

INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Swarna Jayaweera

Former Professor of Education, University of Colombo and UNESCO Adviser and UNICEF Consultant

In consonance with the goals of Equality, Development and Peace of the U.N. Decade for Women, the World Plan of Action formulated in Mexico in 1975 and the Programme of action prepared at the Mid-Decade Conference in Copenhagen in 1980 prioritized the need for integrating Women in Development. Integration has often been synonymous with exploitation, and the integration envisaged for women is on the basis of

- (1) equal access to assets, knowledge, skills and services, and
- (ii) human dignity through equal participation in the development process and in resource allocation in the family and society, and ability to control one's own resources.

A pre-requisite to such a process would be the integration of women in national development plans and programmes. The Mid-Decade Conference in Copenhagen deplored the lack of evidence of any effective integration of women in such plans. It is opportune at the end of the Decade to review the plans and major development programmes implemented in Sri Lanka during these years in order to ascertain the extent to which Sri Lankan women have been integrated into development plans, and concomitantly, to see how much such plans have affected them.

National development plans are state interventions in allocating and distributing resources to attain desired goals and to promote political, social, economic and cultural changes. It is not the purpose here to evaluate development theories or models, or to examine the influence of intervening factors such as global

economic developments, international economic relations or national priorities which have had repercussions on the lives of all citizens. Women are affected by conditions in their society, and in their socio-economic classes or groups, as well as by their position as women per se. This review will focus largely on gender specific issues pertaining to the integration of women in development planning.

Women in Sri Lanka were apparently a non-issue prior to 1970 and were not mentioned specifically as a target group in the plethora of plans and programmes prepared from the forties to the sixties. They were, however, equal beneficiaries of the social welfare policies that were an important component of national plans since the forties. By 1970, equal access to education had brought women in significant numbers to the public arena. In International Women's Year in 1975, participation in the Mexico Conference and accelerated activity by women's non-government organizations gave a momentum to interest in women's issues. The visibility of women in the public scene and in official consciousness increased with the establishment of the Women's Bureau as a special national machinery to enhance the position of women, with regular national seminars and workshops and with successive International Women's Day activities.

This visibility is reflected to some extent in official documents and in public pronouncements but there is little evidence of purposeful integration at the planning level over the last ten years, and, as in many other countries, development plans and programmes are seen to have had a differential impact on men and women. It is noteworthy, too, that gender role assumptions underlying plans and im-

plementation programmes do not appear to have changed significantly during these years.

The planning process in Sri Lanka has been traditionally centralized. The process of decentralization initiated in the seventies has been largely a political exercise with little departure from the conceptual framework of macro-level and district sectoral planning. Divisional Development Councils (1971), Decentralized Budget (1973), District Political Authorities (1973), District Ministers (1978) and District Development Councils, Divisional Development Councils (Pradeshya Mandalas) and Village Development Councils (Gramodaya Mandalas) in the eighties. In this context plans are influenced largely by the perceptions of political and economic decision-makers, planners and administrators. It will be seen that the conceptual issues from which planning assumptions stem are an amalgam of patriarchal social norms and gender role expectations transferred from western industrial societies during the colonial and post-colonial decades.

National Plans

The U.N. Decade for Women began in the middle of the second U.N. Development Decade when the earlier preoccupation with economic growth had been tempered by a recognition of the need for distributive social justice. In Sri Lanka, the failure of the industrial model in the fifties and sixties and the youth insurgency in 1971 stimulated the Coalition government elected in 1970 to formulate an 'alternate model' for development. The Five Year Plan (1972-76) outlined development strategies which were to promote:

- (i) structural changes in the form of land reforms and re-distribution of assets in

order to bridge disparities between the affluent and the disadvantaged,

- (ii) decentralized employment policies giving priority to the small scale sector, labour intensive methods of production and indigenous technology,
- (ii) development of the rural sector involving youth in commercial agriculture and agro-based industries.
- (iv) establishment of Divisional Development Councils to decentralize project planning and implementation, and
- (v) pre-vocational and vocational orientation of the school and university curriculum respectively.

The 1971 youth crisis had brought to the surface the employment needs of young women who were the products of the expanding education system, and for the first time, therefore, a national plan took cognizance of the role of women in development.

"The problem that faces the country therefore is to devise and implement a programme for the development of our national resources to employ not only the young men and women who reach working age each year, but also those who failed to get jobs in the past". stated the Plan.

The Plan, however did not take specific note of the development needs of women in the formulation of strategies and programmes.

In 1977 the election of the U.N.P. government introduced a sharp change in development policies. Priority was given to economic growth,

free operation of the market mechanism, export-led growth, private enterprise and reduced welfare subsidies. The major development programmes were identified as:

- (i) the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Scheme
- (ii) the establishment of Investment Promotion Zones (Free Trade Zones) near Colombo,
- (iii) the Urban and Housing Development Projects, and
- (iv) the Integrated Rural Development Programme.

Annual Public Investment Programmes which are a series of five year projections on a rolling plan replaced the pattern of fixed term plans. The influence of International Women's Year and the Decade is seen in the increase in official awareness reflected in the annual programme documents since 1981. These have referred to the participation of women in the labour force (1981 and 1982) and in education (1984), and to women as a target group of economic and social development policies (1983). The 1982-86 Investment Programme even brought women into the focus of policy objectives:

"The provision of more and better employment for women in order to improve the status of women and to integrate them more meaningfully into the development process has been a major objective of the government".

"Public Investment Programmes deal with a gamut of national policies and plans in all sectors but nowhere else, and particularly in the priorities outlined in each Programme, is there any reference to mechanisms to facilitate this integration.

Greater awareness at national policy level is reflected also in the 1978 Constitution which removed disabilities based on quotas in public sector employment, and even included women with children and the disabled as a "dependent group" needing special protection. In 1980 the government also ratified the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at the Mid-Decade Conference at Copenhagen. The positive attitudes reflected in statements and in such documents need to be translated into action through development programmes, and these are the programmes that are the outcome of the planning process.

National Machinery

A significant development during the Decade has been the establishment of national machinery to promote the integration of women in development. International trends and pressure from local non-governmental organizations impelled the government to implement one of the recommendations of the Mexico Conference to establish a separate machinery at national level as a focal point for policies for the advancement of women. The Women's Bureau for which women's groups had been lobbying since 1975 was established in 1978 and located in a key position in the Ministry of Plan Implementation under the President. It was transferred to a newly created Ministry of Women's Affairs and Teaching Hospitals in 1983, subsequent to a recommendation made at the National Symposium for Women in 1982 to create a separate Ministry for Women's Affairs.

It was intended that the Bureau should play a catalytic role in accelerating women's progress and operate as a co-ordinating agency and a "watch dog" of women's interests. It was expected to identify plans and

monitor programmes to increase the participation of women, raise consciousness, and promote research and data collection pertaining to women. Reviewing its activities in the last six to seven years it is apparent that the Bureau has been successful in increasing the visibility of women and in projecting an 'image' of women as important beneficiaries of development. It has sought to mobilize rural women through projects and its greatest achievement is its non-elitist orientation.

Preoccupation with an extensive district-based programme, however, has prevented the Bureau from carrying out its crucial catalytic and advocacy role in promoting change, and from developing an adequate data and research base. It has failed to integrate women in development planning because the Bureau itself has operated outside the mainstream of planning at national and district levels. The implementation of the Bureau's projects outside the framework of the District Integrated Rural Development Programme is an illustration of the marginalization of the Bureau and its clientele in the planning process. In consequence, the Bureau became a state implementation agency of relatively isolated 'women's sector' programmes.

Development Programmes

'Development Programmes' implemented in the last ten years have encompassed agriculture, industry, rural development, social policies and special programmes directed to women.

Land Reform

Land reform legislation in 1973 and 1975 restricted the ownership of paddy land to 25 acres, and other land to 50 acres, and 'surplus'

land was taken over. Only about 10% of this land, however, is estimated to have been re-distributed among landless families. From the early seventies different types of co-operative organizations were also created to manage the large estates-electoral co-operative farms or Samupakara Gammanas, collective farms of the Land Reform Commission or Janawasas, and the Youth Settlement Schemes organized by the National Youth Service Council as collective farms for youth between 18 and 24 years. Many of these schemes were organizational failures, and in retrospect it can be seen that changes ushered in by land reform had minimal impact on the lives of the majority of women.

Women were absorbed into the 'farms' as a part of the traditional workforce and were therefore on average about half the number of workers. Twenty per cent of those participating in the agricultural projects of the Divisional Development Councils were women who worked on farms cultivating subsidiary food crops such as chillies and onions or on poultry farms. Women therefore continued to be integrated in plantations on unequal terms in the same structure of lower wages, and low incomes and levels of skills, or to function as unpaid labour in their family farms. Even the important principle of equal wages for equal work was accepted in the organized plantation sector only in 1984-85. The only effort to improve the role of women in agriculture was the farm started exclusively for women in 1974 in the Uda Walawe complex of four farms but all these farms failed as training or income generating projects.

The Accelerated Mahaweli Development Scheme

After 1977 the ambitious Mahaweli Scheme dominated the development scene, and the construction of five major irrigation and hydro-

electric schemes and the large scale settlement of farm families in newly opened lands has changed the landscape of a significant segment of the dry zone.

Settlement policies have followed previous colonization schemes in transferring the pattern of economic activities of peasant societies to the new environment. Two Studies in 1979 and 1983 found that women were overlooked as a target group for development programmes in the planning stage, and their economic roles underestimated, as they were taken 'for granted' to be dependent farmers' wives. Programmes in the early years were directed solely to male farmers.

The process of land settlement itself initially eroded the existing rights of women as land was allocated to male heads of households under the Land Development Ordinance. Subsequently the Mahaweli authorities have taken steps to ensure that land was allocated to the landholder in the village of origin irrespective of gender, so that women will not be dispossessed of their rights by migration to settlements. It should be noted, however, that the recent Indian Five Year Plan is reported to have accepted the principle of joint titles for husband and wife in the case of redistributed land. To avoid fragmentation of land, Mahaweli land can be transferred to, or inherited by a single member of the family, in contrast to the equal share of property in the legal system. It is reported that landowners have nominated their wife or son (chiefly) or daughter according to their choice.

Women in the Mahaweli have followed their traditional pattern of active participation in extra domestic economic activities. Gender role stereotypes have often given way to the imperatives of pioneering demands

and women have helped to clear the jungle, cut drains and roads, and prepare fields for the cultivation of paddy or subsidiary crops. The absence of chena cultivation has deprived them of their traditional 'forte', but the availability of water for cultivation in both seasons has increased their field activities. A pilot study of 30 farm households in Decemebr 1984 found women heavily involved in paddy cultivation. They reported that they were engaged in a wide range of activities and that they spent on average 12 hours a day on paddy cultivation, home gardening, animal husbandry and house work. Approximately two-thirds also claimed that they were engaged in more cultivation than in their old villages, had less leisure, received a higher income and believed they had a better life - a conclusion that hardly surprises given the land hunger and low incomes in the villages from which families migrate. Investigations in other areas in different stages of settlement may elicit different responses.

It is clear from the findings of all studies that Mahaweli women like those in traditional villages work extremely hard as unpaid family workers and as an exploited labour reserve and are dependent on their men, while their economic role is undervalued and overlooked by planners and administrators. Their independent economic activity, home gardening, receives less priority, and lack of know-how and marketing facilities preclude them from earning an income from surplus production. Vocational training needs to be prioritized in view of the inheritance pattern, but no efforts have been made as yet to assess skills, resources and needs and to explore adequate avenues of non-agricultural employment.

When programmes focused on women were introduced, it is apparent that women have been perceived

almost exclusively as a target group for social policies. The two Home Development Centres established in 1982 and 1984 and voluntary health workers selected from young women in the settlement areas have concentrated on health and nutrition and are making a significant contribution. The home economics syndrome that overshadows agricultural programmes for women, however, threatens to dichotomize development programmes on gender differentiated lines and to direct economic policies to male farmers and social policies to farm women who are conceptualized to be housewives. Meanwhile, there is potential for women to be mobilized as 'agents' of economic development and to be integrated in the total process of development planning to ensure equal access to assets, skills and services.

Development of Local Industries

The plan envisaged in the early seventies to develop the small scale sector using labour intensive technology and local resources offered considerable potential for the participation of women. The Divisional Development Councils who were responsible for planning and implementing these projects were, however, chiefly engaged in ad hoc projects. Although several women were employed in traditional industries and a few in new areas such as clock repairs, the overall pattern of participation was not significantly different from the past. Neither the vocational training programmes of the Department of Labour, Small Industries, and Rural Development nor the new pre-vocational school courses and job-oriented university courses achieved a breakthrough in changing the conventional pattern of their participation in industries. The National Apprenticeship Board which was established in the early seventies as the chief state agency for industrial training opened its programmes to both sexes, but succumbed to the traditional gender-

based demarcation of the labour market and did not introduce any fresh perspectives.

The economic crisis of the seventies altered the planning framework and gave priority to import substitution and export-production in industrial policy. Both policies stimulated the expansion of traditional industries and opened new opportunities for women in leather and plastic goods, food and beverage industries, ceramics, batik and garment industries and electronic industries but foreign exchange constraints limited the development of such industries. Garment industries began a new trend in female labour utilization by employing almost exclusively young women in assembly line jobs.

Export-Oriented Industries

The second major development programme after 1977 has been the establishment of an Investment promotion Zone (Free Trade Zone) in 1979 in Katunayake, near Colombo, under the Greater Colombo Economic Commission, and a second Zone in 1983 in Biyagama also near Colombo. As a component of the strategy to encourage export-led growth, these Zones are expected to attract foreign and local investors to export-oriented industries by offering favourable conditions such as duty free imports of inputs and tax holidays. They seek to take advantage of the international division of the labour market that relocates labour intensive and less skilled manufacturing processes in Third World countries in order to reduce unit labour costs in production. Third World investors have also been attracted by Sri Lanka's import quotas.

In Sri Lanka the Free Trade Zone operations began with a heavy bias towards garment industries, and although there has been some diversi-

fication subsequently, half the industries even at the end of 1983 were garment industries. These industries are dependent on semi-skilled female labour and in 1984, 78.9% of the workforce of 30,199 and 90.2% of garment workers were women (Table 1).

them income, economic independence, improved living conditions and increased status in the family and neighbourhood. Their working conditions, however, have been subordinated to economic purposes and exploitative production relations, as illustrated by the special features in the operation

Table 1.
Greater Colombo Economic Commission
Employees by Industry and Sex (1984)

Industry	Total	Female	% Female	% Female Distribution
Garment Production	21,619	19,492	90.2	81.8
Rubber Based Products	351	20	5.7	0.1
Jewellery and Lapidary Products	716	626	87.4	2.6
Electro and Electronic Production	426	322	75.6	1.4
Footwear Production	1914	1120	58.5	4.7
Air Lanka Ltd.	2670	826	30.9	3.5
Miscellaneous	2503	1424	56.9	5.9
Total:	30,199	23,830	78.9	100.0

Source: *Greater Colombo Economic Commission (1984)*

The significant feature in this programme is that the escalating demand for semi-skilled labour in these industries has transformed young unmarried women between 18 and 25 years into an economic asset in production and an incentive for investment as 'educated', 'trainable' and 'docile' labour, thus underscoring the vulnerability of this large female labour reserve of supposedly 'secondary earners' as cheap and easily dispensable labour units. These women workers are engaged in gender specific occupations such as operating sewing machines in repetitive assembly line jobs while men are chiefly skilled workers or managers.

Over 80% of these young women come from small cultivator or urban working class families, have no specific vocational skills and have been frustrated by unemployment. Employment in the Zone has brought

or Labour Laws within the Zone, and the pressures that impelled the revision of labour legislation and international conventions to permit night work. They have few prospects for advancement of skills or for promotion. They are integrated in development as human resources but in terms of human development are confined to low levels of skills and employment.

Outside the Free Trade Zone, similar large scale enterprises have been promoted by the Foreign Investment Advisory Committee and Local Investment Advisory Committee, with however, relatively less economic rewards. In the last few years a policy of encouraging labour and local resource intensive industries in preference to capital and import intensive industries (which have been found to have brought less net profit) has led to renewed interest in the handicraft,

weaving and handloom industries which may revive these neglected traditional industries in which women predominate.

The formulation of strategies to utilize local resources for export-oriented industries has also brought the rural sector into focus and has led to the development of the Export Production Village Programme, from 1981, by the Export Development Board of the Ministry of Trade and Shipping. Export Production Village (People's) Companies have been formed in 24 villages since 1982 to orient rural based production to meet export demands, and thereby to increase also income and employment in the rural sector. Production is in three areas- agricultural produce, processed agricultural products and manufactured or assembled products. As the participation of women in these areas of production has been high, it is apparent that women would figure prominently in this development programme. However, in the absence of gender wise data relating to participation as directors, shareholders and producers, and of research studies on the operation of the programme, it is not possible to ascertain the extent to which women are involved in this programme or the impact of the programme on women's economic roles or on their quality of life.

The Tourist Industry had its beginnings in the sixties but has had increased momentum in the last ten years, with its fortunes waxing and waning in response to crises in the national or international scene. Official policy in the early years tended to relegate women to servicing roles as housekeepers and receptionists and to exclude them virtually from management and even from hotel kitchens which were the domain of prestigious chefs. Women have high visibility in ancillary services such as travel agencies, air lines, tourist guest houses and shops, and in the manufacture of

TABLE 2
Migration For Employment

	1976	1977	1979	1980	1981
High Level					
Total	15	51	1657	1357	1991
Females	—	—	251	197	260
% Female	—	—	15.1	14.5	13.0
Middle Level					
Total	75	343	2374	2199	3420
Females	—	11	381	282	264
% Female	—	3.2	16.0	12.8	7.7
Skilled					
Total	222	3208	6110	5895	11,187
Females	—	—	1.1	96	277
% Female	—	—	1.8	1.6	2.5
Unskilled					
Total	214	2031	12,803	14,501	31,936
Females	2	220	10,131	11,321	24,537
% Female	0.9	10.8	79.1	78.1	76.8
Not Classified					
Total	—	—	2931	4692	8913
Females	—	—	1368	2647	4822
% Female	—	—	46.7	56.4	54.1
All Levels					
Total	526	5633	25,875	28,644	57,447
Females	2	231	12,242	14,543	30,160
% Female	0.4	4.1	47.3	50.8	52.5

Source : R. B. M. Korale, Migrations of Sri Lankans Abroad (1981)
Migration for Employment to the Middle East (1983).
Middle East Migration (1984).
Employment and Manpower Planning Division, Ministry of Plan
Implementation, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

batiks for the industry, and as elsewhere, have been vulnerable to the exploitation of female sexuality.

Migration to West Asia

The most visible phenomenon of migration in the Sri Lankan scene is the movement of women workers to West Asia or the Middle East, beginning as a tiny trickle in 1976 and reaching approximately 35,000 in by 1982.

From the beginning of the seventies professional and academic men and women had migrated in relatively small numbers in search of lucrative employment overseas. The increase in the price of oil created a demand in oil producing Arab countries for labour at all level of skills from 1975. The low rate of female labour

force participation in that cultural milieu created a radical change in the pattern of migration, by opening avenues of employment to women, who, oppressed by unemployment and low incomes found that they could earn a life time's salary in Sri Lanka in a few years as migrant workers.

This movement of labour has had official 'Patronage' as the remittances of workers in West Asia became a major component of foreign exchange earnings. In 1976 the Ministry of Labour established the Foreign Employment Division to channel male skilled labour to West Asia. The open economy from 1977 stimulated an increase in the flow of migrants and the state has sought to encourage migration to reach a target of 100,000 foreign employed workers as a strategy to reduce unemployment within

the country and increase foreign exchange earnings. The planning process has taken note of the need to expand training programmes to fill the lacunae created by the exodus of male skilled labour, but has overlooked the stresses and strains created in the social fabric and among women by the migration of unprecedented numbers of married and single women in search of employment chiefly in domestic service, in an alien environment, and their exploitation by unscrupulous agents.

The magnitude of the flow of labour can be seen in the Table 2. The annual outflow of migrant workers of whom 81% are reported to have gone to West Asia, increased from a bagatelle in 1976 to 25,875 in 1979 and to 28,644 in 1980, and then increased twofold to 57,447 in 1981. The total number is estimated to be currently between 60,000 and 70,000. It will be noted that unlike male migrant workers, women are concentrated among unskilled workers (76.8% in 1981), and that female migration of largely unskilled labour has exceeded male migration by 1981 (52.5%). The problem of female migrant workers is therefore practically synonymous with that of Sri Lankan housemaids in West Asian countries.

These migrant workers are mainly from Sinhala and Muslim low income families from different parts of the country, although chiefly from semi-urban areas. 64.4% were married, in 1981, and there was as much gender based differentiation in their educational attainment (70.5% men and 40.2% women had GCE (OL) qualifications) as in their employment levels. Their experiences appear to have varied from the success stories of returnees who have acquired land and houses and improved the quality of life of their families, to the traumatic experiences of large numbers, both in Sri Lanka and in their working environment described in reports. Some

women have acquired a measure of economic independence while others have been confronted with neglected children and family dislocation.

The contribution of migrant remittances has increased to 27.6% of foreign exchange earnings by 1983, second to that of tea exports, and housemaids are reported to repatriate the largest percentage of savings. The marginality of women in the planning process is underscored by the fact that it has not been found possible to exercise some restraint over recruitment malpractices, to assist these disadvantaged with some know-how prior to their departure (as the Department of Labour has begun to do in 1984), to promote some monitoring of their employment situation and family welfare, and to offer advisory services for investment of savings.

Rural Development

A district Integrated Rural Development Programme was initiated in 1975 and has been in operation from 1979 as a major development programme. While the term 'integration' has been borrowed from international development literature, the Programme seeks in fact to promote decentralized planning and implementation of medium term projects in order to increase employment and income and improve living standards in districts which do not benefit from development programmes such as the Mahaweli Scheme. Funded by international organizations (the World Bank in five districts, and bilateral agencies - Norwegian Agency for Development, Swedish International Development Agency and the Netherlands government) it has been extended to 12 districts.

The planning process has differed according to the orientation of donor agencies but the outcome has

been a range of multi-sectoral programmes, and in some districts, area based programmes, designed to strengthen rural infrastructure and to improve the delivery of services in agriculture, industry, transport, electricity water supply, health and education.

Rural development impinges on all aspects of the lives of men, women and children. It is significant therefore that only the bilateral agencies have perceived women as an identifiable target group for development programmes. None of the agencies involved in the Programme nor the relevant national and district planning agencies have sought to integrate women in the planning process. Women's programmes have been planned chiefly by the Women's Bureau in isolation from the main programme, and are therefore mere appendages that have failed to be integrated within the institutional framework of district development.

In consequence, evaluation studies have found that several of these women's projects have failed to achieve their objective of increasing the income and employment of women, and have not made a significant impact on the lives of women. It was also noted that sectoral programmes in the Integrated Rural Development Programme have been directed to women as consumers of social services and have tended to overlook them as participants in economic development. The experience of these programmes points to the fact that if women are to have equal access to assets, skills and services, and to participate as equal partners in development, they must be integrated in the planning and implementation of mainstream national, district or local programmes as participants and beneficiaries of all relevant development programmes. The recent decision in one district at least to use a woman mobilizer to work with women is

likely to introduce a new perspective to planning by enabling women to function as agents of change.

In this respect a significant change in the planning and implementation process in rural development has been foreshadowed by the introduction of the 'change agents programme' by the Rural Development Training and Research Institute in 1978. Unlike the Rural Development Societies and Kantha Samithis (Women's Societies) which have traditionally allocated women a dependent and servicing role and have operated often within a network of patron-client relationships, this programme approaches planning and activities from the grass-roots level. It challenges top-down bureaucratic planning by training village change agents as catalysts to mobilize villagers to form 'interest' groups and to conscientize them to identify their own problems and to take action to meet their felt needs.

The programme has been implemented in about 60 villages and has succeeded, in some instances at least, in breaking the stranglehold of the middlemen in the exploitative dependency structure of rural society. 73% of the 426 change-agents in 1984 were women and many groups formed have consisted of women producers in the rural economy. The programme however still operates outside the development planning structure, and has yet to link up with local or district institutions or to make an impact on the planning process.

Social-Development Programmes

Women have been integrated in social development plans since the forties congruent with the role allocated to them of consumers of welfare policies. Equal access to education facilities and health services that were

frequently mother and childcentred, and family based food subsidies made them equal beneficiaries of social development programmes. As a result, disparities in literacy and enrolment rates and in indicators of health status are minimal and the Physical Quality of Life Index was estimated to be 79.7 for men and 78.1 for women in the seventies. Free school textbooks have been given to all children in Grades 1 to 10 since 1980 and primary health care has become a focal point of health programmes. Nutrition programmes give priority to children and pregnant women in view of the findings of the nutrition surveys of 1975-76 and 1979-81 which pointed to severe malnutrition among a significant proportion of pre-school age children. The introduction of the food stamp scheme in place of the ration scheme in 1979, combined with rising food prices, is reported to have adversely affected low income families.

The most visible social development programme currently is the housing programme initiated in 1978, with its present target of one million houses by 1992, the Village Reawakening Movement which has constructed over 300 model villages between 1978 and 1985, and recent plans to upgrade slums and shanties in urban areas. It is significant, however, that the programme introduced in the International Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (1981-1990) to provide safe water to 70% of the population by 1990 illustrates the limitations of targeting social policies to women instead of mobilizing them as active participants in the planning and development of social development programmes.

Special Women's Programmes

An outcome of the consciousness created by the Decade that 'leaps to the eye' is the proliferation of

special projects for women in Sri Lanka as in other countries. These projects in turn have increased national consciousness about women's roles and have contributed to improving the lot of at least some women. Experience everywhere however suggests that isolation of women's programmes reduces them to fringe operations, as women's issues are in fact inter-related with overall development strategies. The Farm Women's Agricultural Extension Programme and the Women's Development Centres which had their heyday in Sri Lanka in the mid seventies, for instance, suffered from low priority in resource allocation. From the late seventies income generating projects-cum-family health and leadership training for women have been promoted in all economically developing societies by international and bilateral agencies, national institutions such as Women's Bureaus and non-governmental organizations, as a 'model' for integrating women in development. It is doubtful, however, whether such projects have achieved results that are commensurate with the interest generated. It has been noted earlier in this Paper that as ad hoc projects they were never integrated into the planning framework of national strategies in agriculture, industry or health. Operating this on the periphery of development programmes they have been handicapped by their limited outreach, relatively limited resources and institutional support and co-ordination problems, and some of them may even have contributed to marginalizing women in the overall development process.

Conceptually such projects appear to be related to the role of women as supplementary earners and are therefore irrelevant to the needs of the majority of Third World women who are primary or co-earners. The Sri Lanka experience is a mirror of these conflicting perspectives carried over from the international scene. Barbara Rogers (1980) in her analysis

of UN projects refers to the home economics bias of special projects for women, and the tendency to segregate gender roles and to give priority to the social or family related roles of women who are perceived as a dependent welfare target group.

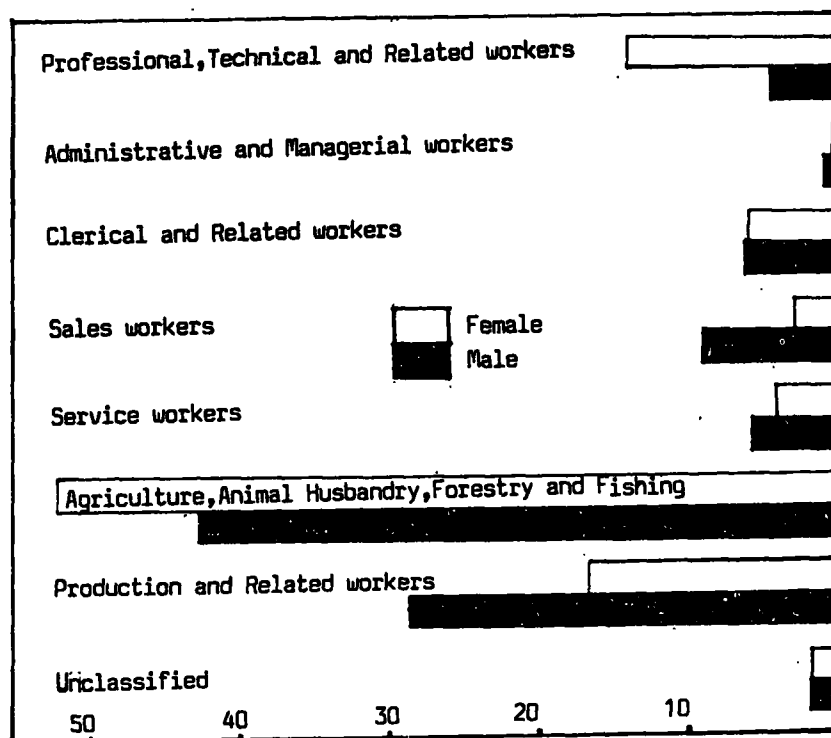
The 'alternative model' is to conceptualize women's problems and needs integrally in each sector of development as a basis for a national development plan, and to introduce special intervention programmes only to meet immediate needs and as a means to integration in the national development plan.

Data Base for Planning

Planning perspectives are partly influenced by the existing data base and particularly by analysis of quantitative data. Development Programmes can therefore have differential gender specific impact if the data base does not reflect realistically the position of women.

There appears to have been very little significant change in Sri Lanka in the last ten years in the data collecting process in national census and related surveys. Discrepancies between statistics and social reality persist particularly with reference to the economic activities of women, despite international debate during the Decade pertaining to the relevance of currently accepted data collection techniques to the situation of women. Since colonial times, and perhaps as a legacy of colonial administration, labour force statistics in Sri Lanka have been based on the acceptance of the industrial world's definition of economic activity as 'gainful employment'. Recent research, as for example in the Status of Women Study in Nepal have underscored the irrelevance of this definition to subsistence economies in which women are concentrated largely in non-monetized production.

EMPLOYED POPULATION BY MAJOR OCCUPATION GROUPS, SEXES AND SECTORS (1981)



Source: UN Decade for Women Progress and Achievements of Women in Sri Lanka

(Centre for Women's Research Sri Lanka)

In Sri Lanka this definition has excluded the economic activities of the majority of rural women who expend substantial time and energy in paddy and chena cultivation and home gardening, and who make a significant economic contribution to the household and to the national economy. Women themselves appear to have been conditioned to perceive these activities as extensions of their domestic tasks albeit as producers, and are apt to report themselves as 'unemployed' in response to survey questionnaires. On the other hand, although adequate data from time use studies are not available, many studies and field investigations have documented the extensive and intensive involvement of women in economic activities both in agriculture and in home-based occupations in traditional domestic as well as other industries and in informal commercial activities. This invisibility of women in the amorphous informal sector in national statistics distorts the

data base which is used for the formulation of development plans and programmes, and accounts partly for the male orientation of economic development programmes.

Gender wise analysis of available data has improved in the last decade in national surveys as the successive increase in gender based tabulations in the Consumer Finances and Socio-Economic Surveys of the Central Bank in 1973, 1978/79 and 1981/82 indicates. But the lacunae in gender wise participation data in vocational training institutions and employment centres has remained largely unfilled with the possible exception of the annual School Census data and recent National Apprenticeship Board statistics. As far as most administrators and employers are concerned, women are still invisible in their records, a situation that is a source of frustration to researchers and an impediment to comprehensive development planning.



The contradiction between the image of "frailty" and "docility" of women aspiring for jobs and those who have to engage in hard manual labour is best seen at construction sites the world over, as these pictures of 'Women at Work' in Egypt and Delhi would illustrate.

Some Conceptual Issues

The divergence between official blanket policy statements pertaining to the need to integrate women in development and the direction and content of development plans and programmes, as well as the differential impact noted, point to conceptual issues underlying the perceptions and gender role assumptions of the majority of political and economic decision makers and planners, and administrators. Some of these perceptions and assumptions surface from the social norms of a patriarchal society that buttress male dominance in the public sphere. Nevertheless the economic activities of women in traditional society were not circumscribed by their 'Private domain' and the middle class bias in perceptions of the economic role of women appears to be a by-product of western development models. Colonial ideology introduced nineteenth century Victorian norms of the 'domestication of women' which legitimized elite life styles, and through the process of 'sankritization' seeped into the administrative and social structure. Western orientation in development planning in post-colonial society has in turn contributed to reinforcing these norms.

The Sri Lanka experience is not unique in this respect. Irene Tinker (1976) has analysed the impact of this western model of 'glorified domesticity' on the position of women in Third World countries. Esther Boserup (1970) drew attention to the fact that the participation of rural women in agriculture in economically developing societies has declined and their rights eroded as a result of the 'modernization' of agriculture. Margaret Mead (1976) described the distortions caused by the adoption of the western model of agricultural training which directs education in scientific agricultural production to men, and home economics, food processing and nutrition to women, and reserves the use of machinery for men, on the assumption that there is gender based differentiation in the processes of agricultural production and post harvest operations and a dichotomy in the roles of men and women.

As the experience in Sri Lankan settlement policies illustrates, middle class administrators in economically developing countries such as Sri Lanka, are conditioned by these 'models' to perceive rural women as dependent housewives and not as agricultural producers. It has been seen

that what has been aptly termed as 'housewifisation' in rural development is clearly reflected in both settlement and rural development programmes with the exception of the change-agents programme. Assumptions relating to domesticity are also extended to urban women, and the marginality of women in development programmes is partly the outcome of perceptions that all women are secondary earners who supplement family incomes, and not primary or co-earners whose economic activities are crucial to family survival and mobility. In contradistinction, rural women and women in low income families perceive themselves as producers, workers and providers of families and not as dependents.

The perceptions of decision-makers have other facets too, that impinge on development planning. 'Suitable occupations' for women are seen not in terms of physiological differences as often claimed but on assumptions of socially produced behavioural patterns, as for instance, the rationalizations made with regard to the 'docility' of young women and their so-called aptitude for monotonous repetitive jobs in world market factories and the contradictions between the image of frailty and the manual labour of women in construction and other activities.

The assumed incompatibility between child bearing roles and economic activities, which is also implicit in Western feminist theory, has influenced attitudes to the economic participation of women, but is not supported by evidence in Sri Lanka where the majority of women in the official and unofficial labour force are married, and where employment is increasingly seen as a substitute for the traditional dowry. The majority of Third World women do not see their family responsibilities and economic activities as alternate roles. Many

of them are primary earners and do not have the luxury of options. Development planners have yet to perceive the multiple roles of women in balanced perspective and to provide support for these role 'enactments'.

A corollary to the 'domestication of women' is the segregation of gender roles in family-oriented programmes. International and bilateral agencies and local planners and administrators appear to assume that the 'family' in social development programmes is synonymous with 'women'. The role of men in family related programmes such as health, nutrition and family planning is accordingly undervalued with negative consequences in plan implementation.

Another stereotype that has implications for development planning is the underlying assumption that the 'household' is the ideal target for all programmes. The household or family is perceived uniformly as a cohesive, harmonious unit, and benefits are expected to trickle down to women from male heads of household. In reality gender inequalities within the family structure often affect responses to policies and prevent equitable resource allocation within the household. An extreme illustration is the lack of access of Indian estate women to their own wage earnings and to control of their income and their lives. The fact that women are not perceived as individuals tends to strengthen the dependency syndrome that traps them as unpaid family helpers.

It is difficult to believe that development planning will take adequate note of the social realities of the lives of Sri Lankan women unless these conceptual obfuscations are removed by informed research and by advocacy programmes directed to the upper echelons of the political, administra-

tive, economic and social structures. It is possible that otherwise a minority of women will continue to enhance their status while the majority will be economically and socially exploited or displaced and marginalized by changes in the modes of production and by mechanization and technological progress.

An Overview

This review of the participation of women in development plans and programmes has indicated that despite the impetus given by the Decade, programmes have had a differential impact on men and women, partly as a consequence of the failure to integrate women in development planning on the basis of equal access to resources and skills in all sectors and equal opportunities for participation.

Women's economic roles are still not recognized in national statistical data and in planning perspectives. Women have been perceived as dependent wives of male farmers in feudalistic production relations and as exploited cheap labour through wage discrimination in capitalistic production relations in plantations and allied enterprises. Export-oriented industries, foreign investment and trends in the international labour market have stimulated demand for professional, managerial, technical and manual skills, as well as for semi-skilled and unskilled female labour, and in response women are concentrated in employment with relatively low skills and remuneration and with job insecurity in 'world market' and other factories and in domestic service in West Asia.

It cannot be said therefore that women are significantly better off at the end of the Decade although their contribution to the economy has even

increased. The presence of a core of professional 'elite' women and the entry of women into several male 'Preserves' during the last ten years cannot compensate for the fact that a large majority are still enmeshed in the lowest levels of the employment pyramid, and that the official unemployment rate for women is double that of men in the context of relatively higher economic growth rates.

It has been noted that women have been perceived as passive consumers of welfare services rather than as equal partners in development. If the development programmes are to promote human resource equity and human development, they need to be conceived and operated in an ideational framework based on concepts of human dignity and distributive social justice. In this context the integration of women in development planning on a basis of equality, even within present macro-structural constraints, needs fresh directions encompassing:

- (i) research studies to strengthen the data base, probe interactive social processes and related conceptual issues,
- (ii) advocacy programmes to change perceptions and counter gender role stereotypes,
- (iii) micro-level participatory planning processes to ascertain the problems and needs of women in their real life situations,
- (iv) explicit recognition of women as participants and target groups in all sectoral and inter-sectoral plans in the design and activities of programmes,
- (v) provision of equal access to resources, services and skills including technology, and
- (vi) mobilization of women as self-reliant agents of development.