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# WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

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WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

ISSUES IN DEVELOPMENT PLANNING



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**WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

**Issues in Development Planning**

**Elsa M. Chaney, Ph. D.**

**June, 1980**

**This Report was prepared for the Office of Women in Development, United States Agency for International Development, AID/OTR-147-80-46. The views and interpretations are those of the author and should not be attributed to USAID or to any individual acting on its behalf.**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### I. Introduction: Women in International Migration

Increasing numbers of women are crossing national boundaries today and heading for the towns and cities of countries not their own. Many women migrants still go along with their husbands, fathers and sons; increasingly, however, others either are going alone or are migrating with dependent children. Whether they are accompanied or autonomous, women migrants will most likely work in some kind of paid employment at the destination.

The international migration phenomenon also affects women in the source countries. Even when women themselves do not go, they and their households are expected to absorb the shock of male departure. Not only must women who stay behind carry on their own responsibilities in the household, but they also must assume the departed male's agricultural tasks in addition to their own work on the land.

Paradoxically, some women find their lives have improved. The paper does not, however, attempt to draw up a cost/benefit sheet on international migration, but focusses attention on women and girls involved in the migration process. Until recently, the "modal type" in international migration was considered to be the young, single male. Women were thought to be merely "passive" migrants; now, however, we know that they often assume important roles ranging from initiation of the migration decision to taking major responsibilities for restructuring the household in the new homeland.

The Introduction argues that international migration poses problems for women different from internal movements: longer absences (their own or their menfolks'); greater distances or, if not distance, then the complications of national boundaries; uncertainty of remittances; ethnic and cultural distinctiveness; mastery of a new language, difficulties in communication, longer separation of family members, and loss of rights and privileges of citizenship.

### II. International Migration: An Historical Perspective

Countries which were first to start the Industrial Revolution all had an opportunity to shed excess population. Third World "late developers" do not have such a luxury and, moreover, their development problems are compounded by rapid population growth and a much shorter time span in which to modernize.

Today international migration has not diminished, but has shifted direction flowing towards the more developed countries -- to Europe, the U.S. and Canada, and the Middle East, as well as regional movements to more developed countries of Africa and Latin America. While the initial participation of women in international labor migration is low, it increases and, in some cases, surpasses male migration -- both internally and across national boundaries.

### III. International Migration: Current and Future Perspectives

In spite of worldwide recession, people today still are moving from the Third World to "high wage zones," many of them without proper documents. The "visibility" of migrants today is attributed by many observers to recent economic contraction in developed societies, when outcry against immigrant workers always increases. Yet in the long term, host country nationals are not willing to take on the low-prestige, low-paid, low-skilled jobs which migrants do.

Automation has not progressed as rapidly as predicted, and advanced societies continue to import labor which comes not so much on account of the "bright lights," as the deteriorating conditions in the rural areas of developing nations. Women also migrate because of the lack of opportunity in the countryside, but they find even fewer job choices and less labor mobility than male migrants.

Paradoxically, however, shortages of labor in developing countries and abandoned agricultural land demonstrate that out-migration is not always determined by conditions in the less-developed societies. In some places, labor migration simply is an acceleration of a well-defined tradition -- in small island nations, for example, which cannot offer sufficient economic opportunity to their people. Often these migrants are small farmers seeking to earn cash in off-season.

In the advanced countries, there may be severe labor shortages by 1985 -- and indications are that labor migration will be a fact of international life well into the 21st century. Since women predominate in several migrant streams already, and since their proportions are increasing in other world regions, we need to reappraise our thinking about women in international migration and adjust our policy recommendations, planning and project design to the real situation.

### IV. Women in International Migration: A Typology

In order to begin to differentiate the situation of various groups of women affected by international migration, a typology is suggested of the kinds of women involved: accompanied and autonomous migrants; refugees; women of the host country and migrants who came in earlier periods; women left behind, and repatriated women and girls. Such gross categories will need to be refined according to the ways in which the varying structural determinants of migration -- as well as the individual characteristics and motivations of migrant women -- affect the different types.

Further, women's active role in the international migration process is categorized also by the kinds of activities they undertake: in the decision to migrate (and the part they play in encouraging male migration, even when they themselves do not go); the arrangements to go; the leavetaking (and the return); the reconstruction of family "survival networks" in the

## **Women in International Migration - iii**

immigration country; the paid work they perform -- whether they go or stay behind; the changes in their status and roles, and the myriad tasks and responsibilities performed when they remain behind. Attention is called to the role of grandmothers and elder daughters, among the women remaining in the sending country. Finally, it is suggested that women experience a great deal of stress, whether they go or stay.

### **V. Women's Migrant Status and Development Assistance Planning**

Some special issues involving women and girls in international migration are not necessarily addressed by general programs directed to "urban women" or "rural women." Among these are the problems revolving around the numbers of unaccompanied female migrants; the special difficulties migrant women encounter in finding cash-earning employment and their lesser job mobility, since the formal sector generally is closed to them. Their problems may be exacerbated by their inability to speak the language and their unfamiliarity with city ways, also a hindrance in the complex tasks of restructuring their households.

Those who stay behind find that they do not necessarily accommodate, but that stress increases with the years of separation from male relatives. They count on "mother surrogates" among their own mothers and elder daughters, but in some cases children may be abandoned. Because managing the double burden of house and fields is so hard, agriculture may suffer: land goes out of production, terraces fall, irrigation systems deteriorate, and women fall back into just sufficient subsistence farming to feed their families. Remittances may or may not come; if they do, they may not always be spent wisely, saved or invested. Finally, the effects of international migration on fertility remain largely unknown.

### **VI. Response of Development Assistance Agencies**

Results of a survey carried out with over two dozen officials of various development agencies (see Annex III) are reported. The conclusion, in brief, is that most agencies have not confronted international migration, either as a problem requiring careful study nor as a programmatic concern. They are not yet grappling with the implications of international migration even at a macro-economic level, much less considering its effects and consequences on people. There are a number of officials, however, who appeared to be generally aware of the dimensions of international migration and of its implications for economic and social development.

There were here and there, too, some positive indications -- hints -- that policy and program officials do view women as having special needs to be addressed. The agencies reviewed included the United Nations specialized organizations already concerned with women in development; the World Bank; several national governments where information was available, including U.S. programs; private research entities and non-governmental initiatives.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section is divided into three parts: conclusions and recommendations which apply principally to women and girls who themselves migrate, whether accompanied or autonomously; women and girls left behind by international migration, and several suggestions which address the situation in a general way, applying to both. Many additional recommendations could be made which would address the situation of the urban and rural poor, including migrants; those which have some relation to development assistance programming for international migration are included here.

It has been argued here that, on balance, we do not yet know how much sending countries benefit from international migration. Although most observers believe that many individual migrants benefit, a great number of people migrating today undoubtedly would be better off if they did not have to leave their countries to find employment. Only when the necessary structural changes take place, enabling source countries to absorb their own labor force in secure jobs with sufficient wages will the tides of migration diminish. Such long-term effects may be fostered to a greater degree by inducing industry to invest in developing countries, rather than recruit workers from them. It should be stressed that such investment must be made with proper safeguards so that such enterprises do not exploit individual workers nor distort national development priorities, as many transnational enterprises have done in the past. Much also could be done with adjustments in trade and tariff regulations, especially to admit some farm produce and manufactured goods which can be produced more efficiently and economically in less-developed countries (Hiemenz and Schatz [1979] sum up arguments for "trade instead of migration".)

Some of the recommendations outlined here are palliatives. Yet the situation in which women affected by international migration find themselves is often desperate, and palliatives may be all that can be offered for the present. They probably should not be rejected unless they are excuses for not carrying out more fundamental reforms. The money women earn in the garment industry in Los Angeles, Singapore, the Philippines, for example, is certainly a miserable wage by developed country standards. Yet, the women who have a chance to earn \$5 a day may not regard it as exploitative -- in comparison to lesser wages available in their own home place, or to no job at all.

#### I. For Those Who Go:

- A. Women and girls need, most of all (as they themselves have articulated it) some means of earning cash -- whether they go with their menfolk, migrate with dependents but without an adult male, or go alone. Since only a few migrant women have the skills and education to enter the formal labor sector, one recommendation for planners would be to assist developing countries in expanding informal sector job opportunities, providing more jobs along with some guarantees -- and to be careful that modernization of industry does not emphasize unduly only capital-intensive, automated modes of production.

Palmer (1979: 49) suggests measures to make it attractive for manufacturing firms to subcontract some of their operations to small, labor-intensive industries; the creation of "industrial parks" of such subcontractors; intensifying research and development on products suitable for either production or use in the informal sector; encouraging governments to contract for goods and services from informal sector enterprises; adjusting licensing regulations and fees so that small firms can operate legally.

At the international level, Palmer (*ibid.*) also suggests that patterns of tariffs on manufactured items from developing countries must be carefully monitored so as to promote indigenous industry and employment. Additionally, she suggests adjustments to the exchange rate which favor small industries and the use of local materials in manufacturing when this is possible (*ibid.*: 49-50). Palmer culled many of these recommendations from recent ILO country mission reports; it is interesting that there now is a trend not to dismiss the informal sector as an aberration, but as a productive and useful alternative employment market.

Another great need is for the creation of employment agencies which also could function in monitoring conditions of work, particularly in occupations where women experience exploitation -- domestic service and the garment industry are leading cases. Migrants tend to concentrate in a few occupations where conditions of work are lamentable. In New York and California, for example, as well as on certain islands in the Caribbean and at the Mexican border, Hispanic women have become the latest group of female migrants to be exploited by the garment industry. Safa (1979) has documented women's work in garment and other manufacturing industries. In Malaysia, the Philippines and other parts of Asia, migrant and other urban women also work in the garment trades, electronics component manufacturing and pharmaceuticals (see Moch and Tilly [1979] for a good resume of "women's trades" worldwide).

There would be room for development planners to work for improvement in all such "women's enterprises," which are characterized by dangerous working conditions, low wages and few benefits. The dilemma for policy, as the authors cited point out, is that women will continue to work under exploitative conditions because such jobs are the only ones available to them. Moreover, if manufacturers see their employee costs rising too fast, they are capable of moving their plants literally overnight -- to another country or another continent.

Hence, the policy suggested is a compromise between so much upgrading that the industry simply seeks cheaper labor in another place, and not enough improvement so that women continue to work in such industries to their great disadvantage and detriment.

- B. Women and girls -- and their menfolk -- also need counselling and guidance before they leave their home countries, not only on working conditions at the prospective destination, but also on availability of housing, education and health services, etc. Here again it is assumed that the respective "colonies" of the new immigrants will cushion the shock of arrival and help in the accommodation of the women and their families to the new culture.<sup>1</sup> But such is not always the case. Immigration centers are needed where prospective migrant workers can obtain information on the jobs available and the conditions of work abroad, as well as receive help in planning

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<sup>1</sup>In Europe, almost every sending country has an employment service or immigration institute to give information, make travel arrangements for migrants and negotiate the conditions of work. Such services also would appear to be very appropriate for private voluntary agencies to offer migrants. At times, the word gets back very efficiently, even without formal channels. Headrick's tells of rural villages in the Dominican Republic which talk each day to kin groups in New York City by shortwave radio. Information exchanged, in order of priority, includes 1) the weather in New York; 2) the New York job market; 3) the soccer scores; 4) the latest arrivals and departures, and 5) what to send (bring) with the next traveller. But at other times, migrants set out for the unknown.

the journey. Such centers could be extremely useful to women because often the formal labor market conditions are known; it is the informal sector where women work about which information is needed. The same centers also could offer help and assistance to those who are returning home.

- C. Women and girls who migrate need education and training in skills useful in the urban milieu, and for informal sector employment, particularly in service occupations. At first, they also need classes in language and often literacy. Concentration of effort on the informal sector, as suggested above, should not of course preclude the possibility of some migrants, especially among younger women, acquiring the skills necessary to compete for better jobs in the formal labor sector. Nevertheless, Palmer (1979: 50) cautions against the notion that the entire spectrum of occupations requires elaborate training. She quotes from an ILO report which observes that "while it takes a pilot to fly a plane and a surgeon to perform operations," it would be misleading to suggest that all jobs in the traditional sector require equally high skills. Palmer thinks that, in some cases, basic literacy training and the expansion of primary education for girls may be more valuable (ibid.).

There is a proliferation in Third World countries of private "academies" which offer sometimes nearly worthless training for careers with few corresponding job opportunities. Sometimes these enterprises prey on migrant women, offering instruction in office work, as hotel and travel/tourist aides, and other types of employment where rural women have little chance of being hired. Still, if carefully regulated, vocational education under both private and public auspices could be valuable for women who are trying to better themselves in the urban job market. Efforts need to be made to counter the tendency for migrant women -- throughout their work lives -- to remain at the same level of employment or to move only laterally, at least in part because programs for upgrading of skills tend to be offered only to men. Migrant women also need vocational guidance and help in achieving employment matched to their present skills, prior to or concurrent with further training. Programs such as those offered to migrant women throughout the world by the YWCA should be supported and encouraged.

- D. Migrant women also need to learn skills useful in their own developing societies on their return. Often the kinds of employment they find in the immigration country do not provide any improvement in skills, much less an opportunity to develop management potential. The Netherlands has addressed this problem partially by providing (during the last months) on-the-job training in a line of work chosen by migrant workers, not necessarily in the field in which they have been employed during their stay (Power, 1979: 144). Such arrangements also exist for Turkish workers in Germany and Moroccan workers in France (van Gandt, 1977: 53).

- E. Migrant women need help in reconstituting their support networks and restructuring their households. As pointed out several times in this report, women coming into a new urban milieu and a strange culture are in need of assistance to ease the burdens of reestablishing their links to health, educational and community services, as well as to commercial establishments. They also frequently are in urgent need of child care facilities, having left behind the extended family which performed such functions as a matter of custom in the rural areas.

Orientation centers and courses, operating through private voluntary agencies, could offer not only valuable help in pointing out where such institutions and services exist, but also could be instrumental in setting up new ones to meet some of the special problems of migrant women and girls. Migrants often live on the periphery of their destination's town or city, and sometimes facilities such as those mentioned are provided in minimal form, if at all -- with migrants often viewed as putting unacceptable strains on already overburdened services. In cases where migrants live interspersed with the indigenous population, such services may need to be upgraded for everyone.

- F. Women and girls who migrate alone, or with dependents but no adult male, need special help. Few of these will be completely alone in the city; most migrants gravitate to where friends and relations from their own country and region receive them, help them get situated and find their first employment. Nevertheless, women alone in the urban environment for the first time may need special attention in the way of housing, training, job counseling and orientation to the city which their own ethnic communities cannot provide.

Special attention needs to be paid also to the female-headed household, created when women migrate alone with dependents, or when they are deserted after their arrival in the new homeland. They need access in their own right to employment, training and community services. Special provisions may be necessary, for example in the case of housing, since projects often are open only to male-headed families.

- G. Women and girls who migrate often desire to maintain their cultural identity and links to their homelands. They may also need help in adjusting to a culture in which they and their children often are racially and ethnically distinct. Several sending countries have addressed this question; Sweden in 1975, for example, enacted legislation for migrant workers<sup>ii</sup>

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<sup>ii</sup>Sweden's program includes setting up a Commission on Immigration Research which focusses some of its effort on gaining an extensive knowledge of the cultures from which immigrants come (in order to understand how they perceive Swedish society, and to devise programs which will give minority groups a cultural freedom of choice), as well as support for cultural expressions of immigrant groups: art, music, history, language.

within its borders to help them preserve their ties to their own societies. Much of this sort of keeping touch is done without formal help or sponsorship -- the air age has meant, besides the possibility of occasional visits home, that migrants need not be cut off from such aspects of their culture as foods, music, magazines and newspapers, sometimes films and sports events. Almost every immigrant group sooner or later also tries to organize itself in order to help its members defend themselves against the majority society as well as adapt to new conditions of life -- and to interpret their situation and contributions to the host country. Fostering of such associations could well be facilitated by either the sending or the receiving country, or both. Teachers from the sending country could be financed by one or the other, as is the case with Turkey (van Gendt, 1977: 43).

## II. For Those Who Stay Behind:

- A. Women and girls who stay behind probably need most help in shouldering the double burden of carrying on their own responsibilities and taking on whatever other tasks are necessary to keep the household and agricultural activity going. As already indicated, there is some evidence that rural women and girls sometimes are not able to sustain both. Unless they are included in programs of credit, extension and agricultural inputs, their farms may produce only subsistence crops to feed the immediate family members left behind.

Women's rights to land, water and other resources may be more in need than ever of being clarified when their fathers, husbands or sons leave for work in another country. Men often go further, stay away longer, communicate less frequently and are more prone to break the links entirely with families left behind because of international migration than is the case when they migrate for employment within their own national borders. Thus, women in rural areas need to have access in their own right to agricultural land, extension services, credit and inputs, and to courses in agricultural management and practices, if productivity is to be maintained.

There is some evidence that those who grow cash crops for sale in the world market fare better in terms of technical assistance, credit and marketing systems than do small farm holders. Indeed, as this paper points out in several places, it may be the tendencies towards farm mechanization and commercialization which have exacerbated out-migration in the first place.

If indigenous populations are to be fed, and if smallholder agriculture is not to continue declining, serious attention will have to be paid to the women left behind on the land. Their proportions are growing, as the numbers of males in full-time agriculture decline. Some research and development money needs to be expended on "women's crops" --

preeminently food crops for home consumption, preservation, processing and sale -- as well as on other aspects of the complex farming systems of the Third World.

- B. Women in rural areas also need cash-earning opportunities, as much or more as their counterparts among women migrants. Access to productive land may not be sufficient to sustain families entirely if remittances do not come, and one or more adult women left behind may find it necessary to hire out as agricultural laborers or do other work for pay. Many other women left behind in rural areas have no land. Ruth Dixon (1978 and 79) has written the definitive argument outlining strategies for designing rural industries to provide employment for women in rural areas. In addition to work-for-pay opportunities, rural women need most of the same services as their migrating sisters -- health and educational facilities, child care, skill training.
- C. Younger women in rural areas, suggests Gordon (1978: 74-75), might escape the severe strains of prolonged separation from their menfolk, overwork and too many responsibilities through education and training. They need to strengthen their position so that their progress towards a similar fate as the older women left behind might be slowed or halted. Gordon says that the ultimate solution, of course, involves changing the process by which wives get into difficulty, that is, the patterns of male labor recruitment.
- D. How women and girls manage remittances means much for the families and their future; in cases where remittances are abundant for a few years, women may need training in investment and savings behavior so that the returns from years of toil in a foreign land by family member(s) can be maximized.

One urban development expert interviewed for this report points out that women are geared by education and custom to consumption; whatever they have, they invest in "setting up the next generation," which, in turn, is looked to for support. However, because family structures and traditions are weakening, many women need to balance immediate consumption pressures to their own longer-term needs over the total life cycle. In a word, they need to plan for their own futures if they have access to significant amounts of remittances (Anna Sant'Anna, World Bank).

- E. Rural development probably does not hold out much hope for stemming out-migration significantly. Some observers have grave doubts whether there is sufficient assistance money available to foster the massive rural development programs which would be necessary to halt the migratory flow from the Third World -- or even whether development aid can be so targeted in any case. Certainly, we may well hope for some positive effects of development programs aimed at the rural poor, but so far the evidence does not show that they would contribute to stemming rural-to

urban migration (and the migration across international borders) to any great degree.

Yet for the women left behind, rural development is crucial. Some provision of better agricultural methods, marketing systems, rural roads, water, health and school facilities, may at least make life more possible and bearable -- and forestall further out-migration of families in the wake of the departure of the male head-of-household. One study points to the phenomenon of "precipitating migration" -- when her partner does not return from foreign employment or send her sufficient cash to maintain the farm and family, the wife may leave the land in any case, going to the nearest town within her country's borders.

It should be stressed once again that women must be specifically included in rural development schemes in their own right; otherwise, even women who have full responsibility for the agricultural enterprise may be bypassed because the nominal head-of-household is away. It also is important that women and families left behind do not abandon the land; if the family leaves, the last links with the farm may be broken and the returning worker from abroad will more than likely end up in the city where his family has migrated, in his own country.

### III. General Recommendations Affecting Those Who Go or Stay

- A. Most students of international migration have concluded that some regulation of guestworkers is urgent, worked out through international convention and/or through agreements between sending and receiving countries. Source and receiving countries need to get together to forge common agreements on ways to match supply and demand so that human costs can be mitigated for those who go, as well as for those left behind. Prospective workers need to be screened in the sending countries; in the receiving nations, programs need to be structured for a more ordered reception and absorption into the labor force and the local communities, as well as in repatriation. Some national agreements and regional pacts already are in force, notably in the European Economic Community; in this hemisphere, the Simón Rodríguez convention on labor migration among the Andean Pact countries was enacted in 1977.

So far as treatment of guestworkers by the host country is concerned, there already are several charters in force on the rights of migrant workers, and several more in draft -- one of which will be presented to the United Nations General Assembly at its next session. It is the opinion of many international lawyers that even nations which have not signed these conventions are bound by them through customary international law and international norms.

In brief, these covenants provide that international migrants for employment receive wages and hours, benefits and working conditions roughly

equal to citizen workers. Moreover, they include such measures as bilingual schooling for migrants' children, reunification of families in the destination country after one year, and the preservation of the cultural heritage of the different migrant groups; as well, migrants are to be free to join trade unions and other associations, and to engage in some forms of political and civic participation (in Sweden, for example, guestworkers may vote in local elections).

These covenants were drafted with the implicit notion that the migrant in question is male, and that he sometimes takes his family along (no mention is made of the woman who migrates autonomously or the woman and family left behind). These charters need to be revised (for those in draft) or amended to include attention to the special needs of women affected by international migration -- those who go and those who stay.

- B. Turning from an immigration country's obligations to individual migrants, we enter a relatively new area of concern: the obligations a host State might have to the source countries. There is an idea growing that immigration countries should make some kind of payment to the sending countries to compensate for the expenditures on workers' education and rearing to working age, as well as for the loss of their services during their most vigorous and productive working years.

Questions revolve around whether such a "tax" should be paid by the workers themselves if they have received advanced training and education in their own country before migrating, or whether the tax should fall upon the receiving country which could, for example, share tax revenues and social security payments collected from the migrants with the migrants' homeland (very often workers return home without being reimbursed for either).

Some sort of compensation scheme could be crucially important for women: often migrant workers do not bring anything back, after years away. An escrow fund held for the workers' return could become a revolving credit source for those who want to invest, start a small business, or buy land. Several European countries have collaborated with sending nations in working out such plans. These schemes would add a development dimension to the migration (van Gendt, 1977: 52). As is the case with The Netherlands, migration countries could also assist in the design of return projects for migrant workers, helping with financing, technical assistance and training (*ibid.*, p. 53). Sometimes such projects could be located in regions from which there are large out-migrations, presuming that many of the migrants would return to their places of origin (*ibid.*, pp. 46-47).

- C. The sketchy evidence in this report for documenting the background, present situation and recommendations for the future of women in international migration points to a final need: for a great deal of research to tell us more about each issue touched upon here. As one observer put it, so far as women are concerned, it is not even correct to speak of "gaps" -- the whole question is a vast unknown.

## **VIGNETTES**

One year prior to the time the oldest son would be ready to attend secondary school in Port-au-Prince, the husband realized that his farm would be unable to meet his financial needs. So he migrated to New York, leaving his wife, his children, his godchild...in Ziltuc. At this stage, the household became a female-headed one.

The departure of the husband caused the addition of a new member in the household, the wife's sister...to help with the children. While the husband was in New York, one of his daughters was living in Port-au-Prince for school purposes. She became pregnant.

Now all the children have joined their father in New York. The wife will be leaving soon for the same destination. They have not seen each other for ten years. After her departure, it is likely that they will continue to help the remaining members of the household financially.

-Michel S. Laguerre, The Impact of Migration on the Haitian Family and Household Organization (1978: 457-58)

They did not even give her time to get to know her before they passed judgment. Being friendly with them would be out of the question. She would have to mind her own business. What these people felt towards her was resentment.... The funniest thing was that from the cynical remarks being made around her, it was implied that she must be illiterate.

What was the point in explaining to them that in her country she attended a colonial school with a standard equalling the best girls' school in London? What was the point in telling them she was not illiterate as they thought, and that even here in their country she worked in their Civil Service. She looked at them, felt a little bit like being sick, then walked in, shutting her front door behind her with a loud bang.

--Buchi Emecheta, In the Ditch, Autobiographical novel of a Nigerian woman separated from her husband and trying to make it in London with her five children (1979: 24-25)

Pepe says in the interview that he, his wife and their three children are all very happy to be going home to Colombia after seven years in the United States. His wife will not have to work, and there will be the extended family so they won't feel so isolated. María Carmen, however, isn't so sure. When her husband is out of the room, she tells the interviewer that she has mixed feelings about returning to the closed, traditional society of

Medellín. "There I won't be able to work; in Bogotá it is changing for women, but not in the provinces. And Pepe's mother and sisters, and my own mother, will always be watching me and judging me by standards I no longer believe in. Here I was a person. There I will suffocate."

--Interview with a Colombian couple  
for Chaney and Cruz, Colombian  
Migration to the United States (1976)

Traditionally, the Mosotho man has been the head of his household. The custom has been eroded by male absence and by the breakdown of the extended family network. Ideally, at least one brother must be at home at all times to help his sisters-in-law with plowing and any other problems they might face. With few exceptions, brothers no longer feel this loyalty to one another. Thus a wife is left fully in charge of her household and fields.

What has not eroded is the husband's determination to prevent his wife from doing anything that he perceives as threatening his pride. Adultery, working in town, using birth control are the most prominent examples. Within the boundaries of her husband's definition of the family, then, a woman can make decisions. If she tries to assert any kind of autonomy, however, he uses all the resources available to him -- primarily money and strength -- to stop her. When a husband comes home, a woman, no matter how strong and resourceful she has been in his absence, resumes the role of a dutiful wife.... Thus separation is paradoxical. While it grants a wife an independence in decision-making that she might well lose if her husband lived with her, it also effectively removes her husband from the scope of her influence at certain crucial junctures...when he is absent, when he receives his wages, she loses the ability to influence him.

--Martha Burton Mueller, Women and  
Men in Rural Lesotho: The Periphery  
of the Periphery (1977: 210-11)

Miss Katy sits by the roadside selling plantain, green bananas, pears (avocado) genip, and breadfruit. She appears to the casual observer to be just another country higgler. The twelve-year-old daughter of Miss Patience is selling pine (pineapples) and breadfruit; she sells while her mother continues to gather other produce from the bush (field). Further up the road is Miss Dolly...with her stand of breadfruit and green bananas. Miss Dolly's step-daughter, Miss Sweety, a few gates away, has a stand set up and operated by her own daughters, ages eight and thirteen.

--Miss Katy is fifty-seven years old, the other of eight children, and a widow. She has two sons living at home and six other children living "a foreign." Looking at Miss Katy, one can see no sign that this country woman, wearing the traditional higgler tie-head (sic)

is linked to three foreign countries: Canada, England and the United States.

- Miss Patience father migrated to the United States when she was ten; he died there.
- Miss Dolly is the mother of six children and is eighty years of age; she is a widow. She has two sons who live in St. Mary District, a daughter who lives in Kingston, and a daughter and a son who live in England. Presently, one son from the district is doing farm work in Canada, his tenth contract, and he has had work experience in the United States as well. Miss Dolly cares for two grandchildren, one the child of the daughter who lives in England, the other the son of the farm contract laborer.

--Victoria Durant-González, Role and Status of Rural Jamaican Women: Higglering and Mothering (1976: 113-14)

In Trinidad an Indian man is not supposed to give his wife money [and this attitude carries over to migrants here]. He takes her to the shop and he buys everything. She'll say, "I'll like to have a bottle of oil, some baking powder and some flour," but he pays for it. The woman doesn't get any money at all... so you don't have \$1 or \$2 to keep on you.

Now that I have a job, I am independent. I stand up here as a Man. Another woman reminded her husband : "I was here before you. I'm the one that get my residence before and then sponsor you."

--Judith Burgess and Meryl James-Gray, Migration and Sex Roles: A Comparison of Black and Indian Trinidadians in New York City (1977: 27)

During the second year of her work in Germany Nezihe was able to buy a flat in Turkey and save some in the bank for the dowry of her daughter.

She admits that in the past her husband did bring home some of his earnings, but as Nezihe sees it, that was not enough; it could cover only their daily bread. Men cannot think of better situations anyhow; they think that only the food for the wife and children should be paid and the rest of their earnings should be spent for their own entertainment, for their drinks. They don't think about the future. "Who is going to be responsible for the future of their daughters?" She does not want them to be poor in the future like she herself used to be.

Besides, Nezihe is planning to buy another house for their own use and still another to rent. All these are being planned and executed by Nezihe. Her husband has almost no part in them.

--Ayse Kuzat and Seval Gürel, Personal, Familial and Societal Impact of Turkish Women's Migration to Europe (n. d.:29)

Rocio is a Colombian woman on her way back to her country after six years in the United States as an illegal alien. She is 46 and lives in a small suburb of Medellin. "Not even once in all these six years did I visit my husband and five children, not even for Christmas, because I was an immigrant with no documents to show the authorities."

Rocio wanted to own a house and give her children an education, and now she was returning after many years of hardship and heavy work as a housemaid... during which she lived as an "illegal" in the shadows of society.

"I never expected to stay so long," she confides. "In fact, this little doll you see in my tote bag is three years old. I bought it for my daughter, the youngest of the family, long ago when I was thinking of returning to Colombia. Now my daughter is eleven and I don't know if she still plays with dolls. She was only five when I left."

A little worried, the mother goes on. "My husband couldn't find a good house for the price we had in mind... and I had to stay three more years. But now we have a house completely paid for, every payment made with my earnings. I also bought all the appliances for my house. I'm taking with me a TV set, electric iron, sewing machine, and many other things.

"Yes, senora! This means that I had to save all my salary and that I didn't do anything else in all those years but work and save. Well, once I took a short trip, and I went with my Church to Miami and Washington. Aside from this, nothing, nothing. I saved it all."

--Elsa Chaney, Colombian Migration to the United States (1976: 137)

## I. Introduction: Women in International Migration

Women today are moving from their home places in ever increasing numbers to the towns and cities of their own or other countries. In former times, most women if they went at all, journeyed with their menfolk. Today, many female migrants still are "accompanied"; yet in every world area, more and more are setting out alone. Sometimes they go to establish a beachhead for family members who will come afterwards -- women often find it easier to obtain initial employment in the place of destination. In other cases, they migrate without men but with dependent children. In still other cases, they are single and, like young males, are seeking ways to earn money and to survive what has been characterized by one writer as a worldwide "flight from agriculture." Even when smallholders do not abandon their land altogether, increasing numbers must send at least one family member off to earn cash.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Sometimes these migrants only go seasonally to another part of their own or to a neighboring country. In Peru, for example, seasonal migration from the Sierra to the coastal plantations has gone on for generations. In other cases, farmers may go abroad for a working lifetime, only returning in their later years. In Jamaica, for example, it is common for a male farmer to go to England (now Canada or the U. S.) for 15-20 years, then return to farm in his late forties or early fifties as the family land passes to him. Sometimes the men don't ever return -- and as a consequence, about 22 percent of farm operators in Jamaica are women (USDA, 1978). In Mexico, farm families may send a daughter to work in the "maquiladora," a U. S. runaway shop on the Mexican side of the border, manufacturing electronics components, pharmaceuticals, clothing -- and generally employing young, unmarried women between the ages of 17 or 18 to 25 years.

Women are affected by migration even when they themselves do not move. As men leave the rural areas for the plantations, mines, oil fields and urban service sectors, their households are expected to absorb the shock of their departure. They leave behind wives, mothers and daughters who must till the land, manage the household, take care of the younger children -- in a word, cope alone -- counting on remittances which may not be regular and which sometimes may cease altogether.

Yet whether they go or stay, paradoxically some women will find their lives have improved. If they go, they may have greater freedom, better opportunities to earn cash, a chance for a more collaborative relationship with their male partners. If they stay, they may find enhanced opportunity for paid employment because men are away and there are more jobs; greater influence in the affairs of their households and communities; remittances to spend in ways that gain them prestige and recognition. The meagre speculation we have done about women in migration has been almost completely negative; now there are a few studies showing that sometimes international migration brings positive outcomes to some women, even when it turns out that, on the whole, their communities and nations do not benefit.

This paper does not, however, attempt to assess the costs and benefits associated with labor migration in any global fashion. We lack sufficient information to make accurate judgments about who gains and who loses in the long run, whether we are considering individual workers or the countries involved. Charles Geely (1979, 54-55) has suggested that

such balance sheets on international migration may not only be premature but irrelevant -- since the migrations will continue in any case.<sup>2</sup>

Rather, the present effort focusses attention on an important group affected by international migration: women and girls. The presence of women in international migration (and the impact of migration on the women left behind) has been obscured by the fact that, until recently, most of those who dealt with migration problems took it for granted that the significant actors in migration were male. Many studies explicitly characterize the modal type as a young, single male. Until recently, few scholarly studies on migration paid attention to women, and when female migrants were analyzed at all, marriage was the main factor singled out to explain their migration. This was one of the major findings of the first effort to tease out information on women migrants from demographic, anthropological and other literature on both internal and international migration (Nadia Youssef, et al., Women in Migration: A

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<sup>2</sup> Many efforts to assess the costs and benefits associated with international migration are underway. There is some evidence that the developed nations have gained more from labor migration. They secure a cheap, flexible labor force, workers in their most vigorous and productive years, and they avoid the social costs of rearing and educating them, however minimally, as well as caring for them in old age if they do return home. Some argue that receiving countries also gain: a safety valve for excess population, for example, as well as remittances which ease foreign exchange shortages. Others then counter that such "benefits" are illusory since most remittances are spent on inflationary consumer goods, and few sending countries have figured out how to capture remittances for productive investment. For a summation of the arguments about gains and losses in international labor migration, along with an account of the growing movement among labor-exporting countries to demand compensatory payments, see Böhning (1979). For a human rights argument related to costs/benefits, see Chaney (1980).

Third World Focus, 1979). Women accompanied their menfolk as "passive migrants"<sup>3</sup>

Now we know that women are far from passive in migration. There is evidence that they often initiate the migration decision; even when they themselves stay home, they may urge (one researcher says "nag" in the case of Portuguese women) a husband or son to go off for a time to earn cash. Migrant women themselves work in paid employment in proportions often exceeding women born in the host countries. Gordon (forthcoming) found that Jamaican women coming to the U.S. were more likely than men to cite the need to get a better job as their reason for emigrating because women's pressing economic responsibilities, she says, often surpass those of men. More men than women cited self-improvement.

Whether they go or stay, women restructure their households and reestablish their "survival networks" to accommodate for absent members or to the new situation in the immigration country. Women's migratory behavior has many unexplored cause and effect relationships to the dislocations in family and community structures, especially the increasing phenomenon of the woman-based household; the future of agriculture in which women of the Third World perform essential roles, and urban labor markets where non-professional migrant women are the lowest-paid, least-mobile group.

Until recently, most women migrated internally, going only short distances. Now large numbers are crossing national boundaries. The

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<sup>3</sup>This myopia exists among demographers, development theorists and media professionals. A filmmaker was describing to me his project on Hispanic migration to Washington, D.C. from Central America and the Caribbean. It would be about five typical young men, he said, and their anguish and triumph in trying to make it in the U.S. When I pointed out to him that women also migrate (in fact, in greater proportions than men from the areas mentioned), his impatient reaction was, "Oh sure, they're included, they're just there."

purpose of this paper is to ask what the implications are of such international movements on the roles and status of women, particularly how international migration affects women's behavior in relation to family structures (natal and conjugal), labor markets and agriculture -- both in the emigration and the immigration countries. No assertions are being made here that internal movements do not also pose some of the same problems. But international migration places those problems in the starkest perspective and adds additional factors which most likely will not -- or at least to the same degree -- confront those who move within the borders of their own countries:

- international migration is likely to mean longer periods of absence than internal migration for work (and often represents a permanent move). Even when distances are not great, borders present problems for free movement. For women who go, international migration means more definitive separation from important kin, friendship and other support networks. If papers are not in order, return visits are too risky, and the worker and family members only go back at the end of an extended period.
- international migration often involves greater distances; interim visits are costly, causing them to be infrequent or put off altogether until the definitive return. Sometimes paying for the return journey and accumulating a stake causes postponement of the return again and again to a distant future.
- international migration means that remittances must often be transferred through banking institutions, unreliable postal services, or trusted to travellers -- all adding to the uncertainty of receiving cash. Sometimes a worker does not send remittances, but accumulates earnings in a lump sum against the return, posing difficulties on how the accustomed contribution to household expenses will be compensated for in the meantime.
- international migration initially attracts through the promise of a significant wage differential which, however, may be eroded

by expenses of the journey and the higher cost of living in the host country. Again, miscalculations may mean longer separations, with greater strains on family structure.

- international migration often brings people into a different culture where they and their children are ethnically and racially distinct. Often it is the women in their dealings with school, health, commercial, religious and other institutions who bear the brunt of adjustment.
- international migration often involves mastering at least the rudiments of a new language; again, the woman -- with her wider range of contacts needed in restructuring her household "survival network," as well as in her paid work -- may have even greater need to learn the new language than the male.
- international migration poses difficulties in communication with the home place which may not be so acute in the case of internal movements. Besides leading to family estrangement, lack of communication may make it extremely hard to take family decisions, especially those involving legal issues.
- international migration may mean separation of family members for long years -- not only the absent father and/or mother, but older and younger siblings. A common pattern in many world regions is to leave younger children behind with their grandparents or adoptive parents in the home place. Sometimes families are never reunited.
- international migration strips people of the rights and privileges they may enjoy as citizens. If they are clandestine migrants, they often are outside the protection of both their own and their immigration country's laws. Sometimes women are particularly disadvantaged in their human rights.

Before exploring specific issues related to women in international migration, it will be helpful to look at migration as an historical phenomenon and at the major movements of people in the world today.

## II. International Migration: An Historical Perspective

Movement across international boundaries, as Davis (1974: 56) points out, was a key factor in the growth of today's advanced nations. In the 16th and 17th centuries, "the world as a whole [for the first time] began to be one migratory network, dominated by a single group of technologically-advanced and culturally similar states." As a result, he says, these countries eventually were able to start the industrial revolution and "enormously enhance their world dominance."

Every country which has developed a strong industrial base has had the opportunity to shed its excess population; only today's late developers have nowhere for their surplus people to go. During the approximately 150 years of Britain's industrial development, for example, its population increased from about 4 million to only 15½ million persons -- yet it had vast colonies for settlement, enterprise and commercial activities for those who found England too crowded. The U.S. had an ever-advancing frontier, with large territories acquired by war and purchase. In contrast, Colombia must compress its industrialization into a fraction of the time it took England and the U.S. to achieve the transition from agrarian to industrial societies, yet it already has a population of 27 millions which will double in about 30 years (Population Reference Bureau, 1980).

Today labor migration has not diminished, but has shifted direction: instead of flowing to the periphery, it is flowing towards more developed countries everywhere. Movements towards Europe are well documented by now: to Western Europe from Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, Southern Europe and North Africa,

**as well as to English and Dutch cities from the West Indies and Suriname.**

**We are only beginning, however, to link the same disparity-of-growth phenomenon to the millions of Afro-Caribbean and Latin American migrants who are rapidly replacing the flow of European settler-migrants to the United States and Canada. Migrant workers in Europe, the U.S. and Canada currently total more than 20 million.<sup>4</sup> (See Chaney and Surton [1979] for articles on the Caribbean.)**

**Millions more are on the move throughout Asia and the Middle East, as agents contract for workers to go to the rich Arab countries from poorer Arab lands and from India, Pakistan, Korea and other Asian nations. Some 2 1/2 million Arabs have moved to their more prosperous sister nations, and about 1 million Asians have gone (Keely, 1979; Birks and Sinclair, 1980; Ecevit, 1979).**

**Labor migration from the Black countries of Southern Africa is an old story; at any one time, some 80 percent of the males of Botswana and Lesotho are absent, leaving behind whole villages inhabited primarily by the old, the sick, women and children (Bryant, 1977; Gordon, 1978; Mueller, 1977). There are significant labor migrations within world regions: in West and East Africa; into Venezuela from the Caribbean and South America, and into Argentina from the surrounding countries (Zachariah and Conde, 1979; Chaney, 1978; Kritz /1979) and Gurak,**

**Labor migration also occurs in response to demand in the semi-periphery.**

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<sup>4</sup>There are no reliable figures on the number of international migrants for employment. The 20 million estimate is one used by most observers. But they may be quoting each other rather than engaging in the task of what Keely has called "counting the uncountable." Power (1979) notes that this is half as many as migrated from Europe to North America in the great 19th and early 20th century movements of people, yet this new migration has occurred in only 30 years. (See Keely, 1977.)

Countries sometimes little better off than their neighbors which are experiencing "enclave" growth in certain sectors are receiving immigrants -- not only in activities related to mining, petroleum or construction, but in the "value-added" enterprises which have mushroomed in electronics, clothing and pharmaceutical industries in Malaysia, Central America, the Caribbean and elsewhere. These latter firms often employ exclusively local and migrant women. Scattered references in the literature point to Indian and Filipina professionals as being particularly mobile. Indian women, for example, have gone as teachers to many Asian nations (Eccvit, 1979); Egyptian women as teachers to other Middle Eastern countries (Hammam, 1980: 21).

Movements of women in international migrant streams have been traced in the project mentioned above, carried out by the International Center for Research on Women (1979: 42-66). The ICRW findings seriously challenge the notion that women's participation in international migration is insignificant. What they do confirm is that, world wide, women's initial participation in labor migration often is low, but that in almost every country, participation later increases because of both dependent and autonomous female migration.

Because the ICRW study covers most world regions, women's various migratory movements will not be described in detail here (an exception is West African movements described in Annex I of this paper, based on studies not available to ICRW at the time of its study). To sum up, the ICRW data show that, with few exceptions (North African migration to Europe, migration to South Africa from the contiguous small Black nations, and recent movements among and to the Middle East), women's participation in international migration registers

high both on statistical indices of foreign immigrants in the receiving countries, as well as in emigration counts. For at least two decades, women have predominated in migratory movements in this hemisphere: within most Latin American and Caribbean countries, and from the Caribbean, Central and South America to the United States and Canada. A migration index constructed by Elise Boulding, using data from 44 countries and 4 world regions, ranges from a high of 47 percent female for immigrants in 8 Latin American countries to a low of 34 percent female for immigrants in 7 African countries (see Annex II).

### III. International Migration: Current and Future Perspectives

Today, in spite of worldwide recession, labor migration continues to flow across what Petras (1978) has termed "wage zones" -- people move from countries where wages are low towards points of rapid capital expansion. Many ignore the formalities of exit and entry documents, and slip into the shadowy world of the clandestine worker. Some 3.5 to 5.5 million undocumented may be living and working within the borders of the United States.<sup>5</sup> Power's (1979: 26-43) careful analysis shows that even in Europe where there has been the most regulation, numbers of undocumented workers are large. In other world areas, borders are much less rigid (for example in West Africa), and persons who often are from the same tribal groups freely pass over from one side to the other, as also happens in the Middle East (Birks and Sinclair, 1980:23).

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<sup>5</sup>Estimates are from a study made by staffmembers of the Census Bureau who reviewed all available studies and emphasize that their own conclusions are speculative (Siegel, et al., 1980 for the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy).

International movements of workers have become "visible" not only because of the unprecedented numbers, but also because of recent economic contraction in some of the receiving countries. Even though migrant laborers, for the most part, cluster in the low-paid, low-prestige jobs that no one in the society wants to do, they nevertheless are resented because they are viewed as "taking jobs away" from host country nationals. Often, too, they are racially distinct; many times even if they speak the language of the host country, they do so in the particular accent and lilt of their homeland, often a former colony of the receiving society.

In times of recession, the outcry against immigrants becomes particularly vociferous; yet even though resident workers might be glad to take on some of the dirty work temporarily, when times are good they are not willing to do so. It is the long-term trends, working themselves out since around 1950 if we take the European experience as the starting point, that concerns us here.

How work is done in the advanced nations does not match the predictions made about life in the last half of the 20th century. Industrial society, as Piore (1973 and 1978) has suggested, always has tended to generate a set of jobs unacceptable to the native born, and many developed countries now fill such jobs by importing contract labor or tolerating illegal migration. Typically, migrant workers take on the residue of low-skilled, low-salaried jobs which defy automation (or simply are not worth automating because plenty of cheap laboring hands are available to do them). They are employed as construction workers, day laborers, restaurant workers, parking-lot attendants, baggage handlers, truck and gypsy cab drivers, and particularly the women, as assemblers,

pieceworkers and packagers; hawkers and traders, and in agricultural work. Above all, women in every urban area to which they migrate find their first opportunities in domestic service (see ICRW, 1979: 105-08 for citations).

From the perspective of the migrant workers, there is evidence that the "bright lights" are not the main attraction now. The message has gotten back to most rural places of the world that unskilled migrants cluster in the worst jobs the host society has to offer. Even if relatively better paid than the same work in the home country, migrants' jobs are dirty, demanding and dehumanizing. As Colvin (1979: 250) contends, probably very little of today's migratory movement can be explained merely as the pull of the world's cities. Rather, it is probable that prospective migrants calculate they have no choice. The dismal facts of life in the countryside impel rural people to leave it. In some world areas, farmers are driven out by drought, soil erosion and other ecological or climactic phenomena. In other cases, the introduction of modern agricultural methods and machinery tends to exclude from the market all those who cannot afford the new technology, restricting economic opportunity for peasants in rural areas and contributing to the ever-accelerating movement of people towards the cities. Even where agricultural development assistance has been available, it has tended to go to larger farmers. In still other cases, many young people reject the grinding poverty of agriculture as a way of life, associating work on the land with the hated slave or colonial status of former times. Policies of cheap food for the urban populations and inadequate marketing systems add to the numbers of smallholders leaving the countryside.

The agrarian reform programs of the 1960s -- less radical than their

## **Women in International Migration - 13**

their public image -- affected relatively few of the world's peasants. Moreover, most analysts now affirm that even if they had succeeded, agrarian reforms would have little impact in stemming cityward migration because there simply is not enough land to give sufficient numbers of peasants plots of viable size. In cases where women stayed behind, they often were not eligible to receive land in agrarian reform schemes, or they had no rights to inherit land -- they, too, migrated. Bryant (1977: 4) documents a process of "precipitating migration": how women in Botswana, abandoned by their mates in South Africa, in turn abandon their land for the towns because they cannot manage alone. An added ingredient in cityward migration is the high rate of population increase in the Third World during the previous decades. (See Rhoda [1979] for a good discussion of the issues related to migration/agriculture.)

Most Third World cities -- urban places which mushroomed to twice or three times their size with little correlation to industrial growth -- are ill-equipped to absorb the flows from the countryside. Unemployment and under-employment rates are high, and among the residents' own offspring, tremendous numbers reach working age each year. Studies show that persons born in the cities who manage to acquire some education and are socialized to city ways compete more successfully than migrants for the better jobs. Industrialization for the most part has been capital intensive, not generating sufficient jobs in manufacturing even for the skilled among city dwellers. Even countries which experienced significant downturns in population growth would not register lessening pressure on job markets for approximately fifteen years because those who would enter the job market are already born.

Most experts believe that migrations of the 1970s (and continuing into the 1980s) were much less selective than those of the previous two decades. Instead of primarily professionals and skilled workers, most migrants today are unskilled persons, the majority of rural origin. Many now go directly to the cities of their own and other nations, bypassing the stage migration which characterized movements from the rural areas in former times when migrants often spent a few years in a nearby town before going on to a larger city. This fact also makes their absorption more difficult.

Increasing numbers of migrants, then, are spilling over into international migrant streams, moving toward growth points in the global economic system where they hope to find opportunities not available at home. In other cases, current migratory movements simply are an acceleration of well-defined traditions in many world regions where migration for employment has become a way of life.<sup>6</sup> The situation certainly is not uniform, and out-migration is not always determined by conditions in the less-developed countries. Some recent trends show labor shortages even in the ranks of the unskilled, as well as outright abandonment of agricultural land, in labor-supplying nations.

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<sup>6</sup>Already mentioned above are the "casual boundaries" in West Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere. Paule Marshall recounts in her novels of West Indian migrant life how the \$5 a day "Panama money" which thousands of men and women earned working on the Panama Railroad and Canal still was talked about with awe in later generations. Small island nations which have no possibility -- barring sudden oil or mineral wealth -- of economic viability continue to encourage out-migration as a national policy. Segal's estimates (1975: 17) show that no Caribbean society since 1950 has had less than a 5 percent net emigration of its total population; for some, the proportion is much higher. In Jamaica, probably also because of the low prestige attached to farming, perhaps one-third of fair-to-good agricultural land lies fallow (USDA, 1978: 54). Jamaica had a population of just under 2 million in 1973; but net losses because of out-migration were substantial: 189,840 from 1943 to 1960; 302,400 from 1960 to 1970 (Ebanks, 1975: 50).

On the other hand, the children of World War II's baby boom generation in the U.S. and Europe already are a much smaller cohort than their parents and, in turn, they apparently will not produce sufficient offspring to fill all the potential employment slots in the advanced countries. By 1985, there could again be severe labor shortages in most of the industrialized nations. Moreover, as Keely points out (1979: 8-9), as is the case of migrant Asian workers to the Middle East, many foreign laborers may still be needed after the present construction boom is over to run the factories, hospitals and other institutions in labor-short countries which have paid their people not to become vocationally skilled (by subsidizing university education). (See also Birks and Sinclair, 1980: 14-17.)

To sum up, migration for employment is a fact of contemporary international life, and evidence points to a continuation of labor migration until well into the 21st century. Women already predominate in several migrant streams (particularly those from South, Central America and the Caribbean to the United States and Canada), and their proportions are increasing in most of the migration taking place in other world regions. Even when they do not migrate, however, the impact of out-migration of their menfolk has many implications for women. These facts point to the necessity to reappraise our thinking on the part of women in international migration. Otherwise, when we come to making policy recommendations, planning country strategies for development, and designing projects, our efforts will fail to address the real situation of the people involved. In the next section a typology of women migrants is suggested, and some specific ways in which women participate in international migration are sketched out.

#### IV. A Typology of Women in International Migration

In order to understand the part women play in international migration, as well as the impact of the migration process on women, it may be helpful to draw up a simple typology of women who are in any way touched by the international labor migration phenomenon. In this way, we can begin to differentiate the situation and needs of the various groups which are not by any means identical. I suggest the following six distinct groups:

1. accompanied migrants - women and girls who go along with their menfolk to the country of immigration. The term "passive migrants" used by demographers is not really appropriate because it implies that women are taken along, much like a sack of possessions. However, even when they go along with their menfolk, women often are far from passive -- they may have initiated the move (see below); at the point of destination, they must exert themselves more than the men in order to restructure their households and build their survival networks to replace those they left behind. Often they must themselves work in paid employment (or invent a job); the need for cash income may increase because they retain a set of responsibilities related to the household and the children. And they face tremendous adaptations to new lifeways, particularly if they come from societies where women's position is greatly different.
2. autonomous migrants - women and girls who set off alone, to establish a beachhead for future migration of family members and other persons from their village or region; to work and save and/or send remittances back home; to get an education; to find more opportunity; to find a suitable marriage partner (or to escape from an impossible marital situation in a place where divorce is not possible). Added to the burden of being alone, or with small children, they face most of the problems of the women migrants outlined in No. 1 above.
3. refugees - women and girls who move because of political events and who also may be unaccompanied. Once past the point of first asylum, they face the same kinds of problems as other women migrants.
4. women of the host country and other immigrant women who came in earlier periods. The migration process affects not only the newcomers, but also the women citizens who may perceive potential rivals for jobs; educational, health and other services; housing. Other immigrant women's attitudes towards the newcomers may

be crucially important in reconstructing their households and in establishing their contact networks -- yet women of the earlier immigrant groups may not necessarily welcome them with open arms. Racial and ethnic differences between older and newer migrant groups may exacerbate the difficulties.

5. women left behind - most often in rural areas, women and girls must cope alone with the double burden of managing their households and caring for small children, while taking on the agricultural tasks when the men abandon them, in addition to their "own" work on the subsistence and often the cash crops. An added difficulty is the question of age -- the "woman left behind" may be the maternal grandmother, often left with smaller children.
6. repatriated women and girls - many women and girls go back to their homelands. Those who go from more freedom to less may have great difficulties in readapting once again to more restricted patterns -- or they may refuse to do so. Reversal of sex roles, at least in part, often occurs in the destination country -- and women and girls sometimes face the prospect of slipping back into more traditional ways, once they are home. Repatriated women may feel isolated, different, out of sympathy with their families and friends who have not shared the experiences of the immigration country. There is some evidence that it is the women, above all, who encourage re-migration after a period in which it becomes clear that re-adaptation to the emigration country is going to be difficult.

These categories of migrants will need to be refined even further, as information becomes available through action programs and research, if they are to be truly useful to development planners and project designers. We need to know, for each of the groups mentioned above:

- how the structural determinants of migration affect the different types of women migrants; for example, acceleration of trends towards rapid urbanization in developing countries; demographic transitions towards lower fertility/lower mortality; neglect of (or attention to) agriculture and rural development, especially to the small farm sector; greater perceived opportunities in the labor market; availability of health and educational institutions, and housing, in the cities and larger towns.
- how individual characteristics and motivations of women migrants may further refine the suggested typology. For example, age struc-

ture of the migrants; race and ethnicity; education and skill levels; rural or urban origins, all have their impact.

Very little if any research is underway (or already exists) on any of the topics suggested here.

There is another way one might categorize women's active role, and that is by the functions they perform in relation to the migratory process. Here, I want to sketch out nine spheres of activity in which women take a prominent, sometimes even predominant part (and/or which affect them in major ways):

1. Women play a far more significant part than we have credited them in the decision to migrate (and just as critical, in the decision not to migrate); a move across international boundaries involving the family rarely will be made over the woman's strenuous objections.<sup>7</sup>
2. Women in many cases initiate the male migration by encouraging husbands and sons to seek opportunity beyond their nation's borders, even when the women themselves do not go. In the same way, a veto -- while not having the same force if the family is not involved and the man intends to go alone -- certainly will be taken into account in many cases. In some world areas, however, there is not much choice involved. Gordon (1978: 83) found that the women interviewed in a large sample in Lesotho overwhelmingly would prefer that their menfolk not go to South Africa to work. Myntti's survey (1978: 44), however, showed that some women preferred their men to stay away because they feared to get pregnant; visits of husbands also meant lavish hospitality, heavy work in cooking and washing.
3. Women often are more involved in the actual arrangements to go than are the men, especially if the man in the family is the only person employed for wages<sup>8</sup> -- an income is crucial at a time when a

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<sup>7</sup>Nos. 1-5 synthesize, in part, ideas based on M. Estelle Smith's research among female migrants from a Portuguese village to Western Europe (1976 and 1980). For other examples of enterprising females in the migration decision, see Chaney and Cruz (1976: 125-39); Cohen (1977 and 1979; xx and 67-72); Durant-González (1977: 116ff); Foner (1978: 57-58); González (1976); Hamer (1979: 161-63); Kudat and Gürel (n.d.: 23), and Myntti (1978:44).

<sup>8</sup>One study (Hendricks, 1974: 56) speculates that out-migration increases when there is more income because more people can afford the journey; several other studies show that migrants generally are employed immediately prior to their emigration, although they may have suffered periods of unemployment in prior years (Cruz, 1976: 71-72).

move is contemplated. It is the woman who often makes disposition of personal property, animals, household furnishings, to friends and relatives; fills out the applications and stands in lines for exit and entry documents; packs and makes the travel arrangements. She may perform many of these same services for the male migrant, even when she does not go herself.

4. Women usually arrange the crucial leavetaking in such a way that ties to the home place are not broken -- it is always well to think ahead to the intended return. The woman carefully orchestrates the final visits and good-byes, and takes on gift-bearing and message-carrying to friends and relatives who have gone to the receiving country. It is very often the woman who maintains these ties through keeping in touch with family and friends back in the home community, and the woman who initiates the return. Foner (1978: 61) mentions the Jamaican woman's closer ties to relatives back home and the strong bond between daughters and mothers: "Women's ties to relatives seem to contribute to pulling their loyalties homeward." Abadan-Unat (1977: 18) also comments on the woman's major role in keeping the links to the homeland.
5. Women are the ones who reconstruct in the immigration country the "survival networks" upon which their families depend -- it is they who forge the new commercial, educational, health, religious, and cultural ties. Often this means that they must master complex public transportation systems to all parts of the new area -- as well as learn quickly a new language -- while the male even if he is alone often will have these things provided through his employer (however lacking in human terms worker barracks and the "company store" may be); if he is with his family, the male migrant usually will not have to do more at first than find his way to his own job.
6. Women going to the immigration country, even if they are accompanied, and even if they have not before worked for wages, almost certainly will eventually look for paid employment. Often they have a set of responsibilities which do not diminish with the move -- school fees for the children; medical expenses; part of the food budget; ceremonial obligations (Hamer, 1979: 162). Women migrants may have a more decisive impact on labor markets than at first appears, a fact which planners need to take into account.

Women's invisibility in migration can be accounted for partly because their economic activity in the new homeland often takes place in the informal sector. "Participation" for women ranges from work for cash that is so intermittent that a woman scarcely distinguishes it from her domestic tasks (for example, a woman may cook extra food to sell at a stand outside her door) to work of the highly-trained

professional at the other end of the scale whose activity includes the aspect of personal fulfillment (León de Leal and López de Rodríguez, 1975: 66-67). The first woman's economic activity, even if it persists over many years, may never be classified as "employment." Where labor force statistics exist, they show that economic activity of female migrants is consistently higher than that of indigenous women. Even in world areas where women in the workforce are few, when they migrate more of them work for pay.

Conditions in the emigration country also may induce women to work in greater numbers. Zachariah and Conde (OECD, 1979: 15) point out that in such countries there will (usually) be a higher proportion of females and a lower proportion of males of working ages. Even in Arab countries, the employment of women left behind is being suggested as an alternative to immigration of more foreign workers (Azzam, 1979: 2; Birks and Sinclair, 1979: 306). The fact that dependency ratios (i. e., the number of persons dependent for their support on each 100 adults) are higher in countries of outmigration may also have an important impact on the number of women who will need to work in paid employment. For example, the ratio is 106 in Upper Volta, a region of high male out-migration, and only 93 in Ivory Coast, to which many West African migrants are drawn (Zachariah and Conde in OECD, 1979: 18).

Other characteristics to watch are age and marital status of migrants. Increasing numbers of women in West Africa, for example, who are single and in the 15-34 year age group are migrating; many of these women are engaged in commerce and trade (Sudarkasa, 1977: 182). Female migrants to West Germany from Turkey are on the increase; since male migration has been curtailed, priorities have been accorded to women who would work for less and not engage in trade union activities. Women also were seen by employers as "docile and adapting" (Abadan-Unat, 1977: 6-9; Kudat and Gürel, n. d.: 3).

7. Women's opportunity to work and to control resources may result in subtle changes in the status of women and in the male/female roles in the household. Laguerre (1978: 469) shows that from the moment the male in Haiti decides to migrate, "the wife little by little takes over the headship of the household," even though the arrangements to leave may take from a month to a year. Kudat and Gürel (n. d.: 15-22) discuss Turkish women's raised power and status in the family -- and the fact that some even open their own bank accounts in order to conceal from husbands exactly the extent of their resources. See also ICRW (1979: 86-87), Hamer (1979: 166-67), Hammam (1980: 23-31) and Sudarkasa (1977: 187-88).

8. When women stay behind, many manage the household, and often the fields and animals as well, taking over the male agricultural tasks. Sometimes they become more active in their communities. They may also dispose of considerable sums of money from remittances, but in other cases, they may have to find ways to earn cash to make up for the loss of the male's contribution.<sup>9</sup>

Women's fertility may be affected by the absence of their partners, unless they resort to a pattern of serial mating in order to have a provider in case of abandonment. Some of the women left behind in various world areas will be maternal grandmothers, who will be entrusted with their migrating daughters' children (Abadan-Unat, 1977: 40; Cohen, 1979: 273; Kudat and Gürel, n.d.: 14; Laguerre, 1978: 472; Philpott, 1973: 138). In some cases, childless women will adopt the children of migrating parents, thus becoming eligible to fulfill an important norm in traditional societies (in Jamaica, motherhood -- either natural or surrogate -- gains "Big Woman" status, and a female is not considered adult in many societies until she has borne or fostered a child (Durant-González, 1977: 189-91). In other cases, mothering of siblings falls to the eldest daughter, who may take on the household duties (and sometimes leave school) so that her mother can seek paid employment (Abadan-Unat, 1977: 42-43).

9. Whether they go or stay, women will experience a great deal of stress because of the prolonged separation from spouse and/o. family and the accommodations demanded because of the changing division of labor. Several studies now deal specifically with problems arising from the emotional and physical demands placed on the woman left behind, as well as on the migrant woman (Cohen, 1979; Gordon, 1979; Mueller, 1977). Gordon finds that women who had sustained the longest absence of partners were apt to be those who were under the greatest stress. Issues between partners include use of remittances (with the man sometimes feeling that whatever is left over after sending money for food belongs to him); questions over what to plant and how to dispose of harvests, and other questions of authority in the household; the participation of the male in the upbringing of his children; extra-marital or conjugal relationships.

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<sup>9</sup>In Gordon's study (1979: 41) women in Lesotho cited agricultural problems above any others encountered in their partners' absence. In Ghana, the feminine component in agriculture increased to 49.2 percent by 1970 because of the departure of male agricultural workers (Zachariah and Nair, 1979: 17). Singer and Asnari (1977: 215) tie women's varying problems to different patterns of men in sending home remittances and coming back to help with the harvest. In some cases, as Hammam (1980: 25) notes, emigration of males in the Middle East has relieved women of the necessity to work; in other cases, it compels women to assume increasing workloads as family producers and wage earners.

**V. Women's Migrant Status and  
Development Assistance Programming**

**What is the relationship between the situation of women in international migration, as outlined so far in this paper, and development assistance programming? The first and most obvious is that major shifts of population need to be taken into account in the calculations of development planners. As Ecevit (1979: 11) argues, it has now become impossible to assess the prospects for economic and social development without a good understanding of the international labor migration phenomenon. Such shifts we know now involve women and children in major ways -- they are affected by international migration not only when they go but when they stay behind. One could also argue that men who stay behind when their wives migrate also are affected, but up until now the great majority of those who remain in the homeland are women and children.**

**The participation of women in international migration involves in an ultimate sense just about every aspect of development. If they go, migrant women will be affected by efforts in urban areas to create more employment and through sites and services programs to bring potable water, electricity, health services and family planning to urban settlements. They will be affected by projects to increase educational and vocational<sup>al</sup> training and to foster community organizations. In the same way, women in rural areas who have a male family member working abroad will be affected by efforts to include all women in rural development and to extend to them agricultural advice, inputs and credit.**

**Nevertheless, there are some special areas involving women and girls in international migration which are not necessarily addressed by programs directed to "urban women" and "rural women" generally. In order to reach women and**

**girls affected by international migration, programs must be designed particularly for them.**

**Considering first those who go, the most obvious problems revolve around the increasing numbers of unaccompanied female migrants -- in some cases women alone, in other cases women and dependent children. Sometimes "family" units are made up entirely of adult women and children: perhaps several women who are sisters, with their children, their own mother and an aunt. Such family units need to be taken account of in, for example, housing schemes. One innovative model community in La Paz, for example, has set aside one third of its new units for female-headed households -- about the percentage in the Bolivian capital. I had a long friendship with a Peruvian migrant whose "family" at different times looked like this:**

- . Hermalinda migrates to Lima at the age of 11 with her natal family: father (mother is deceased), three brothers and an older sister. Hermalinda and sister are co-mothers of younger brothers.**
- . Hermalinda at 16 heads natal family -- father has died. She raises three brothers whom she supports by working as domestic servant. (Her elder sister has married.)**
- . Hermalinda at 24, still heads her household, but now it is her own three children by the same father who, however, has his "official" family in another place. Father contributes, but Hermalinda works.**
- . Hermalinda at 26, still with her three children, plus two of her younger brothers who no longer desire to live with their uncle. Hermalinda, still a domestic servant after a short period of trying her luck as an "ambulante" (street seller), supports everyone.**
- . Hermalinda at 27, still has her three children and two younger brothers with her. She has now been joined by a cousin -- also a migrant -- and the cousin's small child. Hermalinda and the cousin support everyone by their work as domestic servants.**

**Migrant women in the city also face some special difficulties in finding**

**ways to earn cash -- formal employment often is not open to them. The informal labor sector where most find their economic opportunity often does not offer living wages, decent working conditions nor the prospect of employment mobility. Women migrants most probably will always be disadvantaged in their labor market activity. Studies show that they will earn less, and will have far less chance for upward mobility than male migrants. They also may be forced to take jobs where they can keep small children by their side -- street hawking, in particular, or at best, market selling. (For an extended discussion, see ICRW, 1979: 105-110; Moch and Tilly, 1979: 18-21.)**

There also is evidence, noted by both the recent syntheses cited immediately above, that more women than men may go to places more urbanized than industrialized (ICRW, 1979: 90; Moch and Tilly, 1979: 19). Both the ICRW study (*ibid.*, p. 101) and Palmer (1979<sup>17</sup>) also point out that in relation to migrant women, the problem may not be so much in outright unemployment, as in the kinds of work women are forced to do. As Moch and Tilly sum it up,

Migrant women suffer from a triple disability as workers, for they are women, migrants, and often members of ethnic minorities. As women, they are members of a group which has worked and continues to work for lower wages than men, and whose work commitment is often intermittent because of child bearing and child and home care responsibilities (for example, see Foner, 1975: 240-241). As migrants, they find themselves in an economic and social system governed by unfamiliar norms in which their native language hinders communication (Levi, 1975). As ethnics, they are the butt of job and social discrimination against their group -- whether simple prejudice... stemming from the individual's resemblance to workers whom employers view as unstable or unreliable (1979: 18-19).

Inability to speak the language and unfamiliarity with city ways may also greatly hinder migrant women who must restructure a whole network to social service and health facilities, commercial establishments, schools and churches

**in order to rebuild their family life (Anderson [1974]; Smith [1976]; Riegelhaupt [1967]). Many desire that they and their children preserve some connection to their own language and culture and this is difficult when the dominant culture and racial heritage is different from their own.**

**Considering those who stay behind, perhaps the largest question revolves around the notion that traditional family and kin networks can "absorb" the shock of the outmigration of family members. As Gordon sketches it out (1978: 65a), there is a widespread belief in Lesotho, for example, that the extent of labor migration is so great and its history so long that the phenomenon must not be significantly disruptive of family life. "Wives have expected a separated family situation from their first conception of marriage; they plan for it and function normally in their husbands' absence," the argument goes (*ibid.*, p. 7). Such a view is beginning to be questioned. For one thing, as Gordon's own findings demonstrate, it is <sup>not</sup> the younger women who experience the greatest strain, but the older wives who have had the longest exposure to their husbands' absence (*ibid.*, p. 65a). That is, the out-migration of men is so disruptive that it does not permit accommodation no matter how long it goes on. (Gordon's study is based on a large random sampling of women in two villages in Lesotho; Mueller's anthropological approach, however, shows much the same emotional strain associated with the long years of absence -- averaging 20 or even 25 years over a working lifetime for the men. See also Garrison and Weiss [1979] and Sibisi [1979].)**

**Special attention also needs to be focussed on problems of "mother surrogates," maternal grandmothers and elder daughters who may be left with younger children of those who migrate or pressed into service when women with family**

responsibilities must take on cash-earning activities. There also are cases of outright abandonment of children (Brodher, 1974). In rural Jamaica, I encountered numerous cases of grandmothers entrusted with the care of their daughters' children -- in one instance, it was a great-grandmother who calculated her age at 102, and who had been entrusted with two little girls of three and two years, the children of her migrant granddaughter.

Besides the personal anguish associated with the absence of husbands and fathers, difficulties in coping with both household responsibilities and the land may lead women to cut back on agricultural activity or abandon it altogether. Indications are that agricultural productivity is decreasing in some areas of large out-migration of men. Land goes out of production, terraces fall, irrigation systems deteriorate, and women fall back into just sufficient subsistence production to feed themselves and their families (ICRW, [1979: 116-18]; Mueller [1977: 76-77]; Birks and Sinclair [1979: 220]; Myntti [1978: 42]). While the modern sector in West Africa absorbs only some 25 percent of the urban labor force, migration to the cities continues even though agricultural labor shortages are appearing in many countries of the region (Conde and Wolfson in OECD, 1979: 75).

Another consideration related to those left behind is the tendency, noted in many of the studies already cited, that in cases where women do receive a large share of remittances, much of the money is not banked or invested, but spent on consumer goods or, at best, invested in land. In some cases, the income is considerable, as in one study in Pakistan where male emigrants to the Mid-East were sending back most of their pay. The women did not save, but spent the money

principally on consumer goods and improving their standard of living (United Nations Development Program, 1979: 16). Abadan-Unat (1977: 24) also mentions women's conspicuous consumption patterns tied to remittances, and Myntti (1978: 43-44) talks about the fact that many rural women in Yemen, overwhelmed by their sudden wealth, buy imported food products, clothing and gold jewelry. Keely (1979: 9-10) believes that the impact of worker remittances is one of the most crucial relationships between worker migration and national development. Remittances could have important effects on the availability of foreign exchange and the supply of local investment capital. In some countries, while a major policy focus is on capturing these remittances for productive investment, very little thought has been given to women's possible role in channeling these remittances to better use.

One important area where practically nothing is known is the effect of international migration on fertility. What do migrants -- many of them in their peak childbearing years -- add to host country populations, and what are the consequences of their departure on the countries of emigration? If most labor migration is temporary, does it matter? Do migrant women lower their fertility in response to host country norms, or do they carry over the high-fertility ideologies of their own societies? What relief for the sending society (and burden for the receiving) is represented in the large number of dependents in migrant families?

In the next section, the responses of development agencies to some of these issues is reported.

**VI. Response of Development Agencies**

The argument has been made in this paper that women have special needs as well as contributions to make in the social and economic transformations taking place as a consequence of international migration. In the last section, some of the issues related to development assistance programming were outlined. How have international and national development agencies -- both public and private -- so far responded?

Most agencies have not confronted international migration either as a problem requiring careful study nor as a programmatic concern. They are not yet grappling with the implications of international migration even at a macro-economic level, much less considering its effects and consequences on people. A sampling of officials in some key international and national agencies reveals that few were unaware, at least in a general way, of the dimensions of international migration and of the potential consequences for economic and social development (See Annex III for a list of those interviewed.) Most could name at least some studies within their own or other agencies, and several mentioned specific projects related to migration. Only a small number of these appeared to have been originally planned to address the issue.

Here and there, however, there were positive indications -- perhaps no more than hints -- that policy and program officials do view women as having special needs to be addressed, and that they do intend to include attention to women in their response to international migration. There may be some possibility, then, of assessing and planning for women's special situation in relation to the migration process -- as agencies begin to deal seriously with this issue --

and for once avoiding the necessity of later having to "integrate" women into ongoing programs directed to male migrants.

Only one official (at the World Bank) stated flatly that there was "no useful distinction" to be made among the urban poor insofar as programming was concerned -- internal migrants, international migrants and persons born in the city, he said, should be treated exactly alike; no special provisions nor distinctions need be made for migrants. But he added that some measures might be in order to minimize the human costs of migration. He also said that women generally, who form a large part of the urban poor, might need to have some special attention -- for example, in housing projects, more finished houses especially for women-headed households; child care facilities close by settlements; provision of water and other services so that women would have more time for gainful activity.

There are a number of initiatives on women in international migration related to United Nations activities. The Mid-Decade Conference on the Decade for Women through its principal officer expressed great interest not only in the question of women in international migration, but their subsequent competition for jobs in the informal sector of urban labor markets. However, at this writing there are no plans to include migrant women as a special item on the agenda for the Copenhagen meeting, scheduled for July. (The agenda was set by delegates at three preparatory meetings, not by the Conference staff.) Special studies were commissioned for the Conference, however, on the situation of women in Southern Africa (which touches on the plight of women left behind by migration), and on refugee women. The official Conference paper on employment contains a

**number of references to migrant women and their participation in the urban labor force.**

**The unofficial NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) Mid-Decade Forum, planned to run concurrently with the official United Nations meeting in Copenhagen, has a seminar and two workshops planned on women in migration, under the sponsorship of the United Nations Association of San Francisco.**

**Several other United Nations entities have long-standing interests in and research and action projects for women: the United Nations Development Program; the UN Fund for Population Activity and the United Nations Children's Fund. The UNDP has had underway for the past several years, as part of its evaluation program, a wide-ranging "action-oriented assessment of rural women's participation in development," and the principal officer said her agency is aware of the implications of migration, especially for the women of rural areas.**

**Supported in the UNDP effort (as one of a series of 11 regional studies by Ph. D. students at Sussex University) is an action-research project on the effects of migration on women left behind in a Punjabi village of Pakistan from which most of the men have gone off to work in the Middle East. In this village, the problem has not been lack of remittances -- the men send considerable sums home to their wives -- but rather the productive use of income. One recommendation to be implemented in the next phase of the action-oriented project will be an educational program in investment and credit for the women. Another UNDP effort is directed towards support for women participating in the small farmer transmigration scheme to resettle population from Bali, Java and Madura to the outer islands of Indonesia.**

In both the UNFPA and UNICEF programs, significant efforts in the past several years have been devoted to projects to raise women's status and increase their participation, as well as to income-earning activities. Both these UN programs will include migration projects in their portfolios in the future, according to the officials concerned, although neither has done anything specific to date. At UNFPA, little emphasis has, as yet, been placed on migration, according to one official, even though it is a crucial demographic variable.

Outstanding among other efforts by UN-related bodies is the series of Migration for Employment studies currently underway as part of the International Labour Organization's World Employment Project. On the migration list, so far, studies focussing on women are few; the only specific title so far is Gordon's 1978 paper on the women left behind in Lesotho (see bibliography). However, an impressive number of case studies have been carried out on labor force participation of women in developing countries under the WEP project and many of these have now been edited in a single volume by Standing and Sheehan (1978).

Finally, the United Nations has taken action to prepare for its next session in 1980-81 a draft convention on "Measures to Improve the Situation and Ensure the Human Rights and Dignity of All Migrant Workers." Several officials in some of the other UN agencies mentioned were dubious about whether there was, so far, any special attention to the situation of women and girls in migration included in this effort. (The various ILO Conventions on Migrant Workers, the first going back to 1939, all consider the migrant as male; there are provisions on the migrant's family, but not on women specifically.) The

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in other over-all attempts to address the issue at the planning level, and in efforts to address women's situation in migration in projects which lend themselves to such inclusion.

The Bank's rural development efforts have attempted to focus on women, including those left behind by migration of their menfolk. The technique, according to one key official, has been to set numerical goals in rural credit and development projects, beginning at 10 percent female small farmer participants, for example, then increasing the proportions to 20 percent, then 50 percent. There has been a tendency to identify women, he said, with population and particularly with nutrition projects; men with agricultural development. The Bank is attempting to correct these stereotypes.

In urban projects, as noted above, currently no efforts are being made to separate people into migrants and non-migrants. Another official in the urban projects department, however, felt that several measures could be taken. She singled out use of new income as critical, and recommended investment guidance for women in order to help them maximize what migrants would earn in the average ten-year period they spend in the formal labor sector of a more-developed country. Women, she said, currently have no guidance even on how to open a savings account; she speculated, too, that much could be learned on the effects of remittances in developing countries by looking at the "savings behavior" of the women.

The World Bank also has funded and/or sponsored a number of studies on international migration. The most ambitious is the series on West African interregional movements of workers carried out under the direction of

K.C. Zachariah of the Bank and Julien Conde of the OECD. A summary of findings was published by OECD's Development Centre (1979), and a final report is being prepared, drawing together information still in restricted documents on international and internal migration in nine West African countries. The series makes a very careful assessment of the participation of women in the region's migratory movements. As a follow-up, the Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa plans to coordinate a future research project concerning migration, under Conde and Margeret Wolfson of OECD. Their research design which will sample households both in sending and receiving regions does not make any specific mention of women, although their research, as described, could include some data on both female migrants and those who stay at home (OECD, 1979: Annex III, 74-81). Finkle (1979) makes a useful assessment of other European research.

So far as regional attention among development-oriented agencies is concerned, I was not able to discover what, if anything, is going forward on the issue of women in international migration. The Inter-American Commission of Women was the exception; the Commission is aware of the issue and hopes to develop some projects to address it in the future.

It was beyond the scope of this paper -- and the time and resources of the researcher -- to seek out individual government responses to the question of women in international migration. Where these kinds of activities were known, they have been mentioned in the body of this paper. Here, several U.S. initiatives can be mentioned, as well as two or three other national efforts which have been described in reports.

Within USAID, several initiatives are underway, indicating a growing awareness of the problem. In 1977, the Near East Bureau of AID conducted a seminar on international labor migration, and there was some attention to women and children, and to the implications of family movement in the opening presentation by Joan Clarke, the conference organizer. A subsequent conference, which included a general seminar and six country-specific sessions, was sponsored by the same bureau in 1979. Although the major paper for the conference, prepared by two Middle East migration experts, included no consideration whatsoever on the question of women's participation -- in spite of the fact that the bulk of the study is a labor market analysis -- the conference report shows an over-all sensitivity to the impact of women on international migration (Birks and Sinclair [1979b] and USAID, Bureau for the Near East [1979]).

Also within AID, the Offices of Civic Participation and Women in Development, within the Bureau of Program and Policy Coordination, have been collaborating on presenting international migration as a significant policy issue to relevant audiences within the Agency; in recent months, the offices have sponsored several speakers from the scholarly community on the issue, have commissioned several papers and studies, and have a number of project proposals pending. (See especially Buvenić, et al. [1978], International Center for Research on Women [1979], Sinkin [1980]) A review paper on sources of information on interregional migration in Latin America and the Caribbean was commissioned by AID's Latin America and Caribbean Bureau (Díaz-Briquets, 1980), which also has funded a project focussed on Central

America (Poitras, 1980). The latter study does include women in its sample, but fails to report much of the data separately for males/females.

One of the most promising efforts in a U.S. government agency is the Inter-American Foundation's project at the Mexican border (El Paso/Juarez). There, for some years, young Mexican women have been recruited to work in the border industries. Their work life, however, is relatively short: they are employed only from the ages of 17-18 to 23-24. After that (or earlier if they marry), they are fired. There is a tendency for these young women to pile up at the border; they do not want to go back to the rural areas from where they originally came. Now the IAF is supporting a project initiated by a Mexican Women Workers' Center, offering not only counselling, training and legal services, but also a production cooperative for those who leave the plants and who have no other way to use their manual facility. Two other initiatives -- a research project in IAF's doctoral dissertation program and a film on the plight of women at the border -- also have been funded.

The IAF also is funding an attempt to organize a federation of small coffee producers among Guatemalan Indians; the object is to make it possible for men to earn their living -- with consequent alleviation of hardship for their families -- on the Guatemalan rather than the Mexican side of the border. Another project will study the effects of transnational manufacturing enterprises in Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Malaysia; not only are these "runaway shops" heavily female in their workforces, but they employ migrants from other countries of their respective regions.

Another U.S. effort, sponsored by the Research Institute on Immigra-

tion and Ethnic Studies of the Smithsonian Institution, currently is underway to publish papers from a seminar on the Black and Hispanic Female and the Migratory Experience in the United States (Mortimer, forthcoming).

Keely (1979: 13) refers to two government initiatives in the Middle East. A study of migration by the Royal Scientific Society of Jordan has a component on questions related to the effects of migration on the roles and status of women, their control over resources, and the effects of migration on the socialization of children. Keely also in the same place describes a Government of Korea program which is designed to keep links close between the family left behind and the migrant worker -- Korean magazines and television programs are sent overseas; priority in housing in Korea is given to families of overseas workers, and there are government-sponsored letter writing contests for children to keep them in touch with their fathers.

Among non-governmental initiatives, Keely's own exploratory study on Asian migration to the Middle East (1979) stands out as a model of the sort of "first mapping and assessment" exercise that needs to be done for other world regions. Keely makes clear in this report that he believes there is not enough focus on the sending countries, and that an almost exclusive concern with macro economics hides what is happening to the structures and institutions of the emigration and immigration countries. He believes that small scale, complementary ethnographic studies in five or six countries need to be carried out in order to identify the impacts of international migration on people. From such studies, a methodology could be devised and hypotheses generated that then could be tested in other world regions. Keely's study is

one of the few to directly address the issue of the impact of international migration on women:

The absence of mainly male workers can have important effects on village and community structures, on the structure and operation of family life and decision-making, and on the roles and status of women. The general evaluation in all the countries included in the survey [Bangladesh, India, Korea, Pakistan and the Philippines] was that worker migration caused only a few and isolated instances of family problems. No concern was expressed about any impact on community social structure. The conventional wisdom is that the joint family structure is able to handle any strains due to worker absences. . . . The policy, therefore, is to maintain the joint family and, through it, the migrant workers' ties to the homeland. The purpose is to insure remittances, rather than to insure the integrity of the family (1979: 12).

Keely and associates at the Population Council are currently circulating a proposal to look at such impacts in western Asia and North Africa. A recent regional conference on migration of women in Asia (which was focussed, however, almost exclusively on internal migration) was sponsored by the Population Council and the University of Hawaii. Several of the papers do deal with international migrants (Fawcett, et al., forthcoming).

The Ford Foundation has a new program for international migration research, at this writing defining its program for presentation to the Foundation's Board of Trustees; there are plans to include special attention to women in international migration and international refugee movements as well. The Rockefeller Foundation also is open to research proposals on the topic, as is the Charles H. Revson Foundation which is interested in migration as it affects the City of New York.

Another major effort going forward through a Mexican government grant to the Centro Nacional de Información y Estadísticas del Trabajo

**(CENIET) is a "National Survey on Migration to the Northern Border and to the United States," directed by Jorge Bustamente. In a preliminary survey of 10,000 interview made at the border, 1,000 women were included. Dr. Bustamente has called female migration "an area of great uncertainty, really the dark side of the moon" (Brookings Institution 1978: 72 ) and has said that, for this reason, his survey will place great emphasis precisely on this issue.**

**Among private voluntary groups dealing with women in migration, there is one which has, historically, been probably the most involved -- the Young Women's Christian Association. National YWCAs have long cared for internal migrants-to-the-cities among young women and girls. There also has been a preoccupation in the organization to address specifically the needs of young women living and working in countries not their own. Several years ago the United States YWCA sponsored a conference, "People on the Move," highlighting the migration of single women to Australia, New Zealand and the United States. With residential, vocational and leadership programs, the Y has addressed the needs of internal and international migrants in Europe and the U.S. over several generations. In the interests of not, once again, "re-inventing the wheel," government and private agencies now planning projects and programs for international migrant women ought to look at the long history of the YWCA's work in this field.**

**Conclusions and recommendations which ordinarily would come at the end of a report, in this case are included after the Executive Summary, pp. iv-xii.**

## **ANNEXES**

Appendix I: Regional Migration in West Africa

West Africa, one region of the world where there is relatively free movement across national boundaries, also is one of the regions of high internal and international migration, principally from the savannah areas to the coastal cities (Conde and Wolfson, 1979: 74). The Sahelian regions have contributed large numbers of the international migrants. Major movements across the region's boundaries go back at least to the beginning of the century -- some of it forced labor of Voltaics to the Ivory Coast and Ghana. Colvin (1979: 171-72) believes that migration from the Sahel began in an earlier era, as an adaptive measure to earlier droughts, and that the bulk of the migrants are not permanent, but go back to their farms each time the climate and material conditions improve.

Until around 1960, Ghana was the largest receiving country, but the economic situation there, along with the expulsion measures adopted in 1969, combined to cut the numbers, and Ghana presently is a country of net emigration. Nine countries were studied in a World Bank project directed by Zachariah and Conde who estimate that 2.8 million people -- or 7 percent of the total population of these nine nations -- were outside their country of origin (OECD, 1979: 18).<sup>1</sup>

These are long term -- life-time -- migrants, and do not include either the thousands of seasonal workers who go for short periods, many of whom slip back and forth yearly across the permeable borders between countries of the region.

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<sup>1</sup>Upper Volta accounts for 962,000 emigrants (18 percent of its present population); Mali, 418,000; Guinea, 394,000, and Togo, 259,000 (Conde, 1979: 36). The major receiving nations at present are Ivory Coast with 1.4 million foreign Africans (including 726,000 from Upper Volta; 379,000 Malis and 106,000 Guineans), and Senegal (Zachariah and Conde, 1979: 5-6; OECD, 1974: 30). Nigeria, for reasons of faulty census statistics, was not included among the nine countries. Since it is the most populous country of the region, its emigration and immigration statistics could add substantially to these figures.

The World Bank study confirms that, in the past, international migrants in the region have been predominantly male, while short distance, internal migrants include more females than males (Zachariah and Conde, 1979: 13). One notable exception is the low sex ratio among Ghanians and Liberians in the Ivory Coast, 53 and 56 respectively -- that is, there are only roughly half as many males among the immigrants as females. In the case of immigrants from Niger, however, the sex ratio was 429 (Zachariah, 1979: 75). Because Ghanaian and Liberian women are traders, some of the excess women from the two countries may be carrying on commercial activities; a look at the 1975 census figures gives a clue. While only 1,725 Ghanaian males had settled in Abidjan, Ivory Coast's capital, 6,359 females had done so (Zachariah, 1979, Annex 2: 115-17). There were 108 females for every 100 immigrant males in Upper Volta (Conde, 1978: 61), and 107 for every 100 males in Togo (Zachariah and Nair, 1979: 69).

When age of international migrants in West Africa is considered, there are sometimes more women than men in the 15-34 year old working group. For example, there are 113 female immigrants for every 100 males in this age group in Senegal, even though the over-all sex ratio among immigrants is 117, that is, an excess of 17 males per 100 females (Zachariah and Nair, 1979: 33).

Statistics on out-migration also show some high increases among women migrating from some countries. For example, between 1961 and 1975, emigrants from Upper Volta increased by 120 percent, but females by 384 percent (Conde, 1978: 43). Conde accounts for this by noting that men first go to look for work, then send for their wives and children -- while more men in the later period probably migrated with their wives. Nearly one third of the women 15-39 years of age, however, recorded as absent in the 1975 Census of Population, were

**single women (Conde, 1978: Table 43, p. 103). Whether they were married or single, women's impact on the labor force in their new country of residence will be substantial.**

**Several observers have cautioned that in certain cases, movement across international boundaries in Africa must be approached as part of a regional phenomenon not very different from internal movements (Colvin, 1979; ICRW, 1979:49), since borders cross territories on old colonial lines. Such is the region of the Senegambia, a clearly distinct economic region formed by the basins of the Senegal and Gambia rivers; bordering the region are Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Guinea and Guinea Bissau. As Colvin (1979: 13-14) puts it**

**Today, political borders creating the separate nations... have left the area without any organizational coherence. Development planning, politics, administration, and the collection of statistics on populations all take place within national borders. However, when it comes to realizing a development project, the implementers are faced with an existing economy in a place which still continues to function on a regional basis.**

**The region's migration policies, which maintain a free flow of people across national boundaries in West Africa, are reported by Colvin (1979: 292) as being among the most open in the world. Senegal and Gambia experience net emigration (*ibid.*, 273) from this flow, while the other countries all show net immigration. As noted above, Senegal has attracted significantly more women in their prime working years than men.**

**Annex II: Immigration and Emigration "Index of Femaleness" --  
Women as a percentage of all immigrants/emigrants**

	<u>Immigration Index</u>		
	High	Low	Mean
Africa (7 countries)	.4679	.0058	.3463
North Africa & Middle East (3)	.5625	.3293	.4688
Asia (7)	.5147	.0631	.3501
Latin America (8)	.7156	.3010	.4774
Europe and North America (19)	.5521	.1808	.4479

	<u>Emigration Index</u>		
	High	Low	Mean
Africa (7 countries)	.5152	.3091	.4381
North Africa & Middle East (3)	.5187	.3203	.4365
Asia (8)	.8949	.1139	.4255
Latin America (4)	.5902	.3546	.4604
Europe and North America (19)	.6071	.2651	.4722

"High" scores show the countries in the region with highest immigration and emigration of women; "Low" scores show the countries with lowest. The "Mean" column shows the average for the region of women as a percent of all immigrants and emigrants. (Elise Boulding, et al., Handbook of International Data on Women, 1976: 170 and 172)

**Appendix III: Persons Interviewed for this Report**

**Elinor Barber  
The Ford Foundation**

**Mary M. Kritz  
Rockefeller Foundation**

**Linda Basch  
UNITAR**

**Milton Morris  
Brookings Institution**

**Susan Beresford  
Ford Foundation**

**Ulla Olin  
United Nations Development Program**

**Judith Bruce  
Population Council**

**Elizabeth Palmer  
NGO Forum for the Mid-Decade  
Conference**

**Anthony Churchill  
World Bank**

**Elizabeth Reid  
Mid-Decade Conference/  
Decade for Women**

**Jose de Alencar  
Mid-Decade Conference/  
Decade for Women**

**Anna Sant'Anna  
World Bank**

**Carmen Delgado Votaw  
Inter-American Commission of Women**

**Gloria Scott  
World Bank**

**Zafer H. Ecevit  
World Bank**

**Constance Surton  
New York University**

**Adrienne Germain  
Ford Foundation**

**Michael Teitelbaum  
Ford Foundation**

**Meri Hekmati  
UN Fund for Population Activities**

**Carol Weiland  
Charles H. Revson Foundation**

**Mary Racellis Hollnsteiner  
United Nations Children's Fund**

**Sally Yudelman  
Inter-American Foundation**

**Charles B. Keely  
Population Council**

**Montague Yudelman  
World Bank**

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