

WOMEN AND GLOBALISATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword

Acknowledgements

Acronyms

I. INTRODUCTION

II. POVERTY AND GENDER EQUITY

- A. Defining and measuring poverty
- B. Poverty trends in the ESCAP region
- C. Gender equity
- D. Poverty and vulnerability
- E. Policy implications

III. FEMINISATION OF EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

- A. Globalisation and employment consequences
- B. Trends in the economic participation of women
- C. Policy implications

IV. SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND SOCIAL MOBILIZATION

- A. Trends defining women's social integration in the ESCAP region
- B. Trends in social mobilisation for women
- C. Policy implications

V. SOCIAL PROTECTION, SOCIAL SECURITY, SOCIAL SAFETY NETS

- A. Globalization, crisis and demographic trends and challenges to SP systems
- B. Types of SP and SSN schemes in the region
- C. Problems of funding, targeting and monitoring
- D. Policy options for strengthening gender responsiveness in SP and SSNs

VI. WOMEN AND ICT

- A. ICT and the global context
- B. ICT and poverty alleviation
- C. Social Empowerment of Women
- D. Lessons learnt and policy consideration

References

Boxes

Tables

Table I.1. Incidence of extreme poverty by subregions, 1990-1998

Table I.2. Percentage of population below national poverty lines in selected countries, 1990-2000

Table I.3: Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education

Table I.4: Gender equality and empower women

Table I.5 Maternal health

Table II.1. Crude activity rates for Asia, sub-regions and selected countries and areas, by sex, 1960-1995

Table II.2: Percentage distribution of the economically active population by sector for Asia, sub-regions and selected countries and areas, by sex, 1960 and 1990

Table II.3. Labour force participation rates of women in Asia and the Pacific

Table II.4. Share of women in employment in EPZs and non-EPZ manufacturing

Table II.5. Female share of total employment in the 1990s (per cent)

Table II.6. Trends in manufacturing employment and share of women workers

Table II.7: Female wages as percentage of male wages

Table II.8 Unemployment rates by sex

Table II.9. Percentage change in employment in the Republic of Korea

Table V.1: Social risks and informal SP strategies

Table VI.1. Estimated and projected Internet users in Asian countries.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Globalization -- the growing integration of economies and societies around the world -- is a complex process that is variously affecting different regions, countries and areas and their populations. To some, globalization is an inevitable, technologically driven process that is increasing economic and political relations between people of different countries and areas. For them, it is seen not only as a natural phenomenon, but also as something good for the world. To others, there is a much deeper concern about the related challenges and possible risks associated with the globalization process. It is widely perceived that the process produces both "winners and losers".

The complex and contradictory impacts of globalization are notably marked in the situation of women:

- In many countries in the ESCAP region, the global pursuit of profit has enhanced employment opportunities for women, where previously they had not existed. Employment has facilitated some degree of economic independence for many women. This, in turn has generated the self-esteem that comes from such independence.
- The migration of women in search of better employment opportunities has helped to ease the problem of poverty in many cases and meet the labour needs of a number of countries in the region. More remittances are generated for the home economy and there is also a greater possibility of technology transfer and enhanced skills formation.
- Globalization has also contributed to the creation of new associations of women and the strengthening of their networks to offer mutual support and resources. The global social movement of human rights, in affirming women's equality, have provided women's groups in the region with international standards to rise against adverse national or local codes. Instantaneous communications have facilitated the formation of alliances and coalitions, lessened isolation for women in remote or secluded areas, allowed for rapid mobilization over issues and provided support on a global basis.

- In several countries in the region, new information and communications technology (ICT) have improved the access of women to health, microcredit and employment opportunities. Access to ICT among rural women in recent years has been enabling them to participate in economic development through entrepreneurship and small-scale businesses.

However, globalization has further reinforced many existing gender inequalities:

- The traditional sexual division of labour (the location of women in employment to which they are regarded as inherently suited, for example, the caring professions or textiles industries) has been furthered through the addition of new locations and forms of work (services industry, tourism, work in free trade and export process zones). What remains constant is the low economic value accorded to work performed primarily by women in conditions of exploitation, no job security and violations of human rights.
- The shift to more knowledge intensive production has not uniformly impacted women. New jobs have been created but women increasingly have to contend with vulnerable forms of employment. These range between technological redundancy, the casualization/informalization of labour, as well as the health and safety hazards associated with new technology. This is especially severe in transition economies where women had the protection of the socialist state system; the opening up of the market to foreign capital has meant a loss of these rights.
- One major impact of the recent financial crisis, an unintended impact of globalization, was the rapid increase in unemployment as hundreds of small and large firms across the region were forced to close their doors. Women were the first workers to be laid off - both because the industries in which they predominate (e.g. garments) were those most affected by the crisis and because women were less unionized and therefore easier to sack. The unemployment situation was aggravated by increasing numbers of returning migrant labourers, many of whom were women, who were being expelled by countries which were experiencing their own unemployment problems. Moreover, cuts in public social

sector expenditure, that came in the aftermath of the crisis, brought even more hardships, especially for women who have primary responsibility for care of the family.

- Perhaps the most critical of the impacts of globalization on women is the worsening situation of violence against women. One aspect of this deserves urgent attention -- the trafficking of women and girls.

This monograph offers an analysis of the issues facing women in Asia and the Pacific region, particularly in the context of globalization and social development. It also suggests some policy options that could be pursued in order to address the challenges women face.

The structure of this monograph reflects, first, the core goals of social development and, second, the social risks and global opportunities that challenge the realization of these goals. Given the focus of this study, these risks and opportunities will be examined in gender terms. Chapter II looks at poverty and gender inequality, Chapter III the feminisation of employment and unemployment, Chapter IV social integration and social mobilisation, Chapter V social protection, social security and social safety nets and Chapter VI women and ICT. Chapter VII serve as a conclusion.

A substantial portion of the material in the chapters have been drawn from the Theme Study of the fifty-eight session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific entitled “Sustainable social development in a period of rapid globalization: challenges, opportunities and policy options” (United Nations, 2002).

II. POVERTY AND SOCIAL EQUITY

Widespread poverty and excessive inequality remain the principal challenges in the globalization process that has been under way during the last two decades. Even as economies and Governments adjust in order to give a larger role to markets and a smaller role to the State in development, the importance of public action to deal with poverty and vulnerability has increased. It is for this reason that the World Summit for Social Development in 1995 called upon countries to reduce substantially overall poverty and to eradicate extreme poverty. These goals were re-emphasized in a time-bound and measurable framework by the United Nations as core Millennium development goals. These tasks are indeed daunting in the ESCAP region, where in 1998, an estimated 800 million people, or 67 per cent of the world's poor, were living below the international poverty line of \$1 per day per capita at 1993 prices (ESCAP 2001: 140).

This chapter briefly maps out recent trends in poverty and inequality in the ESCAP region, in the light of the Millennium Declaration's target of halving poverty by 2015. The first section provides a brief discussion on current approaches to understanding poverty and vulnerability. The relevant trends of the multiple dimensions of poverty and inequality are identified and discussed. Focus is given to poverty and inequality from a gender perspective. Based on these discussions, a number of policy options are outlined in the final section.

A. Defining and measuring poverty

There is currently broad agreement that the multiple dimensions of poverty cannot be adequately explained or addressed by definitions and measurements based only on income or consumption. The income-consumption approach to poverty fails to show the human development outcomes (Sen 1983; 1990; UNDP, 1997a). In gender terms, moreover, the use of the household as the unit of analysis in poverty measurement, cannot adequately describe women's well-being or lack thereof as a result of intrahousehold inequalities in resource distribution. As some researchers have shown, gender inequality is not necessarily correlated with household poverty (Kabeer 1996; Jackson 1996). Women can be deprived in rich households, and increases in household incomes can co-exist with greater inequality in terms of a woman's well-being.

Poverty is a deprivation of essential assets and opportunities to which every human – male and female - should be entitled. Everyone should have access to basic education and primary health services. Poor households have the right to sustain themselves by their labour and be reasonably rewarded, as well as have some protection from external shocks. These rights and entitlements are understood as “endowments” that people have in any society.

Beyond income and basic services, individuals as well as societies are also poor and tend to remain so if they are not empowered to participate in making the decisions that shape their lives. Poverty is thus better measured in terms of basic education, healthcare, nutrition, water and sanitation, as well as income, employment and wages. In addition, the poor may not have acquired essential assets because they live in remote or resource-poor areas; or because they are vulnerable on account of gender, age, health, living environment or occupation. They may be denied access to assets because they belong to an ethnic minority or a community considered socially inferior, or simply because they are female or have a disability. At a broader level, poverty may stem from situations where gross inequality of assets persists because of vested interests and entrenched power structures. Finally, essential assets may not be available to the poor because of the lack of political will, inadequate governance and inappropriate public policies and programmes.

The entitlements and capabilities framework of Amartya Sen (1990) provides a more useful approach to understanding poverty, as it emphasizes the whole range of means, not just income, available to achieve human capabilities. These means may include personal security and community participation as well as the Human Development Indicators such as literacy, longevity and access to income. Sen’s concept of well-being in the form of choice over capabilities is achieved through a combination of entitlements and endowments. Viewed in this way, poverty and deprivation are a result of entitlement failure, rather than scarcity per se. Furthermore, what is implicit in this approach is the idea of human agency to exercise choice over different combinations of capabilities.

The Human Poverty Indicators of UNDP, which are built on Sen’s framework, is useful to monitor and compare experiences of human poverty over time. These indicators, together with the Gender Development Index, provide the basis for comparing the gendered experiences of well-being and deprivation, including within the household (Cagatay 1998). They also help in for the understanding the magnitude of differences in actual well-being between men and women.

Risk and vulnerability to poverty, especially in the context of rapid globalization, have received renewed attention in recent years. Vulnerability to poverty is an important dimension of poverty and deprivation, but it is also a cause of deprivation. Many individuals, households and population groups, while not currently "in poverty", are vulnerable to events that could easily push them into poverty: a bad harvest, a lost job, an unexpected expense, an illness and an economic downturn. Vulnerability may also be seen as determined by the options available to households and individuals to make a living, the risks they face and their ability to handle such risk.

Recognizing this worldwide situation of poverty and vulnerability, the World Summit for Social Development set as one of its core goals and commitments the eradication of extreme poverty and the reduction of overall poverty. These commitments, however, were not matched with a clear definition of poverty nor appropriate indicators for measuring progress. In September 2000, the United Nations Millennium Summit took these commitments a step further in adopting a set of time-bound and measurable targets to reduce extreme income poverty as well as some major aspects of human poverty. These include the following:

- (a) Between 1990 and 2015, halve the proportion of people whose income is less than \$ 1 a day;
- (b) Between 1990 and 2015, halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger;
- (c) By 2015, ensure that children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling;
- (d) Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015;
- (e) Reduce by two thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate;
- (f) Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio;
- (g) Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the prevalence of malaria and other major diseases;
- (h) Halve by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water;
- (i) By 2020, achieve a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.

B. Poverty trends in the ESCAP region

In the ESCAP region as a whole, poverty, as measured by income/consumption standards, was declining in the 1990s (table I.1). By subregion, poverty reduction in East Asia and the Pacific, including China, was quite significant (27.6 per cent of the population to 15.3 per cent) in the 1990s. However, poverty reduction has been slow in South Asia (reducing the incidence of poverty from 44.0 per cent of the population to 40 per cent) and the incidence of poverty has risen in Central Asia (from 1.6 per cent of the population to 5.1 per cent). The sharp reduction in the incidence of poverty in East Asia and the Pacific as a whole, as well as in China in particular, has meant that the number of people classified as "income poor" in these countries has also fallen quite substantially during the 1990s. However, in South Asia, which is characterized by a large population and a high incidence of poverty, the smaller reduction in poverty incidence has not helped to prevent an increase in the number of income poor. The largest number of poor people is in South Asia, particularly in India. Moreover, between 1996 and 1998, during which time East Asia was afflicted by the 1997/98 financial crisis, poverty rose marginally in the whole of East Asia and significantly in China, resulting in an increase in the number of income poor in those countries. Currently, nearly 800 million people, two thirds of the world's poor, live in the Asian and Pacific region.

Table I.1. Incidence of extreme poverty by subregions, 1990-1998

Percentage of population living below \$1.08 a day (1993 purchasing power parity)										
	Poverty rate (percentage below \$1.08)									
	1987	1990	1993	1996	1998					
East Asia	26.6	27.6	25.2	14.9	15.3					
Excluding China	22.9	18.5	15.9	10.0	11.3					
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	0.2	1.6	4.0	5.1	5.1					
South Asia	44.9	44.0	42.4	42.3	4.0					
Asia and the Pacific		34.3			25.6					

Source: ESCAP based on World Bank, World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking poverty (New York, Oxford University Press, 2000). Aggregate data for Asia and the Pacific, covering East Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific plus South Asia, have been derived by the ESCAP Secretariat

Table I.2 shows the incidence of poverty in 16 countries based on country-specific or "national" poverty lines between 1990 and 2000. It shows that poverty was declining in Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea and Viet Nam. Poverty has increased, however, in eight countries, especially in Indonesia, the Philippines and

Thailand after 1997. Trends in the incidence of poverty, as revealed by the country-specific data, tally with the idea that during the 1990s, which were the years of rapid globalization, the advances registered in the “war against poverty” in a few countries in the Asia and Pacific region have either been weakened or partially reversed.

Table I.2. Percentage of population below national poverty lines in selected countries, 1990-2000

Country	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Bangladesh	47.8 ^a	..	42.7	..	..	..	36.0	..	..	..	34.0
Cambodia	..	..	..	..	39.0	..	..	36.1	..	35.9	..
China	9.4	..	..	..	-	7.1	6.7	5.4	4.6	3.7	..
India	38.9 ^b	..	..	..	36.0	..	..	..	..	26.1	..
Indonesia	15.1	..	..	13.7	..	..	11.3	..	..	18.2	..
Kazakhstan	..	..	..	..	..	..	34.6	43.0	43.4	34.5	31.8
Kyrgyzstan	..	..	..	40.0	..	..	..	51.0	..	..	..
Malaysia	17.1 ^a	..	..	13.4	..	9.6	..	6.8	..	8.1	..
Mongolia	..	..	17.0	24.0	..	36.3	..	..	35.6	..	..
Nepal	41.4 ^c	..	..	..	..	..	42.0	..	..	..	38.0
Pakistan	..	22.1	..	22.4	29.3	..	..	31.0	..	32.6	33.5
Philippines	..	45.2	..	..	40.2	..	..	..	43.0	..	..
Republic of Korea	8.4 ^b	..	..	8.2	..	..	7.0	..	..	..	..
Sri Lanka	..	33.0	..	..	..	..	39.2	..	..	..	..
Thailand	27.2	..	23.2	..	16.3	-	11.4	..	13.0	15.9	..
Viet Nam	..	..	..	58.2	..	..	..	..	37.4	..	32.0

Source: ESCAP, 2001, Manila, World Bank, 2001;

Note: Poverty estimates are based on country-specific poverty lines, expressed in national currencies. Many countries have more than one such poverty line, and efforts have been made to put consistent time series data on the incidence of poverty.

a/ (1989)

b/ (1988)

c/ (1985)

1. Human Poverty

Hunger is a cause as well as a result of poverty. By developing region in the world, there are more chronically hungry people in Asia than anywhere else, according to FAO (MSSRG-FAO 2001). Chronic hunger is defined mainly in terms of caloric intake: people consuming less than the 1,710 - 1,960 kilocalories needed each day to meet the basic minimum requirements for a healthy and active life are considered to be chronically hungry. Many people facing hunger on a daily basis live on approximately 1,300 – 1,500 kilocalories.

In the ESCAP region, the concentrations of the hungry poor are found in Bangladesh, India, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Mongolia. In 2001, it was estimated that 515 million Asians are chronically undernourished, accounting for about two thirds of the world's hungry people. Child malnutrition exacts its highest debilitating toll in the Asian and Pacific region, especially in South Asia. The Millennium Declaration development goals call for a reduction in the number of hungry people by 20 million annually at the global level, if the target of halving the incidence of hunger is to be achieved by 2015; 14 million of those 20 million people annually are to be from the Asian and Pacific region. But this is not happening. Anthropometrically also, over two thirds of the 174 million undernourished children under five years of age in the developing world are Asians. More than half the young children in South Asia are estimated to suffer from protein-energy malnutrition, which is about five times higher than the prevalence in the Western hemisphere, at least three times higher than the prevalence in the Middle East and more than twice that of East Asia. It is currently widely accepted that malnutrition is the major cause of child mortality in developing countries as a whole. What is even more alarming is the high incidence of low birth-weight babies in South Asia.

Importantly, the prevalence of low birth weight babies provides a good indicator of the nutritional status of mothers. The United Nations Commission on Nutrition has rightly warned that nutritionally handicapped infants and children will suffer from handicaps in brain development, thereby having serious repercussions on the intellectual potential of countries in this region.

2. Social Equity

Studies have shown that the status of income equality among most countries in the region appears to have deteriorated rather than improved during the last two decades. But equity is more than the distribution of income and wealth. The distribution of productive assets is important; conventionally, it is described as physical or financial capital such as land, productive inputs, savings and credit. Equity is also about the distribution of human capital such as health and education. Income inequality reflects deeper inequalities in access to opportunities for health, education and production. Equity, therefore, is also about the creation of opportunities for health, education and production, among other things. Improved access to

education and better health enable poor people to contribute more fully to the growth process, and to participate more equitably in the opportunities which growth creates and the in benefits it offers. In short, policies which are good for equity are good for growth, and good at converting growth into poverty reduction.

C. Gender equity

Equity is also about the distribution of opportunities for participation in social and economic life, which is in turn influenced by the distribution of power at various levels: between rich and poor people, men and women, different regions and ethnic groups, to name but a few dimensions. Equity reflects poverty which, as emphasised previously, is more than low incomes and social indicators. Equity is about access to social benefits as well as about the inability to exercise basic human and political rights. Inequity is about the absence of dignity, deprivation in knowledge and communication, environmental impoverishment and the violation of rights.

The term “feminization of poverty” was first coined in 1978 to describe trends in the United States, where it was argued that two thirds of the poor over the age of 16 were women (Pearce 1978). Similar claims over the years have been made for countries in the ESCAP region (ESCAP 2000). ADB and UNDP have also described poverty as having “a women’s face”: of 1.3 billion people in the world living in poverty, 70 per cent are women (UNDP, 1997), two thirds of the poor in Asia are women (ADB, 1995:4). IFAD (1992: 22) found that between the period 1965-1970 and the mid-1980s, the number of rural women living in poverty increased by 48 per cent, while the number of rural men living in poverty increased by 30 per cent in the same period. At the same time, there has been a general perception of an increasing incidence of female headship of households on a global scale and an association of this trend with the “feminization of poverty” (Buvinic and Gupta, 1997).

The “feminization of poverty” concept has become influential in the foundation of development policy and in practices, such as, in targeting of subsidies, for example. The concept implies that:

- (a) Women have a higher incidence of poverty than men;
- (b) Women’s poverty is more severe than that of men;
- (c) There is a trend towards greater poverty among women, particularly associated with rising rates of female headship of household (Cagatay 1998).

However, there are limitations to the full acceptance of this concept based on the following:

- (a) There is a lack of systematic sex-disaggregated data on expenditure and consumption (Marcoux 1997);
- (b) Empirical studies show conflicting conclusions (Buvinic and Gupta 1997; Chant 1997; Quisumbing and others 1995);
- (c) The use of the household as the unit of analysis in poverty measurement does not provide a good predictor of women's well-being because of intra-household inequalities in resource distribution and other institutional biases (recent empirical studies show conflicting conclusions (Buvinic and Gupta 1997; Chant 1997; Quisumbing and others 1995).

Using various indicators such as the Human Development Index, Human Poverty Indicator and the Gender Development Index, researchers have shown that the relationship between women and men, in most countries in this region, is characterized by glaring inequalities (Drèze and Sen 1989; IFAD 2000: Kelkar and others 1999: Jazairy and others 1992). Women tend to fare poorly in relative terms compared with men, even at the household level. Moreover, the gender-based inequality is evident not only in the lack of opportunities for women to develop skills and talents, but also in more fundamental areas such as nutrition, health and survival.

In terms of equity as well, there is a gender disparity in the distribution of opportunities for participation in social and economic life. In many Asian countries, one effect of gender inequality is the remarkably low ratio of females to males. While the worldwide ratio of women to men is 98.5:100, in the Asian region it is 95.7:100. India had 32 million "missing women" in 1986, and China had a somewhat higher estimate of 36 million missing women during the same period. Female infanticide, the neglect of female children and son preference are some of the practices that have led to the excess female mortality and the low ratio of females to males in these countries. However, there are also more subtle and widespread practices that have aggravated the plight of women. The persistence of extremely high levels of gender inequality and female deprivation, and the emerging feminization in agriculture are among the most serious social and economic problems in the region (IFAD 2000).

There is also mounting evidence that gender inequality does not decline with economic growth. For example, South Asian countries have achieved an annual economic growth rate of about 6 per cent over the last two decades. However, South Asia as a region lags behind second to last in the world with respect to social indicators and it suffers from very low levels in other measures of gender-related indicators, namely, the Gender Development Index and the Gender Empowerment Index.

Structural adjustment and globalization are also having effects on women in the region and their roles as producers, mothers, household managers and community organizers (Commonwealth Secretariat 1991; Elson 1992; Ghosh 1993; UNDP 1995). The implications have been typically negative in terms of reduced real incomes and standard of living for most women, along with a greater burden of unpaid work (Ghosh 1999).

One very important area, where negative impacts in gender terms deserve special attention is that of food security. It is a critical issue throughout the countries of South Asia as well as in China and Indonesia and several other parts of the region. Structural adjustment programmes and their attendant processes – emphasis on the export of primary commodities along with cuts in food and other subsidies, the commercialization of agriculture, etc. -- have led to increase in food prices and declining food security, especially in peasant households (Ghosh 1999). It is widely acknowledged in many Asian societies, that when household per capita access to food declines, women and girls face disproportionately excessive cuts in their food consumption.

Perhaps the most critical of the issues related to women's poverty is the many forms of violence against women. One aspect of this deserves urgent attention – the trafficking of women and girls. During the past decade, this form of trafficking has become an issue of growing concern in this region, especially in South-East Asia. It has been conservatively estimated that at least 200,000 to 225,000 women and children from South-East Asia are trafficked annually, a figure representing nearly one third of the global trafficking trade. Women and girls who are victims of this international trade are at an increased risk of further violence, as well as unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection, including infection with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) which cause the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) (IOM 2000).

Two Millennium Declaration targets that specifically address gender inequality concerns are:

- (a) Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015;
- (b) Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio.

The primary indicator to monitor progress in meeting these targets is the ratio of females to males in primary, secondary and tertiary education. The secondary indicators are (a) the ratio of literate females to males among youth 15 to 24 years old (b) the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector and (c) the proportion of seats held by women in the national parliament.

In view of the data available (table 10), it is unlikely that the region as a whole would achieve the Millennium Declaration target of eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education. This is particularly so for Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

Table I.3 Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education

Country by subregion	Primary gross		Secondary gross		Tertiary Gross
	1990-1991	1995-1999	1990-1991	1995-1997	1990-
East and North-East Asia					
China	94	99	78	90	48
Democratic People's Republic of Korea		94x			
Hong Kong, China			105		72
Japan		101		101x	
Macao, China	98		111		48
Mongolia	110	100	114	135	189
Republic of Korea	100	101	96	100	49
North and Central Asia					
Armenia		107		x107	
Azerbaijan	99	99	100	111	69
Georgia	100		97		118
Kazakhstan		100	103	111	
Kyrgyzstan	100	100	102	111	
Russian Federation	100	99x	106	110x	127
Tajikistan	98	98		89	62
Turkmenistan					
Uzbekistan	98	100	91	88x	
South and South-West Asia					
Afghanistan		9	50	34	50
Bangladesh	86	97	46	52x	19
Bhutan		76	25	29x	
India	76	83	57	66	55
Islamic Republic of Iran	92	92	70	90	45
Maldives		98		100x	
Nepal	51	74	40	51x	32
Pakistan	48	70	45	52x	41
Sri Lanka	98	98	108	110	65

Country by subregion	Primary gross		Secondary gross		Tertiary Gross
	1990-1991	1995-1999	1990-1991	1995-1997	1990-
Turkey	94	88	66	71	52
South-East Asia					
Brunei Darussalam	100	95	109	115	115
Cambodia		88	43	60	
Indonesia	96	94	84	87	
Lao People's Democratic Republic	82	82	63	68	50
Malaysia	100	101	107	114	89
Myanmar	97	97	92	103x	
Philippines	100	101	106	106x	137
Singapore	100	98	103	110	
Thailand	98	97	94	97x	69
Viet Nam		97	94	93x	
Pacific					
American Samoa					
Australia		100		103	
Cook Islands		97			
Fiji	100	99	103	102x	
French Polynesia	96		116		
Guam					
Kiribati					
Marshall Islands		99			
Micronesia (Federated States of)					
Nauru		94			
New Caledonia	97		110		
New Zealand		100		105	
Niue		100			
Northern Mariana Islands					
Palau					
Papua New Guinea	84	157	71	65	50
Samoa	109	97	122	112	
Solomon Islands	86	87x	62	67x	
Tonga		97			
Tuvalu		100			
Vanuatu	95	102x	76	78x	

* All figures are expressed in relation to the male average, which is indexed to equal 100. The smaller the figure the bigger the gap; the closer the figure to 100 the smaller the gap and a figure above 100 indicates that the female average is higher than the male average.

1990 figures: United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 1994.

x = Indicates data that refer to years or periods other than those specified in the column heading, differ from the standard definition or refer to only part of the country.

Source: UNIFEM, 2001, The State of the World's Children 2001.
UNESCO, 2000, Education for All 2000 Assessment.

In terms of tertiary level education, a number of countries in North and Central Asia show a ratio of women to men higher than 100 per cent; in South Asia, the male-to-female ratio was generally lower.

As for the secondary indicator, female youth literacy, the overall male and female figures showed nearly universal female youth literacy in South-East Asia, East and North-East Asia, and North and Central Asia; however, the rates in South Asia, were lower.

Data on the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector is very limited (table 10). And on the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments, the available data show very low rates ranging from 2 per cent in Solomon Islands to 26 per cent in Turkmenistan. The targeted rates should, however, be close to 50 per cent (table 10).

Table I.4: Gender equality and empower women

Country By subregion	Ratio of literate female to male 15-24 years old ^{a/}		Share of women in wage employment in the non- agricultural sector ^{b/}	Seats in parliament held by women (as % of total) ^{c/}	
	1990	1999		1992 ^{c/}	2000 ^{d/}
East and North-East Asia					
China	94	97	39	21	21.8
Democratic People's Republic of Korea				20	20.1
Hong Kong, China	101	101	42x		
Japan			39x		<10
Macao, China					
Mongolia	78	87		4	7.9
Republic of Korea	100	100	39x		3.7
North and Central Asia					
Armenia	100	100			3
Azerbaijan					12
Georgia					7
Kazakhstan					11
Kyrgyzstan					
Russian Federation	100	100			6
Tajikistan	100	100			
Turkmenistan					26
Uzbekistan	95	97			7
South and South-West Asia					
Afghanistan					
Bangladesh	59	65		10	9.1
Bhutan				0	2
India	74	81	15x	7	8.9
Islamic Republic of Iran	89	95		3	4.9
Maldives	100	101			6.3
Nepal	41	54			6.4
Pakistan	51	64	8x	1	2
Sri Lanka	98	99	44x	5	4.9
Turkey	91	95	10x	2	4
South-East Asia					
Brunei Darussalam	101	101			
Cambodia	40	55		4	8.2
Indonesia	97	99	38x	12	11.4
Lao People's Democratic Republic	52	69		9	21.2

Country By subregion	Ratio of literate female to male 15-24 years old ^{a/}		Share of women in wage employment in the non- agricultural sector ^{b/}	Seats in parliament held by women (as % of total) ^{c/}	
	1990	1999		1992 ^{c/}	2000 ^{d/}
Malaysia	99	100	36x	8	10.3
Myanmar	96	99			
Philippines	100	100	40	11	12.9
Singapore	100	100	44x	4	4.3
Thailand	99	99	45x	4	6.6
Viet Nam	99	100		19	26.0
Pacific					
American Samoa					
Australia			47x		22.4
Cook Islands					1*
Fiji	99	100	31x	4	10.7
French Polynesia					
Guam					
Kiribati					0*
Marshall Islands					0*
Micronesia (Federated States of)					0*
Nauru					0*
New Caledonia					
New Zealand			48x		29.2
Niue					1*
Northern Mariana Islands					
Palau					0*
Papua New Guinea	83	88		0	
Samoa	100	101		4	8.2
Solomon Islands				0	2
Tonga					0*
Tuvalu					0*
Vanuatu					0

a/ World Bank, World Development Indicators 2001.

b/ UNIFEM 2000.

c/ 1992 figures from United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 1994.

d/ Figures as of January 2000 (United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2000, p. 77)

* Figures from 1999 (UNDP, Pacific Human Development Report 1999).

The other Millennium Declaration target on gender inequality is to reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio. The primary recommended indicator is the maternal mortality ratio and the secondary indicator is the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel.

In many the countries in the region, the percentage of births attended by skilled health personnel was below 50 per cent (table 11). The rates were particularly low in countries with high maternal mortality ratios, for example in South Asian countries. For many developing

countries in the region, it appears that the prospects of meeting this Millennium Declaration target is very slim, unless countries seriously intensify their efforts to provide skilled care at birth to 90 per cent of women by 2015.

Table I.5 Maternal health

Country by subregion	Maternal mortality ratio per 1,000 live births		Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel (% of total)	
	1999	1999/2000	1990-1992	1997-1999
East and North-East Asia				
China	60	30		67
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	35			100x
Hong Kong, China		3	100	
Japan				100x
Macao, China				
Mongolia	150	58	100	93
Republic of Korea	20	8	95	98x
North and Central Asia				
Armenia	29			97
Azerbaijan	43	16		100
Georgia	22			
Kazakhstan	80	22		98
Kyrgyzstan	80	26		98
Russian Federation	74	50		99
Tajikistan	120	20		79
Turkmenistan	65	33		96
Uzbekistan	60	22		98
South and South-West Asia				
Afghanistan		165		8x
Bangladesh	600	61	7	13
Bhutan	500	80	16	15x
India	440	71	44	34x
Islamic Republic of Iran	130		78	86
Maldives	390	60	55	90x
Nepal	830	75	8	9
Pakistan	200	90	40	19
Sri Lanka	60	15	85	94x
Turkey	55		77	81
South-East Asia				
Brunei Darussalam	22			98x
Cambodia	590	100	47	34
Indonesia	450	42	47	56
Lao People's Democratic Republic	660	93		14x
Malaysia	39	8		96
Myanmar	230	77	94	56
Philippines	208	31		56
Singapore	9	3		100x
Thailand	44	28	71	71x
Viet Nam	160	37	95	77
Pacific				
American Samoa				
Australia				100x
Cook Islands	20	26		99x
Fiji	31	18		
French Polynesia			98	

Country by subregion	Maternal mortality ratio per 1,000 live births		Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel (% of total)	
	1999	1999/2000	1990-1992	1997-1999
Guam				
Kiribati	225	53		72x
Marshall Islands		63		97
Micronesia (Federated States of)	561	20		90x
Nauru		25		
New Caledonia				
New Zealand				95x
Niue				99x
Northern Mariana Islands				
Palau				99x
Papua New Guinea	390	58		53
Samoa	70	21	52	76x
Solomon Islands	550	22	85	85x
Tonga	160	18		92x
Tuvalu		40		100x
Vanuatu	68	37		79x

1999 - ADB.
· 1990-1999.

Source: United Nations, Population Prospects, the 1998 Revision, and the 2000 Revision.
United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 2001 and Pacific Human Development Report 1999.
United Nations Children's Fund, State of the World's Children 2001.
World Bank, World Development Indicators 2001 and World Development Indicators 2000 CD-ROM.
World Health Organization, World Health Report 2000.

D. Poverty and Vulnerability

The reversal suffered in the war against poverty is all the more significant because of the extreme vulnerability of the population in many of these countries in the face of shocks of different kinds, varying from natural calamities such as droughts, floods and earthquakes to man-made shocks such as the 1997/98 financial crisis in East and South-East Asia. As studies have shown, one of the most affected social groups, whose situation worsened with the onset of the crisis, were women (Moon, Lee, and Yoo 1999, Park et al 1999, Sigit and Surbakti 1999, Pongsapich and Brimble 1999, and Knowles et al 1999). Most natural calamities, whether they are typhoons in the Pacific, floods in Bangladesh, or earthquakes or droughts in India, adversely affects the poor the most. They are the ones who are located in the most calamity-prone areas, live in the most vulnerable shelters, are prone to crop low and unemployment in times of crisis and have no safety nets to fall back on when adversely affected. Further, already being at the margins of subsistence, even a small external shock is sufficient to push them into a situation where their survival is under threat. For these reasons, poverty and vulnerability are inextricably intertwined.

E. Policy implications

The 1997/98 crisis and the current economic slowdown pose a major challenge to the poverty reduction efforts of all countries. Meanwhile, countries that have been slow in making progress towards meeting the targets should accelerate their efforts and consider a broad policy framework including the following:

- (a) Growth with equity: pro-poor growth through human resources development, employment-generating opportunities, public spending for public goods, especially in health and education provisions to the poor;
- (b) Rural development that includes access to land, investment in infrastructure, access to credit and savings institutions, and protection from unfair competition;
- (c) Improving governance in terms of the participation of the poor (or representative civil society organizations) and collaboration with all stakeholders in local planning processes; in this regard, in this regard to observe what is described on governance in paragraph 13 of the Millennium Declaration;
- (d) International/regional cooperation to remove trade barriers, enhance debt relief measures, eliminate harmful tax and competition practices, and strengthen standards.

In the wake of globalization public expenditures to promote productive participation and enhance social sector provisions for the poor are increasingly being constrained by the fiscal adjustments being forced on countries with open financial sectors. Adequate safeguards to ensure a sufficient level of investment and expenditure in these areas is essential, even if it requires gradualism and appropriate sequencing on the financial liberalization front. The gains to be obtained from these prerequisites for reducing the incidence of poverty and advancing human development are too large to be ignored.

With regard to budget guidelines and the composition of spending, Governments in countries with low levels of human development probably should aim to spend around 5 per cent or more of national income on education, and probably somewhat more than 2 per cent on health. More important is the quality and composition of such spending, and the balance achieved between private and public spending. For countries which are a long way from achieving universal primary education and access to primary health care, international evidence suggests that a target of between 80 and 90 per cent of education spending should be

directed towards primary and lower secondary levels, and at least 70 per cent of public spending in the health sector should be directed to primary facilities and preventative measures.

Continued efforts are required to institutionalize gender budgets in government and to revise macroeconomic models and policy frameworks to incorporate gender concerns. More broadly, efforts to increase the transparency and accountability of budgetary processes should be driven by objectives of equity and participation, rather than simply fiscal restraint. There is also a critical need to improve accountability systems and budgetary analysis skills at the local government level. In policy dialogue with Governments, donors could give far greater prominence to poverty reduction and gender equity concerns than they do currently.

In terms of participation in local planning processes, it is critical that poor women's perspectives be addressed, especially in target-oriented programmes. The need for transport provision ensuring that local planning decisions and regulations do not prevent or displace women's informal sector activity are two areas for consideration.

In public sector restructuring, efforts are also required to improve the service delivery needs so that they focus on the qualitative issues surrounding relations between clients and providers. Incentive systems in public sector management should be related to targets of equitable as well as efficient service delivery and improved impacts or outcomes for beneficiaries.

1. Measures to improve efficiency and equity in the rural sector

The incidence of poverty is generally highest in rural areas. Access to land, investment in infrastructure, access to credit and savings institutions, and protection from unfair competition are all elements in the range of agricultural-sector strategies that are known to have produced effective results in rural poverty alleviation. Highly unequal land systems are economically inefficient and socially disruptive. Support for land redistribution as an element of a wider agrarian reform strategy should be made central to poverty reduction initiatives. A stronger focus is needed on economic and social rights and on their implementation, for example, issues of land reform and titling, as well as maintenance claims. Support

mechanisms (awareness raising; legal aid; resources for land registration etc.) are needed for women to claim legal entitlements.

There is a need to create savings and credit institutions for the poor. Poor producers can save, and they are highly efficient investors. However, most are denied access to savings and credit agencies, creating losses in terms of efficiency and equity. It is vital to develop institutes which are accessible to the poor and deal in small amounts at low transaction costs.

Transport and marketing infrastructure need to be provided. Because poor producers are often located in marginal areas poorly served by roads, they face difficulties in gaining access to markets and inputs. They are disadvantaged through the lower prices for their output, which accompany higher transport costs, while the rest of society loses through lower levels of output.

Public investment needs to be in the rural sector. The point is that even growth cannot be left to markets alone, especially in agriculture. A factor crucial for agricultural growth in most developing countries is public investment in irrigation, drainage and infrastructure. The evidence is overwhelming that in developing countries private investment in the rural sector follows public investment.

Poverty reduction strategies must also work on factors that promote rural non-agricultural employment, which are by no means obvious. Some experiences in this regard, such as that of China with its successful reliance on town and village enterprises, are quite specific for social and historical reasons; they are not easily replicated but possible. A combination of egalitarian land distribution and experience with commune and cooperative forms of organization not only allowed for the release of underemployed labour resources, but also helped to pool those resources for undertaking non-agricultural activities that were jointly managed with State support.

III. EMPLOYMENT EXPANSION AND GLOBALIZATION IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

A. Globalization and employment expansion

At the beginning of the 1990s there was much optimism about the impact that liberalization and globalization would have on employment and growth in developing countries. To start with, these processes were seen as mechanisms to increase both the rate of investment and the efficiency of investment in developing countries. Financial liberalization was expected to enhance the savings rate, which was expected to contribute to higher investment. The liberalization of rules relating to foreign direct investment was expected to enhance capital inflows into liberalizing countries, enhancing investment even further. Deregulation and trade liberalization, by increasing internal and external competition, were expected to ensure the efficiency of such investment in terms of technology choice, scale and operation. The positive impact this would have on growth was expected to contribute to increases in employment.

Secondly, the reduction in protection and the realisation of a more appropriate market-determined exchange rate associated with globalization was expected to have a number of positive effects. Wide and intensive protection in developing countries was normally provided to the fledgling industrial sector being fostered by the State, so that domestic industrial prices tended to rule well above international prices. On the other hand, the agricultural sector was rarely offered protection. This was seen as a mechanism by which the terms of trade were turned against the agricultural sector, affecting agricultural investment and peasant livelihoods adversely. In the event, reduced protection was seen as a means of redressing imbalances in the terms of exchange between agriculture and industry and stimulating growth in agriculture. Given the larger share of the population dependent on agriculture and the greater labour absorbing capacity of primitive agriculture, trade liberalization was seen as contributing to increases in output and employment in the agricultural sector.

Third, the liberalization of rules with regard to foreign investment was expected to result in a surge in foreign direct investment in export-oriented, labour-intensive, greenfield

projects, aimed at exploiting the low costs of skilled and unskilled labour in developing countries.

There was one other factor that fuelled the optimism that stemmed from these perceptions. The conclusion of the Uruguay Round agreement of GATT had raised expectations of an acceleration in world trade growth, which had already been high for some years. In particular, it was expected that the agreement would stimulate exports at higher prices of agricultural products and traditional manufactures from developing countries because of the reduction in protection and a cut in subsidies offered to these products in developed-country markets.

All in all, it would be fair to say that the dominant mood in the late 1980s and early 1990s was one of excitement at a new phase of globalization, in which the expectation was widespread that a significant proportion of the population in developing countries would benefit in various ways from the new technologies and expanded trade and employment opportunities. Women in particular were seen as major potential beneficiaries of this trend because of the trend towards the feminization of employment that was apparent, especially in export production. Of course, this is not to say that there was no consciousness at all of the more negative possible consequences; indeed, many statements emanating from international forums contained very perceptive analyses of the dangers of inequitable growth, the chances of marginalization and exclusion from the benefits of globalization, the costs in terms of reduced food security and greater environmental destruction. But the key question posed (albeit implicitly) in almost all these instances was finally that of how to manage the process of globalization so as to spread its generally beneficial effects more evenly by gender, class and region.

This chapter is concerned with tracking the achievement in increasing the participation of women in the labour force as a means to empowerment. Several aspects of the employment scenario are touched upon: labour force participation; employment, unemployment and underemployment; the impact of export-oriented production on employment and wages; and the emergence of new forms of production organization such as home working and subcontracting. This chapter also contains a specific consideration of the nature and extent of the impacts of the East Asian economic crisis, especially on poor women.

B. The employment consequences

1. Employment expansion

The percentage of the total population who are economically active (the crude activity rate) tends to increase if population growth rates are declining because there is a smaller proportion of persons below employment age in the population. That upward influence is offset by the tendency for younger persons to delay entry into the labour force and older persons to withdraw earlier as an economy develops and shifts to urban formal employment. Between 1960 and 1995, the crude activity rate (CAR) for Asia as a whole increased only from 47.5 per cent to 49.8 per cent (table II.1). All of the increase in the CAR is attributable to increased female labour force participation. The CAR for females increased from 36.2 per cent to 40.6 per cent. These trends vary greatly by sub-region and country, however.

Employment expansion was the greatest in East Asia for both men and women. The CAR for both sexes increased from 51 per cent to nearly 59 per cent, and that for females from 42 to 54 per cent. While those figures are mostly determined by trends in China, large increases in the CAR were also attained for both sexes in Hong Kong (prior to reversion to China), Japan and the Republic of Korea.

While the CAR for males did not increase between 1960 and 1995 in South-East Asia, that for females increased from 32 per cent to 41 per cent. Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines each followed this pattern. In Singapore and Thailand the CAR for both males and females increased substantially. The expansion of female employment was particularly notable in Singapore, although it began from a low level. Fifty-five per cent of the female population of Thailand was economically active in 1995, a level matched only in China. Employment was essentially stagnant in Viet Nam for both males and females.

Total employment as a proportion of the population stagnated throughout South-Central Asia between 1960 and 1995, partially because of higher population growth rates in that region than in South-East and especially East Asia (note that South-Central Asia, in this ILO definition, includes countries in South Asia, West Asia and Central Asian Republics). Kazakhstan and Sri Lanka are the only exceptions to the sub-regional trend. In both of these countries, employment expansion was led by female employment, albeit from a low level in Sri Lanka.

It is clear that during the period, the economies that have been able to participate most actively in global economic processes have expanded overall employment the most significantly. These include Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Thailand. While employment expanded greatly in China between 1960 and 1995, much of the stimulus came from internal reform as well as from the effects of international trade and investment.

International trade stimulated female employment in East and South-East Asia in manufactured textiles, garments, electronic and electrical products, and other household items for export. Rapid industrial expansion also generated increased employment in the service sector for both men and women. Large increases in the percentage of women in the labour force occurred in China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Table II.1. Crude activity rates for Asia, sub-regions and selected countries and areas, by sex, 1960-1995

Region, country or area	1960	1970	1980	1990	1995
Asia					
Total	47.5	46.2	47.4	49.0	49.8
Male	58.4	55.9	56.5	58.0	58.6
Female	36.2	36.0	38.0	39.6	40.6
East Asia					
Total	51.2	50.8	53.7	57.9	58.7
Male	60.0	58.4	60.1	62.9	63.5
Female	42.0	42.8	46.8	52.7	53.7
China					
Total	52.6	51.6	54.9	59.2	59.8
Male	60.8	58.4	60.6	63.2	63.7
Female	43.9	44.3	48.9	55.0	55.6
Hong Kong					
Total	38.6	41.7	49.2	50.9	51.8
Male	53.9	53.6	62.2	62.8	63.4
Female	22.6	29.5	35.2	38.4	39.3
Japan					
Total	47.4	51.0	49.0	51.9	53.4
Male	59.1	63.4	61.8	63.6	64.4
Female	36.4	39.1	36.6	40.6	42.8
Republic of Korea					
Total	33.5	35.7	40.8	45.8	49.0
Male	49.9	48.2	49.5	55.2	58.0
Female	17.3	23.1	31.8	36.3	39.8
Mongolia					
Total	47.9	46.6	46.4	45.9	48.12
Male	52.9	50.9	50.3	49.4	51.3
Female	43.0	42.4	42.5	42.5	45.0
South-East Asia					
Total	44.0	42.2	43.7	46.9	48.3
Male	55.9	52.2	52.3	54.4	55.6

Female	32.2	32.3	35.3	39.4	41.0
Indonesia					
Total	39.0	38.0	39.5	43.9	46.2
Male	57.6	53.5	51.5	54.2	55.9
Female	20.7	22.7	27.7	33.7	36.6
Malaysia					
Total	34.6	34.4	38.5	39.2	39.9
Male	49.2	47.0	50.7	49.9	50.0
Female	19.5	21.6	26.1	28.2	29.7
Philippines					
Total	38.3	37.4	39.0	40.2	41.1
Male	52.2	49.7	50.6	50.7	51.2
Female	24.3	24.8	27.4	29.6	30.8
Singapore					
Total	33.1	35.0	46.3	51.1	50.7
Male	51.2	50.7	59.3	62.1	61.5
Female	12.8	18.6	32.7	40.0	39.8
Thailand					
Total	50.9	48.5	52.2	57.0	59.2
Male	53.1	50.5	54.8	60.7	63.4
Female	48.7	46.5	49.5	53.3	55.0
Viet Nam					
Total	53.4	48.0	47.7	50.7	50.8
Male	58.0	51.0	51.1	52.1	52.3
Female	49.0	45.0	44.5	49.4	49.4
South-West and Central Asia*					
Total	44.8	42.7	42.6	41.7	42.4
Male	57.6	54.7	54.4	54.7	55.4
Female	31.1	30.0	30.0	27.4	28.7
Bangladesh					
Total	53.8	49.4	47.1	46.2	49.5
Male	62.8	56.8	52.7	52.5	55.8
Female	43.9	41.4	41.2	39.4	42.8
India					
Total	45.4	43.7	43.6	42.4	43.3
Male	57.8	55.6	55.8	56.5	57.2
Female	32.3	31.0	30.5	27.4	28.4
Iran, Islamic Rep. of					
Total	32.8	30.7	30.0	29.0	29.8
Male	53.3	49.3	47.0	45.0	44.4
Female	11.8	11.8	12.4	12.5	14.7
Kazakhstan					
Total	40.2	42.3	47.2	47.1	47.6
Male	49.7	46.7	51.4	52.2	52.6
Female	31.4	38.2	43.3	42.3	42.9
Nepal					
Total	54.2	51.5	48.5	46.5	46.1
Male	64.7	61.5	57.9	55.0	54.4
Female	43.6	41.1	38.5	37.8	37.7
Pakistan					
Total	36.4	34.6	35.4	35.6	36.3
Male	55.9	52.3	52.2	52.2	51.8
Female	15.2	15.5	16.9	17.8	19.8
Sri Lanka					
Total	35.9	34.7	36.8	40.2	41.8
Male	51.7	50.2	52.8	52.8	54.2
Female	18.6	18.1	20.2	27.5	29.6
Uzbekistan					
Total	40.5	36.1	40.4	39.4	40.6
Male	47.5	38.6	42.8	43.3	44.0

Female	34.0	33.7	38.2	35.5	37.1
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Source: International Labour Office, Bureau of Statistics, *Economically Active Population 1950-2010*, Vol. I, *Asia*, Statistical Working Papers No. 96-1 (Geneva, International Labour Office, 1996), Table 1.

Note: The crude activity rate is the economically active population aged 10 years and over as a percentage of the total population.

* This ILO definition, includes countries in South Asia, West Asia and Central Asian Republics.

2. Structural change in employment

During the period of rapid economic growth and of employment expansion, the sectoral structure of labour forces in the region also shifted significantly toward industrial and service employment (table 7). In Asia as a whole, the proportion of the labour force employed in agriculture declined from 76 per cent in 1960 to 62 per cent in 1990. During that period, the proportion in industrial employment increased from 10 per cent to 17 per cent and the proportion in services from under 15 per cent to over 21 per cent. While much higher proportions of women than of men work in agriculture, they shifted to industrial and service employment at about the same pace as men.

Although employment expansion was much greater in East and South-East Asia than in South-West and Central Asia between 1960 and 1990 (table II.1), the three sub-regions underwent structural changes in employment at about the same rate. In each sub-region the proportion employed in industry increased by approximately 7 percentage points.

While the proportion of the labour force in industry increased significantly in China between 1960 and 1990, that employed in services increased only modestly and remains at a low level. While the proportion of the male labour force employed in services is essentially the same in South-East Asia and South-West and Central Asia, a much greater proportion of the female labour force in South-East Asia (27.6 per cent) is employed in services than is true in South-West and Central Asia (13.5 per cent).

Table II.2: Percentage distribution of the economically active population by sector for Asia, sub-regions and selected countries and areas, by sex, 1960 and 1990

Region, country or Area	1960			1990		
	Agr.	Ind.	Serv.	Agr.	Ind.	Serv.
Asia						
Total	75.7	9.7	14.7	61.8	16.9	21.3
Male	71.9	10.9	17.2	57.7	18.4	23.8
Female	82.0	7.7	10.2	68.1	14.6	17.3
East Asia						
Total	76.8	9.2	14.0	64.8	17.5	17.8
Male	73.7	10.2	16.1	61.3	19.5	19.2

Female	81.3	7.8	10.9	69.1	14.9	16.0
China						
Total	83.2	6.3	10.5	72.2	15.1	12.7
Male	81.0	6.5	12.5	69.1	16.5	14.4
Female	86.5	6.0	7.5	76.1	13.3	10.6
Hong Kong						
Total	7.8	51.6	40.6	0.9	36.8	62.3
Male	7.0	52.4	40.6	1.0	39.0	60.0
Female	9.7	49.6	40.6	0.7	33.0	66.3
Japan						
Total	33.1	29.5	37.5	7.3	34.2	58.5
Male	26.3	35.5	38.2	6.6	39.0	54.4
Female	43.6	20.0	36.3	8.3	27.0	64.6
Republic of Korea						
Total	61.3	10.2	28.5	18.1	35.4	46.5
Male	57.8	9.4	32.8	16.7	38.8	44.5
Female	71.4	12.4	16.2	20.2	30.1	49.7
Mongolia						
Total	60.8	19.0	20.2	32.0	22.5	45.5
Male	64.0	19.0	17.0	33.5	23.0	43.5
Female	57.0	19.0	24.0	30.2	22.0	47.8
South-East Asia						
Total	76.4	7.1	16.5	59.2	13.8	27.0
Male	75.2	7.6	17.2	58.4	15.1	26.5
Female	78.5	6.3	15.2	60.4	12.1	27.6
Indonesia						
Total	74.8	7.6	17.6	55.2	13.6	31.2
Male	75.2	7.6	17.2	54.4	14.3	31.3
Female	73.7	7.6	18.7	56.4	12.5	31.0
Malaysia						
Total	63.3	11.7	25.1	27.3	23.1	49.5
Male	56.6	14.0	29.4	28.3	23.4	48.3
Female	80.5	5.8	13.8	25.6	22.7	51.8
Philippines						
Total	63.6	14.2	22.2	45.8	15.3	38.9
Male	72.8	11.0	16.2	54.4	16.3	29.3
Female	43.8	21.2	35.0	30.8	13.6	55.6
Singapore						
Total	7.4	23.1	69.5	0.4	35.7	64.0
Male	6.0	23.6	70.4	0.5	36.8	62.7
Female	13.4	20.9	65.7	0.2	34.0	65.9
Thailand						
Total	83.7	4.4	11.9	64.1	14.0	22.0
Male	80.2	5.7	14.1	63.2	15.5	21.3
Female	87.6	3.0	9.5	65.1	12.2	22.7
Viet Nam						
Total	81.6	4.9	13.6	71.3	14.0	14.7
Male	78.7	6.0	15.2	69.5	17.1	13.4
Female	84.8	3.5	11.7	73.1	10.8	16.0
South-West and Central Asia						
Total	74.8	10.8	14.4	61.1	16.7	22.2
Male	69.8	12.1	18.1	56.4	17.3	26.3
Female	84.6	8.3	7.1	71.1	15.4	13.5
Bangladesh						
Total	87.6	5.8	6.6	65.2	16.4	18.4
Male	86.2	4.8	9.0	59.3	14.5	26.2
Female	89.9	7.3	2.8	73.6	19.1	7.2
India						
Total	75.4	10.5	14.1	64.0	16.0	20.0
Male	70.0	11.9	18.1	59.3	16.6	24.1
Female	85.6	7.8	6.5	74.3	14.8	10.9

Iran, Islamic Rep. of						
Total	57.6	21.4	21.1	32.4	24.7	43.0
Male	57.6	19.6	22.8	29.6	26.1	44.3
Female	57.1	29.5	13.4	42.4	19.4	38.1
Kazakhstan						
Total	37.5	24.2	38.3	22.2	31.5	46.3
Male	37.0	26.2	36.8	28.1	37.3	34.5
Female	38.2	21.2	40.6	15.3	24.8	60.0
Nepal						
Total	95.0	2.0	3.0	93.6	0.2	6.1
Male	93.0	2.6	4.3	90.7	0.4	9.0
Female	97.9	1.2	0.9	98.0	0.1	1.9
Pakistan						
Total	65.8	15.6	18.6	51.8	18.5	29.7
Male	59.9	18.1	22.0	45.3	20.3	34.3
Female	89.0	5.8	5.2	72.3	12.8	14.9
Sri Lanka						
Total	56.6	13.4	30.0	48.5	20.9	30.6
Male	53.4	14.3	32.3	47.2	19.8	33.0
Female	66.2	10.6	23.2	51.0	23.0	26.0
Uzbekistan						
Total	56.8	18.0	25.1	34.9	25.2	39.9
Male	51.4	21.3	27.2	34.5	30.1	35.4
Female	63.9	13.7	22.4	35.5	19.3	45.3

Source: International Labour Office, Bureau of Statistics, *Economically Active Population 1950-2010*, Vol. I, *Asia*, Statistical Working Papers No. 96-1 (Geneva, International Labour Office, 1996), Table 5.

Note: On 1 July 1997, Hong Kong became Hong Kong, China. Mention of "Hong Kong" in the text refers to a date prior to 1 July 1997.

D. Trends in the economic participation of women

Some indication of the gender dimensions in the economic participation is available from Table II.3. This gives the female labour force participation rates in 1997, which can be said to be the "peak" year in terms of feminization of work the continuing increases in the female share of employment in the region, as well as the proportionate change since 1985. It is evident that for most countries of the region the period between 1985 and 1997 witnessed a massive increase in the labour force participation of women. This process was most marked in the Southeast Asian region which was also the most dynamic in terms of exporting. Throughout Asia, as a consequence, the gap between male and female labour force participation rates narrowed, suggesting that the recent period has been one in which - at least in terms of quantitative involvement - the gender gap has been narrowing.

Among the 4 countries registering declines in labour force participation of women the percentage change is small ranging from -1.5 (Papua New Guinea) to -5.0 (India). The declines in Fiji, Laos and Nepal should not made too much of, given the problems of data

collection in these countries and the well known problems associated with the under-reporting of women's work.

Despite the growing involvement of women in recognised economic activity in Asia, they have continued to remain dominant in unpaid household work, as also shown in Table II.3. (The very low share of female unpaid workers to the total in Pakistan is likely to be because of the lack of recognition of women's work, especially given the very low overt work participation rates for women in that country. The point that growing responsibility for paid economic activity does not necessarily reduce the burden of unpaid work for women is of course well-known by now, and has been reiterated many times. But the sheer fact that women continue to be the dominant suppliers of unpaid family labour is likely to be of growing significance given the current reliance on adjustment policies which shift more economic activity onto unpaid family labour, as will be discussed below.

Table II.3. Labour force participation rates of women in Asia and the Pacific

Country	Labour force participation rate (age 15+) per cent in 1997	Per cent change since 1985	As share (%) of male rate in 1997	Female unpaid family workers as % of total
Bangladesh	44.4	7.8	77.2	71
China	55.7	13.8	87.3	n.a.
Fiji	22.7	2.5	41.7	21
India	29.0	-5.0	50.3	n.a.
Indonesia	37.9	36.9	66.9	71
Lao People's Democratic Republic	44.7	-5.1	86.9	n.a.
Malaysia	30.5	16.9	60.6	71
Nepal	37.9	-1.7	69.6	61
Pakistan	20.8	23.3	40.3	33
Papua New Guinea	42.5	-1.5	76.9	n.a.
Philippines	31.4	14.3	60.8	56
Republic of Korea	41.2	29.4	70.1	89
Singapore	39.4	20.5	64.8	75
Sri Lanka	30.5	51.3	55.4	53
Thailand	55.5	12.0	86.3	69
Viet Nam	49.4	11.2	93.9	n.a.

Source: UNDP Human Development Report 1999.

Table II.4 shows the shift in employment patterns in three of the "typical" economies of the region, where the growth of export orientation in both production and employment meant that women wage workers came to dominate in the Export Processing Zones (EPZs) and even became much more significant in other non-EPZ manufacturing activity. In this period women workers were frequently the main contributors to household income, rather than subsidiary workers working for supplementary earnings, and this dominant material

contribution in the households reflected also their substantial contribution to the aggregate national economies.

Table II.4. Share of women in employment in EPZs and non-EPZ manufacturing (per cent)

Country	Year	Whole economy	EPZs	Other manufacturing
Malaysia	1980	33.4	75.0	35.6
Malaysia	1990	35.5	53.5	47.2
Philippines	1980	37.1	74.0	41.0
Philippines	1994	36.5	73.9	45.2
Republic of Korea	1987	40.4	77.0	41.7
Republic of Korea	1990	40.8	70.1	42.1

Source: Susan Joeekes [1999].

This pattern is made even clearer in Table II.5, which shows the ratio of female employment to total employment in all sectors of the economy taken together. As is evident, the countries of the East and South-East Asian region show very high shares of female employment over the 1990s. (The ratios given are the average of the years for which data were available in the period 1990-1997.) The female share of total employment was over 30 per cent, and reached almost 46 per cent in Thailand.

Table II.5. Female share of total employment in the 1990s (per cent)

Country or area	Percentage of total employment
Bangladesh	38.7
Hong Kong	37.8
India	14.8
Indonesia	38.1
Malaysia	34.5
Pakistan	13.2
Philippines	34.8
Republic of Korea	40.5
Sri Lanka	31.6
Thailand	45.9

Source: ILO 1998

Note: The numbers relate to the average of years for which data were available over the 1990s.

Data on four countries of South Asia are provided for comparison in table II.5. India and Pakistan show relatively low rates, which are even slightly lower than the average for developing countries. However, even here, it is worth noting that the 1990s witnessed an increase in the female share of manufacturing employment alone. Meanwhile, the two South Asian countries in which export-oriented production has been or has become more important - Sri Lanka and Bangladesh - show female shares in total employment which are comparable to the South-East Asian countries.

This trend towards feminisation of employment in Asian countries resulted from employers' needs for cheaper and more "flexible" sources of labour, and was also strongly associated with the moves towards casualization of labour, shift to part-time work or piece-rate contracts, and insistence on greater freedom for hiring and firing over the economic cycle. All these aspects of what is now described as "labour market flexibility" became necessary once external competitiveness became the significant goal of domestic policy makers and defined the contours within which domestic and foreign employers in these economies operated.

Feminization of work was also encouraged by the widespread conviction among employers in Southeast Asia that female employees are more tractable and subservient to managerial authority, less prone to organise into unions, more willing to accept lower wages because of their own lower reservation and aspiration wages, and easier to dismiss using life-cycle criteria such as marriage and childbirth. This was made more relevant because of technological changes which encouraged the use of labour which could be replaced at periodic intervals.

There are three main macro-economic factors which were widely seen as creating or contributing to these changes in work relations including the tendency towards feminisation:

- (i) The liberalization of trade, emphasis on export production and greater international mobility of capital created a new regional division of labour, which in turn led to the need for employers to achieve quick responses to uncertain markets. This necessarily required more flexibility in the labour market as well, and the more flexible contracts and lower wages under which women workers were typically employed rendered them more attractive than their male counterparts.
- (ii) Technological changes allowed for a stratification of the work force into a small group of highly skilled and highly paid workers, and a large pool of low-to-medium skilled workers whose chances of upward mobility were low and whose possibilities of on-the-job training and learning by doing were far more restricted than before. This meant that there was less need for long-term implicit contracts between employer and employee. In fact, frequent replacement of workers was not only less of a problem but was even seen to be desirable in certain types of activities (such as in the electronics sector) which create high worker burnout. Recent technological changes have also

facilitated decentralisation even of very modern manufacturing work, through the miniaturisation and modularisation of products and processes, which reinforces these tendencies.

- (iii) Organisational changes in production were closely related to the above two features. There was a very substantial increase in subcontracting, in the growth of ancillary small-scale units, and in home-based manufacturing production, which is effectively at the bottom of a complex production chain. Just-In-Time organisational methods, which at one time were spreading rapidly from Japan to the newer exporting industries in Southeast Asia, further strengthened these tendencies. The revival and expansion of putting-out arrangements in the 1990s, which essentially involved home-based women workers, throughout Southeast Asia and parts of South Asia, was evidence of this.

This was the received wisdom - at least until the crash of mid-1997, which dramatically altered both the potential for continued economic activity at the same rate, as well the conditions of employment in the region. When the export industries in some countries started to slow down from the middle of 1995, it became evident that continued growth of employment in these export-oriented industries could not be the same engine of expansion that they had served as over the previous decade. It also became clear, therefore, that there could be some setback to the feminisation of employment that had been occurring, since the export industries had become the most important employers of women at the margin. Indeed, the very features which had made women workers more attractive to employers - the flexibility of hiring and firing and the more casual, non-unionised nature of labour contracts - are precisely those which are likely to render them to be the first to lose their jobs in any recessionary phase.

But it now turns out that even the earlier assessment of the feminisation of work had been based on what was perhaps an overoptimistic expectation of expansion in female employment. Table II.6 presents some information on trends in aggregate manufacturing employment and female employment in this sector over the 1990s in some of the more important East and South-East Asian economies: Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Malaysia; the Republic of Korea; Singapore and Thailand.

Table II.6. Trends in manufacturing employment and share of women workers

Year	Total manufacturing employment, 000s	Women employed in manufacturing, 000s	Share of women workers, per cent
Indonesia			
1990	7,693	3,483	45
1991	7,946	3,536	44
1992	7,948	3,661	47
1993	8,784	4,165	47
1994	10,127	4,323	43
1995	10,840	4,920	45
1996	10,773	4,895	45
Republic of Korea			
1992	4,828	1,931	40
1993	4,652	1,785	38
1994	4,695	1,765	38
1995	4,773	1,756	37
1996	4,677	1,716	36
1997	4,474	1,594	35
Malaysia			
1992	1,637	767	47
1993	1,723	766	44
1995	1,781	761	43
1996	1,912	797	42
1997	2,003	807	40
Thailand			
1990	3,133	1,564	50
1991	3,465	1,748	50
1992	3,600	1,719	48
1993	3,961	1,929	49
1994	3,851	1,912	49
1995	4,377	2,172	49
1996	4,334	2,065	48
Singapore			
1991	423	189	44
1992	434	191	44
1993	429	182	42
1994	422	175	41
1995	408	152	37
1996	406	171	42
1997	414	166	40
Hong Kong, China			
1990	751	314	42
1991	717	292	41
1992	650	255	39
1993	594	225	38
1994	563	202	36
1995	535	197	37
1996	482	177	37
1997	444	160	36

Source: International Labour Office, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics*, various issues.

Table II.6 does not indicate a clear picture of continuous employment in manufacturing industry over the decade even before the period of crisis. In several of these economies – Hong Kong, the Republic of Korea and Singapore - aggregate manufacturing employment over the 1990s actually declined as their economies matured toward a greater

reliance on the service sector. Only in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand was there a definite upward trend in such employment.

The second is that, while it shows that female employment in manufacturing was important, the trend over the 1990s, even before the crash, was not necessarily upward. In most of the economies described in table II.5, there is a definite tendency towards a decline in the share of women workers in total manufacturing employment over the latter part of the 1990s. In Hong Kong and the Republic of Korea, the decline in female employment in manufacturing was even sharper than that in aggregate employment; indeed, in the Republic of Korea, the share of women's employment in total manufacturing employment declined from 40 per cent to 35 per cent in the five years between 1992 and 1997.

Similarly, even in the countries in which aggregate manufacturing employment increased over the period 1990-1997, the female share had a tendency to stabilise or even fall. Thus, in Indonesia the share of women workers in all manufacturing sector workers increased from an admittedly high 45 per cent to as much as 47 per cent by 1993, and then fell to 44 per cent by 1997. In Malaysia the decline in female share was even sharper than in the Republic of Korea : from 47 per cent in 1992 to only 40 per cent in 1997. A slight decline is evident even in Thailand, where the ratio moves from 50 per cent at the beginning of the decade to 48 per cent by 1996 and 1997.

Evidence from table II.6 suggests that the process of feminisation of work really peaked somewhere in the early 1990s, and that thereafter the process was not only less marked, but may even have begun to peter out. This is interesting because it refers very clearly to the period before the effects of the financial crisis began to make themselves felt on real economic activity.

Despite the growing involvement of women in recognised economic activity in Asia, they have continued to remain dominant in unpaid household work, as also shown in table II.3. (The very low share of female unpaid workers to the total in Pakistan is likely to be because of the lack of recognition of women's work, especially given the very low overt work participation rates for women in that country. The point that growing responsibility for paid economic activity does not necessarily reduce the burden of unpaid work for women is of course well-known by now, and has been reiterated many times. But the sheer fact that women continue to be the dominant suppliers of unpaid family labour is likely to be of

growing significance given the current reliance on adjustment policies which shift more economic activity onto unpaid family labour, as will be discussed below.

This is an important issue that clearly requires further investigation. The reversal of the process of feminisation of work has already been observed in other parts of the developing world (notably in Latin America) where it has been found to be associated with either one of two conditions: an overall decline in employment opportunities because of recession or structural adjustment measures, or a shift in the nature of the new employment generation towards more skilled or lucrative activities.

In the East Asian case, until 1996 at least neither of these conditions would have been so important, except to some extent the second factor (shift towards more skilled jobs) in certain economies like that of the Republic of Korea and Singapore. Another relates to the relative cost of hiring women workers, and the relation to perceived other advantages.

It is obvious that one of the important reasons for preferring women workers in many export-related activities in particular, has been the lower reservation and offer wages of women. Table 14 presents evidence on this for selected Asian economies. It shows that women workers' wages have been consistently and significantly lower than male wages in the aggregate. The differentials are particularly sharp in the case of the Republic of Korea, Malaysia and Singapore, where the average female wages are just above half those paid to male workers.

Table II.7: Female wages as percentage of male wages

Economy	Percentage
Bangladesh	71.7
Hong Kong, China	65.9
Republic of Korea	52.3
Malaysia	57.9
Philippines	84.0
Singapore	57.1
Sri Lanka	87.8
Thailand	63.8

Source: ILO 1998.

Note: The data refer to an average of years for which data were available in the 1990s.

To some extent this reflects differences in the types of jobs for which women are used, which are typically at the lower skill and lower wage end of the employment spectrum. But it also reflects the general tendency for gender discrimination in pay, whereby women are paid less even for similar or identical jobs. This feature, which was quite marked in East

Asia, is precisely the feature which tends to be rendered less potent as more and more women are drawn into employment. As women become an established part of the paid work force, and even the dominant part in certain sectors (as in textiles, ready made garments and consumer electronics of East Asia) it becomes more difficult to exercise the traditional type of gender discrimination at work. Not only is there an upward pressure on their wages, but there are other pressures for legislation which would improve their overall conditions of work.

While this is fundamentally desirable and necessary, such action could reduce the relative attractiveness of women workers for those employers concerned with export profitability. The rise in wages also tends to have the same effect. It is worth noting that the female wage as a proportion of the male wage has been rising in most parts of East and South-East Asia in the 1990s up to 1997, including in Malaysia (from 49 to 57 per cent between 1990 and 1995), the Republic of Korea (from 50 to 56 per cent between 1990 and 1997), Thailand (from 63 to 68 per cent between 1991 and 1995 and Singapore (from 54 to 60 per cent between 1990 and 1997). Hong Kong is the only economy in the region for which there is a decline in this ratio, from 69 to 61 per cent between 1990 and 1997. Thailand registered the highest ratio of female to male wages.

What this narrowing of the wages gap has meant is that women became less cheap as labour in exporting industry. Over this period (1995) there have been several moves towards protecting the interests of women workers, for example in terms of slightly better maternity benefits and some improvement in the nature of contracts. In the Republic of Korea, a law which allowed women to be fired once they got married was repealed in the early in the 1990s. Legislation in other countries in the region has allowed for a modicum of benefits which were previously denied mainly to women workers, to be provided.

If these improvements explain the tendency towards reduced employment of women, then it raises certain crucial questions which will become increasingly important in the near future. How is it possible to ensure a minimum provision of basic rights and privileges to women workers, and to improve the conditions of their work, without simultaneously eroding their attractiveness to employers and reducing the extent of female wage employment? How can such rights and basic labour standards be assured in the coming phase, in which heightened export competition is likely to be combined with a phase of aggregate employment contraction, as the full force of the current adjustment measures is felt in the real economies?

These are already pressing concerns, as is evident from the growth of unemployment in the region, which is bound to accelerate in the coming period. Already, over the 1990s, female open unemployment rates were much higher than those of men even in the expansionary phase, as table II.8 makes clear. But now, as the exporting industries are hit and as the general economic decline is worsened by adjustment measures that could affect workers (men as well as women) adversely, the problem is likely to become more acute.

Table II.8 Unemployment rates by sex

Economy	Year	Total	(Percentage)	
			Male	Female
Indonesia	1996	4.0	3.3	5.1
Hong Kong	1996	2.8	3.1	2.3
Pakistan	1995	5.4	4.1	13.7
Philippines	1996	7.4	7.0	8.2
Philippines	1997	7.9	7.5	8.5
Singapore	1996	3.0	2.9	3.1
Sri Lanka	1996	11.3	8.0	17.6
Thailand	1996	1.1	1.0	1.1

Source: International Labour Office, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics*, 1998.

Table II.9 shows how in one year in the Republic of Korea, women were disproportionately hit by the decline in employment opportunities. It should be noted that even within this, two categories of female workers are especially worse off: those who are slightly older (above 30 years) and those with less years of education. Since the full brunt of the adjustment measures is yet to be felt, it is likely that more workers (women as well as men) will lose their paid employment and be forced to consider occupations which are even more precarious and with inferior conditions. Thus, even the progress that had been achieved in the early part of the decade in terms of better pay and conditions for women workers, may be reversed.

Table II.9. Percentage change in employment in the Republic of Korea

Sex	1996-1997	1997-1998
Males	0.8	-3.8
Females	4.5	-7.1

Source: Lee and Rhee (1999).

All this underlines the need to focus on patterns of employment generation, which are not prone to sudden boom-and-bust cycles, but are sustainable over the medium term. Only then can even the basic conditions of work for both women and men be assured.

Home-based work

In this context, it is necessary to examine more closely another tendency that has been widely noted in the Asian economic experience: economic participation by women as home-based producers. Even where, as in most of South Asia, substantial progress by way of women's explicit entry into the modern sectors of the economy is still to come about, the actual contribution of women even in these sectors by virtue of subcontracting relations, is very large. Thus, in India, it has been shown that most of the apparently self-employed women in manufacturing activities are actually involved in home-based piece-wage work as contractor-mediated employees of informal or partly formal capitalist businesses. [Bardhan, 1987; Shah and Gandhi, 1993; Hirway and Unni, 1995; Banerjee, 1998; inter alia] In Pakistan, while employment of women in the formal sector is still very small, recent trends show a rapid increase, and unrecorded indirect involvement through subcontracting and ancillary informal sector activities is also estimated to be very large. In Bangladesh, exporting industries in the garments, leather and electronic assembly industries have increasingly relied on the formal employment of young female labour, but there is now evidence to indicate that a substantial part of the work in the garments and leather goods finishing industries in particular is subcontracted to home-based women workers on a piece rate basis. In Sri Lanka, home-based production is now supposed to account for fully half of all employment, while even in South Korea the ratio is said to be as high as 33 per cent. [UNDP 1999]

Obviously, the issue of home-based work by women in putting-out arrangements is a complex one. On the one hand, such work may be preferred by both employer and employee alike. Women workers may desire such work because it allows them to add income-generating activities to household work without physically leaving the home, which means that other duties such as looking after children can be simultaneously performed. It also provides greater flexibility in terms of time, does not force women workers into long and unpleasant commuting, and so on. But the problem is that such work also lends itself to the greatest possibilities of exploitation, since the individual woman working at home has virtually no bargaining power and the scope for worker protection is extremely limited. It has generally been found (Shah and Gandhi, 1993 inter alia) that home-based production by women through a putting-out system in which such production is the base of a complex production chain ultimately involving major multinational producers, remuneration for such work is the lowest. Such workers get virtually nothing by way of benefits or social protection.

The current policy response to this dilemma has been in terms of proposing a Convention for Home-based Workers, along the lines of similar ILO Conventions. While implementing such a convention, especially in the current economic climate across Asia, it is important to bear in mind that in the near future, such home-based production may actually be increasing. As aggregate household real incomes decrease and, as real wages and/or employment get squeezed by adjustment and recession in various Asian countries, such production may actually form part of the survival strategies of households faced with such adverse material circumstances. The combination of crisis and adjustment measures in the region is likely to increase the reliance of employers (both large and small) on such home-based work and subcontracting arrangements.

Child labour

This also leads to the issue of the labour (paid and unpaid) of children, especially girl-children. It has been estimated that the largest child labour population in the world is to be found in the Asian region - 120 million between 5 to 14 years of age who are fully at work and more than twice that many (an estimated 250 million) for whom work is at least a secondary activity. [ILO-IPEC 1997] The majority of child labourers in South and Southeast Asia are to be found in home-based, agricultural or informal sector and service activities, although there are some cases in manufacturing employment as well. These reflect the fact that the rapid economic growth in some sectors and regions - along with widespread poverty of the labour supply households - has involved the drawing of children into commercial and industrial activity.

It has been noted [Karunan 1998] that girls are being disproportionately employed for work in urban and rural areas in comparison with boys, and there is a significant correlation of this trend with the relative rates of school dropout for boys and girls. Certainly in home-based work, there tends to be a heavy emphasis on the unpaid labour of the girl-child, including not only such activities as childcare and housework, but also piecework under putting-out arrangements. The drastic reduction of spending on social welfare and safety nets and reduced government budgets on essential services to the poor in countries that are experiencing economic crisis and/or structural adjustment programmes, is likely to contribute directly to the growing incidence of child labour, both by increasing poverty in wage-based households and reducing the availability of public services. The issue of female child labour may thus become one of growing significance.

Unpaid labour forms a very significant part of the time spent on economic activities by women. Time-allocation studies commissioned by the UNDP found that in the 11 developing countries studied (including the following Asian countries – Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines and the Republic of Korea) found that on average, women worked for longer hours than men (by 13 per cent) and spent two-thirds of their time on unpaid activities whereas men spent less than a quarter of their time on such activities. A study for Bangladesh has found that this disparity worsened, and female total labour time increased, with the combination of increased female export-based employment and structural adjustment measures.

It now appears that, just as the Asian economic boom was based largely on the *paid* labour of women workers, the pattern of adjustment to the crisis and associated slump in economic activity and employment may rely heavily on the *unpaid* labour of women. Adjustment packages tend to intensify the workload of women by increasing their participation in formal and informal labour markets. Women often assume the responsibility for "making ends meet" when household real incomes fall, and therefore become the category of workers that dominates in the adjustment because of the decline in their effective received wages.

By now it is well known that market-oriented structural adjustment programmes tend to lead to an increase in the unpaid labour of women. This has been discussed extensively [UNDP 1995, *inter alia*] and it has been argued that the basic inadequacy of structural adjustment programmes from the women's perspective is that they emphasise price changes and market forces as the preferred instruments of resource allocation, but fail to consider explicitly the process of reallocation. Thus they implicitly rely upon a supply of extra unpaid labour, pushing the burden of adjustment from the paid to the unpaid segment of the economy, and ignore the fact that it is largely women who will have to supply that labour. The other important negative feature which has a gender dimension is that of food security, which is discussed in the following section.

The increase in the unpaid labour of women typically comes about because of the decline in access to basic public services and also in the reduced access to goods and services of basic household consumption for which the responsibility of provision belongs usually to the women of the household. These are the result of the reduction in government expenditure that comes as part of the stabilisation exercise, as well as the general withdrawal of the state from various aspects of the provisioning of goods and services and greater reliance on the

market mechanism. Almost inevitably the burden of public expenditure cuts falls on the so-called "soft" social sectors such as education, health, sanitation etc., and on the public provision of infrastructure, food subsidies, basic services. Declines in real public productive and infrastructure investment, which have been observed throughout South Asia and more recently now in some parts of Southeast Asia, affect not only the growth prospects for the future but also general production conditions. Cuts in public expenditure have effectively reduced real incomes of working households as well as access to basic services.

The emphasis on market relationships rather than public and community provision of basic needs tends to have other adverse implications for women. The domination of market processes undervalues everything which is not directly calculable in those terms, unpaid housework being a prime example. Simultaneously, the privatisation of common property resources and reduced access to the commons which has been a notable feature throughout South and Southeast Asia, often means that household-related work also has become more time-consuming and arduous especially in rural areas. The reduction of subsidies to energy sources and to basic amenities such as sanitation and water supply, public health facilities and the like, has not only reduced wage-earners' household incomes, but has put an especial burden on women, who typically bear the responsibility for provisioning these within the household. It should be pointed out that ecological degradation and rising environmental costs and hazards may also put a disproportionate burden on women, often for the same reasons.

D. Policy implications

Overall, the process of globalization poses important challenges to the potentials for employment generation in Asia and the Pacific. Moreover, the current global economic slowdown, which may be more prolonged than originally foreseen, does not bode well for employment expansion based on growth alone. There is need for specific policies to counteract the tendency towards jobless growth and deal with the increasing level of informal, casual and volatile nature of work, especially among the female labour force.

Poor or slow growth will also cause severe employment problems for the most vulnerable groups of workers, among them young workers, women, migrant workers, the long-term unemployed and persons with disabilities. Their situation is often compounded by

labour-market segmentation, which is common in all developing countries. Formal sector workers have difficulty moving from one labour-market segment to another because of barriers such as distance from alternative markets, entry requirements, education and skills requirements non-job related aspects like discrimination based on status or ethnic group. This is especially true for women. It is easier for workers to move from the formal to the informal sector or from wage employment to self-employment because both the informal sector and self-employment do not have significant entry barriers.

(i) Nature of employment

The trends in employment expansion and structural change generally conform to the concept of a shifting comparative advantage among economies. At a low level of development, a country with abundant labour may offer relatively low wages, and its comparative advantage would lie in labour-intensive basic industry. At higher economic and social development levels, educational levels and wages rise and the economy's comparative advantage shifts to more value-added manufacturing based on higher levels of technology. As the economy continues to develop, its comparative advantage may shift to the tertiary sector and knowledge-based enterprises, such as business and financial services, research and development, and information and communications.

(ii) Human capacity building

The rapid changes in job-market requirements and needed skills increases the emphasis on training and life-long learning to raise workers' employability and improve access to employment. Countries need to continually invest in skills and knowledge development and the training of their workforce in light of these changes, including advances in technology and work organization. The risks are higher for the vulnerable groups and reduce their opportunities and incentives for training. To progress to higher levels of value-added employment (and thus towards higher incomes at the individual and aggregate levels), the population and workforce of the country must steadily improve their knowledge and skills for contributing effectively to the changing job market requirements. Human resources

development or human capital formation are essential for sustaining a productive work force. Importantly, as policy attends to the development of both human and social capital, there are two elements that deserve special attention: making new information technologies available to wider segments of the population and building productive assets, especially for the poor men and women at the household level.

Because the structure and composition of labour markets are changing rapidly, there are also pressures to heighten “flexibility” and this can mean compromising on the protection of workers' incomes, rights and working conditions. Evidence suggests that making labour-markets flexible by abandoning protection for workers does not help in dealing with changing labour markets and capturing global opportunities in trade and investment. Instead, the new vulnerabilities in labour markets call for the following:

- (a) Employment expansion, especially on reasonably productive jobs;
- (b) Regular upgrading of workers' skills, through training, dissemination of technical know-how, and developing the technical skills needed to overcome labour-market segmentation that is characteristic of developing countries;
- (c) Having in place reasonable compensation, minimum wage and accepted labour standards and rights;
- (d) Increasing the productivity of the informal sector through tax holidays, duty exemptions, lower interest sales and access to credit.

In addition to training, labour market interventions are necessary to attend to a wide-ranging set of issues, including employment promotion and poverty alleviation, human resources development, migration policies, industrial relations policies, labour standards, workers' protection, labour administration and statistics.

In designing such interventions, the distinction between private and public sectors is relevant, particularly in transition economies. In Central Asian countries, most labour policies are geared or should be geared towards private sector development in an attempt to reduce employment in state-owned enterprises from the quasi-totality of employment as it had been

in 1989. An important issue is the absorption of excess labour from agriculture. In the Central Asian economies, labour-market policies face a much more important task in trying to facilitate enterprise restructuring. The growth prospects of these countries are almost entirely dependent on enterprise restructuring.

(iii) Country-specific conditions

Labour policies need to consider differences between the rural and urban areas. For instance, for improved efficiency and effectiveness, labour-market exchange systems set up in the rural areas might take account of the limited infrastructure and transportation system, seasonal labour the strength of village organizations or community services vis-à-vis formal local authorities.

In the urban area, a focus may be given to youth and female unemployment. This is so because in rural areas young people and women in need of a job can be occupied with various types of agricultural or household duties, thus appearing in statistics as employed or economically inactive rather than unemployed. Intra-household income distribution is also typically different in urban and rural areas. Offering training or public works to households in urban or rural areas can have very different repercussions on household income.

Attention should be given to measures to protect and support informal sector workers also with skills-training. Credit fore production and marketing programmes to secure their livelihoods. This is particularly important for example for female workers, those with low skills, and a majority of the Pacific island workers for who formal sector employment is not a viable option. Research has pointed to the many livelihood opportunities that a more active informal sector can create (UNDP 1999b). Promotion of informal sector work expands livelihood opportunities to all sectors of the community, especially those disadvantaged by their lack of formal education. Increasing the demand for surplus labour generally raises the income of the poorest groups in a society.

In view of the narrow range of economic resources in the developing Pacific island economies, a firm basis for growth is to promote sustainable resource use and increase the

local value of local resources. Productivity and employment need to be expanded in such a way that natural resources are not used indiscriminately. A clearer environment policy could encourage investment and trade, and ensure that more of the benefits of such are realized locally. The Pacific subregion is, for example, the most important tuna fishing area in the world, providing about one third of the global catch. Sustainability of and expanding this resource by good management is critical to the employment prospects it offers. Around 10,000 Pacific islanders depend on tuna fishing and processing for their livelihoods and possibly another 20,000 are indirectly employed by the industry, but the industry could provide a livelihood for many more people in the region. Pacific islanders comprise less than 10 per cent of the crews of commercial fishing boats in the region. Local recruitment could be increased by better regional coordination of qualified crew, regional standardization of contracts, more local training opportunities, and more information to reach local employment agencies about recruitment opportunities and procedures in the United States and Asian fleets. Much more local employment and local business could be generated by bringing the foreign tuna-fishing fleet onshore. Such a move onshore would be particularly suited to decentralizing employment, creating jobs for women and developing private enterprises, including in the informal sector.

(iv) Gender-related dimensions

A central challenge is how to encourage female participation and promote equal gender opportunity at work without disrupting cultural values, family life and social stability. Developing appropriate support systems for child reproduction and child care becomes necessary for working mothers. By contrast, in economies that are mostly rural, labour policies per se may not be the best means to improve equal gender opportunities in the labour market. In some cases, improving water and sanitation infrastructures can do more to benefit women than a kindergarten, by reducing the time needed to collect water where this is a traditional female task.

Other than the human rights aspect of gender equality, there is also a valid economic argument. Bringing women into full employment at an equal wage with men encourages women to work, increases the potential for growth of any economy and enables the best use of local labour as opposed to immigrant labour. A number of countries have made great efforts to encourage women to work, so as to keep the internal labour supply up to demand requirements and to avoid massive immigration.

(v) Labour migrants

For some countries, policies regarding migrant workers need urgent attention. The economies that have expanded employment rapidly have also generally reduced population growth, so that labour shortages are apparent in some sectors. Large wage differentials between countries of the region have induced large movements of international labour migration within the region. Millions of persons in the region now work in countries other than their own. International labour migration can benefit the migrants, the country of origin (through remittances and removing some surplus labour) and the country of destination (by solving labour shortages). However, the possibility for exploitation of the workers can occur at each of the steps involved in recruitment, movement, employment and return, and workers outside their own country may be particularly vulnerable to infringement of their rights. Much greater subregional and regional cooperation is required to smooth the process of international labour migration and to ensure the rights and benefits to which the workers are entitled. To assist the migration of unskilled workers, labour-sending countries could set up employment units in receiving countries to capture employment opportunities and protect workers' well-being. Countries also need stronger legal frameworks and laws to stop human trafficking. NGOs and other civil society institutions could play an important partnership role in eliminating human trafficking.

(vi) Labour-market policies

Labour policies are more likely to be seen and accepted by Governments as an effective way to facilitate matching the supply of and demand for labour, especially in highly

segmented labour markets. They provide some form of assistance to the unemployed as a form of social protection. Job brokerage and training could contribute to matching the unemployed with vacancies, while microfinance and other measures aimed at assisting the self-employed could be effective in creating new jobs. In some labour-surplus countries where large numbers of people live in poverty, food-for-work programmes could provide employment, improve the nutritional status of the population and contribute to building the infrastructure. However, the overall effect of such measures on the economy is usually marginal. Therefore, it is important to have the correct expectations towards labour policies and invest in monitoring and evaluation, especially for new experimental measures, in order to keep the possible waste of resources to a minimum. The establishment of costly systems such as employment service networks, should be carefully reviewed before their introduction.

Finally, different labour policies or groups of labour-related policies may also be managed by different institutional arrangements. A country's ministry of labour may be the principal organization responsible, but it is by no means the only unit of Government to play an important role. Ministries of industry, economy, education, finance and interior, and more recently established ministries for women or gender, are often involved in one way or another in the design or implementation of labour policies. Trade unions, employers' organizations, NGOs, women's organizations, local administrations and village autonomous organizations are just some of the stakeholders which may be involved in the design and implementation of labour policies. A country strategy needs very much a "who-does-what?" preliminary assessment in order to ensure issues of that implementation and division of responsibility are addressed from the start.

IV. SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND SOCIAL MOBILIZATION

The term social integration is variously understood by different agencies. Some see it as a positive process of including everyone, especially vulnerable groups, in the development process. Others see it as an unwarranted imposition of uniformity or external ideals and values, and a disrespect of socio-cultural differences among people. In this chapter, social integration is understood as the processes addressing the social disparities and the exclusion of people who are denied equal access to the services, benefits and rights enjoyed by other in society. Such services, benefits and rights include access to education and health care, decent work, participation in economic, social, political and civic life, and strong social ties to the family, local community, voluntary associations, trade unions and society.

Globalization, or global integration, is moving at a rapid pace. However, not all countries or people are participating in or benefiting from the globalization process and the expanding opportunities in the global economy, in global technology, in the global spread of cultures and in global rules-making. According to a recent World Bank study, approximately 2 billion people, many of them from Asia and Africa, are currently excluded from enjoying the benefits that globalization brings (World Bank 2002).

But social exclusion is not just a byproduct of globalization. Social exclusion is present as a feature of all societies when different rules and policies, formal and informal, enable some and constrain others in gaining access and entitlement to goods, services, activities and resources. Certain groups of people are denied

opportunities which are open to others, for reasons of age, gender, lifestyle, belief systems, physical characteristics or health.

A number of trends towards increasing economic and political exclusion, and defining the context of social integration of women in the region, have already been discussed in previous chapters. Poverty affecting women in its different forms, growing gender inequalities and feminisation of labour-market conditions are excluding women partially or wholly from sustainable livelihoods, decent employment, minimum earnings and consumption, physical and human capital formation. In the following sections, additional broad outlines of trends affecting gender aspects of social integration will be reviewed.

This Chapter also looks at the potential of programmes and policies designed to enhance the gender equality of opportunities, and social integration and stability, through social mobilization.

A. Trends defining women's social integration in the ESCAP region

1. Increased population movements

As globalization concentrates opportunity in certain regions and countries, and in particular economic sectors, one of the most obvious responses on the part of those most threatened with exclusion or marginalization is to migrate, whether within countries or abroad. Over the past few decades, this phenomenon has become a central element in the livelihood strategy of millions of women and men. According to United Nations estimates for the period 1995-2000, in the ESCAP region as a

whole, emigration has reduced population growth by about 2 per cent. This is but one indicator of the significant rate of migration. Looking at some individual countries, Australia has a net gain in population of 80,000 annually; countries such as Bangladesh, India and Pakistan in South and South-West Asia have experienced the emigration of over 100,000 persons annually. Similarly, emigration rates are significant in China in East and North-East Asia, and Indonesia and the Philippines in South-East Asia (United Nations 1997).

As for rural-urban migration trends, in the ESCAP region as a whole, nearly 40 million people are added to the urban population each year, with about half, or approximately 20-25 million people, moving to urban centres in search of a better life. Nearly half of this urban migration is taking place in South and South-West Asia. The difference between East and North-East Asia (which includes China) and South and South-West Asia (which includes India) is striking. During the period 1990-2000, both subregions had approximately the same number of net rural-to-urban migrants; while in East and North-East Asia, the number is expected to increase by 50 per cent; in South and South-West Asia, it is expected to double by the period 2010-2020 (Seetharam, Gubhaju and Huguet 2001).

A forthcoming United Nations study indicates a gradual increase over time in the proportion of women among rural-to-urban migrants who move independently (United Nations forthcoming). This trend is likely to continue because of employment opportunities in the urban formal and non-formal sectors. The continuing pace of urban growth and urbanization, together with increasing female education in both rural and urban areas, can only add to this trend.

It is recognized that migration has helped to ease the problem of poverty in some cases and meet the labour needs of the countries of both origin and destination. As countries increasingly welcome more highly skilled workers, more remittances are generated and there is also a greater possibility of technology transfer and enhanced skills formation. The demand for skilled migrants will also increase the migration chances of women, whose migration currently is largely a response to the demand for domestic workers, factory workers, and for the entertainment industry. However, long-term migration of some members can induce disintegration of the family. So does more temporary migration, when virtually all able-bodied adults must make a living elsewhere, leaving grandparents to take care of children, as is increasingly the case in rural areas hard hit by economic crisis and adjustment.

Note must also be taken of irregular migration and human trafficking of women and girls. As national borders become more porous, the already substantial irregular migration in the region will likely increase. Those involved in irregular migration have established networks and migrant institutions across transnational spaces, thereby facilitating further flows. Such irregular migration is financially costly to the migrants and expose them to a precarious existence where there is a lack of access to basic services and redress for any grievances.

Human trafficking, as a form of irregular migration including the buying and selling of humans for the sex industry, is currently one of organized crime's fastest growing business (UNDP 1999). As discussed in Chapter II, trafficking has become an issue of growing concern in this region, especially in South-East Asia. It has been conservatively estimated that at least 200,000-225,000 women and children from

South-East Asia are trafficked annually, a figure representing nearly one third of the global trafficking trade (IOM 2000). Traffickers prey on the economic vulnerability of their potential victims. Across Asia, millions of children, young women and men are lured from their homes and villages by sophisticated crime syndicates and forced into labour where the conditions are exploitative and even slave-like. Poverty is a critical “push” factor for many victims. In Asia, where cross-border trafficking in humans occurs on a large scale, many victims are forced to work in the sex industry, as well as in other illegal activities, under the threat of violence and intimidation.

2. Feminisation of the elderly

Another demographic trend of concern is the falling fertility rates in the region, especially the wealthier Asian countries. Fourteen countries and cities in Asia have fertility rates below the 2.1 births per woman required to replace the older generations. This is more pronounced in the region's more affluent nations and cities, such as Japan, Hong Kong, China, Macau, China, Singapore, Taiwan, Province of China and the Republic of Korea where fertility rates are below 1.5 per woman, while Thailand is marginally higher at 1.8. Women in these countries are having fewer babies or no children at all because of career pressures.

Asia's fertility rate plunged from around six children per woman from 1950-1955 to 2.7 children per woman between 1995-2000. The current fertility rate in the region of 2.7 children per woman is slightly below the world average. The implications are far-reaching and profound, as they affect the age structure of the population, giving rise to population ageing, labour force shortages, increased elderly dependency ratios and feminisation of the elderly population.

One key impact will be on the labour force, where there will be fewer younger people to take over jobs left by the greying generation, who may have to work longer than normal before retiring. By 2050, Japan's old-age population - categorised as people aged 65 and above - is forecast to be more than 36 per cent of the total

population, up from 17 per cent in 2000. This will be three times as high as the proportion of people aged between 15-64. The proportion of the old-age population will exceed that of the younger population in Singapore by 2020, 2025 in the Republic of Korea, 2035 in China and 2040 in Thailand. What this means is that countries with high social security coverage will come under pressure to provide pensions for the growing number of elderly.

The problem of care for the elderly is likely to be especially acute for older women, who constitute the majority of the elderly in virtually all low-mortality populations. Because of women's greater longevity in most countries of Asia and the tendency for men to marry women younger than themselves, women are more likely than men to end their lives as widows. The implication of this is a serious gender asymmetry in the support and care of the elderly.

Population ageing is also a women's issue in that the care for the elderly is still considered to be the responsibility of the family, part of a cultural value of filial piety. Women in the family or in the community have to play a major role in providing this care and support.

The onset of physical disability in old age may produce a need for support as well as for care if the individual's income depends on continued employment. Likewise, the social disabilities created by a sex-based division of labour or by arbitrary rules of retirement may also create both support and care needs in old age. An important issue in formulating policy, then, is whether social norms concerning such issues as the gender-based division of labour or the mandatory retirement age, create or exacerbate problems for populations as they age. The problems that elderly women face are, moreover, frequently compounded by their difficulties in obtaining sufficient income because of their limited access to pensions and rights to property.

In Asia the numbers of rural elderly are projected to increase in absolute terms. Such increases have implications for health needs and other necessary services. Many countries in the region will face an important elderly dependency ratio, which raises the issue of the possible future vulnerability of the rural elderly as a group in view of the pressures which will be placed on the family and community institutions.

A large percentage of the future rural elderly will not benefit from any significant pension, health insurance or social security support which, insofar as they are being developed, are limited mostly to urban elderly. Again, the sex ratio is in favour of women, particularly in rural areas. From a rural-gender perspective, distribution issues such as land property or tenure and other assets need to be examined.

3. Women in development

In recent decades issue of gender equality and empowerment of women have been increasingly given particular attention national and regional development efforts. This has come about, to a large extent, as a result of the impetus given and commitments made by a succession of international meetings and conferences since the declaration of the first International Women's Year in 1975. The momentum of action in this area by Governments and NGOs has accelerated, as is evident in the reviews of progress made, most recently at the Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing in 1995, and the special session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2000.

The efforts in promoting and integrating the role and status of women in development have led to the following achievements, among others; greater de jure equality, closer gender parity in school enrolment ratios in many countries, increased participation in the labour market and business, better recognition of women's unpaid work and initiatives taken to quantify such work in alternative national and domestic accounting systems, and increased political participation. Important mechanisms and institutions have been established, such as equal employment laws, revisions in inheritance, property and succession laws and other family laws to accord women equal rights in matrimonial and family affairs, national machineries to advocate and

coordinate strategies and plans for women's empowerment and gender equality in the household, economy and polity, national policies and action plans to integrate women in development at all development levels, measures to prevent or penalize discrimination in employment practices and sexual harassment at places of work, and violence against women.

Gender-related Development Index (GDI) values have been calculated based on three major achievements in human development, namely, a long and healthy life as measured by life expectancy at birth, knowledge as measured by the adult literacy rate and gross enrolment ratio, and a decent standard of living as measured by the estimated earned income adjusted to account for inequalities between men and women (UNDP 2001). The GDI values between 1994 and 1999 improved in 20 out of the 25 ESCAP countries for which data were available. The other five countries lost some. Among the 25 countries as a whole, the GDI increased by an average of 9.1 per cent.

In the context of globalization, with greater political and cultural awareness there is increased expectation regarding the attainment of human rights and women's rights, among others. Globalization has led to an unprecedented increase in women's NGOs and networking for mutual support and dialogue. These movements have catalysed women's advocacy of gender dimensions in the outcomes of international, regional, national and local forums concerning various development issues. They have also promoted the role of women in building a culture of prevention and peace.

Yet many obstacles remain, blocking a fuller social participation for women because of legal and customary barriers, including family and labour laws, and deep-

rooted socio-cultural perceptions and practices. In many developing countries, gender disparities are still prevalent in indicators of health, literacy, education, income and employment. Women face difficulties in elections and appointment to public office, retaining guardianship rights over children, receiving fair judgement as victims of domestic and sexual violence.

The integration of women in the development process remains a key policy issue for sustaining social development. Based on studies that suggest a positive relationship between access to social services by poor women and girls, with improvements in overall family and community well-being, the empowerment of women and gender equality are integral to social policy considerations in national agendas. Public policy can encourage the decision-making roles of women, including in political leadership, and for conflict management and resolution in the globalizing world, it can also support the use of international and national legal instruments and agreements towards attaining greater integration of women in development.

4. Participation in economic, cultural, social and political processes

On a positive note, globalization has contributed to the strengthening of peoples' organizations, including the poor themselves and civil society in general. Until recently, in countries characterized by authoritarian rule, the kind of independent association necessary to constitute a civil society was generally proscribed. In many countries, people pursued their interests through channels controlled by the Government. This situation is changing markedly, as steps are taken to strengthen democratic political systems and as economic crisis reduces the capacity

of many Governments to influence and maintain representation and control. Increasingly there are new opening for citizens' initiatives in the transition to democracy. Such initiatives are being encouraged by the international development community, which is currently committed to strengthening NGOs by channelling an increasing proportion of available funds for aid and relief to that sector.

Certain aspects of globalization greatly favour the creation of new associations and interest groups in societies on the road to democracy. Worldwide networks of like-minded people, linked by modern communications, offer support and resources. This is particularly visible in fields such as environmental protection, equality for women and human rights. International links are also forged between some trade union and farmers' organizations in countries of the global network, as they collaborate to meet the challenges from the potential downsides in the internationalization of production. A plethora of business associations search for partners in well-established and fledging market economies. Neither democracy nor development can be achieved without effective organization of people to pursue common interests, and the awakening of civil society in many parts of the region will foster development efforts.

Globalization has also contributed to the creation of new associations of women and the strengthening of their networks to offer mutual support and resources. The global social movement of human rights, in affirming women's equality, have provided women's groups in the region with international standards to rise against adverse national or local codes. The technological and communications revolutions have added new dimensions to women's long-standing organizational methods.

Groups working for the recognition of women's human rights have furthered their skills and strengths in campaigning and communicating globally. Instantaneous communications have facilitated the formation of alliances and coalitions, lessened isolation for women in remote or secluded areas, allowed for rapid mobilization over issues and provided support on a global basis.

The combination of institutions, laws, procedures and norms, which allows people to express their concerns and fight for their interests within a predictable and relatively equitable context, forms the basis of effective participation. Efficient administration of public resources is an additional element in this definition. Contemporary concern with social exclusion and lack of inclusiveness present challenges to structures of governance that to more appropriately provide a framework to better meet the rising expectations and aspirations of diverse groups in the population.

Political and administrative systems must increasingly support a balanced gender-response to the participation demands of their citizens. The problem is partly ethical, and partly structural. Long-standing socio-cultural attitudes and institutional practices biased against women.

C. Trends in Social mobilization

This section reviews the actions taken by the major interdependent actors, that is, Governments and NGOs and civil society, including the private business sector, in social mobilization for women. The following highlights some of the policy and

programme measures implemented by the various actors, as reported in United Nations and ESCAP documents, and recent country reports pertaining to social mobilization.

1. Governmental actions

In the past decade, many Governments in the region have initiated a number of specific measures towards the integration of women in their overall national development plans and policy. Many have formulated and implemented comprehensive social development programmes either sectorally or intersectorally, with particular emphasis on gender issues. Bangladesh, China, Fiji, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam developed and operationalized comprehensive plans for the purpose of poverty alleviation and employment expansion or for expanding opportunities or benefits to, among others, women. Some countries revised existing laws and regulations or introduced new legislation to strengthen or upgrade measures for enhancing protection of women's rights. The Republic of Korea, for example, introduced the "Basic Law for the Development of Women" in 1996; it revised its decades-old "Child Welfare Act" in 2000. Institutional arrangements, such as designating focal points and establishing coordinating bodies to supervise and monitor governmental and non-governmental programme activities, vis-à-vis women's issues were other actions taken by a number of countries in the region. For example, the Republic of Korea and Malaysia set up new ministries to address women's issues.

Governments resorted to surveys to collect sex-disaggregated data on poverty level so

as to improve the efficiency of targeting in poverty alleviation projects. Some countries have identified indicators for assessing social integration; the indicators include distribution of assets and access to services, the status of women and children, including violence against them, and women's participation in economic and political processes at the national and local levels, and children displaced by armed conflicts. However, the lack of development of indicators in this area, for many other countries, could be attributed partly to the fact that poverty reduction indicators are assumed to subsume achievements in social integration.

Provision of subsidized childcare facilities and services to promote women's participation in the economy, and subsidies to employers to open more job opportunities to women are of particular interest from the perspective of social integration. For example, an extensive training programme in the use of computers and the Internet was offered cost-free to housewives and other interested groups over a period of two years or more. Such initiatives served well to reduce the extent to which women and others without the opportunity to become computer literate would have become alienated and excluded from the emergent socio-economic mainstream.

2. Civil society organizations

Civil society organizations, particular women's groups, have played a highly important role in social development for women during the past decade. Many government initiatives such as those cited above could not have taken place without the collaboration of CSOs. These organizations have articulated and advocated the need for action, and they have collaborated with the public sector in undertaking

necessary actions. Collaboration has occurred in employment, labour-management relations, rural development, social service delivery, human rights and other fields.

The growth of gender-related CSOs world-wide and in the region, in numbers and quality, their solidarity, and extensive and multi-level networking, has made them an influential force in the development arena. During the 1990s especially, they have been effective advocates of gender mainstreaming in human rights issues, consumer protection and environmental protection, among other areas. Globalization has accelerated rapid CSO networking and the reach of these networks to the grassroots level. Women's groups have become important opinion makers, and have influenced the decisions of local and national Governments and international bodies. For example, the success achieved by a number of NGOs in the family planning field is well known. Their work has had a significant impact on overall development outcomes. Indeed, the United Nations gender initiatives are in large part the outcome of CSO activism that has spanned decades.

In general, the activities of many gender-related civil society organizations in the region have shifted from human service to a more rights-based orientation. This shift is indicative of their increasingly urgent demand in society for women's fuller integration into all the economic, social, political and cultural processes that affect their daily lives.

C. Policy considerations

Strengthening national mechanisms and promoting the greater participation of women in community-based and non-governmental organizations remain one of the major objectives in empowering women. In that regard, as mentioned above, national machineries have emerged as important institutional systems for the integration and mobilization of women, with focal points as their primary components. The United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985), stimulated the establishment of national machinery for women in most countries, but only about 30 per cent of Asian and Pacific countries established focal points in 1985 and thereafter, with up to 40 per cent of them functioning without either mandates or vested authority. Decisions about structures and functions of machinery may either limit or enhance their potential for mainstreaming the advancement of women.

While the positioning of national focal points varies widely, Asian and Pacific countries use four major structures: (a) women's organizations; (b) women's commissions, councils or committees attached to the Prime Minister, President, Governor or Cabinet of Ministers; (c) women's ministries; and (d) women's units within one or more ministries. The majority of countries use the first three structures, whereby the focal point can access high levels of power and influence national decision-making. The remaining two fifths limit this access and influence to units in ministries.

During the last decade, many countries introduced major changes in the location of their focal points. Elsewhere, movement took place within ministries, and many focal points were relocated more than once. As a result, during the decade, women's units were incorporated in ministries simultaneously assuming responsibility in different substantive areas. These include social welfare, children's affairs, youth, sports, family planning, human resources development, community affairs, culture, justice, relief, resettlement, education, science, technology, archives, religion, teaching hospitals, interior affairs, political affairs, health, transport, the environment, population, labour, national unity and, finally, social development.

National machineries are becoming increasingly complex as governments supplement and complement focal points. Many countries complement their focal points with subnational units at provincial, district or even village level. Women's studies programmes and research units are increasingly becoming major components of national machinery. Other integrative mechanisms link focal points among ministries and with communities of women and their organizations.

In addition, mechanisms organize input from concerned organizations, while others provide forums for dialogue and negotiation. Some even enable governments to access researchers and to elicit their substantive direction for the preparation of reviews and evaluations and the design of policies and programmes. Governments assign a range of functions to focal points, but four major functions are essential to mainstreaming: (a) research and policy analysis and identifying issues and concerns; (b) recommendations and advice; (c) implementation; and (d) monitoring and evaluation.

National mechanisms support mainstreaming at the highest level of national decision-making. They also create enabling environments for focal point staff to combine research and statistics with programme and project experience to furnish a solid foundation for recommendations to a predominantly male audience. But in many countries, skilled personnel are not available in sufficient numbers from within the civil service or as cadres of women's organizations to furnish such recommendations. While some governments introduce training to enhance the analytic capacity and gender sensitivity of their staff, it offers insufficient support for the effective operation of national machinery. For this reason, governments often establish new components with mandates for policy-oriented research and monitoring functions.

Dissemination of information forms another priority area of concern in strengthening national mechanisms. While several governments organized information centres during the last decade, these remain inadequate and often lack staff with sufficient training to use what is available effectively. Focal point initiatives on behalf of women are severely curtailed by inadequate information, especially accurate and timely data and policy-oriented research.

The fuller integration of women in development in the region entails the creation of an enabling environment. Focal points ought to be given mandated authority with primary responsibility for women. They should also be complemented with mechanisms that lend them assistance and access to power, information and support. Such an environment remains a prerequisite for women and men to work together towards empowering women.

Women's groups, NGOs and other sections of the civil society are also playing a vital role in empowering women in the region. Women's organizations have greatly helped in raising consciousness about the rights of women and drawn attention to the social and economic hardships experienced by them. These organizations, along with the relevant NGOs, have been campaigning for legal reforms and legislative changes for the betterment of women. Social development in general and social integration (or gender mainstreaming) in particular form the broad frameworks within which the women's organizations are working in advancing the cause of women. As in most other areas, these organizations tend to be more resourceful and effective in the developed and more advanced countries of the region. In the weaker economies, these organizations need further strengthening in order for them to play a more meaningful role in empowering women.

Promotion of women's rights as human rights

The promotion of women's rights as human rights was one of the main objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action. In that context, ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has become an important instrument in empowering women in the region. As of January 1999, the Convention had been ratified by over two thirds of ESCAP members and associate members. Of those, nearly one third have entered reservations for reasons of religion, culture and conflict of law. Such reservations and/or declarations effectively dilute the human rights standards set by the Convention for women in those countries and also for the region. Even where ratification has been without reservation, implementation has been slow in a number of countries, thereby allowing existing discriminatory practices against women to continue under the sanction of religious principles or cultural and customary values.

Given the differences and the degree of sensitivities posed by the cultural and religious particularities of individual countries of subregions, a rights-based approach to gender equality may provide some common ground which can yield positive results.

In recent years, trafficking in women has attracted a great deal of attention. It is now widely seen as one of the worst forms of the violation of women's rights as human rights. It has become a serious problem without borders, affecting countries within Asia as well as other parts of the world. Women have been trafficked for prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation such as sex tourism and pornography, domestic workers, labourers in sweatshops and on construction sites, as beggars and brides. The increasing use of new information technologies, in particular, the Internet, presents a new dimension to the problem faced. Poverty and economic deprivation have also subjected women to trafficking. In many instances, trafficked women are becoming victims of highly organized networks. Women victims in these situations lack legal protection and legal rights. The United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 52/98 of 12 December 1997, emphasized the need for more concerted and sustained national, regional and international action over the alarming levels of trafficking in women and girls.

The adoption of the Bangkok Accord and Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Women at a Regional Conference on Trafficking in Women, held at Bangkok in November 1999, provided the first step forward in harnessing a regional response to the problem.

Violence against women constitutes another form of gross violation of women's rights as human rights. It has become a grave social problem, requiring urgent attention. Although the problem in the region is not new, it has so far attracted limited social recognition and legal redress owing to the complexities of patriarchal values, traditions, norms and standards. Even laws often discriminate against women and offenders go unpunished. Violence against women takes a variety of forms, including physical, mental and sexual abuse. While many countries in the region are engaged in combating violence against women in cooperation with NGOs and women's organizations, there is a need for more cooperation at the regional and subregional

levels, particularly in those areas which affect women from several countries.

Promoting greater participation in the decision-making process

Promoting the greater participation of women in the decision-making process remains another major objective in several countries of the region towards the goal of empowering women. Awareness of the need for promoting the greater participation of women in the decision-making process is on the rise. In several countries of the region, women have reached the highest positions of political authority. Parliamentary representation is also on the rise in several countries. Yet, women by and large still find themselves excluded from the state or government apparatus in many countries of the region. Regional experience suggests that women tend to do better in terms of participation in the decision-making process when proactive policies are in place, backed up by a social consensus on the need for empowering women.

CHAPTER V

SOCIAL PROTECTION, SOCIAL SECURITY, SOCIAL SAFETY NETS

Social Protection (SP) is a relatively new and broad concept in social policy. In fact, there is no consensus among United Nations member states on the definition of SP; definitions reflect the history and value system in the different countries. This was one of the main conclusions reached in the preparatory meeting for the Commission for Social Development on SP, which was held in February 2001 in New York (United Nations 2001).

In this Chapter, SP is understood as the mix of policies and programs aimed at reducing poverty and vulnerability for individuals unable to work owing to chronic illness, permanent disabilities or old age, and also to protect the majority of the population against some of the unexpected downturns of life (sickness, unemployment, death of breadwinner, etc.).

Social Security (SS) and *Social Safety Nets* (SSN) are often used as alternative terms to SP. SS generally refers to programs that are directed at meeting a specific need, that are usually financed on the basis of contributions, and that are available to beneficiaries on the basis of their participation and entitlements. SSNs, on the other hand, refer to public measures that are designed to transfer resources to groups deemed eligible due to deprivation. SP is intended, therefore, to encompass both SS and SSN programs. In sum, SP refers to all forms of benefits and services (such as family benefits, universal health care services, and minimum-income provisions) that are generally available on a universal basis without regard to participation, contribution or employment status (although they may include a test of means).

The experience from the recent financial/economic crisis has shown that many of the affected countries in the ESCAP region did not have in place effective schemes to ensure adequate SP against the macroeconomic shocks generated by the process of globalization. Many countries in the ESCAP region discovered, painfully, that their lack of proper SP systems have made their working populations vulnerable to excessive risk, increased the incidence of their poverty, and undermined their longer term human capital investment efforts. Developing countries are also recognizing that what SP systems they do have in place are difficult to sustain financially and not effective in meeting the challenges of globalization, changing demographic trends and the attendant processes of urbanization, migration, and disintegration of family and community networks.

The crisis also underlined the vulnerable situation of women. It had also severely undermined the progress made during the previous decade in empowering women in the economic and social fields. Shutdowns and lay-offs in the manufacturing sector had affected many women, who shouldered the major brunt of job losses in the affected countries. The feminization of employment in many of these previously high-growth economies was followed by the equally rapid feminization of growing unemployment. Additionally, the deflationary adjustment policies affected women adversely, not only as workers, but also as household providers, mothers, etc. Women's access to basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter, and to the provisioning of common property resources, were curtailed. Their access to education and skill formation that allows them easier labour mobility was also diminished. There were also serious consequences for total household incomes in different sectors and gender-based distribution within households. As austerity measures took hold, women were required to spend more time on caring for the young and infirm as health-care facilities and other social services were reduced.

This chapter examines some of the challenges posed by globalization and demographic change for the provision and financing of various forms of SP, especially gender-responsiveness in policy design, monitoring and sustainability. It considers various measures by which formal, informal and temporary SSNs could be made more sustainable and inclusive by effectively targeting groups in need. SP policies vary from country to country depending on specific needs, availability of resources, the range of institutions, and the political economy of reforms. But once specific measures are selected, the programs will have to consider the crucial issues of coverage, targeting of vulnerable populations, gender responsiveness, sustainability, good governance, and institutional and political capacity for reforms.

A. GLOBALIZATION, CRISIS AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND CHALLENGES TO SP SYSTEMS

The recent and heightened interest in SP derives, to a large extent, from the global reaction to various forms of economic or financial crisis over the 1990s. These crises are associated with contemporary processes of globalization, and specifically with the growing integration of trade systems and capital markets, which are generally seen to present two contrasting faces. On the one hand, they are seen as increasing opportunities for all (including poorer people and poorer countries); while on the other hand they are seen as increasing

insecurity on a global scale (Weisbrot, Baker, Kraev and Chen 2001). Other dimensions of contemporary global change of relevance include:

- Increasing inequality – both within countries and between countries;
- An increasingly liberalized international economic environment restricting many sources of revenue which were previously available to governments to fund social expenditures; and
- A global demographic transition which implies long-term changes in dependency ratios, in particular, the growth in the absolute and relative numerical importance of older people.

In short, processes of international economic integration are increasingly leaving nation states with less power to regulate conditions for relationships between capital and labor, conditions of access to internal markets, and levels of budgetary support available for human development.

The Asian financial/economic crisis certainly caused a shift in SP thinking. The crisis was initially an urban-based crisis but its impact soon went beyond urban areas and affected the rural communities as a result of globalization. The crisis hit countries in East and South East Asia with different intensity and speed. Accordingly, the responses of governments varied. In some countries, the crisis was aggravated by natural disasters caused mainly by the El Nino phenomenon. Existing SSN were inadequate and not properly designed when the crisis hit.

Before the financial crisis hit the region in 1997, several high-performing East Asian economies had enjoyed three decades of steady income growth and attained a remarkable improvement in the well being of the population. Meanwhile, a number of new social issues, such as gender disparities, rapid ageing of the population, migrant workers, income inequality, and ethnic conflicts, as well as environmental concerns were beginning to attract political attention in many parts of the region prior to the onset of the crisis. It was, however, the 1997-98 crisis itself that triggered a serious debate within these countries regarding the sustainability of SP and more broadly the future of Asian societies.

The financial crisis quickly translated into a drastic contraction in production and employment in Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand, the five hardest-hit countries (Lee and Rhee 1999). The fall in real GDP in 1998 over 1997 ranged from 13.1 per cent in Indonesia to 0.6 per cent in the Philippines, while the rise in

open unemployment rates was most conspicuous in Korea (from 2.6 to 6.8) and Thailand (from 0.9 to 4.4). Such shocks had severe adverse social consequences, bringing the question of SP to the fore - as a common reform agenda of the region.

The crisis negatively affected the well being of individual households in a number of ways (Lee, 1998). First, a sharp contraction in production reduced the demand for labor, which resulted in a reduction in real wage rates and/or an increase in unemployment. Second, a bout of high inflation during the crisis and its aftermath dented real household expenditure. Third, higher import prices as a result of real currency devaluation reduced the purchasing power of household income. Fourth, a substantial loss of property incomes (dividends, capital gains and rents) reduced total household income. In addition, the welfare of poor households further deteriorated through the government's lower spending on education, health care and other social services as a consequence of the economic downturn.

Evidence thus far indicates that the social impact of the crisis was substantial, and more importantly, the impact on poverty was much more severe in some countries than others. Such country differences are due to several factors. One reason is that workers displaced from the formal industrial sector were absorbed in agricultural and (informal) service employment. In other words, much of the adjustment took the form of lower real wages. In the case of Malaysia, it has been pointed out that migrant workers bore the brunt of the adjustment burden more than domestic ones (World Bank 2000, p.117).

Importantly, the gender dimensions of the social impacts must be taken into account. The crisis has underlined the vulnerable situation of women. It had also severely undermined the progress made during the previous decade in empowering women in the economic and social fields. Shutdowns and lay-offs in the manufacturing sector had affected many women, who shouldered the major brunt of job losses in the affected countries. The feminization of employment in many of these previously high-growth economies was followed by the equally rapid feminization of growing unemployment. The economic crisis also caused male unemployment. The growing male unemployment affected women directly, and an increasing number were pushed into the labour market under unacceptable work conditions owing to the pressure of declining real household incomes.

Additionally, the deflationary adjustment policies affected women adversely, not only as workers, but also as household providers, mothers, etc. Women's access to basic needs such

as food, clothing and shelter, and to the provisioning of common property resources, were curtailed. Their access to education and skill formation that allows them easier labour mobility was also diminished. There were also serious consequences for total household incomes in different sectors and gender-based distribution within households. As austerity measures took hold, women were required to spend more time on caring for the young and infirm as health-care facilities and other social services were reduced.

Where many women have been forced in such circumstances to seek additional income outside the home, this had put pressure on girl children, who had to take up some of the activities of the household and childcare otherwise performed by their mothers. In extreme cases, this led to their withdrawal from schooling and other negative effects. Importantly, these other negative features were in the area of food security - a critical issue throughout the region. The emphasis on primary product export, along with cuts in food and other subsidies typical of such structural packages, led almost axiomatically to increases in the relative price of food and therefore put pressure on real consumption within households. It is widely acknowledged that in many Asian societies, social and cultural norms are such that women and girl children face disproportionately excessive cuts in their food consumption when household per capita access to food declines. Where adjustment programmes have also tended to include effective cuts in public distribution systems for food and essential items, these place a special burden on females within the family.

Demographic trends, such as feminisation of population movements and population ageing, as discussed in earlier chapters also have important implications for SP policy and programs.

B. TYPES OF SP SCHEMES PREVAILING IN THE ESCAP REGION

The situation of the ESCAP region countries has been diverse, to say the least, with a range of SP mechanisms and strategies ranging from the formal to informal, and public to non-governmental and private sector delivered. Generally, the SP mechanisms and instruments in the region may be usefully classified under the 6 major areas of SP: (1) informal SP, (2) Social assistance, (3) social security/insurance, (4) employment schemes and (4) area- and micro-based programs.

Many of the terms used in SP analysis are ascribed different meanings in different institutional publications. In this chapter, “formal” is used to describe SP provided by state

and market-based actors (through direct provision, statutory insurance, public works, or private insurance firms), while informal covers individual and collective arrangements which fall outside these systems (household income diversification, assistance between kin, mutual aid societies, etc.).

1. Informal SP

Poor population groups in developing countries are for the most part not reached by formal SP systems. In fact, more than half of the world’s population is not covered by any type of formal SP, with the Asian region being far worse as compared with other parts of the world except Africa. In South Asia, statutory security coverage is estimated at 5 to 10 percent of the working population and decreasing in some countries. In South East Asia and East Asia, coverage can vary between 10 percent in Cambodia and 100 percent in Korea for health insurance (Yoshitomi 2001). The formal SP system in most South Pacific countries (Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, Vanuatu and recently Tonga), as well is limited in its coverage (ILO 2001). Overall SP remains at dismally low levels in the region.

The poor are largely dependent on SP mechanisms provided by non-state institutions including family and kin, ‘community’, religious bodies, non-governmental organizations, savings and credit groups, and forms of ‘traditional’ insurance such as burial societies (ADBI 2001). In the development literature of the 1990s this trend is referred to as “social capital” - organizational capacity, linkages and networks which poor people can mobilize for the management of social risk and protection from absolute destitution.

All population groups, but especially the poor, are vulnerable to four main types of risks (i) those related to the individual lifecycle, (ii) economic, (iii) environmental and (iv) social/governance related (ADB, 2001:2). Another way to categorize the risks is (i) covariant (common) risks (climatic shocks, seasonality, policy shocks, etc) and (ii) idiosyncratic (individual) risks (orphanhood, widowhood, old age, unemployment, etc.). Table V.1 lists some of the informal strategies employed by the poor to cope with these various risks.

Table V.1: Social risks and informal SP strategies

Types of Social Risks	Household or Informal Mechanisms
Lifecycle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hunger, children's stunted development • Illness/injury/disease (including HIV/AIDS) • Disability • Old age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women as family welfare providers • Extended family, community support • Hygiene, preventive health • Asset/savings depletion • Debt

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death 	
Economic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of source of livelihood (i.e., crop failure, cattle disease) • Unemployment • Low income • Changes in prices of basic needs • Economic crisis and/or transition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversified sources of livelihood • Private transfers/extended family support, child labor • Depletion of assets/savings • Reduced consumption of basic goods • Debt • Migration
Environmental <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drought • Flood, rains • Earthquake • Landslides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migration • Community action for resource management • Private transfers/extended family support • Assets/savings depletion
Social/Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion, losing social status/capital • Extortion, corruption • Crime, domestic violence, social anomie 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political instability • Maintaining community networks (reciprocal gifts, arranging marriages, religious networks) • Community pressure • Women's groups • Migration

Source: ADB, 2001:2.

The intra-household arrangements reflect the ‘safety-first’ principles observed in inter-household (‘community’) relationships. In many societies women settle for unequal and exploitative relationships to their husbands (and their husbands’ relatives) because these relationships also entail some reciprocal responsibilities and protection – at least in theory (cultural ideal), if not always in reality (cultural practice). Several reports attest to these household strategies, which were exacerbated with the onslaught of the economic crisis in 1997 (White and Sharma 1999)

Common property resources (CPRs) is another crucial element of the livelihood strategies of the poor in rural societies. Fish from rivers and lakes, timber and non-timber products from forests, and field crops such as frogs, crabs and birds may all be essential to the consumption and income of rural households. Common property resources are particularly important to women as household managers, as a fallback strategy in times of trouble (e.g. crop failure) (Seidensticker, Kurin, and Townsend 1991).

In many societies organized religion provided and in some cases still provides refuge of last resort to the completely destitute. The Buddhist temples in many countries will offer

shelter and food to (for example) those, particularly women, who lack kin to support them in their old age. Churches often provide similar welfare functions. In some societies religious conversion can be interpreted as (amongst other things) an effort to escape ascribed social identities (e.g. caste), which confine their members to impoverished, high-risk lives. More directly, changing religion may allow the convert to claim the support of the new church. In situations of widespread distress religious groups also frequently provide a 'bridge' between the local environment and external sources of support (for example, the regular role played by local churches in cushioning the impact of natural disasters, frequently by drawing on contacts with northern NGOs).

The widespread involvement of various forms of developmental and charitable organizations (local, national and international) is of obvious relevance to the discussion of SP. Local and international NGOs generally operate with a strong value-based motivation, many concentrating on assistance to the poorest. Pioneering work in areas of assisting the poor to develop the organizational forms to manage their own resources (credit and savings groups) has also of course often been associated with NGOs. Innovative approaches in working with women, and other marginalized groups have also often emerged from the NGO sector.

Van Ginneken (1999) discusses at some length an aspect of SP that is not extensively studied in the development literature, namely the inclusion of insurance functions in multi-faceted local level organizations such as cooperative associations and Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCAs). Arderner, (1996) highlights the fact that most of these informal systems generally involve women either as members/participants or managers. Burial societies, for example, accumulate regular contributions paid by their members. The accumulated funds are then used to pay for funerals and other ceremonies at the time of death. This plays a major role in preventing debt and hardship in households which have already been dealt a major blow in the loss of a member. ROSCAs can be found all over the world and go by different names in different regions and countries. Tontine, which is commonly found in Asia and the Pacific, is basically a club which runs a revolving fund to which each member contributes a fixed amount. The proceeds are distributed to members in rotation. The rules of the tontine require an agreed upon schedule of deposits and withdrawals by members. The "equity" built up is therefore not available at will to tontine members. Because the tontines are either kinship or friendship-based, there is strong social control -payment ethics are based on personal relations, which ensures that contributions are duly made by each member. A review of experience has found ROSCAs or a range of institutions (including the

extended family) that provide protection against risks such as disability, old age, death, illness and maternity.

Informal entitlements of SS are offered by traditional solidarity (such as support payments, gifts, dowry, bequests which are all based on generalized reciprocity), autochthonous self help (such as burial funds, savings clubs, community support which are all based on balanced reciprocity) and modern self help which can be initiated from above such as co-operatives, trade unions, charities or NGOs. They can also be initiated from below such as women's organizations, religious groups or self-help groups. Unconventional SS may provide food (food for work), loan insurance, employment security (guaranteed employment) and strengthening the capacity of solidarity.

Evidence shows that in Thailand, in the aftermath of the recent crisis, at both the family and community levels, social capital institutions that form the traditional, non-formal safety nets were used extensively and even expanded. For instance, Thai families have continued to help each other with cash gifts and remittances during the crisis; better off Thai families on average continued to help their poorer friends and relatives. At the household level, Thai women continued to protect their essential expenditures on necessities, their children's education, and basic health needs. Thai families managed household budgets to cut back on luxury purchases and "vices" such as alcohol and tobacco ("Thailand Social Monitor 2000)

These then are some of the parameters of household- and community-based social risk management and SP systems: often far from ideal, but a resource nonetheless which should be understood and incorporated when policy-makers attempt to design state instruments of SP. These informal arrangements typically focus upon mitigating and coping with risk: small-scale, informal SP arrangements cannot generally generate resources of the scale or diversity necessary to reduce risks. Informal SP arrangements may also buy SP in the short term at the cost of long-term poverty traps.

B. Formal SP

Among the lessons learnt from the recent economic crisis is that the informal, family-/community-based mechanisms on which traditional societies rely, as the main form of SP cannot cope with those nation-wide shocks that bring down a great number of households

simultaneously. This painful experience highlighted the need for more formal mechanisms for managing risk and protecting the poor and vulnerable in society. Since the crisis, several countries have been trying to adapt existing institutions to evolving social conditions and establishing new ones, in order to cope with the social impact of the crisis.

Formal SP policies and projects in the region may be usefully classified under the headings social assistance, SS/insurance, employment schemes and area-/micro-based programs. The shape of individual country's SP regime is greatly influenced by cultural and value patterns and policy developments in the past years.

Social assistance

Social assistance is equivalent to transfer payments offered to those who are living in poverty or in immediate risk of becoming poor. It can be provided through governments and the informal sector (including CSOs, NGOs, religious groups, etc.). Social assistance and welfare services provide protection to those who cannot qualify for insurance payments or would otherwise receive inadequate benefits. Social assistance programs are designed primarily to enhance social welfare by reducing poverty directly. Programs targeted to younger people can also promote longer-term growth and development by encouraging greater investment in human capital.

Social assistance interventions may include

- (i) welfare and social services, institutionalized or community-based, to highly vulnerable sections of the population, such as the physically or mentally disabled, orphans, and substance abusers;
- (ii) cash or in-kind transfers such as, food stamps and family allowances to vulnerable groups;
- (iii) temporary subsidies, such as energy life-line tariffs, housing subsidies, or support of lower prices of staple food in times of crisis;
- (iv) safeguards: in cases of a rise in prices and/or loss of entitlements to the poor, adequate mitigation measures are needed to prevent any adverse effect on the poor and the vulnerable; in the case of infrastructure, it should be designed to allow disabled populations to benefit from public investments.

State-provided social assistance is typically of minor importance in low-income countries, although subsidies towards or exemptions from state services may be used. As

Most of the low-income countries, especially in the South Pacific have no such schemes in place. Social assistance may also be used as a means to other social policy ends: the provision of free school meals, for example, may be used to encourage poor families to keep their children, and especially girls, in education.

In Indonesia, where the financial crisis was exacerbated by a natural calamity, the El Nino, the Government introduced several social assistance programs to allow for continued access to critical social services through introducing a basic health card system, subsidizing generic drugs and providing student scholarship and block grants (Irawan, Rahman, Romdiati and Suhaimi 2001). It also introduced public works (Padat Karya) programs and created a micro-credit program. Most importantly, however, it improved food security by introducing the rice subsidy program, which replaced a general subsidy program that was in place before the crisis. This revised program was a targeted price subsidy program that aims at distributing rice directly to poor households at subsidized prices.

In Thailand, which had no national poverty program in place prior to the Asian financial crisis, SP programs put in place thereafter consisted of social assistance including: (i) the health card system for low income groups and assistance to HIV/AIDs sufferers, (ii) education schemes through education loan programs, lunch programs in elementary schools and for pre-elementary school children, (iii) special programs for disadvantaged and abandoned children, disadvantaged youths and women and homes for the elderly, and (iv) programs for vulnerable groups such as development programs for hill tribes, welfare and social services for low- income individuals and families, emergency loan programs for the poor, in-kind programs for the destitute and support for people in disaster (Pongsapich, 2001).

Japan, with a public social assistance program going back to 1874, bases its schemes today on a few basic principles: (i) public assistance to people in need is a responsibility of the state, (ii) all citizens have a right to claim public assistance provided they meet the economic criteria for receiving such assistance, (iii) the state guarantees to all citizens a minimum level of healthy and cultural life, and (iv) public assistance is a supplement to all resources available to the applicant. Assistance is mainly given to elderly households, single mother households and households with disabled or sick persons (ADBI 2001)

Social security/insurance

SP must include an ex ante insurance function through SS in order to mitigate against possible life cycle risks and some disasters. Reducing these risks allows workers who have lost their jobs to search for a good alternative, removes barriers that might otherwise discourage workers from acquiring education and training, and helps ensure that the health and education of their children are not sacrificed in an economic downturn. Social insurance programs mitigate the risks by providing income support in the event of illness, disability, work injury, maternity, unemployment, and old age. Such programs include:

- Employer liability schemes
- Provident fund schemes
- Social assistance
- Social insurance
- Area- and micro-based programs
- Microinsurance
- Agricultural Insurance
- Social funds
- Disaster preparedness and management
- Public works programs

IV. PROBLEMS OF FUNDING, TARGETING AND MONITORING

In response to the recent crisis, one key SP measure the Republic of Korea undertook was a public works project aimed at stabilizing the livelihood of the unemployed poor (ADBI 2001). In retrospect, this program covered only 38.9% of the unemployed, the majority of whom were over 60 and were not the initial target group. Occupational retraining budgets were also increased during that period; however there were loopholes through which the private companies tried to subvert the system. Another important mechanism to respond to the crisis was to increase the budget and coverage of the unemployment insurance scheme. While the unemployment scheme was a crucial mechanism and one of the good practices in SP that does not exist in many countries in the South, the size of the benefits was below the poverty line so its effectiveness was more limited than expected.

Other SP interventions in India, Indonesia, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, etc. introduced by the state suffered from the same problems as in the experience of the Republic of Korea, including limited funds, low benefit size, leakages in targeting, inadequate of lack of monitoring of outputs and insufficient coverage. These problems were highlighted at the ESCAP Regional Seminar on Strengthening Policies and programs on SSN, held in May

2001. Studies commissioned by ESCAP pointed to common problems in the region, including:

- Under-coverage as a serious drawback to many SP regimes. Workers in the informal sector as well as those in the rural area constitute the majority of the workforce that are the most vulnerable and are often excluded from public social services; also excluded from coverage are most agricultural employment, occasional or part-time employment and domestic service, in which women workers predominate
- The design and choice of targeting mechanisms require further study, taking into account individual countries' particular situations: trade-offs are evident in terms of economic incentives, fiscal objectives and political acceptability. A recent policy paper submitted to the APEC Finance Ministers recognised this point well.
- Involvement of civil society organisations (CSOs) in program implementation and monitoring is essential to enhance the efficiency and coverage of SP policy. The question remains about how best to establish a good working partnership between the government and CSOs.

While financial constraints are challenges in themselves, the overall sustainability or viability of public provisioning of social services also depends on targeting efficiency. Targeting efficiency ensures that the most needy are the real beneficiaries of SP interventions. Illegal receipts and mismatch of the intended beneficiaries and actual beneficiaries are the most commonly observed examples of ill-targeted SP (Lee, 2001).

Other incidences of ill targeting may be found in public works programs. In an ESCAP-sponsored survey, on two major public works programs in Indonesia, female respondents reported systematically greater reduction in income after the outbreak of the economic crisis than male respondents. Labor market figures also showed a higher proportion of female workers to be underemployed than male workers. However, the public works program implemented to address this problem, showed severe imbalance in terms of gender participation (Lee, 2000).

One of the reasons behind this ill targeting in gender terms may lie in the types of tasks selected for this program. The jobs offered were more suited to male workers, for example construction, repair, renovations, normalization of infrastructure, etc. Yet another reason was that information on the program and application procedures was disseminated

only through government and social leaders. No information was made accessible through the news media, thereby excluding particular groups from receiving the information. It is also very likely that gender bias was at play, in that women are seen traditionally as secondary income earners and, therefore, priority given to providing male-related works programs.

D. POLICY OPTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING GENDER REPOSIVENESS IN SP

Where formal systems do not have sufficient human and financial resources to cover identified needs, the priority will be to target available resources to vulnerable groups. Many women are not only vulnerable to adverse effects of the crisis, but because of their role as household and family managers, the risks they face have extended implications. If only for these reasons, they should be prioritized as a target group.

Progressively, comprehensive SP systems will be developed but, in the short term, resources will be channeled to those most in need. Matching the results of the social expenditure reviews and vulnerability analysis will show the need to either pursue the development of a formal SP system or concentrate scarce resources into priority needs. When the vulnerability analysis shows high child/adult dependency ratios and children exposed to risks, the country's SP system should target children. When most vulnerable people live in the rural areas, resources should be decentralized and programs be put in place to target these priority population groups. A distribution analysis, as pointed out in the following section, should ensure any proposed SP program achieves its targeted objectives.

Special consideration should be paid to gender issues. Although half of the population of all population is women, they receive much less assistance and opportunities than do men. Many poverty reduction and social development programs are focused on households and do not consider intrahousehold differences. Assets and labor are normally distributed in a different and unequal manner between men and women, boys and girls within a same household. Unless particular attention is paid to women's unique problems and life patterns when SP policies and programs are developed, approaches that might appear to be gender-neutral may actually disadvantage women. Positive discrimination maybe needed to ensure women's development in this region. For example, labor market reforms must go beyond a purely traditional agenda to adequately address such special concerns of women as a higher incidence of home work, competing demands from household responsibilities, and the

particular needs surrounding child bearing. In child protection, the benefits of investing in the girl child are large—educated girls become more responsible and better-informed mothers. Social insurance programs need to be designed to take into account the longer life expectancies of women in most societies; the additional implications for women of the risk of loss of support due to death, abandonment, or divorce; and the less stable earning patterns commonly found among women.

The most vulnerable populations are often not reflected in household surveys – migrant workers, orphans, the homeless, victims of disasters, refugees, nomads and marginalized indigenous groups. These groups may require special attention owing to both extreme poverty and social exclusion. As with women, they may be seriously disadvantaged by programs that appear otherwise to be uniform and fair, owing to the effects of labor market discrimination and alternative cultural traditions. Special outreach strategies are normally required for those.

CHAPTER VI: WOMEN AND ICT

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a key enabler of globalization. It allows for an efficient and cost-effective flow of information, products, people and capital across national and regional boundaries. ICT is not a panacea for rural development problems but it has the potential to help the rural poor leapfrog some of the traditional barriers to development, by improving access to information, expanding their market base, enhancing employment opportunities and making government services work better.

Imports of ICT affect the local modes of production and employment. Internet technologies facilitate the way companies can locate and manage production away from the main site to geographically distributed centers. This expands employment possibilities of women who live away from metropolises, in suburbia, in rural areas--both in the manufacturing and services sector. Such technologies allow women to have possibilities of flexible location and flexible hours, through tele-working or with the use of neighborhood centers. It also allows women to have new forms of business: such as selling telephone services and Internet services through Internet and telephone kiosks or cellular phones. There are examples of such initiatives in India and Bangladesh.

These potentials, however, become reality only when the policy makers can create the necessary enabling environment. Effective ICT strategies must provide the basic infrastructure for connectivity and access, develop human capacity, offer affordable demand-driven ICT services and involve local stakeholders and beneficiaries in project design and implementation. Special attention should also be given to disadvantaged women, youth and the persons with disabilities during project development and implementation.

This chapter looks at the general situation of women vis-à-vis their technological and information contexts. What are some of the main barriers to women's full use of ICTs, and strategies for overcoming those barriers. This chapter is based on examples of women's experiences and activities. The final section contains

guidelines and recommendations for to facilitate women's participation in the information society.

A. ICT AND THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

The world is in the midst of a rapidly expanding information and communication technology (ICT). ICT comprises a diverse set of technological tools and resources to create, disseminate, store and manage information. Traditional ICT tools such as television, radio and the telephone have proved their use in effecting development in marginalized areas. The emergence of computers, the Internet and wireless communication technology, along with powerful software for processing and integrating text, sound and video into electronic media, have formed the modern ICT. The spread of the global electronic network of computers, also called the Internet, and wireless telephony has generated an unprecedented global flow of information, products, people, capital and ideas. The Internet needed only four years to reach 50 million users. It took 38 years for radio to capture 50 million listeners. TV took 13 years to reach that figure.

Technological advancements have also slashed the costs of information and communication. Email is becoming a free service. Internet-telephony is offering a much cheaper long distance communication than the traditional telephone. Costs of transmission of digital information anywhere in the world has also fallen dramatically. This cost reduction has enabled developing countries to partly benefit from modern ICT.

The number of people with access to the Internet grew exponentially from less than 20 million in 1995 to more than 400 million in 2000. This number is expected to reach 1 billion by 2005. The number of web sites also grew rapidly from fewer than 200 in mid-1993 to about 20 million in late 2000. Since the early 1990s, the web has been the mainstream environment for creating and disseminating digital information.

At present, access to the Internet is almost exclusively from personal computers. This could change in the near future with the emergence of data-enabled wireless phones and web-enabled PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants). Internet access through wireless devices is expected to outstrip personal computers access by 2005. This development could bring the web to remote areas without basic ICT infrastructure. Also coming soon is a whole new range of the so-called Internet appliances for use in the home, at work or in the car.

Today, ICT is the fastest growing industry in the world and is poised to become the largest global industry. Global spending on ICT is projected to grow from US\$ 2.2 trillion in 1999 to US\$ 3 trillion by 2003 – providing many niche opportunities for service providers in developing countries. Establishment of national ICT infrastructure and policy framework are prerequisites for them to participate in the emerging global ICT business.

A. ICT IMPACT ON DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The ICT revolution is having an impact on economic and social conditions around the world, including developing countries of Asia and the Pacific. With costs of information and communication down to almost zero, location of production and other industrial activities have gradually shifted to low-cost developing countries. ICT has enabled services to be provided by developing countries and delivered to developed countries. These new outsourcing opportunities create employment, generate income and allow poorer countries to participate in the global market.

Developing economies have benefited from the rapid expansion of the ICT sector. In India, ICT revenues rose from US\$ 150 million in 1990 to US\$ 4 billion in 1999. The global outsourcing market is worth more than US\$ 100 billion, with over 185 Fortune 500 companies outsourcing software requirements to India. India now has 1,250 companies exporting software (UNDP 2001). In Malaysia, ICT has become the key driver of economic growth. In 1999, the contribution of the ICT sector to GNP was approximately 36.5 per cent (Accenture, Markle, UNDP 2001). This contribution is primarily from semi-conductors and electronic equipment.

ICT is also proving a vital tool in helping link new civil society networks around key issues, from global warming to women's empowerment to attempt to make globalization more responsive to the needs of developing countries and the poor. And it is a dynamic new way to help connect people to their governments. ICT can also make government services and institutions cheaper, more efficient and more accessible. Developing countries like Brazil and Chile already have successful experiments underway in these areas. In parts of India, online government licensing is cutting through traditional bureaucracies.

Nevertheless, as Table 1 shows, the global electronic network has so far reached only a tiny fraction of the population in developing countries in the region. Less than 0.1 per cent of the population in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam had access to the Internet in 1999. Although a sharp increase in online users is expected in 2003, the proportion would remain very low. Moreover, it is very likely that new users would come largely from the urban population.

Table VI:1. Estimated and projected Internet users in Asian countries.

	Total population 1999 (thousands)	(in thousands)		
		1999		2003
		Estimated online population (thousands)	% of total population	Projected online population
Bangladesh	127 118	7	< 0.1	14
China	1 246 872	3 565	0.2	43 950
India	1 000 849	835	< 0.1	2 985
Indonesia	216 108	125	< 0.1	228
Philippines	79 346	375	0.4	683
Sri Lanka	19 145	16	< 0.1	43
Thailand	60 609	265	0.4	555
Viet Nam	77 311	10	<0.1	335
Japan	126 182	16 500	13.1	44 750
Malaysia	21 376	725	3.3	1 075
Republic of Korea Singapore	46 885	1 950	4.1	5 681
	3 532	835	23.6	1 240

Data was based on government's statistics and represents people using the Internet more than two hours per week. For comparison, percentage of online population in 1999: US 40.6 per cent and Germany 15 per cent

Source: Goh Swee Seang, 2000. IT and the k-economy of the 21st century organization. Report of the Asian Productivity Organization on IT at Corporate Level, Malaysia, 19 to 23 June 2000, pages 19 to 46

III. ICT Women's Empowerment

The experience of development agencies around the world provides ample evidence that ICT could play an important role in women's empowerment. These modern technologies have much to offer in meeting the information-communication needs of women, improve their access to health, micro-credit and government services; create direct employment opportunities; provide training and education to; and support women entrepreneurs in the production, storage and marketing of farm and non-farm products. ICT can also facilitate the generation and exchange of community-based information and stimulate establishment of small and medium-sized enterprises. It can break barriers to knowledge by providing demand-driven information and services to women. Access to information is key to building human capabilities. The real benefits of ICT lie in its ability to make possible powerful social

and economic interventions by making critical information easily available. ICT can also break barriers to participation.

The following provides some examples of recent ICT initiatives for the social empowerment of women.

The GrameenPhone programme (www.grameenphone.com) in Bangladesh is innovative in creating ICT-related job opportunities for rural women. The programme has enabled poor and illiterate women to sell telephone services to others. In 2000, there were about 2,200 “telephone ladies” in Bangladesh (Grameen Trust 2000). If the network coverage of the programme were extended, the number could easily reach over 100,000. An evaluation study concluded that the impact on poverty alleviation at the household level was significant, since the revenue from the telephone business was substantial. The success of the GrameenPhone programme in Bangladesh has spurred a number of similar programmes in other countries in Asia.

ICT also offers innumerable indirect employment opportunities by improving business prospects of rural-based enterprises through better access to market information, improved production technology and more efficient marketing systems. For example, the telecenter services in Pondicherry, India had encouraged villagers to utilize their considerable knowledge of local herbs for the establishment of -a herb processing centre. Using the services of the telecenter, the villagers learned how to package and market the herbs. Around 300 village women were engaged in herb processing.

ICT can also make available information on employment opportunities for low-level jobs such as factory workers, domestic help, and farm laborers to the rural poor and disadvantaged groups. Rural workers normally have no direct access to information on jobs available in urban areas and have to depend on the services of private employment agencies which often charge exorbitant fees or exploit them. ICT can create a direct link between workers and employers, thus avoiding costly intermediaries. The MSSRF telecenter, which facilitates recruitment of women workers for an agricultural processing factory, is a good example.

1. Challenges and opportunities

Most of the positive aspects of the information-communications revolution are largely bypassing the poor, a majority of whom are women. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, called for an increase in women's participation in and access to new technologies as a tool for strengthening women's economic capacity and democratic processes.

The five-year review report of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action pointed out that, traditionally, gender differences and disparities have been ignored in policies and programmes dealing with the development and dissemination of improved technologies. As a result, women have benefited less from, and been disadvantaged more by, technological advances. Women, therefore, need to be actively involved in the definition, design and development of new technologies. Otherwise, the information revolution might bypass women or produce adverse effects on their lives. The outcome of the five-year review recommended that further actions and initiatives be explored and implemented to avoid new forms of exclusion and ensure that women and girls have equal access and opportunities in respect of the developments of science and technology.

In recent years a number of ICT-related initiatives aimed at the social empowerment of women have emerged. Most of these initiatives are relevant to women across the rural-urban divide but some specifically address the rural woman's situation. Mention has been made earlier of the Grameen Phone Programme in Bangladesh and the use of the village telecenter in Pondicherry, by women engaged in herb processing, to market their products. In India, "telecenters and fax booths have created 250,000 jobs in the last four years alone, and many of these have gone to women. Women-owned businesses such as these generate a higher rate of female patronage than male-owned businesses (ILO, World Employment Report 2001, p. 58).

Another initiative is the "HIV/AIDS Prevention and Women and Girls Empowerment through Access to Information and Education". This pilot project, supported by the United Nations Foundation, will provide access to critical information and education to underserved urban and rural communities in the Asia Pacific region. The focus of the project is HIV/AIDS Prevention and Women's and

Girls' Empowerment with a later expansion to other sustainable development topics important to the community. The pilot phase of the project entails establishing 800 sites in Indonesia, India, Malaysia and Nepal, and. In these sites, locally produced information content will be broadcast in local/national languages by using satellite digital broadcast technology and inexpensive portable digital receivers, coupled with portable solar systems to power receivers in areas that lack reliable electricity supply. The main partners in the project are Equal Access (www.eqaccess.org) and the UNDP Asia-Pacific Information Development Programme (www.hivasiapacific.Apdip.net/). UNDP will provide the resources of their extensive network of country offices and contacts with government and non-governmental organizations and coordinate in-country operations, while Equal Access will provide links to the satellite broadcasting capacity through the WorldSpace Foundation, financial resources, technical support, training and guidance on impact assessment methodologies and approaches.

Recognizing the advantage of ICT for women's networking for empowerment, a number of women's organizations have begun adapting the use of ICT to support their information, communication and networking initiatives. ESCAP has been working with the Asian Women's Resource Exchange (AWORC) since 1998 for the regional women's electronic networking training for the promotion of the South to South cooperation activities. The training is targeted to female information officers in women's organizations, both governmental and non-governmental and aimed to build the capacities of women and their organizations to utilize new information and communication technologies in social and policy advocacy. The course trains them in running effective web-based information services, in using online communication tools to advance their networking and advocacy work, and in developing databases.

UNICEF developed the Meena Communication Initiative in South Asia and the governments of Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan have come out in support of a mass communication project aimed at changing perceptions and behavior that hamper the survival, protection and development of female children in the region. The Initiative involves the production of multi-media packages, including animated films, videos, radio series, comic books, posters, discussion guides, folk media, calendars, stickers and other materials. The package aims to put across gender, child rights and educational messages using the medium of popular entertainment. Topics for the

animated film episodes and other multi-media materials were identified through field research

(http://gkaims.globalknowledge.org/projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=info&record_iden tifier_001=549)

C. Lessons learnt and policy considerations

Based on the experiences of selected initiatives, it is evident that ICT can be an effective tool in enhancing the lives of poor women, whether by increasing access to information relevant to their economic livelihood, or providing better access to other information sources such as healthcare, education and government services as a means for rural poverty alleviation. However, many pro-poor ICT initiatives have failed to achieve their development goals or have an impact on the target beneficiaries.

This section draws some lessons from various initiatives on how ICT can best address rural poverty alleviation and what conditions are necessary for successful implementation of pro-poor ICT projects. In assessing these lessons, one should note that development-oriented ICT initiatives in rural areas have started only recently and are highly experimental, involving new methodologies and flexible approaches depending on the need, culture and socio-economic conditions of the target clients. At this stage, it is therefore premature to make definite conclusions on what works and do not.

In general, seven key issues must be addressed before ICT initiatives can truly serve the rural poor. They include connectivity, accessibility, content and services, ICT skills development, sustainability, partnership with local stakeholders, and sensitivity to gender and disadvantaged groups needs.

Micro-credit can also expand ICT access in rural areas. The Grameen Phone project in Bangladesh exemplifies an innovative and targeted micro-credit scheme that enables rural women to own mobile phones and provide communication services in villages where no one has a phone. The emergence of mobile phones in rural Bangladesh with the help of micro-credit has suddenly connected villages to the

outside world. Demand for phone services is high among village households with relatives working abroad. This enables mobile phone owners to service their loans despite the fact that handsets can cost about a year's income.

Men and women play different productive and community roles in rural development and have different needs and preferences. As an example, women produce more than half the world's food and face many problems in addressing food security and rural development. These include weak extension services, non-adoption of technologies, low status and therefore non-involvement in decision- and policy-making, varied and heavy workloads, poor access to credit; and lack of access to education and training. When new technologies are introduced, they are seen as a domain for men, and women have often been left out of initiatives associated with new ICTs.

Rural women, however, have wisdom and indigenous knowledge that is rooted in culture, traditions, values and experience. At the same time, access to ICT among rural women in recent years has been promoting their participation in economic development through entrepreneurship and small scale businesses. Their methods of communication and information exchange should thus be harnessed and be complemented with new ICTs. Women's needs with respect to ICTs, then, do not concern only access to education and training that will support their participation, but the social and policy acknowledgement that what women already do is technology, appropriate and worthy of recognition, and, further, an important resource for development. Support of women's existing technology activities, recognition of their role, as economic contributors and possessors of most of the indigenous knowledge in developing countries are critical to community development. Reasons for this include the benefits of taking advantage of a valuable resource for development, equity and recognition of the rights of women to equal access to personal and professional development, and benefiting from the skills and innovation that emerge from women's perspectives and responsibilities. Surveys of women innovators in Kenya and the Philippines show that women's inventions tend to have direct application to improving family and community well being or increasing efficiency. Examples include a power tiller built to women's physical specifications and their agricultural practices, an

improved cloth diaper, improved diagnostic kit for leishmaniasis, and a fireless cooker.

The profound, gendered implications of ICTs for both men and women in employment, education, training, and other productive and personal development areas of life mean that women need encouragement and support to take their place in the information revolution. What becomes clear from these discussions and case studies, then, is that access for rural women will depend critically on where the technologies are located, while the most efficient and beneficial use of ICTs is closely connected to the kind of information produced and distributed, i.e. information that directly supports women's activities and responsibilities. In order to facilitate access for women from various classes and sectors, ICTs will need to be located in places where women have open and equal access, such as health centres, women's NGOs, women's employment centres, and perhaps even religious houses of worship. The location in these types of contexts also pertains to the practical, specific kind of information that women require as a result of their time constraints. For example, placing internet access in a local health center will facilitate women's access to the health information they need for themselves and their children, by providing access to information for which there is a specific need at the same time as making a health-related visit. When women can understand and experience the benefits of ICTs, they are quick to use them. Establishing telecommunications centers in local communities is also a potentially useful strategy, if gender obstacles to their access by women are taken into account. Information production and distribution strategies will also be an important consideration, in order to make the most of each point of access. They will need to be flexible, mixed-media and multi-technology systems in order to effectively reach the greatest number of women. Further consideration should be given to the social background of women which makes them less accessible to the ICT. For example, considering the fact that girls in many developing countries tend to leave formal educations earlier than boys, ICT skill training should be started at early level of school education.

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