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Women and the Labour Market in Changing Economies:
Demographic Issues
Ruth Dixon Mueller

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Introduction

Policy & Research Papers are primarily directed to policy makers at all levels. They should also be of interest to the educated public and to the academic community. The policy monographs give, in simple non-technical language, a synthetic overview of the main policy implications identified by the Committees and Working Groups. The contents are therefore strictly based on the papers and discussions of these seminars. For ease of reading no specific references to individual papers is given in the text. However the programme of the seminar and a listing of all the papers presented is given at the end of the monograph.

This policy monograph is based on the seminar on 'Women in the Labour Market in Changing Economies: Demographic Issues' organised by the IUSSP Committee on Gender and Population, the Dipartimento di Scienze Demografiche, universita degli Studi di Roma 'La Sapienza' and the Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (ISTAT), held in Rome Italy, from 14-22 September 1999.

The Feminization of the World's Labour Force

More than 40 percent of the world's labour force is female. In some regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, the high visibility of women as workers – in some cases exceeding half of the labour force – is a manifestation of women's traditional role in agriculture and trade. In other areas, such as China, Vietnam, the Russian Federation and Central and Eastern Europe, women's high participation rates – reaching almost 50 percent of the workforce – are a result of economic and social policies under socialism that valued (indeed, required) women's labour in all sectors of the economy. And in still others, such as the high-income post-industrial economies, they result from expanded opportunities in the service sector, combined in advanced welfare states with generous social policies that make it easier for women – whether married or single – to hold a job and raise children.

Regions of significantly lower female participation, such as North Africa and the Middle East and Latin America, represent more conservative traditions with respect to women's work outside the home. But the female share of the labour force has been rising in the past two decades in both regions, from 26 to 28 percent in North Africa and the Middle East and from 28 to 33 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean (World Bank 1996). Export manufacturing has contributed to this growth in much of South and Southeast Asia and Latin America. Only in the newly independent states of Central Asia have significant losses occurred following the collapse of the Soviet union and the resulting economic disarray.

As shown in Box 3, the highest participation rates and the most rapid growth in female employment across countries grouped by income level are found among women ages 25 to 49, that is, during the prime years of marriage and childrearing. The rise in female participation is particularly pronounced in high-income countries, where the total fertility rate is also dropping most precipitously.

Box 3: Female labour force participation rates are rising and fertility rates falling across all income categories, but more rapidly in high-income countries.

Activity rates by age and year	All countries	Low income	Middle income	High income
Age 15 to 24				
1970	44.2	52.5	34.7	53.6
1990	47.3	54.6	39.4	55.0
1990 as % 1970	107	104	114	103
Age 25 to 49				
1970	43.3	57.9	35.8	42.3
1990	58.8	65.4	49.8	69.0
1990 as % 1970	136	113	139	163
Total fertility rate				
1970	5.15	6.55	5.63	2.75
1990	3.84	5.63	3.94	1.76
1990 as % 1970	75	86	70	64

The table is based on unweighted averages of 91 countries for which data are available (24 low-income, 44 middle-income and 23 high-income).

Source: adapted from Clark, R. L. and A. York, 'Cross-national analysis of women's labour force activity since 1970'. Seminar paper.

The changing position of women in the labour force signifies dramatic changes in women's lives inside and outside the home. Responding to the shifting structure of labour markets and to social and demographic trends such as rising female education, delayed marriage, lower birth rates, and work-related migration, women's integration in the labour market sets in motion additional social and demographic transformations. The complex interactions among economic systems, labour markets, social policies, gender relations, and demographic behaviour raise a number of research and policy questions. For example,

- How is women's position in the labour market in different regions and cultures affected by major economic changes such as the globalization of production, increasing flexibility and informality of production, growing economic insecurity and unemployment, the expansion of part-time formal sector employment, and economic restructuring?
- How is women's entry into the labour market affected by demographic factors such as the timing of first marriages and births, the likelihood of divorce or non-marriage, patterns of marital and non-marital childbearing, contraceptive use, and voluntary migration? In turn, what additional social and demographic changes result from women's employment?
- What range of policies is needed to facilitate women's economic participation and ensure their fair and equal treatment with respect to employment, job advancement, and wage and non-wage benefits? How can policies enhance women's economic independence and their ability to combine productive and reproductive/familial roles more effectively?

The Impact of Global Economic Change on Labour Markets

The 1990s were a period of economic turbulence. Despite the ongoing efforts of experts to 'get the markets right' through international policies of liberalization, privatization, and structural reform, income distributions were worsening both within and among countries. While some economies were booming, others were in decline. By mid-decade, the per capita gross national product of 25 high-income countries (encompassing 15 percent of the world's population) averaged \$23,420 compared with only \$1,090 for 108 low- and middle-income countries for which data were available. More than half of the latter group were classified as 'severely indebted' (World Bank 1996).

Intended to fuel economic growth, unrestricted flows of private capital turned out to be highly unstable. Currencies, stock markets, and bank reserves soared and plummeted, causing overnight crises that spread from one country to another. Even high-income countries were not immune, although they were more resilient and some among them were experiencing unprecedented prosperity. Low- and middle-income countries attempting to insert themselves into the global marketplace competed with one another to cut costs in the face of uncertain or declining world prices for their primary and manufactured goods, giving rise to new terms such as *unequalizing trade* and *immiserizing growth* (Joeques). The great Planned Economies had collapsed (the former Soviet union) and/or were embarking on market reforms (China and Vietnam). Including one-third of the world's population, they were now called *countries in transition* with an 'unfinished agenda'.

Macro political and economic changes such as these influence demographic processes directly by altering the environment in which people make demographic decisions. They also exert indirect effects by altering the demand for male and female labour. The impact of globalization on national labour markets depends on conditions unique to each country such as its political institutions, resource base, and location in the world economy.

- In much of Asia, for example (e.g. Bangladesh; see Afsar) and to a lesser extent in Latin America (e.g. Mexico; see Parrado and Zenteno), the growth and diversification of exports away from primary commodities toward light manufactured goods has created unprecedented opportunities for girls and women (even those with little formal schooling) to enter the wage economy (Box 4). Across developing countries, the higher the share of exports in the manufacturing sector, the higher is the share of female labour (Joeques). Although women are paid less than men, they typically earn higher wages in this sector than in agriculture, small-scale commerce, or domestic service.
- Volatile capital flows and fluctuations in exchange rates can cause sharp falls in incomes and employment affecting wage and salary earners. However, the visible effects of massive layoffs on labour force participation rates are sometimes clouded by compensatory movements in and out of the labour force, by shifts between wage work and self-employment or unpaid family labour, and by reductions in hours worked, as happened during the currency crisis in Indonesia in 1998 (Beegle, Frankenberg and Thomas). Difficult to track, employment transitions such as these are differentiated by gender as well as by age, education, family status, and region of the country.
- Evidence from sub-Saharan Africa (Arneberg; Kikhela) and from Latin America (Parrado and Zenteno; Cerrutti) suggests that the adoption of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in times of recession causes additional deterioration in employment generation and job security. In the face of increased male underemployment and unemployment, women from low-income households enter the labour market in unprecedented numbers. Most end up at the low end of the occupational spectrum. Households cope by reducing consumption and increasing the labour supply, not only of women but also of children and adolescents who may be taken out of school.
- The collapse of Soviet communism has hit women especially hard through the disproportionate loss of government employment, the difficulty of finding new jobs, and the critical loss of job-related social benefits such as child care, paid maternity leaves, health care and subsidized housing (Kohler and Kohler; Festy, Prokofieva and Mouratcheva). In some parts of Central and Eastern Europe and the Russian Federation, women account for a higher share of the unemployed and in some countries have been told by officials that their duty is now to stay home and not take jobs from men (World Bank 1996:73).
- In China and Vietnam, the growth of entrepreneurial opportunities in urban areas and of capitalist enterprises in the Export Processing Zones places women and men in competition for jobs as government controls on mobility are relaxed and the commitment to gender equality weakens. In some cases, female migrants from rural areas fare less well than their male counterparts in terms of occupation, hours worked and wages earned (Shanghai; see Wang and Shen) whereas in other cases they benefit equally or even exceed the achievements of male migrants in the place of destination (Shenzen, China; see Liang and Chen; Vietnam; see Goldstein, Djamba and Goldstein).

BOX 4: THE PHENOMENAL GROWTH OF FEMALE EMPLOYMENT IN THE GARMENT INDUSTRY IN BANGLADESH

Bangladesh has been called 'a classical case of female led industrialization'. The manufacture of readymade clothing for export, which scarcely existed in 1980, employed 1.5 million workers in the mid-1990s. Ninety percent are migrants from rural areas and nearly 70 percent are women. The female share of the labour force in the export processing zones (64 percent in 1994) exceeds that of Malaysia and is almost as high as Korea and the Philippines. Overall, the female share of the total labour force in Bangladesh grew from 6 percent in the 1981 population census to 18 percent in a 1995/96 survey with comparable definitions of economic activity.

Policies promoting export-oriented light industries in Bangladesh have created a demand for cheap labour which, despite some negative implications, has opened up new employment opportunities for girls and women in the garment sector and brought major changes to their lives.

- most garment workers, both female and male, migrate to the Dhaka area primarily to look for jobs and not for family reasons;
- most already have established social and kin networks in the city and know in advance about the nature of work and wage opportunities;
- female migrants are increasingly young, unmarried, and from poor rural families in which economic pressures overcome the restrictions of purdah;
- although women earn less than men, the wage differentials decline with time as women acquire experience and on-the-job training;
- entry into formal wage employment is associated with delayed marriage and changing relations between the sexes, especially among co-workers;
- compared with their non-employed counterparts, married female workers are more likely to use contraceptives and to have fewer children.

Social policies have not yet caught up with these changing patterns, however. Women workers depend on families and other informal networks for housing, social support, child care if needed, health care, and safe passage to and from work. Moreover, policies are not yet in place that would reduce discrimination in wages and types of work or ensure that opportunities for women will prevail in other sectors if garment exports should decline.

Source: Afsar, R. 'Gender, labour market and demographic change: a case study of women's entry into formal manufacturing sector of Bangladesh'. Seminar paper.

- In high-income economies, the growth of the service sector – which now employs two-thirds of the total labour force – has created an intense demand for female labour across all skill categories. Occupations with high proportions of female workers are more likely to offer part-time or temporary work, flexible work schedules, and non-standard work weeks that allow women to combine work and child care in the expanding 24-hour economy (Presser 1999). At the same time, the industrial sector cuts costs through *downsizing* and *outsourcing* of suppliers, which disproportionately affects men's jobs.

Social and Cultural Factors Affecting Female Participation

The impact of changing economic conditions on women's involvement in the labour market is mediated by social relations of gender in each society that determine, among other things, the sexual division of labour, the distribution of material and social resources, and the nature and degree of male power and privilege. Gender systems affect both the supply of female labour and the demand. In turn, social and structural changes in labour markets can challenge traditional gender systems by offering new opportunities to women and girls.

Labour markets are socially complex, hierarchical systems for buying and selling people's labour that is, of negotiating the 'terms of trade' of the employer-employee relationship. They are segmented according to many crosscutting criteria. Some relate to the institutional setting (the scale, function, organizational structure and location of the enterprise, for example, and the degree of unionization); others to the ascribed characteristics of the worker (gender, age, race or ethnicity, caste, nationality, etc.) and still others to the specific demands of the job and the skills and training required.

Varying across and within countries, the segmentation of labour markets creates geographically-specific structures of opportunities and constraints that operate to the advantage of some and the disadvantage of others. Those capable of moving may transcend the socially determined limitations of local labour demand (as well as a generally weak market) by moving to environments with more favourable opportunity structures. Indeed, the search for just such an economic niche is a prime motivator of population movements from rural to urban areas and across national borders.

The sex segregation of occupations, which often occurs together with racial and ethnic segregation, is one of the most visible manifestations of labour market segmentation. Although declining in some countries, sex stereotyping continues to circumscribe women's opportunities and to steer girls and women into lower paid jobs.

Statistical indexes of dissimilarity in the distribution of women and men across occupations differ significantly by world region. In general, the degree of sex segregation is lowest in the Asian and Pacific countries and highest in North Africa and the Middle East. But there is a considerable range within regions as well (for example, the index of dissimilarity is far higher in Sweden than in the United States, in Ghana than in Senegal, and so on) that is not explained by national variations in per capita incomes, the percentage of the labour force in agriculture, or women's average educational levels (Anker 1998, cited in Clark and York). Cross-national analyses suggest that social and cultural factors (especially gender systems) may be more important than economic or labour market variables in determining the extent and nature of sex-based occupational segregation and the rapidity of change (Box 5).

BOX 5: WHY ARE WOMEN AND MEN CLUSTERED IN DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONS? THEORIES OF OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION BY SEX

Neoclassical theories stress the balance of supply and demand factors and the element of rational choice or preference within a system of constraints. Women may prefer certain occupations even if they are 'overeducated' for the job, for example, if such occupations permit greater flexibility of hours or easier labour force entry and exit and can thus be adapted to family responsibilities. Employers try to maximize profits by weighing the relative value of female and male workers, taking into account their 'endowments' of human capital (e.g., training and experience) and their labour costs.

Theories of labour market segmentation stress the institutional character of decisions relating to who is hired, fired and promoted and how much they are paid. Although neoclassical notions of rational choice play a role, the segmentation of the labour market according to workers' sex as well as to the type and scale of enterprise and the benefits offered creates a series of boundaries within the market that are difficult for workers to cross. Different rules apply within these segments that are determined primarily by their institutional characteristics.

Feminist theories stress gender-related characteristics such as the traditional sexual division of labour and female subordination resulting from patriarchal ideologies and practices. These include the sex-stereotyping of fields of study and occupations in which certain types of work are considered inherently suitable for males or females. Females are generally assumed to be better at household and care-related work compared with males. This approach emphasizes the importance of social norms and cultural practices rather than the structural characteristics of labour markets and economic systems.

Although each of these approaches contributes to our understanding of sex segregation and other labour market inequalities, the most compelling explanation appears to derive from theories of gender hierarchies, the sexual division of labour, and gender-based socialization and stereotyping.

Source: Anker, R. (1997) 'Theories of occupational segregation by sex: an overview'. *International Labour Review*, 136, 315339.

Gender in the Labour Market: Attachments and Rewards

The segregation of the sexes across and within occupations (by task and rank) represents one component of women's and men's experience in the labour market, but there are many others. The timing and frequency of shifts into and out of the labour market, including moves between wage-paying jobs and self-employment or unpaid labour in a family enterprise, is another. Hours worked per week, short-term or casual employment, experiences of layoffs and unemployment, access to legal work permits and other factors all represent degrees of attachment to the labour market that differ for women and men.

- In the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Italy and Germany, the female share of the rapidly growing part-time labour force ranges from 79 to 95 percent (Bardasi and Gornick). The highest probability of working part-time is found among married mothers, followed by married women without children, single

mothers, and single women without children. Although the effects of family composition on the 'choice' to work part-time vary across countries, the consequences are consistently associated with less job security, fewer non-wage benefits, and lower rates of pay.

- The female labour force participation rate in Buenos Aires has risen rapidly during the past two decades, reaching 46 percent in 1995. However, analysis of panel data (Cerrutti) reveals that very high proportions of women change their labour force status within an 18-month period. Fewer than half of those who worked during the period did so continuously. Intermittent participation is more frequent among younger and older women, among married women with small children (especially in low-income households) and among those with little schooling. The lack of regular part-time jobs in the formal sector, the proliferation of temporary jobs and discrimination against mothers of young children all contribute to job discontinuity, which reflects and perpetuates gender inequalities in the labour market and in other areas of social life.

Much of the research on gender differences in labour market experience focuses on disparities in wages, controlling for the influence of personal and job-related characteristics in an attempt to isolate a pure *discrimination effect*. Analysts typically distinguish among human capital variables (e.g., years of schooling, training, job experience), labour market variables (e.g., economic sector, occupation, size of enterprise, overall wage hierarchies), and discrimination factors (e.g., unequal pay for the same work or for work of equal value).

Among labour migrants in Italy from Morocco, Poland and the former Yugoslavia, for example, the discrimination effect is statistically significant among the first two groups and absent from the latter, in which women's lower wages are due primarily to their concentration in domestic services (Strozza, Gallo and Grillo). In Canada and the United States, two-thirds of the female/male earnings disparity is due to 'discrimination' (a residual effect after controlling for differences in human capital) while in several Latin American countries the 'discrimination factor' accounts for 85 to 115 percent of the sex-based wage differentials (cited in Joeques). (The 115 percent figure results from the higher average level of education among women compared with their male counterparts in the labour market in Chile). In a broader sense, however, *virtually all of the so-called control variables are themselves manifestations of discrimination*, that is, of gender differences in social expectations, familial responsibilities, and labour market segmentation.

Of particular interest in this report is the gendered nature of the relationships among demographic factors and labour market participation. How do variables such as a woman's current age, years of schooling and field of study, marital status, the number and ages of her children, the presence of other family members in the household, and her migration history affect her relationship with the market as compared with a man's, for example? In turn, what are the demographic implications of women's labour market participation with regard to the motivation to marry or divorce, to avoid pregnancy, and – more broadly – to challenge gender ideologies and practices that restrict women's freedom of choice?

Demographic Linkages: Work, Marriage, Family

A growing *demand* for female labour will attract those most able, willing, and qualified to take advantage of new opportunities. Individual demographic traits such as marital and childbearing status will of course play a role in the selectivity of the response. At the same time, national trends such as rising female education, delayed marriage, rising proportions single, lower birth rates, and growing rates of marital dissolution affect the *supply* of female labour by increasing its quantity and flexibility quite apart from the demand.

Most research addressing the linkages between women's labour market participation and their demographic behaviour is based on causal models in which one factor, such as wage employment, is hypothesized to influence another, such as contraceptive practice, controlling for related influences such as education, age at marriage, number of children, place of residence, husband's social and economic characteristics, religion, and so on.

Imposing a causal model on what is typically a pattern of jointly determined behaviours is somewhat artificial, however. Both sides of the equation are likely to be shaped by a common set of conditions at the individual, familial and societal levels. The degree of parental investment in a girl's education, for example, which is correlated with social class among other variables, is likely to influence both her career *and* her marital and reproductive aspirations and opportunities. In this sense, her opportunity structure is a 'package deal'. This is not to say it is static, however, for the nature of the 'deal' and the connections among its interrelated elements can change over time.

- In Mexico the female labour force participation rate rose from 13 percent in 1950 to 35 percent in 1996 (Parrado and Zenteno). Although the demand for female labour under the impact of macroeconomic change has grown in the commercial sector and to a lesser extent in manufacturing (it has always been high in domestic service), virtually all of the growth in female participation can be explained statistically by

intergenerational changes in women's human capital (especially the increase in higher education) and family characteristics (lower nuptiality and fertility).

- Although divorce is still rare in Spain, it is becoming more frequent following the liberalization of the divorce law. Among younger generations, female labour force participation rates are rising and birth rates falling dramatically, especially among highly educated women (Solsona and Houle). Women's economic independence as measured by occupational status raises the likelihood of union disruption independent of duration of union, age at union, current age, number and ages of children, and education. Its effects are weaker among younger generations of women, however. For men, *unemployment* doubles the risk of divorce among older generations and triples the risk among younger cohorts.
- In Sweden (Stanfors and Svensson) and Norway (Skrede), the educational attainment of young women now exceeds that of men and labour force participation rates approach equality. The postponement or avoidance of formal marriage and the postponement of childbearing occurring in the context of heightened market demand for female labour (especially in social services) and the availability of subsidized care for children and elders creates an opportunity structure for young adults that is very different from that of older generations. Marked gender differences remain in fields of study, however, and in occupational specialization, working hours and wages (Box 6). Moreover, family obligations continue to act differently on men's and women's labour market achievements. At all levels of education, men with responsibility for the support of children earn more than those without children whereas the opposite is true for women.

While the Nordic countries represent one extreme of the gender equity continuum, the cultures of some North African, Middle Eastern and South Asian countries represent another. Yet, even in patriarchal regimes in which the honour of the kin group is defined by the physical seclusion and sexual modesty of its female members, changes in the market demand for female labour or in the social, economic and demographic conditions that affect its supply can have a substantial impact.

- In Eritrea, for example, a history of civil war and male out-migration has undermined the economy and left large numbers of women without male support. Among those aged 30 to 44 years, 29 percent of married women with spouse present are in the labour force compared with 45 percent of those married with spouse absent, 65 percent widowed, 75 percent divorced, and 87 percent never married (Arneberg). Within the wage sector, marital status is a strong determinant of participation quite apart from education, religion (Muslim women are more restricted) and number of children. Women without husbands have a greater economic need to work but they also have more autonomy.

BOX 6: ECONOMIC GROWTH, WELFARE ENTITLEMENTS AND GENDER EQUITY IN SWEDEN

Emerging from two decades of job stagnation, falling output per capita and staggering budget deficits, Sweden has become one of Europe's most vibrant economies. Despite tax and wage rates that are among the highest in the world, growth for 1999 is estimated at 3.8 percent. The boom is due in part to recovery from recession and in part to an entrepreneurial explosion in information technology and other areas following the deregulation of industry.

The labour market has generated an intense demand for women's work in the social services and information processing. Enabling legislation relating to maternity and parental leaves, subsidized child care, tax relief on the earnings of married couples, and other policies keep women in the labour force while maintaining one of the highest fertility rates in Europe.

In 1988 the labour force participation rate of women with children under six years of age reached an astounding 86 percent. Seven in ten children under age six are enrolled in high-quality publicly subsidized childcare facilities. Women's average years of education have surpassed those of men and hourly wage gaps are relatively low.

The high rates of female education and labour force participation conceal some persistent gender-based labour market differences, however:

- the employment rate of mothers of young children declined to 80 percent by 1997;
- women work on average 72 percent of the hours that men work;
- one-third of all mothers of children under six are absent from work on a given day because of parental or other paid leaves;
- 90 percent of paid parental leaves are used by mothers, not fathers;
- part-time and temporary jobs are staffed almost entirely by women;
- fields of study are highly sex segregated (e.g., 87 percent of upper secondary school graduates in health

care are female but only 13 percent in technology);

- occupational sex segregation in the labour force is equally marked, although
- less so among younger cohorts of highly educated women.

It appears that policies facilitating women's double roles in work and the family have not eliminated major gender differences in work-family preferences. Nevertheless, the roles of worker and mother have become so compatible that they may come to vary independently in the future.

Source: Stanfors, M. and L. Svensson. 'Education, career opportunities and the changing patterns of fertility: a study on 20th century Sweden'. Seminar paper.

Labour market opportunities also affect women's motivation to marry by making it possible to delay marriage (even in countries with early arranged marriages), to choose a 'higher quality' mate, or to forego matrimony entirely.

- In Bangladesh, six of every ten girls are married before their fifteenth birthday (Afsar). Single females in the garment industry have an incentive to defer marriage until they save enough money or their parents find them a suitable mate. Meanwhile, they taste a little freedom, as limited as it may be. Married female employees find it difficult to deal with household chores, care for children, and cope with their husbands' demands and suspicions. Yet employment has also provided them with personal incomes, physical mobility and social space outside the family that would otherwise be denied them.
- In the United States (Cox, Hermsen and Klerman), women who live in states with favourable labour markets for workers with matched characteristics (classified by sex, age, ethnicity and education) are significantly more likely to delay or avoid marriage than are women in states with less favourable markets. The availability of 'high quality' (high earning) men raises the probability of marrying, however. The potential for economic independence provides an important alternative to marriage for young women that has significant implications for future trends in marriage, divorce, and fertility.

These examples of demographic linkages attest to the complex nature of the relationships among gender systems, labour markets, and demographic behaviour. Although some commonalities can be identified, relationships differ by gender, generation, social class, ethnic group and region. Regression equations are filled with interaction terms in which the strength (and even direction) of the effect of A on B depends on the values of C, D and E.

Regional identities can play a particularly important role in this regard. In Italy, for example, whereas virtually all married women have one child, the probability of having a second ranges from only 3 percent in the North to 24 percent in the Centre and 36 percent in the South (Rampichini and Salvini). Representing distinct labour markets, work patterns and cultural values, the effects of women's work and occupation on the timing and probability of the second birth are regionally distinct. Regional identities are also significant in the work-contraception relationship in Egypt (Kulczycki and Juarez) and the work-divorce relationship in Spain (Solsona and Houle). Such findings suggest that causal factors may follow quite different paths in different settings.

Demographic Linkages: Gender and Migration

The impact of economic change on labour markets has major repercussions on the size, characteristics, and directions of population movements within and across national boundaries. As economic conditions improve in some areas and worsen in others, the resulting imbalances can trigger substantial population flows. Not everyone is free to move, of course. Family and community ties, social and cultural factors, lack of information or financial resources, and government-imposed restrictions all affect the nature of the response and the role that gender plays.

- Italy's rapid economic growth combined with the impoverishment of some of its neighbours has turned it almost overnight from a labour-exporting to a labour-importing country (Strozza, Gallo and Grillo). Of the over one million immigrants holding official permits in 1997, 45 percent are women. Analysis of the characteristics of legal migrants identifies four major clusters: predominantly male groups with high rates of regular employment (e.g., former Yugoslavia, Albania, Poland, Tunisia); predominantly male groups who are mostly self-employed or unemployed (e.g., Morocco, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Somalia); predominantly female groups with high employment (former Yugoslavia, Poland, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sri Lanka and the Philippines) and predominantly female groups with low activity rates who came to join their men-folk (Albania, Morocco, Tunisia). Wages and working conditions are highly differentiated by gender, national origin, and occupation in a segmented market.

The liberalization of government restrictions on the movement of populations within countries through mechanisms such as work permits, pass laws and residence permits can also release large migration streams. However, the extent to which migrants are able to translate their newfound mobility into occupational success depends largely on labour market demand.

- With the lifting of apartheid in 1994, South Africa entered the international economy and began to attract foreign investment (Arends-Kuenning, Kaufman and Roberts). Economic growth has been slow, however, and unemployment remains extremely high among black Africans. Restrictive policies that once confined their physical movements, place of residence, and right to work have been eliminated. For those living in the 'homelands', the capacity to migrate is a key to finding work. In KwaZulu-Natal, women who moved out between 1993 and 1998 were younger than those who stayed behind, more likely to be single, and more likely to hold a job in 1998. Among those who remained, female employment held steady at 22 percent while unemployment rose from 24 to 30 percent. Male employment dropped from 36 to 30 percent while unemployment stayed at 30 percent. Almost half of employed women and men worked as day labourers.

The liberalization of policies relating to population mobility in Vietnam and China, combined with the decline of agricultural employment and the institution of economic reforms, has produced a massive wave of migration to metropolitan areas and export processing zones. Entrepreneurial opportunities in the cities and a demand for labour in export manufacturing result in significant improvements in migrants' occupational status.

- In Vietnam (Goldstein, Djamba and Goldstein), temporary migrants of both sexes are younger on average than permanent migrants and more likely to be single. More than one-quarter of all permanent migrants to towns and cities work in professional and technical occupations compared with one-tenth of temporary migrants. Almost half of all migrants work in commerce and services. Migration improves the occupational status of both sexes and reduces the sex segregation of their urban occupations, primarily by increasing women's participation in traditionally male activities.
- In the Special Economic Zone of Shenzhen, China (Liang and Chen), temporary migrants were less than one percent of the population in 1979 but 72 percent in 1994. Four-fifths of female migrants are under 30 years of age, the majority unmarried and from rural areas. Among permanent migrants (a small minority), 42 percent of women hold professional or technical jobs compared with only 17 percent of men and 3 percent of temporary migrants of both sexes. Two-thirds of all temporary migrants work in manufacturing and transportation. Female migrants benefit more than males from the new opportunities when compared with gender differences in the areas from which they came.
- In Shanghai (Wang and Shen), the proportion female among migrants rose from 30 percent in 1988 to 41 percent in 1997. Only 1.5 percent of female migrants are employed in professional or administrative occupations, however, slightly fewer than male migrants. The vast majority of both sexes are in commerce, services and manufacturing. Despite working longer hours than men on average, female migrants in Shanghai earn 25 percent less. Doubly disadvantaged by their gender and their rural origins, female migrant labourers in this urban environment are at the bottom of the labour hierarchy.

Global Policies and Real-world Settings: the universal vs. the Particular

In exploring the demographic implications of women's changing position in the labour market, it is useful to address the global policy agenda as it is intended to shape national economic, social and demographic policies and programmes. The global agenda has a potential impact on all elements of the analytic framework discussed in this report. Considering that the elements of the framework are also highly interconnected, it is inevitable that policies that affect one aspect of the relationship, such as the promotion of free trade, will affect others, such as the demand for female labour, women's marital, reproductive and migratory behaviour, and cultural attitudes about women's roles.

- The promotion by institutions such as The World Bank, The International Monetary Fund, and bilateral donors of *macroeconomic policies* favouring free markets, international trade, privatization, liberalization, fiscal responsibility (structural adjustment), and institutional reforms affects *labour markets* as a whole as well as the specific demand for female and male labour in quite different ways, depending on the setting. Given their broad economic reach, such policies are also likely to affect demographic behaviour directly (by altering the perceived costs and value of children, for example) quite apart from their indirect demographic effects operating through women's employment.
- The global advancement of social policies that define human rights in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres are intended to affect *social institutions of gender*, among other features. Such policies include the universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the programmes of action of the International Conference on Human Rights (Vienna 1993), the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen 1995) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995). Of most concern to this report are policies aimed at eliminating

discrimination against girls and women in all aspects of education and employment, including the free choice of occupation, the right to work and to job security, and the right to equal benefits and remuneration for work of equal value.

- The propagation of *labour policies* by agencies such as the International Labour Office sets international standards regarding conditions of employment, the elimination of child labour, special protection of women workers such as maternity benefits, the right to work and to non-discriminatory treatment, the right to equal pay for equal work, the right to form unions or other workers' organizations, protection from arbitrary dismissal, protection of migrant workers, workers' health and safety, and other aspects of the labour market. These policies relate specifically to the *conditions of women's and men's work* in the labour market which will have an impact on other aspects of their lives.
- The promotion of *demographic policies* relating to such issues as minimum legal age at marriage, the rights of adolescents, fertility control and family planning, safe abortion, child survival, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and internal and international migration affects *marital, reproductive and migratory behaviour*. As articulated by agencies such as the United Nations Population Fund, the World Health Organization, regional and bilateral aid organizations, and at the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo 1994), such policies provide an enabling environment for women to make informed sexual, marital and reproductive choices and to move more freely within countries and across national borders. All of these behaviours contribute to women's capacity to take advantage of labour market opportunities and rewards on more equitable terms with men.

Although global policy agendas such as these are by no means universally applied, they do offer a clear policy context in which to view the relationships considered in this report and the potential for change. Perhaps more interesting, however, are the challenges posed by the particular regional, national and local circumstances in which such policies are *meant* to apply. Is it realistic to expect a universally predictable set of outcomes? Or is it the case that universal policies will interact with particular environments in some quite unexpected ways?

A review of the country case studies raises two major points in this regard. First, policies that are intended to accomplish a specific goal often have important unintended consequences, some positive, some negative. Second, some global policy recommendations are not only unrealistic in their expectations of what countries with a limited resource base can do, but also potentially self-defeating if they are applied without paying attention to institutional constraints and to women's own assessment of the risks and benefits involved.

Consider, for example, the following contradictions:

- Macroeconomic policies promoting free markets, privatization and other structural reforms, by shifting responsibility for the provision of employment and other social protections from the state to the individual (who is expected to 'adapt' to the market demand) appear in some cases to violate the universal principle that all human beings have an 'inalienable right to work'. As many critics have noted, policies are needed to protect women, men and children from further economic and social impoverishment in the transition from other forms of political and economic organization to the free-market model.
- Intensified competition among low- and middle-income countries (and among low-income areas of high-income countries) to attract multinational manufacturing and service industries can drive down wages and undermine protective labour legislation and workers' rights to organize. National industries producing for local markets or export may also try to evade such legislation or subcontract to unregulated sectors because of market pressures. Policies need to address the harmful consequences of such competition such that the labour rights of women and men in all countries and economic sectors are fully respected.
- The promotion of gender equality in the labour market may require gender-specific policies such as affirmative action in hiring and promotion and the protection of pregnant women and mothers. The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women declares that 'In order to prevent discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, States Parties [to the Convention] shall take appropriate measures .. to introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances ...[and] provide special protection to women during pregnancy...' (United Nations 1988:21). Where private employers are expected to absorb the costs of such benefits, however, the tendency to discriminate against women of reproductive age may be intensified. Although high-income states with low birth rates could reasonably subsidize maternity leaves directly (and indeed may be motivated for demographic reasons to do so), the opposite is likely to be true for low-income countries with high birth rates. The question then remains as to whether it is either feasible or desirable for low-income countries to be expected to provide such benefits.
- The elimination of lower-paid job opportunities in manufacturing and services could destroy the growth of wage employment for women in some low-income countries. Multiple examples attest to the export-driven demand for cheap female labour in light manufacturing and related industries. Such jobs often represent the only opportunity that girls and women have to earn wages. In South Africa, the government offers incentives to industries such as textile and clothing to locate in border areas of the former black labour reserves

(Arends-Kuening, Kaufman and Roberts). Most of those hired are women. Although pay is low and working conditions are poor, the income women earn is higher than they could obtain elsewhere and helps to free them from dependence on unstable remittance wages from men, many of whom are absent from the reserves. For the women involved and for the welfare of their families, it is possible that lower wages may be preferable to no work at all.

- The sex segregation of occupations can offer advantages as well as disadvantages to women. In culturally conservative countries where the relations between the sexes are strictly controlled, employment in female occupations or with female clientele (e.g. women doctors in women's hospitals, women teachers in girls' schools) may provide the only acceptable work opportunity. Women in more 'modern' settings may also prefer to work in predominantly female environments as a matter of personal choice. The extent to which such 'choices' reflect discriminatory practices needs to be investigated in each setting. Whatever the outcome, policies are needed to address inequities in the social and monetary valuation of 'female' and 'male' work and the resulting inequities in wages, benefits, and job security that are based on gendered assumptions (Anker 1997).
- Policies promoting more flexible work hours and long-term part-time employment in the formal sector also carry advantages and disadvantages for women. They expand women's options by making it easier to combine work with higher education, family responsibilities or other interests. As in the case of sex-segregated occupations, however, part-time jobs overwhelmingly attract women and are penalized relative to full-time jobs in terms of hourly wages and benefits. Policies need to correct these disparities such that full-time and part-time workers receive benefits proportional to their inputs.
- Social policies in democratic high-income welfare states intended to promote gender equality and maintain or increase current fertility levels, such as paid parental leaves, can result in highly gender-differentiated behaviours deriving from the personal preferences of workers and the prejudices of employers (e.g., disapproval of men taking family leave). In Sweden and Austria, 90 and 99 respectively of paid parental leaves are taken by mothers rather than fathers (Box 6 and Box 7). Policies such as these appear to be effective in halting further declines in the birth rate and facilitating the combination of employment and childrearing but not in reducing the sexual division of labour in family care.

BOX 7: THE GENDERED EFFECTS OF PARENTAL LEAVE POLICIES

Austria has one of the most generous policies relating to maternity and parental leaves in the world. The Maternity Protection Law prohibits the employment of women for a minimum of 16 weeks before and after childbirth and provides a state-subsidized income substitute. In addition, Parental Leave Legislation enables mothers and fathers to take a job-protected, paid leave of absence for up to two years to care for each child. Benefits consist of one flat rate for married/cohabiting mothers and a 50 percent higher rate for single mothers or married mothers whose husband has little or no income. Fathers have the right to paid parental leave as long as the mother does not take it and remains employed.

What effects have these remarkable provisions had on women's and men's work and childrearing patterns? In this case, a parental leave policy that is gender-neutral in intent is deeply gendered in its results.

- Virtually all women (95.98 percent) who are entitled to parental leave benefits take them and the majority draw benefits for the entire period.
- Only one-third of all women return to work immediately following the end of their leave period, and only one-fifth resume work with their former employer.
- Although state-subsidized parental leaves reduce women's dependence on men, it increases their dependence on PUBLIC social benefits.
- Only one percent of those taking parental leaves since 1990 are fathers.
- Almost one-third of fathers on parental leave had not been employed before the start of the leave. Absolute income is less a determinant of men's parental leave-taking than whether the mother's income equals or exceeds father's income. Sixty percent of fathers return to work as soon as the parental leave ends.
- For men, the parental leave often constitutes a transitory phase in their working careers, frequently connected with a change in jobs. For women, parental leave usually marks the beginning of a longer period of absence from the labour market for child care.

Source: Neyer, G. 'The gendering effects of parental leave policies'. Seminar paper.

- The provision of day-care services for preschool children is not sufficient to overcome the constraints to employment experienced by women who have school-age children, who are responsible for the care of elders, or who work non-regular hours. In countries where such programmes are feasible, subsidized

services need to include after-school programmes for older children and, in the case of younger children, seven-day-a-week, round-the-clock facilities for parents who work non-regular hours (Presser 1999). Daycare or in-house assistance for elders is also critical. In a study of fulltime vs. part-time work in five post-industrial economies (Bardasi and Gornick), the presence of an 'adult dependent' in the home exerts a stronger and more consistent downward pressure on women's labour market attachment than does the presence even of young children.

- The promotion of female schooling and higher education to levels equal to those of males is a matter of human rights and social justice. Its effects on improving women's employment rates and occupational and wage position in the labour market appear unequivocal. Higher female schooling is also associated with significantly later marriage and lower fertility, especially in countries in the early stages of demographic transition. However, in some countries where the average level of female schooling approaches or exceeds that of males, significant sex stereotyping remains in fields of study and vocational preparation. In order to broaden the options of both sexes, policies are needed to provide girls with the same basic skills as boys, to encourage women to train in traditionally male fields such as the physical sciences and engineering, and to encourage men to train in traditionally female fields such as nursing and elementary school teaching.

As labour and gender policies confront economic and political realities, the complexities, contradictions, and unrealistic expectations become abundantly clear. As valuable as such policies may be in setting universal standards, most will require adaptation and fine-tuning to particular circumstances if their fundamental purpose is to be served.

The global evidence points almost everywhere to rising female labour force participation, increasingly delayed marriage and timing of first births, falling completed fertility, higher probabilities of marital dissolution, more cohabitation in lieu of marriage, and more non-marital births, often by choice. Levels, trends and connections among these behaviours vary widely. In essence, however, all of these trends point to greater flexibility in girls' and women's lives. Women who gain full benefits from the labour market typically have far more social and demographic options and greater leverage and autonomy than do other women living in the same environment. Policies adapted to local conditions are clearly needed to protect and advance the gains that women have made and to prevent their deterioration in the face of global economic forces. For this one needs a politically committed state, not just a free market.

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WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET IN CHANGING ECONOMIES: DEMOGRAPHIC ISSUES

List of papers presented at the seminar on 'Women in the Labour Market in Changing Economies: Demographic Issues' organised by the IUSSP Committee on Gender and Population, the Dipartimento di Scienze Demografiche, universita degli Studi di Roma 'La Sapienza' and the Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (ISTAT), held in Rome Italy, from 14-22 September 1999.

Session 1: Overview

- 'Crossnational analysis analysis of women's labour force activity since 1970' by Robert L. Clark and Anne York
- 'Policyrelevant paper on the theme of global trade and women's issues' by Susan Joekes

Session 2: Rapid Economic and Political Change, Women's Employment and Demographic Issues

- 'Gender, labour market and demographic change: a case study of women's entry into formal manufacturing sector of Bangladesh' by Rita Afsar
- 'The effect of the end of apartheid on women's work, migration, and household composition in KwaZulu-Natal' by Mary Arends-Kuenning and Carol Kaufman
- 'A post-war economy: women entering the urban labour market in Eritrea' by Marie Arneberg
- 'Economy in crisis: Labor market outcomes and human capital investments in Indonesia' by Kathleen Beegle, Elizabeth Frankenberg and Duncan Thomas
- 'Contexte économique et évolution du marché d'emploi de la femme en milieu urbain d'Afrique Centrale: cas de Kinshasa (R.D.C.) et de Bangui (R.C.A.)' by Denis Nzita Kikhela
- 'Relative income position of single parent households in West and East Germany: the role of female labor market participation in the 90s' by Felix Buchel and Henriette Engelhardt
- 'Fertility decline in Russia after 1990: the role of economic uncertainty and labour market crisis' by Lliana Kohler and Hans-Peter Kohler

Session 3: Migration and Women's Employment

- 'Gender and labour market among immigrants in some Italian areas: the case of Moroccans, former Yugoslavians and Polishes' by Gerardo Gallo, Francesca Grillo and Salvatore Strozza
- 'Migration and occupation change during periods of economic transition: women and men in Vietnam' by Sydney Goldstein, Yanyi Djamba and Alice Goldstein
- 'Double jeopardy? Female rural migrant laborers in urban China the case of Shanghai' by Wang Feng and Shen Anan
- 'Migration, gender and return to education in Shenzhen, China' by Zai Liang and Yiu Por Chen

Session 4: Public Policy

- 'Part-time employment across countries: workers' choices and wages penalties in five industrialized countries' by Elena Bardasi and Janet Gornick
- 'The impact of antipoverty programs on female labor force participation and women's status: the case of Progresa in Mexico' by José Gomez de Leon and Susan Parker
- 'The gendering effects of parental leave policies' by Gerda Neyer

Session 5: union Formation and Dissolution

- 'Economic opportunities and the transition to marriage among young women' by Amy Cox, Joan M. Hermesen and Jacob A. Klerman

- 'Divorce et carrières professionnelles en Russie pendant la transition vers l'économie de marché' by Patrick Festy, Lidia Prokofieva and Olga Mouratcheva
- 'Women's employment: a determinant factor or a consequence of union dissolution in Spain?' by Montserrat Solsona and René Houle
- 'Occupational sex segregation in Brazil: marital status and market work flexibility' by Eduardo Rios Neto and Ana Maria Oliveira

Session 6: Fertility, Employment and Life Course

- 'The influence of female employment and autonomy on demographic behaviour in Egypt' by Andrzej Kulczycki and Lucia Juarez
- 'Changes in female labor force participation in Mexico: assessing the role of labor supply, labor demand and the new international division of labor Explanations' by Emilio Parrado and René Zenteno
- 'Female labour force participation, and fertility in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Jordan: anomalies or standard cases?' by Jon Pedersen
- 'A dynamic study of the work-fertility relationship in Italy' by Carla Rampichini and Silvana Salvini
- 'Gender equality in the labour market still a distant goal?' by Kari Skrede
- 'Education, career opportunities and the changing patterns of fertility: a study on 20th century Sweden' by Maria Stanfors and Lars Svensson
- 'Walking the tightrope: women's employment strategies following childbirth in Cebu, Philippines' by Meera Viswanathan
- 'Labour force patterns, gender relations and labour markets in Buenos Aires' by Marcela Cerrutti

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