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CURRENT TRENDS AND CHANGES IN THE STATUS AND ROLES OF  
WOMEN AND MEN, AND MAJOR OBSTACLES TO BE OVERCOME IN THE  
ACHIEVEMENT OF EQUAL RIGHTS, OPPORTUNITIES AND  
RESPONSIBILITIES

Item 9 of the provisional agenda



Report of the Secretary-General\*

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\* Chapters IV and V of the present report, on the family, and other social questions appear in addendum 1 of the present document. Chapter VI on international co-operation and peace, appears in addendum 2. The annexes, including statistical tables and the status of selected international conventions, appear in addendum 3.

NOTE

The following officially recognized abbreviations are used in the present report:

- UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund
- UNDP United Nations Development Programme
- ILO International Labour Organisation
- UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The present report surveys briefly the current situation of women throughout the world, highlighting major trends in recent years, and indicates some of the main obstacles that still prevent women from participating fully in all aspects of national and international life and from developing their full potential as individuals enjoying equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities with men.
2. The trends reviewed take place against a background of changing individual, national and international goals. The conflict cannot be ignored, for example, between the growing assertion by individuals, irrespective of sex, of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, and prevailing economic and social conditions that may limit and even deny the enjoyment of those rights and freedoms. Governments are confronted with the responsibility of fulfilling the legitimate aspirations of all individuals for a better life, while being faced at the same time with chronic unemployment or underemployment and shrinking national resources.
3. There is a growing realization among nations of the need for mutual assistance to narrow the gap between rich and poor countries and to eliminate mass poverty and hunger for the benefit of all mankind. Experience has shown that the pressure for economic growth without adequate measures of social development will not achieve the desired goals. Social and economic policies should be directed simultaneously towards raising basic levels of living. For example, compulsory education should be introduced or extended; employment opportunities increased; basic health, housing and social welfare services improved; and fiscal systems adjusted to redistribute national income more equitably. Social scientists and others concerned with future trends have also drawn world attention to the dangers of overpopulation and ecological neglect and to the fact that millions will die or be mentally and physically impaired in Africa and Asia because of inadequate food resources. Women can no longer be under-utilized or ignored if solutions are to be found to these and other urgent world problems and if women are to benefit equally with men in the progress and development of society.
4. Women comprise approximately one half (49.8 per cent) of the world's population of 3,987 million; 70 per cent of the world's women live in the developing countries and women form just over 60 per cent of the world's rural population. Among the 1,437 million young people below the age of 15 years, there are currently over 705 million girls (49.03 per cent), which represents 35.5 per cent of the total female population. The 15-24 age group numbers about 737 million, of which 361 million or 49 per cent are girls. Women tend to form a numerical majority in the older age groups as they continue to have a longer life expectancy than men. They currently comprise 50.9 per cent of the 50-54 age group and this proportion increases in each successive age group. They constitute 62.9 per cent of the 80 and over age group. By 1985 it is estimated that women will not comprise 50 per cent of the population until they reach the 55-59 age group. But, thereafter, their proportion will continue to increase. They will comprise 63.6 per cent of the 80 and over age group in 1985.

5. In assessing the situation of women on a global basis the present report takes into consideration, as far as possible, differences in levels of development among countries and differences among categories of women within countries. Clearly, the stage of development of a country will determine to a great extent the concerns of the women of that country. Further, those living in primitive rural areas or in marginal groups on the periphery of large urban settlements may be overwhelmed by the pressing problems of mere survival. Highly educated women, on the other hand, may be preoccupied with the difficulties of reaching the top echelon of their profession.

6. In general, trends over the last half century, and particularly over the last decade, show that there have been far-reaching changes in the conditions and attitudes affecting women and men in society and that considerable progress has been made, especially in the legal field. The constitutions, basic laws and other legislation of a great many countries now guarantee the principle of equality of the sexes. Women have wider options for controlling their lives than ever before. In many countries they are better able to determine the number and spacing of their children. They are more likely to complete their education through the primary, secondary and even third levels. They are more likely to find employment and enjoy improved conditions of work. They have the right to vote and are eligible to stand for election in all but a handful of countries. They can choose a marriage partner with a greater degree of freedom, get a divorce more easily or, in some cases, remain single. They can exercise a wider choice in a number of countries about whether to live in rural or urban areas, or even whether to migrate to foreign countries in their search for a better standard of living for themselves and their children. Through the mass communications media they are much more aware of issues of common concern and of the problems faced by women in other parts of the world.

7. Despite these general gains, much remains to be achieved before women enjoy in law and in fact equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities with men. In some countries discriminatory legislation continues to exist especially in the area of family law. In many countries the gap between law and practice is very wide. Women are still disadvantaged in most countries, at all levels of education. A majority of the 700 million illiterates of the world are women. Women, who constitute more than one third of the world's gainfully employed labour force, are concentrated in a few job areas, mostly poorly paid and requiring low levels of skill and responsibility. Their work is usually not recognized as being of equal value to men's work and often they are paid less than a man doing the same job. Women frequently do not receive training relevant to their needs, especially in agricultural work and basic skills. Little priority is given to the improvement of tools and machines that would lighten the drudgery of the millions of women who work in rural areas, often under the most primitive conditions. Maternity and the rearing of children is not regarded as a responsibility of society and of both parents, but rather as the task solely of the mother, to be carried out by her in addition to her other responsibilities if she works outside the home. Within the family, the male is usually the dominant partner and, as such, has the final say in all major matters affecting the family. The woman may still be deprived in many instances of a number of personal and property rights upon marriage. Divorce may not be as readily available to her as it is to her partner and may entail serious

financial problems for her. In a great majority of countries, even in those where women have long enjoyed political rights, the percentage of women who participate in the higher levels of policy making at the local, national or international levels is very small; this is true also of bodies concerned with development programmes and plans.

8. Some of these problems stem from traditions, customs and beliefs that originated far back in history and still govern present-day values and attitudes concerning the roles of women and men in society. Both sexes are conditioned from birth to believe that man is superior to woman, that he should be the provider and she the guardian of the home, and that she is less capable of mastering certain disciplines or performing certain tasks. Societal discrimination, which starts in the cradle with the early acquisition of different sex roles, continues throughout life.

9. The findings of the present report indicate that the major obstacles to the achievement of equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities for women and men are basically the same in nature, but their relative importance within a country depends on its stage of development. If any obstacles may be singled out as the most prevalent, they are rigid attitudes and sex-stereotyping, transmitted through customs, religion, school curricula, textbooks, literature and the arts. The mass communications media frequently mirror and reinforce these traditional attitudes rather than act as agents of social change.

10. Other important obstacles in many parts of the world are the poor health and the malnutrition of women, the heavy load of daily responsibilities borne by them in the home and on the farm and the high fertility patterns prevailing in many societies, all of which result in the physical exhaustion of women and account for their lack of interest, energy and time required to improve themselves and acquire basic skills. High fertility is usually accompanied by low status of women and is frequently both a result and a cause of underdevelopment; thus a vicious circle has been set in motion.

11. Further obstacles common to most countries, in varying degrees, are the low priority accorded to the promotion of women's participation in all aspects of national life and the limited awareness on the part of policy makers of the importance, for the success of development policies, of integrating women in the development process on equal terms with men. Other serious obstacles to be overcome are: apathy on the part of society, reflected in the priorities set by policy makers especially when resources are limited; political constraints reinforcing cultural attitudes; and a general unwillingness to support the costs of the social infrastructure needed to integrate women fully in the development of their countries.

12. Much of this apathy may be due to insufficient data and information on the situation of women and the relationship of their situation to various other aspects of political, socio-economic and cultural development. This lack of data is widespread, and the difficulty experienced in obtaining adequate cross-cultural statistical data and information for the preparation of the present report is an

indication of the general situation. The actual economic contribution of large numbers of women is often unknown or ignored since, as homemakers, unpaid family and agricultural workers or self-employed handicraft workers, they are automatically excluded from the economically active population counted in national statistics. Biases in data-gathering instruments, including human census and survey takers, conspire to underrepresent women's potential contribution in the foreseeable future unless attitudes and parameters are fundamentally changed. Priority attention has to be given to creating data bases essential to sound planning, policy making and evaluation of progress made.

13. The draft World Plan of Action submitted to the World Conference (E/CONF.66/5) proposes measures to overcome these and other obstacles to the achievement of equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities of women and men and the full integration of women into the mainstream of development as contributors and beneficiaries.

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## I. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

14. Political rights have been defined by the international community in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966 and, in respect of women in particular, the Convention on Political Rights of Women of 1952 and the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women of 1967. These rights, as set forth in article 4 of the 1967 Declaration, include: (a) the right to vote in all elections and be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies; (b) the right to vote in all public referenda; (c) the right to hold public office and to exercise all public functions.

### A. Legal situation

15. The trend towards the formal recognition of the political rights of women began in the middle of the nineteenth century; at first, it progressed very slowly and faced strong opposition from the conservative elements of society. In the twentieth century considerable gains were achieved, especially since the United Nations came into being in 1945, as a result of the intensified struggle on the part of women to obtain political rights, their involvement in the two World Wars, the granting of independence to African and Asian countries formerly under colonial rule and the gradual acceptance of the principle of equality of women and men. This trend has now culminated in the almost universal legal recognition of the right of women to vote, to stand for election and to hold public office and exercise public functions on equal terms with men. <sup>1/</sup>

16. In nearly all countries where elections are held, the modern trend appears to be towards the goal of universal suffrage. Old restrictions and disqualifications have been removed gradually, and new ones are only rarely imposed.

17. However, in some instances laws or regulations may indirectly deprive women of the enjoyment of their political rights by requiring that certain conditions be fulfilled for the exercise of political rights. While the requirements usually apply to women and men alike, women cannot meet them as readily as men, in particular those relating to education, economic status, civil capacity and family status.

18. The requirement that voters should be able to read and write is especially prejudicial to women in countries where they either constitute the majority of the illiterates or generally receive less education than men. In countries where the official language is different from that spoken by the majority of the population, the requirement that candidates for elective or appointive office should have

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<sup>1/</sup> There are nine countries where the law does not accord women political rights: Bahrain, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Nigeria (in six states), Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.



knowledge of the official language may deny substantial numbers of citizens the possibility of holding public office. In those countries, women will be more affected than men by this requirement in so far as their level of education is lower and fewer of them are literate in the official language.

19. In some instances, the successful completion of elementary education (e.g., Laos) or of higher education (e.g., Turkey) is specifically required in order to be a member of the senate.

20. Not only literacy but also certain other educational qualifications may be required of those holding many types of public office, whether elective or appointive. If these are unduly high, women will have more difficulty than men in meeting them. This will result, in practice, in restricting the public service mostly to men, especially at the intermediate and higher levels.

21. Qualifications relating to property ownership, to income, and to tax paying are prerequisites to the exercise of the right to vote or to be elected or appointed to public office in some countries (e.g., Fiji, Laos, Liberia and Sri Lanka). Such qualifications, even though they may apply to men and women alike, may affect significant numbers of women, as women do not usually enjoy the same economic status as men and frequently have no property or income of their own.

22. Qualifications relating to civil capacity or family status may also prevent large numbers of women from exercising their political rights. For example, the requirement that voters should be of age may lead to differential treatment of women and men in those countries where the ages of majority for the two sexes are different. 2/

23. The requirement that voters should be heads of families is another example of an indirect form of discrimination in those countries where, according to the law, the husband is the recognized head of the family. Such a requirement prevents married women, who are not considered as head of families, from exercising their right to vote. In Portugal, for example, only heads of families vote in elections to local boards (juntas de freguesia).

#### B. De facto situation

##### Electoral participation of women

24. Although quantifiable data on the use by women of their right to vote is sparse, available information indicates that women make great use of the franchise, frequently as extensively as men in developed countries. Where a difference has existed in the past between electoral participation of the two sexes, with a higher percentage of women not voting, the difference has tended to narrow gradually.

2/ For the ages of civil and political majority in a number of countries, see annex I of the present report (E/CONF.66/3/Add.3), table 6.

25. In various countries, strenuous efforts are being made to attain the highest possible participation of the electorate in voting procedures. In some instances, compulsory registration and voting have been introduced. In some countries penal sanctions - fines or the loss of certain civil and political rights - are imposed upon qualified citizens who fail to exercise their right to vote. In some countries (e.g., Libya), voting is compulsory for men but optional for women.

26. For many years women have been making full use of their right to vote in Eastern European countries. In the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, for example, available data (A/8481) indicate that more than 99 per cent of the women usually participate in elections to the Supreme Soviet and to local Soviets. In the United States of America, at the time of the 1966 elections, 53 per cent of the women and 58 per cent of the men voted. In 1968, 66 per cent of eligible women and 69.8 per cent of eligible men voted. In 1972, 62 per cent of eligible women and 64.1 per cent of eligible men voted. 3/

27. About 87 per cent of men voted in most countries of Western Europe in the mid-1960s, and about 85 per cent of women, a marked increase over the past. In Sweden, for example, only 47.2 per cent of women went to the polls in 1921. 4/

28. In Africa and Asia, while little data is available, participation of women in the electoral processes does not seem to have been extensive, except in a few countries. In the Philippines, for example, in the 1960s, 80 per cent of women participated in national as well as local elections, a percentage equal to that of men. 5/ In Japan, from 1946 to 1966 approximately 60 to 70 per cent of the female electorate voted. These percentages have been lower than those for men, but the differences have tended to narrow, roughly from 14 per cent to 2 per cent. 6/ Information available for some Latin American countries shows that women make extensive use of their right to vote. For example, during the mid-1960s, 46 per cent of Chilean registered voters and 37 per cent of Peruvian registered voters were women. 7/ In Argentina, in December 1973, the same percentage of men and women registered voters - 80 per cent - went to the polls.

*oaber n.º de votantes (ms e hs) nas eleições*

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3/ Citizens' Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Women in 1973 (Washington, D.C., 1974).

4/ Marcelle Stanislas Devaud, "Political participation of Western European women", Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, vol. 375 (January 1968) (hereinafter referred to as Annals).

5/ Amara Raksasataya, "The political role of Southeast Asian women", Annals.

6/ Taki Fujita, "Women and politics in Japan", Annals.

7/ Elsa M. Chaney, "Women in Latin American countries" in Anne Pescatello, ed., Female and Male in Latin America (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973).

Actual participation of women in political leadership

29. A wide gap exists between the formal recognition of political rights - which is almost universal - and the extent of women's direct role in government. With few exceptions, the actual political participation of women, small to begin with, grows still smaller as the centre of political leadership is approached. Women candidates for high-level positions in the Governments of their countries continue to be rare. Except in a few countries, women are rarely members of parliaments and even more rarely are they members of the influential committees of those bodies. Few women are ministers and they tend to specialize in social and legal matters affecting the well-being of the individual and the family. Four women are currently heads of Government, all of them in developing countries (Argentina, where the Head of State is also Head of the Government, Central African Republic, India and Sri Lanka).

→ 30. The percentage of women decreases as the higher levels of political leadership are reached. This is noticeable not only in the structure of the State and its political organs but also in the government service, the political parties, trade unions, and private business. It is also reflected in the international civil service, which shows a sharp pyramidal pattern in respect of the employment of women and the positions they occupy in the hierarchy.

on the contrary → 31. Low participation of women in political leadership does not necessarily have any relation to the length of time that the women of a country have enjoyed political rights. Nor does it necessarily relate to how those rights were won - whether through a long and difficult struggle or through a movement for national independence or subsequent to membership of their country in the United Nations.

32. With few exceptions, the extent of women's participation in political leadership has been limited and pace of progress usually slow and, in many instances, sporadic. A turning point may have been reached in recent years, however, due to the growing awareness of the need to integrate women more fully into the national political structure and to the pressure in some countries from women's organizations and feminist groups.

33. Participation of women in elected bodies is highest in Nordic and Eastern European countries, although there are variations among countries in both of these groups and data are inadequate with respect to the positions held by women in the committees of such bodies. In Finland, in 1907, in the first election following the granting of women's suffrage, 19 women were elected to Parliament, or 9.5 per cent of the total membership. These were the first women ever elected to any national parliament. For 40 years the figure continued to fluctuate around 10 per cent, with a peak in 1908 of 12.5 per cent and a low in 1930 of 5.5 per cent. The number of women began to rise in 1948, the percentage reaching 16.5 in 1966 and 21.5 in 1970. 8/ In Sweden, where women were granted political rights in 1919, four women were elected to Parliament in 1921. In the mid-1960s, the percentage of

8/ "Report of the Committee on the Position of Women in Finnish Society" (1970: A.8) (Helsinki, Government Printing Centre, 1973), pp. 132-133.

women in Parliament rose to 14.8 per cent; in 1972 it was 14.3 per cent, and it rose to 21.2 per cent in 1974. <sup>9/</sup> In the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, 189 women were elected to the Supreme Soviet in 1937; the number steadily increased to 475 or 31.3 per cent in 1974. <sup>10/</sup> In Poland, however, the percentage was 15 per cent in 1972. <sup>11/</sup> In Western Europe, during the past couple of years, the percentage of women elected to parliaments has ranged from less than 3 per cent (e.g., Belgium and Italy) to about 9 per cent (e.g., the Netherlands). In the United Kingdom, in 1943, 26 years after the first woman was elected to the House of Commons in 1919, there were 23 women Members of Parliament out of a total of 630. In 1951, the number fell to 17, a decrease attributed to a change in the representation of the parties. In the mid-1960s, the number rose to 25. <sup>12/</sup> It is at present 27, that is, 4.30 per cent of the total membership.

34. In the United States of America, where women obtained their political rights at the federal level as far back as 1920, they formed only 2.5 per cent of the House of Representatives and 1 per cent of the Senate in 1971. <sup>13/</sup> The percentage increased slightly in the most recent elections and the Congress in 1974 had 18 women members, forming 3.4 per cent of the total membership of 535. Information for Latin American countries for 1969 also indicates a very low percentage of participation. There were 12 women deputies in Chile and 7 in Brazil and Colombia, these being the highest figures. <sup>14/</sup> In Argentina, in 1972, there were 21 women members of Parliament out of a total of 312, or 6.7 per cent of the total membership. <sup>15/</sup>

35. Information available for certain countries of Asia also shows a low representation of women in political bodies. Thus, for example, in Japan, in the first election for the House of Representatives held in 1946, 39 women out of 410 were elected (or about 9 per cent). In 1968, the number fell to 7 out of 467 (or less than 1.5 per cent); in 1970 it rose to 8 (1.7 per cent). <sup>16/</sup> In the Philippines, after more than 30 years of suffrage, only 12 women have been elected to the House of Representatives, 7 to the Senate. The highest ratio in the Senate

<sup>9/</sup> M. S. Devaud, "Political participation of Western European women", Annals; E/CN.6/571/Add.2; and ESA/SDHA/AC.6/CP.3.

<sup>10/</sup> A/7197 and ESA/SDHA/AC.6/CP.14.

<sup>11/</sup> E/CN.6/571/Add.2, table 4.

<sup>12/</sup> Lakshmi Menon, "From constitutional recognition to public office", Annals; and Maurice Duverger, The Political Role of Women (Paris, UNESCO, 1955).

<sup>13/</sup> Bella S. Abzug and Cynthia Edgar, "Women and politics: the struggle for representation", Woman, an Issue (Massachusetts Review, 1972).

<sup>14/</sup> Inter-American Commission of Women of the Organization of American States, as cited by Elsa M. Chaney in "Women in Latin American countries", loc. cit.

<sup>15/</sup> E/CN.6/571/Add.2, table 4.

<sup>16/</sup> Taki Fujita, "Women and politics in Japan", Annals; and A/8132.

at any time was 3 out of 24 and in the House 6 out of 104. 17/ In India, there are at present 39 women in Parliament out of a total membership of 767. There were 33 two years ago. 18/

36. Little factual information is available for Africa, where the participation of women in political leadership does not appear to be high. For example, there are two women members of Parliament in Kenya, 11 in Sudan. In Guinea, 27 per cent of the National Assembly and 16 per cent of the regional assemblies have been for some time women. Recently, a few countries have taken steps to appoint or elect women to certain political positions, notably in Tanzania and Ghana. 19/

37. Because of the lack of data on the political participation of women at the local level, especially for countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, it is not possible to indicate trends or formulate conclusions that would apply on a world-wide basis. In many countries for which information is available there is a marked trend towards an increase in the political participation of women at the local level. Such participation, however, may not always be as high or higher than at the national level. It is highest in Nordic and Eastern European countries, although there are variations among countries within each of these groups. In Finland, the percentage of women among communal council representatives has grown during the 1946-1972 period from 4.7 to 14.9, with the sharpest increases having occurred at the two last elections. As indicated above, the percentage of women in the National Parliament has been 21.5 since 1970. The ratio of women is higher in urban than in rural localities. At present women form 41.6 per cent of the City Council in Helsinki and over one third in other large cities. 20/ In Sweden, in 1972, women formed 17 per cent of the permanent members of municipal bodies; 15 per cent held honorary posts and 22.9 per cent deputy posts. 21/ As indicated above, the percentage of women in the National Parliament was 14.3 in 1972 and 21.2 in 1974. In the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1972, 45 per cent of local deputies were women, while about 34 per cent were deputies at the national level. 21/ In the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, 47.4 per cent of the deputies elected in the 1973 elections to the regional, local, city and village soviets were women, while women in 1971 formed 35 per cent of the Supreme Soviets. 21/ In the Netherlands, there was an increase from 6.5 per cent in 1966 to 11.8 per cent in 1974 in the representation of women in provincial councils and, for the same period, their representation in municipal councils increased from 4.8 per cent to 9.9 per cent. As mentioned above, women formed 9 per cent of the members of Parliament in 1974. 22/ In New Zealand the percentage of women in territorial local authorities

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17/ Irene R. Cortes, "Women's rights under the 1973 Constitution", sixth in the Albino Sycip lecture series, College of Law, University of the Philippines, 31 July 1974.

18/ ESA/SDHA/AC.6/CP.13; and E/CN.6/571/Add.2, table 4.

19/ E/CN.14/SW/37, para. 60.

20/ "Report of the Committee on the Position of Women in Finnish Society", 1970: A.8 (Helsinki, Government Printing Center, 1973), pp. 132-133; and Municipal Journal of Finland, No. 10, 1974.

21/ E/CN.6/571/Add.2.

22/ ESA/SDHA/CP.4/Add.1.

was 5.8 per cent for 1971 as compared to 4.6 per cent in Parliament. 23/ In the United States of America there were, in 1974, 441 women serving in the state legislatures, that is, 6 per cent of the total members, 23/ as compared to 3.4 per cent at the Federal level, as noted above.

38. Some generalizations that can be made about the political participation of women at the local level are that: (a) such participation is not usually uniformly distributed throughout a country, women tending to be appointed or elected to public office more often in the capital city and other large cities than in smaller towns and villages; (b) women tend to be represented mainly in the social welfare, health, educational and cultural sectors; (c) offices held by women at the local level do not serve as stepping stones to higher political positions as is often true for men, and (d) despite progress achieved, particularly in recent years, women could have played a more active role in local government, where fewer barriers to their political participation exist than at the national level. Thus, while the foregoing statistics indicate that women are, in general, more active politically at the local than at the national level, the commonly held view that they are considerably more active on the local level is not necessarily true. This view may be due to the fact that women at the lower level of the political structure are closer to the people and hence their presence is more noticeable.

#### C. Factors affecting the role of women in political leadership

39. Undoubtedly, if women are to share with men the responsibilities of government, they must possess the necessary education and occupational or professional expertise. Without such qualifications, women cannot expect to exercise political leadership and their role in politics will remain negligible. Moreover, unless the proportion of women having such qualifications matches the proportion of men who do, the base from which prospective women political leaders may be drawn will remain small and this in turn will perpetuate the pattern of low participation of women in politics.

40. Women's actual exercise of political power, however, has not paralleled their educational, occupational or professional advancement. Indeed, in politics, even more than in other occupations and professions, the higher the position and the greater the power, the less likely that it will be held by a woman. It may therefore be concluded that other factors are at work which keep women out of the mainstream of politics. Two significant correlations may be established. First, the official policy as regards the principle of equality of the sexes appears to have a direct bearing on the participation of women in politics, both numerically and qualitatively. Secondly, it appears that women's access to political bodies and functions is less limited under an electoral system of proportional representation.

41. A paramount obstacle to the increased participation of women in politics, particularly at the higher echelons, is the belief still widely held by women and men alike that there is a natural division of labour between the sexes, based on their different aptitudes. The public world, the world "outside", is seen as that

of men and the private world, the world of the home, is seen as women's sphere. Thus, politics, "by nature", is considered to be a field better suited to men. The fallacy of these concepts has been demonstrated; further, "the results of men's management have not been so brilliant in this field that the male sex can boast of its proven capability".<sup>24/</sup> Yet, the majority of women have accepted the traditional sex roles and adopted behavioural patterns that made the desire for or the holding of power basically incompatible with "femininity" and the "nature" of women. In certain instances, these concepts have even inhibited women from exercising the most elementary political power - the right to vote. They also explain why women have tended to distrust each other's competence and ability and preferred to cast their votes for men, why wives are said to usually vote as their husbands do, and why, on the whole, women in the political structure - particularly at the higher level - tend to specialize in matters relating to the family, children, health, social welfare and education. Their "special" expertise is recognized by women and men alike in these fields, considered to be extrapolations of women's family role to the arena of politics.

42. Political activity presupposes that anyone engaging in it takes full responsibility for his fate and does not leave it to another to decide for him. It is diametrically opposed to any form of paternalism in social relations. In spite of the formal recognition of the equality of the sexes in many countries, and of their civic equality in most, when it comes to actual decision-making, male dominance is still, on the whole, the common denominator in all social relations from family to government. As women are almost always brought up to depend on men and to develop behavioural characteristics conducive to such dependency, and as they are overburdened by the material and time-consuming tasks related to the family, the home or the farm, it is not surprising that their political socialization has been on the whole negligible and that they often complain that they have neither the time nor the energy for politics. This is particularly true in countries where conditions of under-development prevail.

43. To increase the interest and participation of women in political life requires measures designed to: (a) change traditional beliefs in a natural division of labour between the sexes; (b) inform the electorate, particularly the female electorate, of political issues at the local, national and international levels and of the need for the active participation of women in public affairs; and (c) alleviate the workload of women, among other means by encouraging a more equitable sharing of family responsibilities among its different members.

44. Politics has always been a field of extremely keen competition among men themselves. Therefore, there has usually been vigorous male opposition to the exercise of political power by women. This is nowhere more apparent than in the hierarchy of political parties, where women have served and still often serve in auxiliary and supportive roles. Though their fund-raising and campaigning efforts are needed and solicited, their representation in the hierarchy is weak and they usually appear at the lower levels or, at best, at the intermediate level. As a result, there are few women to choose from when it comes to nominating a candidate

<sup>24/</sup> Duverger, op. cit., p. 125.

does socialism enable to change that? Not to be seen yet...

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for election, or a minister or a member of a parliamentary committee. In addition, party officials are usually reluctant to support women as candidates, as they are less likely to be elected. Their names are often omitted from multiple electoral lists or placed at the bottom, so their chances of being elected are small or nil. In the Norwegian elections in 1971, women candidates achieved a spectacular success merely because their names were moved from the bottom of the list to the top. In Eastern European countries, where there is only one candidate for each seat, there is a high proportion of women deputies. In the United Kingdom, a woman recently was chosen to head the official opposition party in Parliament for the first time.

45. In recent years, women have become less accepting of their negligible role in politics. This is particularly true of young, educated and urban women. Also, Governments are becoming more aware of the importance of the greater participation of women in all aspects of political life. Long-established non-governmental organizations and new feminist groups in some countries are making special efforts to activate women and to support them as candidates, particularly at the municipal and local level (e.g., Canada and Finland), or to develop specific programmes to arouse their political consciousness (e.g., Kenya). Women's political parties have also been formed (e.g., Belgium). Special governmental action has included: the issuance of instructions designed to achieve a fair representation of women in public office; the adoption of a quota system (public or clandestine); the setting up of special machinery to encourage equal opportunities for women in the public service; the appointment of increasing numbers of women to legislative bodies; the limiting of campaign expenses and the length of campaigns (e.g., Canada); and the imposition of a minimum tax on all citizens for the establishment of a national fund for campaign purposes, to be shared equally among candidates (e.g., United States of America - for Presidential elections only). Special action and reforms will produce significant results only if backed by measures designed to accelerate the transformation of traditional attitudes with respect to the roles of women and men in the family and in society.

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II. EDUCATION AND TRAINING 1/

A. Inequality of enrolment

46. The simplest indicator of inequality in education by reason of sex is the percentage of female enrolment in the total at the different levels in various regions. (See annex I (E/CONF.66/3/Add.3), table 5.) In the developed countries parity has been practically achieved at the first level and very nearly so at the second level, but there is considerable inequality of enrolment persisting at the third level. In the developing regions (with the exception of Latin America, where parity of enrolment approaches that of the developed countries) disparities are large, especially at the second and third levels. The trend of female participation appears in the following table.

Index numbers of total and female enrolment, 1971  
 (1960 = 100)

<u>Region</u>	<u>First level</u>		<u>Second level</u>		<u>Third level</u>	
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Female</u>
Developed countries	114	114	142	144	239	276
Developing countries	174	183	249	282	320	366
Africa (excluding Arab States)	175	193	220	231	283	271
America	140	141	166	163	266	303
Arab States	185	198	297	372	299	410
Asia (excluding Arab States)	161	165	176	174	298	369
Europe	107	108	156	162	252	308

47. The index for the developed countries shows that at the first level female enrolment advanced pari passu with total enrolment. This was to be expected, as numerical parity of enrolment had already, in effect, been attained by 1960. At the second level a gain is recorded, since equal enrolment of girls lagged slightly in 1960. For the third level, however, a significant upward change is shown. 2/

48. Significant progress is seen in the indices for Africa (excluding Arab States) at the first level, some progress at the second level, and a proportionate decline at the third level. In Asia (excluding Arab States) and America (including Latin

1/ This chapter is based on a report prepared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Unless otherwise indicated, the statistics were prepared by the UNESCO Statistical Office.

2/ UNESCO, Statistical Yearbook, 1973, p. 113. For a summary and analysis of the situation in the 1960s, see UNESCO, "Women and education in the world today" (ED/WS/183, 1970).

America) considerable progress is seen in the index at the third level. The Arab States show some increase at the first level, and large increases at the second and third. (Both the Arab States and Africa had a low proportion of female enrolment in the second and third levels at the 1960 starting point.) The proportion continues to be lowest in middle South Asia, South West Asia, and in Western middle and Northern Africa. These areas however are showing considerable progress, especially at the second and third levels.

49. Comparable figures for the USSR and China are not shown in the UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, other than that the index for female participation in higher level education in the USSR was 202 in 1971 compared with a total increase of enrolment of 179. As far as the USSR and Eastern European countries are concerned, the introduction of compulsory secondary education is the main objective in the field of education. It has been already achieved in the USSR and in a number of countries of Eastern Europe. The percentage of women among students of higher educational institutions was in 1972/73: in the USSR, 50 per cent; in Bulgaria, 51.9 per cent; in Hungary, 46.5 per cent; in the German Democratic Republic, 41.2 per cent; in Yugoslavia, 41 per cent; in Poland (1971/72), 43.7 per cent; in Romania (1971-72), 43 per cent; in Czechoslovakia (1971/72), 38.2 per cent and in Albania (1969), 32.4 per cent. <sup>3/</sup> The proportion of female enrolment is also known to be high in China.

50. As regards the future, a projection of the trends during the last decade to 1985 shows the following percentages of female enrolment, by age range:

<u>Regions</u>	<u>Age range</u>	<u>1965</u> (Actual)	<u>1975</u> (Actual)	<u>1985</u> (Projected)
More developed	6-11	49	49	49
	12-17	48	49	49
	18-29	39	42	43
Less developed	6-11	41	42	43
	12-17	36	38	40
	18-29	29	33	36

51. According to the projections, the third level inequality of enrolment will persist in the developed countries. For the developing countries, a steady increase in the proportion of girls enrolled is indicated, particularly in the age range 18-29, but a substantial disparity continues at all levels.

#### B. Equality of achievement

52. While female enrolment percentages are the simplest of indicators of inequality, they can be misleading in terms of educational achievement and of the contribution

<sup>3/</sup> "Zenshchiny v SSSR, Statisticheskie materialy" Vestnik statistiki (Moscow), No. 1, 1974, table 19.

of women to development. Enrolment percentages for instance need to be supplemented by information on drop-out rates. Projections made by the Statistical Office of UNESCO indicate a somewhat greater improvement in this area for girls than for boys, with the largest differential remaining in higher education. See, for example, the following:

Percentage of pupils aged 6-11 and 12-17 in 1960, 1970 and 1980, who remain in school six years later

<u>Regions</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>1960</u>		<u>1970</u>		<u>1980</u>	
		<u>6-11</u>	<u>12-17</u>	<u>6-11</u>	<u>12-17</u>	<u>6-11</u>	<u>12-17</u>
More developed	Male	93	37	99	41	99	52
	Female	91	26	98	31	99	41
Less developed	Male	63	28	60	28	60	29
	Female	51	23	54	24	54	26

53. Projections of the percentages of pupils remaining in school 12 years later are shown in the following table, and again illustrate more improvement for girls, who start from a lower base, of course, than for boys.

Percentage of children aged 6-11 in 1960 to be in school in 1972      Percentage of children aged 6-11 in 1975 to be in school in 1987

<u>Regions</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>in 1972</u>	<u>in 1987</u>
More developed	Male	30	49
	Female	22	39
Less developed	Male	9	11
	Female	5	7

54. The higher drop-out rates of girls are partly for reasons connected with marriage and duties in the home; they also reflect insufficient guidance on occupational possibilities and inequalities in the recruitment to occupations. Similarly, inequalities of achievement during school age are closely related to external factors, such as differences in methods of bringing up boys and girls in the home and traditional conditions in the community. A number of studies show that the achievement of girls as compared with that of boys, given equal educational treatment, is lower in mathematics and the physical sciences than that of boys; however, a growing number of other studies show that the situation may be changing with more equitable treatment and growing self-confidence among girls. <sup>4/</sup> Other

<sup>4/</sup> See discussion in John P. Keeves, "Differences between the sexes in mathematics and science courses", The Education of Women, special issue of International Review of Education, vol. XIX, No. 1 (1973), pp. 47-63; see also New Society, vol. 27, No. 589 (17 January 1974), p. 136, and J. S. King, Women and Work; Sex Differences in Society, Manpower Paper No. 10 (London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1974), pp. 8-14.

findings indicate that the achievement of girls is in many cases better than that of boys in the other subjects of the average curriculum. The differences seem due to the way parents behave towards boys and girls in their early years and the toys and kinds of tasks given to them.

55. Thus, equality of achievement would require special programmes for girls in order to correct such biases. It seems doubtful whether universal action of this kind is feasible today. However, the time is ripe for the provision of more adequate systems of selection and guidance, the setting up of pilot projects to lead the way and the introduction into school curricula variations that will maximize female contributions to development, both personal and national, without creating discriminating conditions.

56. The notion of equality of opportunity, though a more valid concept than simple equality of enrolment, needs supplementation. The capacity to take advantage of opportunities at any particular time in the educational field is itself conditioned by the educational treatment previously received and the factors governing achievement. 5/

57. The achievement of numerical equality in male and female enrolment would not necessarily be the best means of "achieving the integration of women as full and equal partners with men in the total development effort and eliminating discrimination on account of sex". 6/ This is so because the distribution of enrolment among the three levels may be numerically out of balance with development needs and, to further overexpand a particular type of education in the name of equality would add to unemployment and frustration. Secondary and higher education in many developing countries is, in fact, overexpanded in relation to employment possibilities, while adult illiteracy grows for lack of elementary education.

58. A development approach to such a situation might be to create parity of enrolment and achievement for the first level and equality of opportunity for the other levels, though each national system would have to strike its own long-term educational balance. This would also accord with the findings of the International Commission on the Development of Education which recommended that "universal basic education in a variety of forms, depending on possibilities and needs, be the top priority for the educational policies in the seventies". 7/ Giving priority to the task of providing the mass of women and girls living in acute educational poverty with at least minimum information and skills would not involve relaxing the pressure against inequalities of opportunity between the sexes in the total educational system, especially in the training of women for specialities in science, industry, agriculture, the professions and commerce.

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5/ For a further discussion of these questions see The Education of Women, International Review of Education, vol. XIX, No. 1 (1973).

6/ Economic and Social Council resolution 1851 (LVI), para. 1.

7/ Edgar Faure, ed., Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow (Paris, UNESCO, 1972), p. 192.

### C. Literacy and adult education

59. The inequality between the sexes in literacy that reflects past disparities in access to education remains especially acute in Asia and Africa though, as can be seen from annex I, table 4 (E/CONF.66/3/Add.3), some improvement took place between 1960 and 1970. The published statistics for countries and regions do not show the over-all percentages of women's participation in adult education. Information for 66 countries issued by UNESCO in 1970 showed that women in general have the same access as men, while there were also some special facilities for women. Statistics on the participation of women in literacy courses in 44 countries showed that in five countries the percentage was very low; in 16 countries women were still underrepresented, comprising no more than 35 per cent of the participants; in the rest there was strong female representation. <sup>8/</sup> In the UNDP/UNESCO Experimental Literacy Programme the percentage of women participants has varied from country to country according to the environment and type of employment opportunities to which each project has been geared. In all, however, over 50 per cent of the participants have been women. <sup>9/</sup>

### D. Technical and vocational training

60. A study on technical and vocational training issued in 1968 and prepared with the collaboration of ILO set out for 46 countries the percentage of girls who had entered such training around 1964. The conclusion was that:

"In most of the States and Territories which replied to the questionnaire, the present position of boy and girl students in technical and vocational education is still marked by a far-reaching numerical and sectoral imbalance and bears witness to the fact that the opportunities open to girls in technical and vocational education are still far from equal to those enjoyed by boys. Moreover, it should be noted that the increase in girls in over-all enrolment is much larger at the skilled-worker training level than at that of the technician; that is to say that they are in an even less favourable position as regards training for jobs and trades requiring a higher level of qualifications." <sup>10/</sup>

The report also stated that, in general, the economically more developed countries, where the volume of enrolment in technical and vocational education was large, had the highest percentages of girl students. Nevertheless, it also stated:

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<sup>8/</sup> UNESCO, "Equality of access of women to literacy" (ED/MD/14, 1970), p. 14.

<sup>9/</sup> UNESCO, "The experimental World Literacy Programme and its global evaluation; interim report" (18/C/68, 1974).

<sup>10/</sup> UNESCO, "Comparative study on access of girls and women to technical and vocational education" (ED/MD/3, 1968), pp. 27 and 94.

"Old countries and new nations, some economically developed countries and others only now developing, have sometimes very nearly the same percentages of girls undergoing technical and vocational education." 11/

61. The participation of both women and men in vocational and technical education is naturally conditioned by the employment possibilities which make the training effective. Information is available for individual countries on the percentage of females in vocational and technical education, but it is not computed by UNESCO for regions and the world owing to difficulties of definitions. 12/ The current statistics by individual countries show considerable variation. For example, in 1971, the percentage of women receiving such education was 2 per cent in Niger, 6 per cent in Afghanistan, 9 per cent in Chad, 18 per cent in Morocco, 20 per cent in Cuba, 21 per cent in Ghana, 23 per cent in Iraq, 26 per cent in Pakistan, 27 per cent in Switzerland, 30 per cent in Kenya, 32 per cent in Central African Republic, 34 per cent in Saudi Arabia, 40 per cent in Costa Rica, 46 per cent in the United Kingdom, 48 per cent in France, 50 per cent in West Malaysia and 51 per cent in Venezuela.

62. In-depth studies have been undertaken by UNESCO with the co-operation of ILO in Argentina, Ivory Coast, Lebanon, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. The results are contained in a summary report on the relation between educational and employment possibilities for women, which states:

"The promotion of technical and vocational education and, more broadly, of job-training schemes for young people and adults have not met with the expected success. Although in the Argentine Republic the increase in numbers is considered satisfactory, in the other countries the enrolment in studies of this type represents only a small portion of the in-school population. In all cases studied, training programmes did not appear capable, either at present or according to projections, of meeting sectoral economic and social development needs." 13/

#### E. Juridical factors and public attitudes

63. The past 25 years have shown remarkable progress in the recognition by Governments that equality of treatment of the sexes is part of the right to education. In this process, an important role has been played by the United Nations and UNESCO through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the recommendations of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and the UNESCO Convention and Recommendation on Non-Discrimination in Education, which have served well their purpose of stimulating the necessary legal attention to this subject. The UNESCO Committee on Conventions and Recommendations in Education reported in 1972

11/ Ibid.

12/ UNESCO, Statistical Yearbook, 1973, pp. 162 and 188.

13/ UNESCO, ED/74/WS/56, p. 147.

that "with the exception of three States parties to the Convention which do not answer the question concerning the admission of pupils, all the others indicate in their reports that there is no legal discrimination in this matter". 14/

64. The review made by UNESCO and ILO of adult education and the training of women and girls also found no legal discriminatory obstacles to equality among the sexes. Here too, however, the problem is one of de facto inequality. A recent ILO report states:

"Acceptance of the principle of non-discrimination has not always been followed by measures to promote true equality and to overcome the prejudices and other obstacles in the way of the employment of women. Even in the advanced countries, where significant progress has been made in the emancipation of women, complex problems have arisen in attempts to secure them greater equality of access to employment and to vocational training, and even equality in remuneration. Old prejudices against the employment of women, although dying away, still persist in many cases; job openings for girls and women tend to be in the lower-level, least skilled and less well paid occupations; many opportunities for vocational training are available only to men." 15/

65. International instruments and recommendations show increasing recognition of the difficulty that parity of enrolment is not necessarily consistent with over-all development objectives, since the males with whom parity is obtained may be in archaic and dead-end forms of education. The UNESCO General Conference of 1972 amended the title of its programme from "Equality of access of girls and women to education" to "Equality of educational opportunity for girls and women".

66. Continued and accelerated pressure on public opinion, educational administrations and employers is required to secure de facto implementation of juridical rights and of the clause of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that affirms the right to universal compulsory education. A further development would be to ensure that legal instruments and provisions dealing with areas of total development where educational contribution is particularly vital, contain appropriate clauses on women's education. 16/

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14/ UNESCO, "Committee on Conventions and Recommendations in Education: second report" (17 C/15), paras. 42, 43, 44, 52 and 53.

15/ Women Workers in a Changing World: Preliminary Report (Geneva, ILO, 1973), p. 60.

16/ An example would be legislation on family planning. As Helvi Sipilä states in "Third world woman: master of her own destiny" (UNICEF News, No. 76 (July 1973), pp. 4-7): "The very strong interrelationship between the educational level of the mother and the size of the family comes out very clearly, (in national studies undertaken for the United Nations by over 50 Governments) and in the developing countries even the transition from illiteracy to a few years of primary education is of notable significance." See also Maureen Woodhall, "Investment in women: a reappraisal of the concept of human capital", International Review of Education, vol. XIX, No. 1 (1973), pp. 9-29.

#### F. Obstacles to equality

67. The main obstacles to equality in education between the sexes fall under the following headings: (a) discriminatory clauses in legislation, administrative instruments and national education plans that limit the access of girls and women to education; (b) de facto discrimination incorporated in traditional attitudes and practices of parents, schools and training institutions; (c) an inadequate number of school places even where de jure and de facto discrimination has been overcome; (d) prevailing expectations of the gains obtainable from education; (e) severe poverty in many homes that particularly affects girls because of their involvement in survival activities in the household, such as looking after the younger children, fetching water and helping to keep the family clothed and fed.

68. Elimination of legal discrimination often depends on specific resource allocation. De facto discrimination may be more difficult to correct. Schools for girls, for example, may have less adequate facilities and lower quality teaching than schools for boys. The report of the UNESCO Committee on Conventions and Recommendations in Education states that:

"The impression is gained that in most cases the separate schools provide equivalent courses, are staffed by teachers holding similar qualifications, have premises and equipment of the same standard and enable girls to take the same subjects and obtain the same certificates of the co-educational schools." <sup>17/</sup>

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Nevertheless, the whole area of possible discrimination in the facilities in separate schools needs to be kept under review.

69. De facto discrimination may also take the form of curriculum rigidity, lack of guidance in vocational education and failure to provide the extra facilities and services girls may need in order to attend school because of local conditions and attitudes. These may include communal transport to school, more women teachers, free uniforms and suitable lodgings in boarding schools. Prejudice shown by headmasters and teachers expressed in the form of failure to give sufficient opportunities for learning or adequate appreciation of attainment also constitutes de facto discrimination.

70. At the adult level, the traditional attitudes of prejudices of employers, male superintendents and recruitment officers towards the employment of women can affect the supply of training places for women. Hidden discrimination in the form of outright ignorance and prejudice also plays a role.

71. As regards the supply of additional places for education and training, targets in national plans are normally set for the combined sexes. However, some countries have established separate targets for the universal primary education of girls.

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<sup>17/</sup> UNESCO, "Committee on Conventions and Recommendations in Education: second report" (17 C/15), para. 53.



Provided no discrimination is exercised in matters of allocation of resources and necessary special facilities for girls, separate targets have the value of drawing attention to the lag in female enrolment and of setting time schedules and dates for its elimination. However, this practice has to be kept under careful review in order to guard against its use as an instrument of discrimination.

72. The fourth obstacle to equality in education - prevailing expectations of the gains obtainable from education - is mainly the result of disfunctions in current educational systems. Most rural families, the bulk of the population in the developing countries, see the formal school system as a means of social mobility for at least one member of the family away from work in the fields. This chance is given to boys rather than girls, since it is currently expected that boys are more likely to succeed. Indeed this expectation is often borne out in fact owing to existing conditions. Career expectations are seldom realized because of the lack of salaried or wage-paid employment, but they remain active. A further factor is that, although education increases a girl's dowry, it often delays her marriage. This may be desirable from a demographic point of view, but her family may feel otherwise.

73. Educators today are giving increased attention to devising forms of rural education which would raise the productivity and welfare of rural families as a whole in situ rather than encourage migration to urban shantytowns, where urban poverty is frequently worse, particularly for the family and for women, than poverty in traditional rural surroundings. Women and girls would benefit greatly from such new educational programmes, and as a result could contribute greatly to raising rural standards of living and production. However, this view is not normally shared by the villagers themselves; nor have adequate teaching and learning patterns been yet designed and adopted for introduction over large areas:

74. The last but not the least important of the obstacles listed to equality in education was poverty. While education alone cannot eliminate poverty, an increase of basic education is a necessary condition for an integrated attack on it. The fact that masses of women in the developing countries and regions are deprived of basic education feeds the vicious circle of under-development, low productivity and poor health and welfare conditions. The contribution of women to total development requires therefore the breaking of this vicious circle wherever the possibility presents itself. The lack of well-defined and planned programmes for rural development which include the education of women is one of the most persistent obstacles to equality of opportunities for females.

75. The relation between educational equality and low national income can be seen from the following table:

Enrolment of girls as a percentage of total  
first and second level enrolments

<u>Countries by GNP per capita (in dollars)</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>First level (per cent)</u>	<u>Second level (per cent)</u>
Up to 120	1970	38	28
120-250	1970	44	29
251-750	1970	45	41
751-1,500	1970	49	45
Over 1,500	1970	49	48

Along with mass poverty, elements of cultural and religious tradition dominate the scene within the first group of countries.

76. To the obstacles that have been discussed should be added insufficient mobilization of public opinion. There is a lack of up-to-date information about inequality of educational opportunity and the reasons for it. Facts on the causes of existing disparities at the national and international levels are still far from adequate despite the valuable country studies and pilot projects which have been undertaken by UNESCO in co-operation with Member States and with assistance from ILO and UNICEF in specialized areas. (See E/CN.6/580.) Research efforts are also needed on how to increase women's contribution to total development through equality of educational opportunity. Current educational concepts such as life-long education, intermittent education, minimum learning packages designed for local needs and compensatory cycles should be applied to the problems of inequality.

77. An attack on the problems of poverty, will not offer the whole solution, since inequalities in education on the basis of sex still persist in the richer developed countries, though to a lesser degree than in the developing countries. The Dean of Smith College recently pointed out that the percentage of women in academic posts in the United States of America was higher 50 years ago. She asks, "Why is it that women received 43 per cent of the B.A. degrees, 36 per cent of the M.A. degrees and only 13 per cent of the Ph.D. degrees in 1968?" Why indeed? Apparently, women in general, even highly educated women, are reared both at home and in school in a manner to suppress their highest capabilities. 18/

78. The problem of achieving equal educational opportunities for girls and women is clearly world-wide. Its solution calls for short-term remedial educational measures, long-term action to reshape many aspects of formal and non-formal education and a critical look at the informal education given in the home by parents.

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18/ Alice B. Dickinson, "Smith academic women", Smith Alumnae Quarterly (Northampton, Massachusetts), vol. LXV, No. 2 (February 1974), p. 8; and Jessie Bernard, Women and the Public Interest (Chicago, Aldine Atherton, 1971), pp. 125-126.

### III. EMPLOYMENT AND CONDITIONS OF WORK <sup>1/</sup>

#### A. Women in the work force

79. Women make up more than one third of the world's economically active population and 46 out of every 100 women of working age (15-64 years) are in the labour force. These figures understate the picture, since many women who work (e.g., unpaid family helpers) are not counted as economically active in many countries. Nearly two thirds of working women live in the less developed regions.

80. Despite variations between the growth rate of the female and the male labour force in different parts of the world, there is a general trend towards an increase in the female participation rate and in the role of women in the total work force. There are estimated to be about 562 million women among the labour force of 1,637 million persons in 1975, and the distribution of these economically active women between more developed and less developed regions is estimated as follows:

Region	<u>Economically active women (millions)</u>	<u>Percentage of world total</u>
World	561.6	100.0
More developed regions	198.3	35.3
Europe	71.9	12.8
USSR	65.4	11.6
Northern America	34.1	6.1
Japan	21.6	3.8
Temperate South America	3.3	0.6
Australia and New Zealand	2.0	0.4
Less developed regions	363.3	64.7
East Asia (excluding Japan)	158.7	28.3
South Asia	142.1	25.3
Africa	45.6	8.1
Latin America (excluding temperate South America)	16.2	2.9
Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand)	0.7	0.1

<sup>1/</sup> This chapter is based on ILO, "Equality of Opportunity and treatment for Women Workers", Report VIII for the sixtieth session of the International Labour Conference, 1975.

81. In the United States of America, the percentage of women workers among all women aged 16 years and over increased from 34 per cent in 1950 to 43 per cent in 1971, and women made up 38 per cent of the total work force in 1972 as against 30 per cent in 1950. In Japan, there has been a dramatic rise in the number of women in employment during the postwar period. In 1972, women workers represented 38 per cent of the country's entire labour force and 48 per cent of the female population aged 15 years and over. In recent years there have been notable increases in women's employment in Western European countries (e.g., Switzerland and the Netherlands) where their share in the work force has traditionally been low. In Eastern Europe, women are encouraged to exercise their right to work and they play a highly important role in economic life. In Hungary, women constituted 42 per cent of the work force in 1971 as against 38 per cent in 1963. In Bulgaria, at the end of 1971, women in employment comprised 46 per cent of the total economically active population. In the USSR, women now make up a little over 50 per cent of the total labour force, and in Romania and the German Democratic Republic they represent nearly 50 per cent. In the less developed countries, the great bulk of the female labour force is in agriculture (about 90 per cent in some countries in Africa); the modern industrial sector absorbing only a very small number and a very low percentage of the labour force, especially in Africa.

82. The proportion of the world's female population in the labour force in 1975 is estimated to be 28 per cent (34 per cent in the more developed countries and 26 per cent in the less developed ones), indicating that the rates of participation in the labour force of women are lower than those of men in all age groups. In general, the rates of participation of women are expected to increase slightly more than those of men in some regions (Europe, Northern America, temperate South America, Australia and New Zealand) and remain the same in others (Japan, East Asia and the less developed areas of Latin America and Oceania). The male work force is expected to increase much faster than the female in the USSR and slightly faster in Africa.

83. Unemployment has affected women along with men. Unemployment rates for women exceeded those for men at the beginning of the last quarter of 1973 in a number of industrialized countries, including Australia, Canada, Sweden and the United States of America. Nevertheless, the female rate of participation in the labour force has shown a strong upward trend in these countries in recent years. In many developing countries, there is evidence of much hidden unemployment, particularly among women, although in many cases no reliable data are available.

84. In general, the occupations in which women workers are concentrated are not the same as those in which men are concentrated. In spite of a tendency for women to move into new types of work, in most countries women are concentrated in a limited number of occupational areas (traditional "women's" occupations), usually at relatively low levels of skill, responsibility and pay. Almost everywhere, there remains a clear division of labour by sex. While the line of demarcation may vary with time and place, the persistence of this distinction is a highly significant factor in the integration of women in economic life.

Married women and mothers at work

85. There is also a trend towards an increase in the number and proportion of married women and working mothers in the work force. In many countries over one third of all married women are economically active and married women make up over half of the female labour force. About 10 years ago the increase was largely made up of married women beyond the usual childbearing years. More recently there has been an upturn in the employment of younger married women in a good many countries.

86. For example, in Canada in 1972 married women made up 57 per cent of the female labour force and one third of all married women in the working age group were in the labour force as compared with one fifth in 1962; it is estimated that 1 million Canadian children have mothers who go out to work. In Japan in 1972, 46 per cent of all women workers were married and an additional 10 per cent were widowed or divorced, a distinct change from the situation in 1960 when only 25 per cent of all women workers were married. In the USSR and Eastern Europe the number of married women in employment and their proportion among economically active women are both very high. In Poland, the percentage of married women among female workers, less than 20 per cent in 1950, rose to about 70 per cent in 1970; in 1973 about half of them had children under 16 years of age. In Bulgaria, in 1971, 85 per cent of all employed women were married. In the developing countries, comparative statistical data are lacking but there is a heavy concentration of women in rural areas where, in many cases, the earnings and production of women are essential to family maintenance. In Africa, for example, it has been estimated that eight tenths to nine tenths of the women live and work in rural areas and that they perform three fifths to four fifths of the agricultural work of the continent.

87. While there has been an undeniable expansion of child care facilities and services, there is still an over-all shortage everywhere.

Attitudes towards the employment of women

88. Despite trends towards an increase in female employment, attitudes towards the employment of women, especially married women and working mothers, remain ambivalent in a great many countries and parts of the world. These cultural attitudes are reinforced by political constraints and a general unwillingness to support the costs of the social infrastructure needed to make women's right to work effective. Also, national studies, surveys and reports show evidence of stubbornly persisting discrimination. This is particularly marked as regards equal pay for equal work, but equal pay is only one aspect of the wider question of equality of opportunity and treatment for women workers. A number of Governments have come to the conclusion that a multipronged approach on a broad front is essential if further progress is to be achieved. Much discrimination is hard to track down. This is especially true of women's advancement in economic life and their opportunities for further education, training and promotion on the basis of their individual merits. In many countries measures have been taken to develop more positive social attitudes and a more favourable climate of opinion regarding the employment of women at their level of qualifications and experience.

These measures include, for example, various campaigns carried out through national, area and local study groups, seminars or workshops with the participation of men and women, through the mass media, through the efforts of trade unions and through approaches to employers.

#### Maternity protection and protective legislation

89. Women have a basic right to maternity protection and most Governments recognize this right and have taken steps to introduce measures to make it meaningful in terms of paid maternity leaves, nursing breaks and prevention of discrimination during pregnancy and after child birth. Nevertheless, the standards of protection are not always high enough and there are gaps in coverage; rural women are at a particular disadvantage.

90. There is a seeming conflict between protective legislation for women (e.g., restrictions on their working at night) and equality of opportunity and treatment for them in economic life. There are different points of view on this matter.

91. Two things are clear: maternity protection is a right and a must, and legislation designed to protect women's health in relation to her function of reproduction, provided it is based on scientific evidence, can hardly be regarded as discriminatory in a pejorative sense.

92. Many countries have been taking a fresh look at other special protective legislation applying exclusively to women, a structure built up over many years and therefore somewhat obsolescent. In some countries of Western Europe and in North America, the view is now taken that the same standards of protection should apply, as far as possible, to men and women alike. In some other countries, the opinion has been expressed that protective standards for women should be strengthened and that such standards should not be regarded as discriminatory in terms of employment and occupation. It is not easy to strike a balance between equality and discrimination since, as mentioned, some special measures for women are dictated by their functions of reproduction and maternity.

#### The establishment of national machinery

93. During the past decade there has been an interest in the establishment of some kind of governmental focal point for drawing attention to the constant and changing opportunities, needs and problems of women workers and for promoting the evolution of co-ordinated policies and activities relating to the employment and conditions of work of women.

94. A number of countries have established women's bureaux within national departments of labour and social affairs. There has been increasing recognition that women and their work belong in the mainstream of the labour force and that the task of the women's bureaux is to assist in their integration into economic life on a footing of equality. In the United States of America, a women's bureau was set up in the Department of Labor as far back as 1920; its main functions are to

draw up policies and standards for improving the opportunities and conditions of women workers, to serve as a source of information on the employment and status of women workers and to promote a climate of public opinion favourable to women's employment on a basis of equal opportunity with men. In Canada, a Women's Bureau was established in the Federal Department of Labour in 1954 to bring about wider understanding of the role and contribution of women in the work force. In Latin America, many countries have women's bureaux or departments or sections within the ministries of labour and social welfare or of social security. Their functions vary from country to country but the tendency has been to widen their tasks, to make them more positive from the standpoint of women's employment as distinct from the enforcement of legislation relating to women and minors, and to distinguish more clearly between the needs and problems of women on the one hand and of minors on the other.

95. In Africa, a number of countries have expressed interest in the establishment of a women's bureau. In Asia, a number of countries have women's bureaux or similar arrangements for handling women's problems. The oldest is that established in Japan in 1947 within the Labour Ministry. In Europe, the pattern of arrangements for dealing with the problems of women workers is more varied. A number of countries (e.g., France, Netherlands), have advisory committees on the employment of women. The Nordic countries tend to have no special governmental units dealing with women workers' problems as such, but in Norway the Council for Equality is served by a research staff. In the USSR and other countries of Eastern Europe, the trade unions play an important part in ensuring equal opportunities for women and promoting their welfare.

96. Many countries have recently established national advisory committees or councils to review problems relating to women's employment and conditions. Italy has set up a National Commission on Women's Employment Problems.

Most of these various arrangements provide for systematic consultation among employers, workers' organizations and other organizations.

#### B. Obstacles to equality and measures designed to overcome them

97. The obstacles to be overcome in achieving the goal of practical equality of opportunity and treatment of the sexes in the field of employment and occupation can be summarized briefly as follows:

(a) Societal discrimination which starts in the cradle, with the early acquisition of different sex roles;

(b) Continuing distinctions in the early and later education and training of girls and women. If girls are handicapped from the start by lesser education and training than boys, as is the case in a great many countries, their integration in the work force is bound to be on an inferior level and their career development is bound to be limited;

(c) Continuing distinctions in the vocational guidance, placement and employment of girls and women, resulting in an imbalance in their integration in the work force, and the persistence of the concept of "men's work" and "women's work";

(d) Continuing practical barriers to their entry into certain fields of occupation and employment;

(e) Continuing practical barriers to their entry into employment at levels consistent with their qualifications and capacities;

(f) Continuing prejudices and misconceptions on the part of employers as to women's abilities and inabilities as workers;

(g) Continuing practical obstacles to their promotion and career advancement;

(h) Continuing difficulties as regards the full application of the principle of equal pay and status for work of equal value;

(i) Continuing problems of participation in work life on a footing of equality without discrimination; and

(j) Continuing apathy on the part of society, combined with a reluctance to face realistically the very complex and difficult issues involved in achieving equality of opportunity and treatment for women workers.

98. Measures designed to overcome these and related obstacles include the following:

(a) Constitutional and legislative approach. Inclusion of the principle of equal rights for men and women, including the right to work, as a constitutional right; adoption of laws or regulations containing the principle of equality of opportunity and effective provisions for enforcement; establishment of the individual's right to appeal before appropriate juridical bodies; abrogation or repeal of laws with discriminatory provisions; ratification and full implementation of the relevant international labour conventions and acceptance and full implementation of the relevant recommendations;

(b) Administrative approach. Creation of a central unit for co-ordinating research, planning, programming and action on women workers' opportunities, needs and problems; development of systematic arrangements for consulting employers and workers' organizations and other organizations concerned; dissemination of information regarding all aspects of women's employment and conditions of work;

(c) Collective bargaining approach. Elimination of any provisions discriminating against women on the basis of sex; inclusion in collective agreements of explicit provisions for equality; joint enforcement of equality provisions such as equal pay for work of equal value; inclusion of women in grading or job classification committees involved in collective negotiations of grades;



- (d) Job analysis and evaluation approach. Development, improvement and use of more scientific, rational and objective systems and methods of job analysis and evaluation; importance of objective and positive approach to grading; role of government; role of employers' organizations and trade unions; active participation of women trade unionists; training of women trade unionists to control the application of job evaluation techniques;
- (e) Special action by employers and trade unions. Encouragement to employers to abolish discriminatory practices based on sex; public and trade union pressure to ensure equity; special trade union and employer meetings and conferences to discuss elimination of discrimination; technical seminars on such questions as equal opportunities for promotion and objective appraisal of job content and occupational classification;
- (f) Educational and promotional approach. Planned efforts to promote public understanding of and support for the equality principle, a more sympathetic attitude towards women workers and a better appreciation of the full value of their work; wide participation in such efforts, including non-governmental organizations; campaigns and effective use of public information media;
- (g) Need for necessary infrastructure. Efforts on the part of Governments to build up the necessary infrastructure to make it possible for working parents to combine their family and work responsibilities (especially child-care services);
- (h) Research approach. Planned and continuous research and factual studies to bring to light the facts regarding the application of the equality principle, to identify and study the problems and to make information available about their solution; studies of closely related problems, such as those mentioned in the Equal Remuneration Recommendation (No. 90) of ILO, 1951; other special studies and hearings; co-operation of universities, women's organizations and other appropriate bodies in planned research projects;
- (i) More active participation of women in trade unions. Measures to encourage women to join and participate more actively in positions of responsibility in trade unions and to work with their male colleagues for elimination of discrimination;
- (j) Enforcement approach. Desirability of equal opportunities commissions with effective enforcement measures and appeals procedures; measures to strengthen labour inspectorates to ensure and improve enforcement of statutory and other standards relating to fair employment practices and non-discrimination on the basis of sex;
- (k) Co-ordinated approach. Interaction of the various approaches with a view to ensuring full and rapid implementation of the non-discrimination principle in all sectors of the economy and need for co-ordination of all efforts, nationally and locally, including over-all evaluation and appraisal of results.

99. More effective integration of women in the work force at all levels on a footing of equality with men can make a vast contribution to development, especially

but by no means exclusively in the third world. Vigorous and co-ordinated action to this end on a broad front should be made a matter of urgency and priority.

C. International standards adopted by the International Labour Organisation

100. ILO Conventions and Recommendations cover most of the main areas of labour and social policy and have been widely ratified or accepted as guidelines for national law and practice. Almost all of these standards apply to women as well as to men without distinction, whether they relate to employment and unemployment, vocational guidance and training, conditions of work, social security and occupational health and safety or industrial relations.

101. Relatively few of the instruments that make up the ILO's International Labour Code apply exclusively to women. Those which do are of two main types - promotional and protective. The promotional instruments are aimed primarily at overcoming economic and social discrimination against women in the world of work. The protective standards are concerned with providing them with the special protection they require because of their biological functions of reproduction and maternity.

102. The principle of non-discrimination has been expressly stated in a number of instruments. The Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111) of 1958 (ratified by 85 States) lays down the principle of non-discrimination on the ground, inter alia, of sex and calls for a declaration of national policy of non-discrimination. The Convention on Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value (No. 100) of 1951 (ratified by 84 States) commits ratifying Governments to the principle of equal pay, to its implementation in sectors under their control and to the active encouragement of its application in the private sector. The Employment Policy Convention (No. 122) of 1964 (ratified by 50 Governments) provides that Governments shall pursue, as a major goal, policies to promote full, productive and freely chosen employment, with the widest opportunities for each worker, irrespective of sex, to qualify and use his or her fullest abilities in a job for which he or she is well suited. The human resources development instrument to be adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 1975 contains a special section on the prevention of discrimination against girls and women in all forms of vocational guidance, initial and further training and retraining.

103. The maternity protection instruments, in particular the Revised Maternity Protection Convention (No. 103) of 1952 (ratified by 15 States) set down specific standards relating to the period of maternity leave, the provision of benefits in cash and in kind during such leave, medical care, nursing breaks and the prohibition of dismissal during the authorized period of maternity leave.

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