. In micro-enterprises and small businesses, women are concentrated in traditional sectors where profits and growth potential are small, such as in sewing and embroidery.

Another constraint is the absence of effective women's organizations, including those that may focus on the problems of women in the labour force. This is compounded by the low level of women's participation in trade unions and in the political parties (although the Taggamu Party and the Nasserist Party seem to have the most progressive social and gender agendas). Women are beginning to own businesses, but there is no equivalent of Jordan's Business and Professional Women's Association – although the American Chamber of Commerce's Successful Career Women's Committee, established in 1994, may be starting to broaden its scope. Female membership in organizations such as the Egyptian Businessmen's Association and the Alexandria Businessmen's Association is estimated at about 10 per cent. The women's organizations are not strong or unified enough to have a role in economic decision-making or to interrogate public policies for their impact on women. Consequently, social and cultural attitudes, which result in a lack of support for women's economic participation, go unchallenged.

The lack of gender sensitivity and awareness on the part of government officials and planners – and, frequently, their donor counterparts – is a major constraint to women's enhanced participation in the labour force and the goals of integration of a gender dimension in economic policy-making. Egypt's current Third Five Year Plan does not recognize women as contributors to economic growth or to economic development, but emphasizes motherhood and childhood, in a special section. The gender units across the various ministries are under-resourced and marginal; there is a strong emphasis on social welfare rather than women's contribution to economic development as economic agents.

According to Egyptian economist Nadia Farah and others, employed women cannot cope with their dual roles, given poor public transportation, low incomes, and the overall conservative climate. Thus many women – especially in the middle class and among illiterates or those with partial education – prefer not to work. Nurseries are not available at all workplaces (especially in the private sector), and the high cost of private care for children may deter women from seeking employment. A CAPMAS study states that 'increasing the number of childcare centres and upholding their quality' could increase women's labour force participation (CAPMAS 1990, p. 176).

Egypt's national report for the Beijing conference shows a concentration of female students in secondary commercial schools and in teachers' colleges. Although the percentage of women in the total number of graduates from secondary schools has increased significantly from 32 per cent in 1982/83 to 40 per cent in 1989/90, the distribution of females shows a concentration in the humanities (44 per cent) and the sciences (43.7 per cent in 1989/90), with low representation in mathematics (16.6 per cent). 'This affects the rate of women matriculating in the faculties and technical industrial academies of the Ministry of Education qualifying them to work in

unconventional fields such as engineering, technology, electronics, petroleum and mining industries' (NCCM, 1994, p. 25).

Women's concentration in the humanities notwithstanding, they are also present in some potentially key fields. There has been a striking increase in the rates of female students graduating from industrial schools (from 12 per cent in 1982/83 to 20 per cent in 1989/90) and from agricultural schools (from 14 per cent in 1982/83 to 23 per cent in 1989/90). Women represented 41 per cent of those in technical commercial academies in 1989/90 – up from 38 per cent in 1982/83 (NCCM, 1994, p. 21). In the humanities, women predominate in economics and political science, languages, communication and advertising – fields of study quite useful in a market economy. The high and growing percentage of women in the technical commercial academies and some key faculties raises the question of whether they will be well-positioned to take advantage of growing job opportunities in the emerging market economy, or whether they will be squeezed out of the labour market for such jobs, which may be reserved for men.

Although women have been making inroads in the banking sector – with the result not only that they constitute about 24 per cent of the work force but that many are found in managerial positions – there is some evidence that in more recent years women have found themselves blocked from gaining access to entry-level jobs. It is possible that these jobs are being 'reserved' for men. According to Nadia Farah, Islamic banks, especially those coming from Saudi Arabia, are not hiring women.

A major constraint to women's increased and enhanced participation in the formal labour force is the high rate of female illiteracy, low level of educational attainment of a large section of the female population, and the poor quality of the schooling that many Egyptians receive. Cost recovery in education has especially pernicious effects on girls: introduction of user fees and the increasing cost of schoolbooks, uniforms, meals, transportation, and so on, lead many poor families to withdraw their daughters from school, especially in rural areas. Unless this is corrected, both the drop-out rates and the poor quality of schooling will put females at a decided disadvantage vis-à-vis men in the competition for jobs in the industrial and services sectors.

Although it is a violation of the law to discriminate against women in hiring, job advertisements stipulating men-only have appeared. These may be linked to the intensification of patriarchal notions about gender roles and 'women's place' in the context of economic crisis and economic reform. According to one study: 'For a number of years allegations have been circulated that a woman should remain at home and be deprived of her citizen's right of work, i.e. to rob her constitutional rights. Also some authorities have taken measures against the employment of women, most important of which are the judicial authorities, which still reject the appointment of women to certain posts. Moreover, the private sector and some public sector companies unconstitutionally put advertisements on newspapers about job opportunities, stipulating that they are for males only' (Soliman, 1994, p. 12). It should be noted that this is a pattern found in the

transition economies of East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union (see Moghadam 1993).

In light of the above – that is, the apparent barriers to women's entry into the private sector as salaried workers, and the eventual reality of labour shedding in the government sector – it becomes important to explore the possibilities for female entrepreneurship, self-employment, and ownership and management of small businesses. As mentioned above, data for 1988 showed 17 per cent of private-sector businesses to be owned by women, although the size of these businesses is unclear. What is apparent is that there are many constraints on women's ability to start a business, especially a microenterprise or a small business. In addition to customary and Family Law restrictions on women's mobility and women's unequal access to family property and other economic resources, onerous regulations and the reluctance of Egyptian banks to give small loans make it extremely difficult for women to start and sustain a business. The major source of capital for small enterprise investment comes from informal sources, savings, and money provided by family and friends. For obvious reasons, this is easier for women from richer families than for women with more modest means. There exist some successful and prominent women-owned businesses – and they are just beginning to organize themselves for purposes of support, information exchange, and so on – but the available evidence suggests that even elite women business owners encounter conservative attitudes. For example, the owner of a successful career development centre that offers management and business training, educational development, and language courses, said that 'the tax authorities don't like dealing with women managers or owners. I always take my husband, lawyer, or accountant'. Zoning restrictions were one of the many hurdles she encountered: 'First, the question of location. Second, extreme difficulties over the license. To this day I get harassed by the Heliopolis zoning authorities and the Ministry of Education over the contents of the books I use.'³⁰

5. Current initiatives in support of women in the formal labour force

The characteristics of the female labour force, gender-based differences, and constraints to women's economic participation notwithstanding, there exist some interesting initiatives to support women's contribution to development and to their own and their families' welfare.

The national machinery for women in Egypt has initiated a number of projects to enhance the situation of women in the formal labour force. For example, the General Department for Women's Affairs in the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) sponsors production projects that grant concessionary loans to rural women to enable them to carry out production projects; it also runs Centers for Working Women, 'designed to improve the conditions of working women, by producing instant and semi-manufactured meals, canning vegetables and manufacturing ready-made clothes for working women,

³⁰ Interview with Mrs. Omneya Kassabgy, Cairo, 2 February 1995.

as well as providing the services of women trained to carry out housework chores for reasonable wages' (NCCM, 1994, p. 13). The General Department for Productive Families/Ministry of Social Affairs, formulates policy for the activities of the Project for Productive Families, and vocational training in particular (NCCM, 1994, p. 14). The Unit for Policies and Coordination of Women's Activities in Agriculture/Ministry of Agriculture, grants loans 'for the fulfilment of small projects which create job opportunities and increase the incomes of rural women' (NCCM 1994, p. 14). The Section for Researches on Women and Children/Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, began operations in 1987 through funding from UNICEF, and 'provides basic reference works needed for planning policies concerning women and their position in the labour force' (NCCM, 1994, p. 14).

The Social Fund for Development (SFD) has designated women as one of its six beneficiaries (the others being groups mostly affected by the ERSAP; working classes and low income groups, new graduates, Gulf crisis returnees, and inhabitants of areas deprived of basic services). When the SFD was created, a WID unit was established in the Community Development Programme (CDP). Its aim, as encouraged by the World Bank, was to allocate 25 per cent of all CDP projects to women's issues. 'Today, rather than operating as a separate unit, WID has been integrated into the programme as a whole. ... By the end of 1993, 38 per cent of CDP projects were allocated to women, 7 per cent higher than the initial target decided upon in 1991' (SFD, 1993, p. 45). In a sense, WID has been integrated into the SDF programme as a whole. For example, one of the criteria of the small enterprises development programme is 'participation of women'. Of the total loans and credits disbursed thus far, 30 per cent have gone to women in labour-intensive industries.³¹

The Employment and Retraining Programme of the SFD has two components: the Egyptian Labour Adjustment Service (ELAS, based on the Canadian model, to provide retraining for workers made redundant during restructuring or privatization) and the Human Resources Development programme (demand-oriented training for identifiable jobs). It is not yet known, however, how many women have enjoyed these services, or will do so in the future. This is clearly an area that requires monitoring.

The Ministry of Manpower and Employment has retraining programmes for women, according to Mrs. Eslah Amin and Mrs. Azza Okail (respectively, director-general of the International Labour Relations Department, and director-general of the Technical Bureau). The goal is labour mobility, not retrenchment. Thus workers are being retrained to be placed in other sectors so as not to add to the unemployment figures. The Ministry is also undertaking a legal literacy and awareness-raising programme for women in enterprises.³² The Unit for Policy and Coordination at the Ministry of Agriculture, working in cooperation with the FAO, provides women with loans for small agriculture and food processing projects.

³¹ Social Fund for Development, Seminar, AID-Cairo, 7 February 1995.

³² Interview, Ministry of Manpower and Employment, 9 February 1995.

Various NGOs and women's organizations are involved in providing support for women's productive employment. One NGO, called Friends of the People, had an innovative three-year project to train young women in the use and repair of electrical and electronic equipment. The purpose was to prepare women for factory employment or to repair appliances in their homes or in their own private businesses.

The USAID-supported Small and Medium Enterprise programme of the Alexandria Businessmen's Association (ABA/SME) provides credits and training, although only 10 per cent of borrowers are women. The African-American Labor Center provides an advisor to the Egyptian Trade Union Federation, including assisting the ETUF 'in establishing various new social service programs for their members. Here vocational training, day care centers, women's programs, and others are included' (Hagglund 1992, p. 10).

There exist a number of donor initiatives – on the part of multilaterals, bilaterals, and INGOs – to improve the position of women in the labour force (including their access to resources in the informal sector and in home-based activities) and to alleviate the high unemployment rate among women. For example, the ILO initiated a project called 'Employment Promotion for Women through Small-Scale Garment Production and Food Processing Activities', in several agricultural governorates as well as in Cairo, Alexandria, and new cities such as 10th of Ramadan (ILO, 1991, pp. 49-52). The ILO is also assisting the Egyptian Federation of Industries and the Egyptian Trade Unions Federation in updating and improving their respective data collection and information system and their statistical yearbooks. This will be an important step towards determining women's precise locations in the industrial sector and the level of their activities in the trade unions.

Most of the donor initiatives – and many of the current programmes of the SFD – focus on women in rural areas or in small towns. There are fewer initiatives for women workers in the large cities and central governorate, such as Cairo/Cairo governorate, where the female labour force is in fact concentrated. What is needed is a survey of women's positions in the industrial sector, including new industrial centres such as the 10th of Ramadan City. In the latter are found privately-owned industries enjoying tax exemption and producing an array of traditional and new consumer goods. Although women workers are found there, men are the majority of the workforce and of the supervisors and managers as well. Is this because of the capital intensity of the technology? Or is it because of other forms of gender bias?

6. Conclusions and recommendations

ERSAP poses risks and opportunities for Egyptian women in the labour force, and challenges for the government, NGOs, and donors to design policies and introduce initiatives that achieve both efficiency and gender equity. Legal and regulatory reforms are needed – such as a unified labour law that is fair to women workers in both public and private sectors, and measures to encourage women-owned businesses. Policies

should be directed to enhancing women's participation as workers, administrators, managers, and owners in economic sectors and industrial branches in which they are concentrated – healthcare, education, pharmaceuticals, and ready-made garments – as well as in new areas such as agro-processing and private services such as transportation, childcare centres, and career development centres, as well as in the financial sectors.

Women need training and skills upgrading for the industrial jobs, if Egypt's development strategy is to succeed and its export sectors are to be competitive. But women also need good reasons to seek work in the private sector – that is, private sector employment should be made attractive to women. This is where a unified labour code that takes into account women's need to balance jobs and family responsibilities comes in – and its enforcement is important.

Maternity leave benefits should be financed from government revenues or social insurance rather than by the employer only, so as to remove the disincentive for private sector employers to hire women, while also recognizing women workers' unique contributions to social and biological reproduction. At the same time, the establishment of childcare centres, and a lengthening of the school day, could serve as an alternative to the current policy of two years unpaid maternity leave and a solution to absenteeism of women workers.

Support for the eradication of illiteracy and drop-out rates among women is perhaps the single most strategic objective from a gender and development perspective, and it has pay-offs in efficiency as well as equity terms. Donor initiatives could include technical assistance in upgrading of the educational sector, especially the public school system. Related objectives are to increase educational attainment among females and to encourage them to acquire theoretical knowledge and technical competence in new and expanding fields. Training programmes should not be restricted to traditional professions, and women's training should be linked to objectives of the national development plans. Specific initiatives could include the following:

- Voluntary schemes such as early retirement for government employees with pension rights and severance pay compensation and/or loans for setting up private businesses. Many new women-owned or -managed businesses – including those that could provide important services geared to women in the labour force, such as transport, childcare, employment services, and career development – could be set up through this route.
- Monitoring the progress of the Social Fund for Development to ensure that its labour retraining programmes for displaced workers (the labour adjustment programme) and the placement of workers in identifiable jobs (the employment service programme) include a sizable proportion of women. The large numbers of unemployed educated women seeking work for the first time (and waiting for a government job that will not appear) should be one target.

- Legal literacy promotion for women, through women lawyers, through the media, and through the women's units of ministries and government agencies. Related to this is the need to strengthen women's position in the trade unions, in part through support for the Women's Unit of the Egyptian Trade Union Federation, and support for the upgrading and improvement of gender-disaggregated data collection and statistics at and by the ETUF.
- An improvement of methods of collecting and disseminating labour force statistics, so that these can more effectively guide economic policy, particularly with respect to women. In particular, there should be technical assistance to CAPMAS for improvement of the labour force sample surveys, the 1996 census, and industrial and enterprise surveys.
- The small number of Egyptian gender trainers need to be supported in their training and awareness-raising endeavours. One place to begin is the Gender Unit of the Department of Regional Planning of the Institute of National Planning (Dr. Azza Soliman), which is under-resourced but very enthusiastic about gender training across government agencies and the governorates. Gender training packages should include a discussion of the relationship between investing in women's education and productive employment on the one hand, and social development and economic growth, on the other hand. (In this regard, the East Asian experience is relevant.)
- Facilitating policy dialogues between government policy-makers, labour market specialists, and women labour-force specialists and activists. These could be seminars organized around specific issues such as reasons for and implications of high female unemployment; underutilization of female labour and its implications for economic growth and social development; relative costs of male and female labour (i.e., tackling the widespread perception of women as 'expensive labour' by conducting gender-disaggregated labour market studies on leaves, wages, social security, other benefits). Those who could be involved include various research institutes and women's organizations, the Women's Unit of CAPMAS, and the Women's Units of the Ministries of Manpower and Employment, Social Affairs, and Planning.

7. References

- Arab Republic of Egypt. 1992. *Summary of the Third Five Year Plan (1992/93-1996/97)*. Cairo: Ministry of Planning.
- Assaad, Ragui. 1993. 'The Employment Crisis in Egypt: Trends and Issues.' Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, mimeo.
- Assaad, Ragui and Commander, Simon. 1990. 'Egypt: The Labour Market Through Boom and Recession.' World Bank (May).
- CAPMAS. 1990. *Women Employment in Egypt*. Cairo: Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics, Arab Republic of Egypt.
- CAPMAS/UNICEF-Egypt. n.d. *The State of Egyptian Children and Women*. Cairo: CAPMAS and UNICEF.
- El-Deeb, Bothaina. 1993. 'Women in Small-Scale Productive Activities.' Cairo: Women and Child Research Unit. CAPMAS.
- ESCWA. 1994. *Compendium of Social Statistics and Indicators*. New York: United Nations (third issue).
- Fergany, Nader. 1990. *Employment and Unemployment in the Domestic Economy*. Preliminary Report I/1. CAPMAS Labour Information System Project. Cairo: CAPMAS.
- , 1993. 'Characteristics of Women-Headed Households in Egypt.' Almishkat Research Notes No. 02. Cairo: Almishkat (May).
- , 1994a. *Urban Women, Work and Poverty Alleviation in Egypt*. Final Report on a Pilot Study in a District of Cairo (Algawaber), sponsored by ILO and UNDP. Cairo: Almishkat Center for Research and Training (February).
- , 1994b. 'On the Impact of Economic Restructuring on Human Development and Proposed Strategies to Alleviate Poverty: The Case of Egypt.' Cairo: Al Mishkat (mimeo, September).
- Hagglund, George. 1992. 'Egyptian Trade Union Federation, African-American Labor Center.' Consultancy Report Concerning The Workers Education Association, the Egyptian Trade Union Federation, and its Affiliated Unions. (Submitted to USAID-Cairo, 9 September.)
- Handoussa, Heba. 1991. 'Crisis and Challenge: Prospects for the 1990s.' In Heba Handoussa and Gillian Potter, eds., *Employment and Structural Adjustment: Egypt in the 1990s*. Prepared for the ILO. Cairo: The American University of Cairo Press.
- Handoussa, Heba A. and Gillian M. Potter. 1992. 'Egypt's Informal Sector: Engine of Growth?' Paper presented at the annual conference of the Middle East Studies Association, Portland, Oregon, 28-31 (October).

- Hatem, Mervat. 1992. 'Economic and Political Liberation [sic] in Egypt and the Demise of State Feminism.' *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol. 24, pp. 231-251.
- , 1994. 'Privatization and the Demise of State Feminism in Egypt'. In Pamela Starr, ed., *Mortgaging Women's Lives: Feminist Critiques of Structural Adjustment*. London: Zed Books.
- Institute of National Planning. 1994. *Egypt: Human Development Report 1994*. Nasr City, Cairo: INP.
- International Labour Organisation. 1991. *The Challenge of Job Creation in Egypt. Annex: Summary of Project Outlines*. Cairo (25 March).
- Korayem, Karima. 1993. 'Structural Adjustment and Reform Policies in Egypt: Economic and Social Implications'. Prepared for ESCWA.
- Middle East Library for Economic Services. 1994. *The Labour Law (Modified up to November 1994)*. Cairo: MELES.
- , n.d. *The Executive Decisions for the Labour Law, No. 137/81*. Cairo: MELES.
- Moghadam, Valentine M., ed. 1993. *Democratic Reform and the Position of Women in Transitional Economies*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- , 1994. 'Market Reforms and Women Workers in Vietnam: A Case Study of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City', UNU/WIDER Working Paper No. 116 (July).
- , 1995. 'Manufacturing and Women in the Middle East and North Africa: A Case Study of the Textiles and Garments Industry.' University of Durham, Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, Occasional Paper Series, No. 49.
- National Council for Childhood and Motherhood [NCCM]. 1994. 'Women in Egypt: Egypt's Report to the 4th International Conference on Women.' Cairo: Council of Ministers, National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, Arab Republic of Egypt.
- Niblock, Tim. 1993. 'International and Domestic Factors in the Economic Liberalization Process in Arab Countries.' Pp. 55- 87 in Tim Niblock and Emma Murphy, eds., *Economic and Political Liberalization in the Middle East*. London: Academic Press.
- Perkins, Frances. 1992. 'Integration of Women's Concerns into Development Planning: Market Interventions.' In ESCWA, ed., *Integration of Women's Concerns into Development Planning in Asia and the Pacific*. New York: United Nations.
- Said, Mona. 1994. 'Public Sector Employment and Labor Markets in Arab Countries: Recent Developments and Policy Implications.' Mimeo (October).
- Social Fund for Development [SFD]. 1993. *Annual Report 1993*. Cairo: SFD.
- Soliman, Azza. 1994. 'Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Programme: Its Effects on the Egyptian Women in the Labour Force.' Prepared for the CDC 24th

annual seminar on Population Issues and the Challenges of the 21st century in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, 11-13 December. Mimeo.

- Springborg, Robert. 1993. 'Egypt.' Pp. 145-165 in Tim Niblock and Emma Murphy, eds., *Economic and Political Liberalization in the Middle East*. London. Academic Press.
- Standing, Guy. 1989. 'Global Feminization Through Flexible Labor.' *World Development*, vol. 17, no. 7: 1077-1095.
- UNIDO. 1993. 'Women in Industry Country Information: Egypt.' Vienna: UNIDO (May).
- UNFPA. n.d. 'Egypt: Programme Review and Strategy Development Report.' No. 32. New York: UNFPA (1992?).
- USAID/Cairo. 1992. 'Country Program Strategy FY 1992-1996 - Economic Reform,' (May).
- World Bank. 1991. *Trends in Developing Economies 1991*. (Chapter on Egypt.) Washington DC: The World Bank.
- , 1994. 'Egypt: Labor Reform and Structural Adjustment.' (October).
- Zaalouk, Malak. 1990. *Employment of Women: Conditions of Work*. Preliminary Report SG/1. CAPMAS Labour Information System Project. Cairo: CAPMAS.
- Zaytoun, Mohaya A. 1991. 'Earnings and the Cost of Living: An Analysis of Recent Developments in the Egyptian Economy.' In Heba Handoussa and Gillian Potter, eds., *Employment and Structural Adjustment: Egypt in the 1990s*. Cairo: AUC Press.
- Zulficar, Mona, n.d. *The Egyptian Woman in a Changing World*, The New Civic Forum, Wahba Press: Bab El-Louk, Egypt.

CHAPTER VI

ECONOMIC CRISIS: EMPLOYMENT AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN CUBA

Elena Díaz González

The objective of this paper is to show the present-day situation of women in Cuba, assessing the effects of the economic crisis that began in 1990 on female employment and the living conditions of women.

Emphasis is placed on the interrelation between women and their socio-economic context, as well as the close link between the evolution of macro-economic indicators, the social policies which are implemented and the possibilities which are generated for women's participation. Various studies have shown the existence of this link; factors such as urbanization and the educational process have an influence on the past increase in women's employment. The concept of gender is also included, as this makes it possible to understand the cultural legacy that conditions women's participation in the ideology of society and in individual subjectivity. Thus, if the modernization of production establishes greater requirements for the specialization and technical preparation of workers, and crises bring about the increase of unemployment, both situations can have unfavourable repercussions on female employment.

1. Historical background

In Cuba, a project of social transformation was launched in 1959, one aimed at achieving social development on the basis of equity and justice. In this project, women played a significant role, as active participants of changes in society while they themselves were the object of transformation: a substantial modification of conduct, a disruption of traditional patterns, a progressive assimilation of new ethical values. In the words of the President of the Federation of Cuban Women, Vilma Espín: 'It is fair to recognize impressive advances in the consciousness of Cuban women throughout these thirty years of Revolution, which has been moulded into everyday practice, in an active participation of women in social life, and this undoubtedly requires a new conception, a greater understanding of this reality and its problems' (Espín Guillois, 1990: 240).

This process did not unfold in a linear way; four major phases can be defined: the model of Cuban socialism as the prevailing tendency (1960-70), the assimilation and partial conversion to the model of European socialism (1971-85), the attempt to redefine a Cuban model on new bases (1985-90), and the present internal readjustment aimed at international reinsertion after the disappearance of the former socialist countries (1991-94), period which is still underway. The key element in understanding this evolution is the structural conditioning of the revolutionary process; Cuba is a small,

developing, peripheral country, therefore inserted in a pattern of specialization in primary production under the weight of the aggressive and intransigent domination of the United States.

Without attempting to dwell on this periodization in depth, the participation of women can be characterized as one of constant progress.

The Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) created on 23 August 1960, organized courses for domestics and peasants, and this had the double effect of educating women and converting them into social activists in their communities. The FMC contributed to the women's social integration and to the struggle against female discrimination, with outstanding effects on women's and men's ideology. Especially significant were the Schools for Revolutionary Instruction for women, where thousands of women from different walks of life and ages were re-qualified throughout the decade.

In the 1960s women became involved in all aspects of social life; in a contradictory – and sometimes disruptive fashion from a personal standpoint – a new way of understanding and sharing life was generated. An example of the type of conflict that arose was the assimilation – social and subjective – of women as members of the first armed corps created in defence of the revolution: the National Revolutionary Militias.

Between 1970 and 1985 a relative weakening of the original project occurred, following the failure to attain the 1970 sugar cane harvest target of 10 million tons of sugar. A foreign model was gradually adopted, which at the time appeared to be successful and solid, but was ultimately the wrong choice, as it brought about bureaucratic and hierarchical forms.

During the 1970s and 1980s the employment of women increased at an annual rate of 8 per cent, with greater intensity than male employment: out of every 100 newly-employed persons, 69 were women (Quiñones, 1986: 17). During this period, mobility is observed towards non traditional occupational sectors that required some type of qualification; between 1970 and 1981 women's participation increased mainly in qualified social services, especially in education and health, while 20 per cent joined the industrial sector and 11.9 per cent the agricultural sector.

As an outstanding feature during this period, the generalized debate on the Family Code should be emphasized; this document establishes the equality of women in marriage, it suppresses the distinction between natural and legitimate children, it defines the rights and duties of husband and wife, and it establishes equal obligations for each parent with respect to their children.

Female representation in the Cuban Parliament evolved as follows: 21.8 per cent in 1976; 22.6 per cent in 1981; 33.9 per cent in 1986 and 22.8 per cent in 1993. The figure reached in 1986 corresponded to an effort to deliberately increase this index. The average 20 per cent female share of parliamentary seats compares very favourably to the ten per cent average in developed countries. The figure of 33.9 per cent in 1986 was the

result of a tendency to insist on equality that did not reflect the underlying reality. It should be noticed that the representation of women in politics is lower than on the work force, and that the higher the level of responsibility is, the less frequent is their presence, as the figures below illustrate.

TABLE 6.1
WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN THE CUBAN COMMUNIST PARTY
(PER CENT)

	1975	1980	1986	1991
Central Committee	8.8	14.4	18.2	16
Political Bureau	--	3.4	10.3	12

Source: Diaz (1994) with data provided by the CCP's Central Committee.

In 1984 a more active form of criticism of this period began to emerge, and came to be known as the 'rectification period'. The Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) opened debate about its social role. It reformulated its basic policies, and gave new dynamism to the organization, which involved other areas. For example, Centres for Studies on Women were created in various academic centres of the country. Work directed to social development was revitalized in the country, with the accelerated construction of day-care centres, polyclinics, special schools, and housing projects.

The sudden demise of the European socialist bloc in 1990 interrupted this process, starting what is called in Cuba 'the special period in times of peace', referring to the implementation of measures planned for wartime situations. This paper concerns this very period, still in full effect.

The most important result of the past 30 years, therefore, is that the groundwork was laid for women's participation in and access to employment, education and health services. On the basis of these structural conditions, a qualitative modification of the participation of women was brought about, as the main obstacles on its path were greatly reduced: economic dependence, ignorance and the limitations associated with illness, and especially reproductive health. By 1989, significant changes had taken place in the lives of Cuban women; they accounted for 38.9 per cent of the economically active population, they benefited from good education and health care. They were thus more independent, more highly educated, and more self-confident, as a result of which they participated more in society. This in no way implies the disappearance of the ideological limitations and the prejudices that contribute to discrimination against women. A major deficiency of the past, with regard to women's participation, was the development of an 'apologetic' tendency. A different problem was the underestimation of feminist theory.

1.1 The economic crisis and economic reform

In 1989, 85 per cent of Cuba's foreign trade was with Eastern Europe. Not only was the geographic concentration of commerce important for the country; the nature of these trade relations, based on preferential terms and membership in an integrated system, conditioned compatible technology. With the disappearance of the COMECON, Cuba had to seek international reinsertion for the second time in three decades.

In 1960, the United States government suspended the Cuban sugar quota and eliminated trade with the island, which at that time accounted for 74 per cent of Cuban imports. Under pressure from the US, Latin American countries, with the exception of Mexico, broke diplomatic relations with Cuba, bringing about the island's isolation. It is within this context that Cuba established relations with the socialist bloc, beginning 30 years of increasing cooperation. In the 1960s, Cuba tried to find its own economic model, striving to modify the condition of a country which produced raw materials and attempting to achieve a diversified production, including industrialization and technological development. But these aims were only partially achieved. In 1972 Cuba entered the COMECON as part of the assimilation of the European socialist model. The link with COMECON turned out favourably for the country, although it signified a new economic dependency. By the end of the 1980s the extensive model of development became obsolete and starting in 1986 – as a consequence of a Cuban moratorium in its payments – further international credit was denied (Carranza, 1992).

The losses of its trade partners required a new policy of international reinsertion. But this new challenge faced great international obstacles: the readjustment of regional blocs and the continuing hostility of the United States. The economic blockade imposed by the US under the justification of Cuba's role in the East-West confrontation, did not cease with the end of the cold war. The US economic blockade against Cuba has cost the island over USD 40 billion. This blockade was condemned (in United Nations deliberations) by the immense majority of nations in 1992, 1993 and 1994. Nonetheless, this United States policy was not changed; instead the blockade was tightened. In October 1992, the Torricelli Bill was passed in the US. Among other aspects:

- it applies economic sanctions against countries that establish common trade practices with Cuba;
- it prohibits trade with Cuba on the part of third country subsidiaries of American companies; and
- it prohibits ships entering US ports for six months after entering Cuba.

The US hostility is felt also in other fields, specially in the migration policy with Cuba. As a result of agreements between the two countries signed in 1984, 20,000 persons per year should have been authorized to emigrate to the US on a permanent basis, yet the majority of applicants have been continuously denied visas. In 1993 only one thousand visas were granted, encouraging illegal emigration.

From the domestic point of view, the main obstacle to reactivating the economy is the inefficiency which has been generated by years of paternalistic policy, which

failed to modify the workers' behaviour patterns and motivate greater productivity. At various times since the 1960s there have been great spurts of collective action towards productivity. But these experiences were not generalized throughout the country. From this point of view there have been partial achievements, still insufficient to guarantee the necessary efficiency without having to use special incentives or sanctions.

The main product of the country is still sugar, with nickel being the second important export (Cuba has one of the world's main nickel reserves). Also important are citrus and tobacco, but the main market for these products were the former socialist countries. Cuba now faces country modification of its economic model, which for years was based on extensive, energy consuming programmes, and depended on imported components. For example, agriculture, which is highly mechanized, used to depend on imported fertilizers and herbicides; high-breed cattle requires imported animal feed. Cuba exported sugar in quantities that could support high-calorie products for 40 million people, although the coefficient of imported supplies for the domestic demand is over 50 per cent.

The current crisis is very serious. According to a government official, in 1993 the economy functioned with 23 per cent of the imports it had in 1990. Oil imports dropped from 13 million tons in 1989 to 6 million in 1992.¹ Official estimates pointed out an excess of money of 10,000 million pesos at the end of 1993 and a budget deficit of 4,200 million pesos (Rodríguez, 1993). The 1993 sugar cane harvest decreased to 4.2 million tons and in 1994, only 4 million were produced.

For all these reasons, in a short period of only three years the reorientation of markets took place with exports to Europe dropping from 83 per cent in 1990 to 67 per cent in 1993, and increasing from 7 per cent to 14 per cent in Latin America. However, imports from Europe decreased from 87 per cent in 1990 to 38 per cent in 1993, while imports from Latin America during the same period soared from 7 to 44 per cent.² Under these circumstances, the country adopted an economic strategy which includes the recovering of traditional sectors (sugar cane, nickel, citrus) and the development of new sectors, such as international tourism and the pharmaceutical industry with a biotechnological base.

It was also decided to modify the predominance of state property with an opening to foreign investment, the legalization of foreign currency and the acceptance of private enterprise by individuals. A measure of special importance is the creation of Basic Units of Cooperative Production (UBPC) which some experts refer to as a new agrarian reform that gave land to groups of workers for indefinite usufruct and made them the owners of their production and equipment. It also means a new and more decentralized scale of agrarian production. The UBPC already cover 2.5 million hectares.

¹ Data from Carlos Lage (Vice-President, Council of State, Secretary of the Council of Ministers, Cuba), in a speech at the Conference on Nation and Emigration (Havana, April 1994).

² Ibid.

In October 1994 there was an opening to the market. In agriculture where once the production targets were fulfilled, free prices for the trade of products are now allowed. This policy has led to the increase of production.

Some of these policies are already producing positive results at a microeconomic level. Tourism, which was almost only for Cubans has increased its facilities with foreign investments for international offers and it has grown 30 per cent annually. There are more than 200 new products in the pharmaceutical industry which are being marketed internationally, such as the anti-meningococci vaccine, but their marketing is slow and difficult because of international competition and the effects of the US blockade. In 1993, domestic oil production amounted to 1.1 million tons which guarantees 30 per cent of the electric power consumed.

At present, there exist 176 economic associations from 36 countries, where foreign capital takes part. These investments are found in almost all spheres of economy: oil exploration and extraction, nickel exploration and other minerals, textile production, in equipment and machinery; industrialized food, telecommunication lines, etc. In tourism, 35 hotel management agreements are added.

In 1994 the number of tourists doubled compared to 1990, and the incomes for those in tourism also doubled. Income from the pharmaceutical and biotechnological industries were over 100 million dollar in 1994. However, these measures have not yet had a positive influence on the living standard of the population and a short term recovery is not foreseen.

1.2 *The impact on women's employment*

To analyse the effects of the economic crisis and reform on women's employment it is necessary, first, to characterize it. As it was stated before, the incorporation of women into the work force increased consistently over the years. Due to the characteristics of the economic development, based on centralized state planning, the majority of jobs were in the state sector.

TABLE 6.2

FEMALE CIVIL STATE WORKERS IN OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS

	Total	% Women	Total	% Women	Total	% Women	Total	% Women
Total	100.0	37.3	100.0	38.7	100.0	38.9	100.0	39.1
Workers	100.0	18.8	100.0	19.4	100.0	19.5	100.0	19.7
Technicians	100.0	55.8	100.0	54.9	100.0	57.7	100.0	58.1
Administratives	100.0	83.9	100.0	90.1	100.0	90.2	100.0	90.9
Services	100.0	62.2	100.0	64.1	100.0	62.6	100.0	63.0
Leaders	100.0	25.4	100.0	33.7	100.0	28.6	100.0	28.8

Sources: Studies on Women, FMC 1993; Annual Statistics of Cuba 1988; Annual Statistics of Cuba 1989; Report of the State Committee of Statistics.

The participation of Cuban women in the labour force increased from 27.4 per cent in 1975 to 39.7 per cent of the total amount of workers in 1991 and 40.6 per cent in 1993. By occupational categories, women accounted for 58.1 per cent of the technicians, 90.9 per cent of the administrative workers, 63 per cent of the service workers, only 19.7 per cent of the blue-collar workers and 28.8 per cent of the management personnel. Nearly all employed women are members of trade unions. The position of women in the qualified labour force is impressive, although their participation as management is proportionately lower than their representation in the total number of workers. Women are more strongly represented in the middle and grassroots levels.

Women still predominate in areas considered traditional, such as health and education. But a deeper analysis indicates that even in those spheres their participation has changed qualitatively. For example, in the health sector women were 49.3 per cent of the physicians and 70.7 per cent of the dentists in 1991. Of the 55 medical specialities in Cuba, women predominate in 29 and some of them in non-traditional fields. 70 per cent of the ophthalmologists, microbiologists and nutritionist are women, as are about 60 per cent of the immunologists, neonatologists, dermatologists and psychiatrists. They also make up 60 per cent of the family physicians, part of a plan for primary health care with emphasis on preventive and community medicine (see Table 6.3). In the health sector, women represent 32.1 per cent of the workers; 79.9 per cent of the technicians; 86.9 per cent of the administrative workers; 82.9 per cent of the service workers and 35.8 per cent of management.

Women's employment is characterized by a concentration in the tertiary sector, with a corresponding educational concentration in fields such as pedagogy, medical sciences, natural sciences, and social sciences. Female enrolment in economics has increased to 54 per cent in 1991-92 (see Table 6.4). At the University of Havana, women outnumber men in the following fields of study: accounting, economics, foreign languages, arts, law, philosophy, technical and scientific information, psychology, pharmaceutical sciences, pharmacy and food, and geography. Men outnumber women in mathematics and physics.

Discrimination prevents women from occupying some posts, especially where management prefer men. Some of the reasons for this are absences due to maternity or child care. This practice is against the law and the FMC (Cuban Women Federation) actively struggles against it, but it expresses the prejudices that still exist and subordinate women.

Thus far, the economic crisis and reforms have not adversely affected the level of women's employment because women are concentrated in non-productive sectors and these sectors (health and education) remain protected.

TABLE 6.3
PROPORTION OF WOMEN ACCORDING TO MEDICAL SPECIALITIES

More than 60 per cent	1989	1991	Between 40 and 60 per cent	1989	1991	Less than 40 per cent	1989	1991
Child psychiatry	79.6	84.4	General medicine integral	56.2	59.8	Neumotisiology	36.8	38.5
Histology	74.5	77.7	Anaesthesiology	55.4	58.8	Reconstructive surgery and		
Hygiene of schools	73.5	75.0	Radiology	54.9	56.5	burn	31.8	33.9
Ophthalmology	69.9	73.2	Immunology	52.0	57.4	Others	28.6	34.0
Embryology	68.8	76.5	Work related medicine	48.9	50.8	Onocology	27.6	27.6
Clinical laboratory	68.6	70.0	Hygiene	48.3	59.6	Endocrinology	27.0	38.2
Clinical genetics	68.3	67.7	Clinical biochemistry	47.8	53.9	Angiology	25.4	25.5
Logopaedics and phoniatriy	67.1	71.4	Allergy specialist	46.8	53.4	Internal medicine	24.4	34.0
Human anatomy	67.1	71.4	Rheumatism	46.2	42.3	Neurology	14.8	19.4
Microbiology	64.0	70.1	Psychiatry	45.7	57.8	Biochemistry	14.3	33.3
Pathological anatomy	60.5	63.7	Epidemilogy	43.4	51.3	Coloproctology	13.5	17.0
Neomatology	66.1	64.8	Normal psychology and			Sports medicine	10.9	12.6
Dermatology	58.2	60.5	pathology	43.3	54.5	Cardiology	9.4	13.1
Paediatrics	55.2	63.3	Legal medicine	40.2	43.8	Orthopedic and traumatology	7.5	9.8
			Pharmacology	40.0	54.3	Neurosurgery	10.1	11.2
			General medicine	44.6	40.4	General surgery	7.2	12.0
			Biostatistics	65.4	56.2			
			Reconstructive physical					
			medicine	37.3	42.5			
			Obstetrics and gynaecology	36.7	44.6			
			Gastroenterology	32.8	43.3			
			Geriatrics	32.0	42.0			
			Haematology	31.5	42.3			

Source: Studies on Women, FMC, 1993.

TABLE 6.4

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN FIELDS OF STUDY, 1991-92

Branch	Per cent female
Technical sciences	33.1
Natural sciences	65.3
Medical sciences	57.7
Agricultural and cattle breeding sciences	39.8
Pedagogy	66.4
Economy	53.8
Social sciences	62.8

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AS TEACHERS

Level	Per cent female at each level
Primary school (elementary)	48.5
Secondary (junior high school)	49.1
Pre-university (high school)	63.8
Formation for Pedagogy	82.1
Technical-professional formation	48.0
Higher education	58.2

Source: Studies on Women, FMC, 1993.

In December 1992, there were 3,629,500 workers in the country; partial interruptions affected 6,800 workers, mainly in the manufacturing construction sectors. As women do not prevail in these sectors they were not greatly affected. Out of that number of workers 85 per cent was relocated, and the other 15 per cent that did not accept the proposed relocation, received a subsidy of a 60 per cent of their salary. In 1993 the unemployment rate in Cuba was estimated at 4 per cent. In 1991 and 1992 120,000 persons started to work, but at the same time there were 150,000 retirements or deaths, so the number of vacancies was not compensated.

In January 1995, a balance was reported in the process of state reorganization. The 50 state agencies were reduced to 32, followed by a reduction of jobs (11,621 fewer positions). Some of the displaced employees are being directed to agriculture, to jobs of their own, and to new joint-venture enterprises. The degree of change and its consequences are not yet well-known.

It is predicted that about a half million workers will lose their jobs. Whatever their alternative employment, they will all retain social assistance, and free access to education, health care and rationed food at minimum prices.

In areas of strategic development of the country (medical, pharmaceutical industry and tourism) women have a notable participation. In the medical pharmaceutical industry women are 60 per cent of the workers, 43 per cent managers and 60 per cent of technicians (Aguilar, et al., 1993). In 1991, 52 per cent of workers in

scientific research centres of the country were women, as well as also 58 per cent of the technicians and 40 per cent of the researchers.

As previously noted the development of biotechnology is one of the areas of major interest in the economic strategy of the country. The analysis of women in four prominent centres of biotechnological research shows that women are 44 per cent of workers, 46.6 per cent of technician researchers and 24 per cent of its management. The centres are Genetic-Engineering and Biotechnology Centres, Immuno-Assay Centre, National Biopreparation Centre, and The Finlay Institute (Aguilar, et. al., 1993). Another strategic sphere is international tourism where women are also present; in 1979 they were 38 per cent of all the workers of the Ministry of Tourism (formerly INTUR); in 1993 they represented 44 per cent.

The salary system has a scale that gathers different jobs of equal value, so a secretary will receive the same salary of 140 pesos monthly as a blue-collar worker from a factory. The extremes of these wage rates are 100 and 450 pesos; therefore, a Minister who earns as much as a university professor of high level only receives four times more than a simple worker with a lower salary. It can be seen that there are not big salary differences. In order to understand these figures, it is necessary to take into account that during the revolutionary process, measures of a social character were established, including free health and education, housing, and the subsidization of consumer goods. Thus, the real income of workers was higher than the salaries alone would suggest.

According to a government official, in February 1994 when private employment was allowed the number of private workers increased to 144,284, of which 33,330 were women. Out of the total, 41,437 carried out their private work and other professions, and 19,506 were housewives (13.3 per cent).³ It appears that women are being increasingly incorporated in this area of private market activity and that housewives have a significant participation. The UBPC seeks to attract some working women to agriculture, although this is not yet significant.

The legalization of currencies and the opening of shops that retail their goods in dollars – together with a severe shortage of those same goods in the rationed market – make employment linked to tourism, where part of the payment is in dollars, very attractive. The presence of foreign investment and the existence of corporations that require highly qualified Cuban staff introduce other labour challenges which are not yet sufficiently studied. Among the problems that have arisen are an informal market with various operations from the sale of scarce products at a very high price, originating from the rationed market or as stolen goods.

In a recent report the leader of the Central Trade Union of Workers of Cuba announced that 69 per cent of all the Cuban enterprises are unprofitable. Decree 6194 of September 1994, intends to achieve more economic efficiency in the medium term with

³ From an interview with Lic. Lavigne Mayda, First Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Work. September 1994.

the analysis and readjustment of the structure, composition and functions of employment. Each body makes a proposal to the Ministry of Labour, which will establish a territorial balance among the proposals. The new process will reduce the number of jobs; once the new proposals are passed, it is the function of a Commission in each work centre to determine the workers that will be available.

In each work centre, the commissions are formed by representatives from the management, the union, and the Cuban Communist Party, and must be approved in meetings of workers. Those workers available will receive 100 per cent of their salary, in the first month and in the following months, while they are not relocated, they will receive 60 per cent. The term of this subsidy will vary depending on the time of work accumulated (from 12 to 36 months without a justified reason). If the worker available doesn't accept the relocation, or if he does not pass the qualification course, he will only receive his salary for the first month. New qualification offers will be received only by those workers already qualified, so as to occupy specific jobs. Those workers who are about to reach the retirement age have preferences for staying. Women have the same right as men to maintain their employment as men and there is no evidence of discrimination here.

This process is too recent to be able to evaluate it.

2. Social policies and the quality of life

For 30 years, Cuban social policies aimed to elevate the quality of life of the population, which is shown in the positive evolution of some social indices (see Table 6.5). The estimated gini index in Cuba during 1986 was 0.22, which demonstrates the level of equity achieved (Brundenius and Zimbalist, n.d.). As special beneficiaries of these policies, Cuban women enjoy broad legal protections in their working lives and in respect to reproduction. Cuban law prohibits gender or ethnic discrimination at work. Although as mentioned, a tendency to discriminate against women exists in practice, the law protects their right to work, there are occupations where they are preferred, and they are only excluded specifically from the ones considered harmful to them.

The working woman has the right to retire from work at the age of 55, while the age for men is 60. The law stipulates that a widow receives a pension whether she works or not, and children have the same rights. From 1989 to 1993 there was a 33 per cent increase in the social security budget.

The law establishes the right to freely use health services. Included in the family planning programmes, women have access to a protection system, including the massive search for congenital diseases in foetus, for breast or cervical-uterine cancer, and for AIDS. Services also exist to ensure the good health of women and their children. A working woman has the right to enjoy a paid maternity leave of 18 weeks, 6 from the 34th week of pregnancy, plus an additional 12 weeks following childbirth, after which she may ask for unpaid leave for another nine months without losing her job.

TABLE 6.5

SELECTED SOCIAL INDICATORS, CUBA 1959 AND 1989

<u>Health</u>	<u>1959</u>	<u>1989</u>
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 births)	65	12
Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births)	125	29
Life expectancy	62.29 (1952-54)	74.5 (1986-87)
Population per:		
doctors	1,076	303
dentists	27,052	1,623
Hospital beds (per 1,000 inhabitants)	4.2	6.2
<u>Education</u>		
Illiteracy rate	23.6% (1953)	1.9 (1981) *
Number of:		
Day care centres	37	1,072
Primary schools	7,600	9,500
Secondary schools	81	2,150
Institutes of higher education	3	47
<u>Income and consumption</u>		
Medium salary (in pesos)	82 (estimate)	188
Coverage of social security	53%	100%
Caloric consumption per capita (in daily calories)	2,410 (1962)	2,845
Protein consumption per capita (in daily grams)	57.8 (1961-63)	76.5
Consumer durables (per 1,000 inhabitants)		
Televisions	46.6	173
Radios	162.6 (1956)	338
Conditions of houses (1953 to 1986-87)		
Good	13.0%	40.4%
Fair	40.0%	41.0%
Bad	47.0%	15.4%
Without classification	---	3.2 %

Source: Rodriguez (1992).

* According to *Human Development Report 1993* (UNDP), 0.4 for 1992.

In the last years, fertility in Cuba remained constant, below the replacement level. At the beginning of the 1950s, there was a gross reproduction rate of approximately two children per woman, and at the beginning of the 1990s, it was 0.89. According to the Cuban demographer Fernando González, there are a number of factors which affect fertility. As the feminine working force doubled between 1966 and 1986, fertility suffered a reduction of 50 per cent. The results of the 1987 national study of fertility show that the number of children is negatively correlated with mother's level of education.

The use of contraception is widespread, having been employed by 92.7 per cent of fertile women. Nevertheless, there was an increasing tendency towards abortion as a method of family planning. The yearly abortion average for the 1980s was over 100,000; between 1986 and 1989 it reached 150,000. Thereafter it declined to 111,000 in 1992. In 1986 there were 90.6 abortions for every 100 births, and 70 for every 100 births in 1992, while in 1993 there were 56.6 for every 100 births. Another problem has been pregnancy among women under 20 years of age.⁴

Life expectancy rose from 70.6 in 1969-71 to 74.7 in 1988-89. As a consequence of the low fecundity and mortality, a tendency towards the population's progressive ageing is a significant demographic characteristic in Cuba. By the end of this century and at the beginning of the next, Cuba will have about 12 million inhabitants, of whom between 1.5 and 2 million will be persons of 60 or more years of age.⁵ Special programmes such as clubs for senior citizens and other facilities for this increasingly older population are already being organized.

In Cuba, social policy helped to create an infrastructure aimed at compensating for the weight of domestic work, such as the creation of dining facilities at work centres and schools, boarding schools, child care centres, automatic laundry systems. This network helped to relieve women of the double working day, thus making it possible to progressively socialize the household economy. At the same time, the electrification of the country (94.2 per cent of the population by 1990) and the possibilities to acquire largely as a reward for good work electrical appliances for domestic use, such as refrigerators, washing machines, fans, etc., made it easier for the family to help at home.

In spite of these favourable conditions (and of the already mentioned effects of the Family Code) it was not possible to change the tendency for the woman to be in charge of the burden of housework. According to research there is a tendency to share domestic duties when the woman works outside the home, which is higher in the cases when her work is of an intellectual kind (Alvarez, 1993). But in general a traditional pattern prevails which includes the families, and is transmitted to the children.

⁴ Data from 'Cuba: Report on the Evolution of Its Population and the Interrelation with Development', prepared for International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), Havana, February 1994, p. 54.

⁵ Ibid.

What is the effects of the economical crisis on the Cuban woman's social situation? From 1990 on, there occurred a sharp decline in the quality of life and of public services in Cuba. Most seriously affected are the public transportation system, foodstuffs, and domestic power consumption, and some essential products such as those for cleaning. It was necessary, in the first phase, to ration every item of distribution. The possibility of acquiring products at a higher price in the parallel market was eliminated, alternate cuts of power supply were scheduled, the availability of foodstuffs was substantially reduced. Everyday life became more and more difficult, especially for women.

To help face the adverse conditions, steps were taken to compensate shortages, including the distribution of bicycles, collective use of vehicles allocated to state institutions, the substitution of animal proteins by soy beans, the increase of agricultural projects, etc. Still, the shortages have led to much public dissatisfaction.

Less harmed by the crisis are health and education. Not a single hospital has been closed, and the population still receives high quality medical services, including organ transplants and highly specialized surgery. However, in the health sector there are new restrictions in the availability of medicine. In 1993 the country was affected by an epidemic of neuritis diagnosed as of multicausal origins, but associated to a vitamin deficit. It was necessary to produce and distribute eleven million vitamin compound pills for daily consumption. One indicator of the effects on health is an increase of underweight newborns – from 7.3 per cent in 1989 to 86 per cent in 1990, and 9.0 in 1993.⁶

In education there is a shortage of pencils, books, notebooks, and others school materials. In higher education there is a need for more sophisticated equipment, such as chemicals and computer components. But no school has been closed, and the school year takes place normally, with a remarkable level of participation by women.

It should be noted that health and education are considered to be permanently socialized, and there are no plans to privatize education or health care.

Because of the persistence of the traditional pattern in domestic work, it is the woman who suffers most from the accelerated deterioration of everyday life. People who are sent dollars by their relatives abroad, or who work for tourists can purchase goods in the dollar shops. But this is, in fact a breach in the general equity model because these groups may acquire necessary and scarce products (such as clothing, shoes, food, cleaning and toilet articles, etc.) while the majority cannot.

After many years, prostitution has re-emerged, a result of both the economic difficulties, including scarcities, and the accelerated development of tourism. Young women with high school education who do not have to struggle for survival and who

⁶ Information from *Principal Figures of Health 1993* (Ministry of Public Health, 1993).

could find employment in various branches of the economy, resort to prostitution as a means to obtain dollars or consumption articles they desire.

A more positive outcome of the economic crisis is the new focus on housework and family responsibilities. Because of the economic crisis, men or other family members now share chores that were formerly left to the woman: looking for food, cooking with alternative fuels (such as kerosene, coal, or wood), cleaning the house, or doing the laundry. As a result of cooperation in efforts to try to find solutions for the family and the adaptation of individual needs to collective responsibilities, many people demonstrate a tendency to change traditional patterns and to accept housework as a collective task.

3. A closer approach

To complement the integrated analysis of the effects of the special period on women with specific examples, we have included the results of research undertaken in two work centres, the University of Havana and the electronics enterprise Primero de Mayo. In both cases, women play important roles. We interviewed fifteen women, six of whom held management responsibilities: one is a dean, two hold prominent positions in research institutions at the University of Havana and the other three include a commercial manager, a vice-director, and unit chief from the enterprise Primero de Mayo. Also interviewed were a secretary and a worker from the University, and seven industrial workers.

The University of Havana was founded in 1728 and is one of the oldest academic institutions in the region. In 1959 it housed the majority of higher level studies in the country. The explosive increase of students compelled the formation of institutes to house the specialized fields in medical sciences, technical sciences, and the Pedagogical Institute. The policy of social development multiplied the number of the institutions for tertiary education, and as a result, there are today 44 centres for higher education in the country.

In the 1993-94 school year, women represented 58.6 per cent of the total workers at the University of Havana and 60.3 per cent of its teaching staff. Of the full professors 43.6 per cent are women, who also represent 58.6 per cent of the auxiliary professors and 43.6 per cent of the principal categories (see Table 6.6). As for occupational groups, women occupy 42.8 per cent of leadership responsibilities, they make up 33.1 per cent of the workers, 73.7 per cent of service workers, and 96.2 per cent of administrative workers.

In this period, no woman has been nominated vice-rector (in that level there are the rector and four vice-rectors), but women head ten of the sixteen deanships (62.5 per cent). The women with management responsibilities at the university agreed that they have never felt themselves to be discriminated against as women and that they have received ample opportunities and acknowledgement.

TABLE 6.6
FEMALE EMPLOYMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAVANA

	Total	Female	%
Faculty:			
Professors	293	128	43.6
Auxiliary	421	247	58.6
Assistants	613	397	64.7
Instructors	309	215	69.5
Total	1,636	987	60.3
Occupational groups:			
Leaders	264	113	42.8
Teachers	1,516	922	60.8
Researchers	152	72	47.3
OT Technicians	524	320	61.0
Administratives	297	286	96.2
Services	374	276	73.7
Workers	609	202	33.1
Total	3,736	2,191	58.6

Source: University of Havana.

When analysing the general situation of Cuban women, some of those interviewed, whether managers or simple workers, pointed out the continuity of the double moral standards as a restriction in the lives of women and presented this difference as an expression in practice of discrimination against women.

About prostitution, they all agreed that it is a consequence of the economic crisis and the contradictory convergence of economic and social elements such as tourism, the legal status of the dollar and scarcity.

The women interviewed admitted that their lives are affected by the economic crisis, though this varied according to their kind of work. It was more serious in chemistry, pharmacology or in the computer field, in which some elements or products fundamental for the process of production, teaching, or research are either scarce or non-existent. They are also affected by cuts in the power supply.

The negative effect of reduced possibilities for recreation and for spiritual fulfilment as well as the feeling of exhaustion people have, were also emphasized. Some of these women stated however, that the crisis had contributed to a redistribution of those family duties aimed at subsistence, thus contributing to a tendency to unite families as we have noted above. Conversely, in family relationships with a traditional lack of harmony, the economic difficulties were fuelling discord.

Something of importance that emerged in the interviews is the existence of a contradiction between the search for individual happiness and personal fulfilment in society and work on the one hand, and the need to preserve the relationship of the couple and the care of the children, specially during early infancy. It was stated that the latter could impede the woman's social and political participation, depending upon the type of cooperation provided by the spouse or other family members. All agreed on the importance of developing a more flexible policy regarding the participation of women in some specific periods and circumstances. According to one woman, there also exists a problem in the organization of work that demands that the person in charge – whether man or woman – devote too much extra time to the fulfilment of their tasks, thus diminishing their possibilities to share in family life. 'If the work of leadership were better organized, we would all be happier'.

The enterprise Primero de Mayo produces television sets (black and white, and colour) previously with imported parts from the Russian electronics industry. After the crisis, production declined but did not cease, and new lines have been added: communications equipment, audio systems, moulds, dyes, and plastic parts. This production is directed principally to the national market making the sphere of tourism a priority, although exports to Latin America have begun. The working time lasts 8 hours, and there is only one work shift. The enterprise does not have its own nursery, but the working women enjoy access to nursery schools in their community. There are dining halls in the factories with subsidized prices with an acceptable range of balanced food and abundant supply. An evaluation system rewards model workers with access to recreational places, restaurants, houses at the beach, and other activities.

There are 315 workers in the electronics enterprise Primero de Mayo, out of whom 36.8 per cent are women (see Table 6.7). Women represent 44.2 per cent of the technicians who work in the industry, evidence of the qualifications that have been achieved by them. They are also 35.2 per cent of the workers, but only 7.9 per cent of those with management responsibilities. This low figure is very significant, especially when compared to the university. Nevertheless, in the enterprise the women do not feel excluded even though they are not predominant. Indeed, they consider themselves favoured, and enjoy their interactions with the male employees, both Cuban and foreign.

TABLE 6.7
WORKERS BY OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY AND BY SEX IN THE
ENTERPRISE PRIMERO DE MAYO

	Total	Female	%
Workers	673	237	35.2
Service	51	14	27.4
Technicians	470	208	44.2
Leaders	63	5	7.9
Contractors	58	20	39.4
Total	1,315	484	36.8

Source: Enterprise Primero de Mayo.

The women occupying management responsibilities did not believe they faced restrictions in carrying them out, nor did they think that being a woman was an obstacle in fulfilling these tasks. Nevertheless, they all agreed that it is still difficult for many persons to accept a woman as a boss, and it was especially noted that the living conditions of daily life, such as the double working day, the responsibility of domestic life, and children, are the reasons why women cannot be even more prepared for management responsibilities. One of the youngest women interviewed (32 years old) said, 'Cuban women deserve many medals, and they are really unknown heroines.'

Other restrictions and shortages with effects on working life were also taken into account such as the lack of fuel, difficulties in communication and transportation, and deficiencies in the dining facilities of working places. Yet the greatest limitations associated with the special period are concentrated in everyday life, especially the difficulties with house work. One of the industrial workers with an unusually large family of eight said, 'Only if I were a magician could I get enough to prepare and serve equal quantities to feed so many persons'. One worker explained how the crisis had united her family, 'If I receive three candies I keep one for my mother, another one for my daughter, and I share the third with my husband'. But she also said that it depended on the number of persons and on their principles, regardless of their educational level. One of the women with managerial responsibilities repeated to us her husband's critical judgement, 'The problem is that you work as if you were a man'. He considered this a negative characteristic because it reduced attention to him and their child, and because the intensity with which she participated in her work appeared to him as masculine. The women the demand made in some centres for the punctuality of women workers, especially in periods where the illness of their small children makes it hard to fulfil discipline at work. The fact that women are basically those who take care of their children, and the relative high expectations of women created by the prevalent ideology, are among the strongest limitations perceived by these workers.

The interviews revealed that compared with the professionals, more workers believed they have experienced gender discrimination.

4. Conclusions

Cuban women achieved important goals as the number of working women increased and the nature of employment changed and the guarantee of equality in their labour participation charged during the three decades from 1959 to 1989. This could be assessed as the most important premise which permits their economic independence and social participation. The increase in the educational qualifications and access to health, especially reproductive, favourably conditioned women's participation.

The country's social policies have facilitated women's participation and decreased inequalities of opportunity between men and women. Nevertheless, women's inability to reach posts at the highest level, the burden of domestic tasks and the care of children, and the economic crisis which the country has suffered since 1990 are obstacles to women's well-being and to gender equality.

5. References

- Aguilar, Carolina, Mercedes Verdeses, y Perla Popowski. 1993. 'El período especial y la vida cotidiana'. Mimeo, Habana: FMC (April).
- Alvarez, Mayda. 1993. 'Acerca de la familia cubana actual: un enfoque social en el estudio de la comunicación familiar', Habana.
- Carranza, Julio. 1992. 'Cuba, los retos de la economía', Revista *Cuadernos de Nuestra América*. La Habana, No. 19. (Dic.) p.130-158.
- Debate sobre la sociedad en Cuba*. 1988. Documento del encuentro científico Cuba-Suiza. Universidad de La Habana.
- Díaz, Elena. 1994. 'Mujer cubana: desarrollo social y participación', Revista *Portavoz*. Bogota-Colombia, No. 39 (Mayo-Junio).
- Espín Guillois, Vilma. 1990. *La Mujer en Cuba: Familia y Sociedad*. La Habana: Imprenta Central de las FAR.
- González Quiñones, Fernando. 1986. 'La participación de la mujer en la fuerza de trabajo y la fecundidad en Cuba'. La Habana: UH, CEDEM, p. 17.
- Guzmán, Virginia y Portocarrero, Patricia. 1989. 'Una nueva mirada. Crisis, mercado de trabajo e identidad de género'. Flora Tristán. Perú.
- Informe sobre Desarrollo Humano 1993*. 1993. Programa de Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo. Madrid.
- Integración de la mujer cubana a las actividades socioeconómicas y políticas*. 1985. Editorial de la Mujer. FMC.
- La Mujer en Cuba socialista*. 1977. Publicación oficial del Ministerio de Justicia. La Habana.
- Portocarrero, Patricia. 1993. *Estrategias de desarrollo: intentando cambiar la vida*. Ediciones Flora Tristán. Perú.
- Rodríguez, José Luis. 1993. Ministro de Finanzas de Cuba. Intervención en la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular. Periódico *Granma*. La Habana (29 December).
- Rodríguez, José Luis. 1992. 'La Economía Cubana, algunos problemas actuales y perspectivas'. Mimeo, La Habana.
- Sistemas políticos poder y sociedad*. 1992. Estudios de casos en América Latina. Editorial Nueva Sociedad. Venezuela.
- Zimbalist, A. and Brundenius, C. (n.d.). 'Crecimiento con equidad: el desarrollo cubano en una perspectiva comparada', en *Cuadernos de Nuestra América*. La Habana, Vol. VI, No. 13 (Julio-Dic.).

6. **Annexe – Excerpts from the Family Code of Cuba**

EXECUTIVE BRANCH, COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

I, Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado, president of the Republic of Cuba,

Hereby proclaim: That the Council of Ministers have approved and I have signed the following:

Whereas: The equality of citizens resulting from the elimination of private property over the means of production and the extinction of classes and all forms of exploitation of human beings by others is a basic principle of socialist society being constructed by our people, a principle which must be explicitly and fully reflected in the provisions of our legislation.

Whereas: Obsolete judicial norms from the bourgeois past which are contrary to equality and discriminatory with regard to women and children born out of wedlock still exist in our country, these norms must be replaced by others fully in keeping with the principles of equality and the realities of our socialist society, which is constantly and dynamically advancing.

Whereas: The socialist concept of the family is based on the fundamental consideration that it constitutes an entity in which social and personal interests are present and closely linked in view of the fact that it is the elementary cell of society and, as such, contributes to its development and plays an important role in the upbringing of the new generations. Moreover, as the center for relations of common existence between men and women and between them and their children and between all of them with their relatives, it meets deep-rooted human needs in the social field and in the field of affection for the individual.

[...]
[...]
[...]

Whereas: The draft version of the Family Code was submitted for broad and far-reaching discussion by all the people through the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, the Central Organization of Cuban Trade Unions, the Federation of Cuban Women, the National Association of Small Farmers, the Federation of University Students of Cuba, the Federation of Students of Intermediate Education and a number of state and social agencies, and was approved in full and section by section by a majority of more than 98 percent of those who participated in the meetings and assemblies held for this purpose.

[...]

Therefore: By virtue of the powers vested in it the Council of Ministers has resolved to enact the following.

LAW NO. 1289 – FAMILY CODE

Article 1. This code regulates judicially the institutions of the family – marriage, divorce, parent-child relations, obligation to provide alimony, adoption, and tutelage – with the main objections of contributing to:

- the strengthening of the family and of the ties of affection and reciprocal respect between its members;
- the strengthening of legally formalized or judicially recognized marriage, based on absolute equality of rights between men and women;
- the most effective fulfillment by parents of their obligations regarding the protection, moral upbringing, and education of their children so they can develop fully in every field as worthy citizens of a socialist society;
- the absolute fulfillment of the principle of equality of all children.

[Title 1: Marriage

Chapter I: Marriage in General]

Chapter II: Relations between Husband and Wife

Section 1: Rights and duties between husband and wife

Article 24. Marriage is established with equal rights and duties for both partners.

Article 25. Partners must live together, be loyal, considerate, respectful, and mutually helpful to each other.

The rights and duties that this code establishes for partners will remain in effect as long as the marriage is not legally terminated, even if the partners do not live together for any well-founded reason.

Article 26. Both partners must care for the family they have created and must cooperate with the other in the education, upbringing, and guidance of the children according to the principles of socialist morality. They must participate, to the extent of their capacity or possibilities, in the running of the home, and cooperate so that it will develop in the best possible way.

Article 27. The partners must help meet the needs of the family they have created with their marriage, each according to his or her ability and financial status. However, if one of them only contributes by working at home and caring for the children, the other

partner must contribute to this support alone, without prejudice to this duty of cooperating in the above-mentioned work and care.

Article 28. Both partners have the right to practice their profession or skill and they have the duty of helping each other and cooperating in order to make this possible and to study or improve their knowledge. However, they must always see to it that home life is organized in such a way that these activities are coordinated with their fulfillment of the obligations posed by this code.

[...]

(Adopted February 14, 1975)

UNU World Institute for
Development Economics Research
(UNU/WIDER)
Katajanokanlaituri 6 B
00160 Helsinki, Finland

Telephone (358) 0-693841
Telex 123455 UNUEI FI
Facsimile (358) 0-6938548