

THE CURRENT STATUS OF WOMEN CROSS-CULTURALLY: CHANGES AND PERSISTING BARRIERS

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THE PROCLAMATION by the United Nations of 1975 as the International Women's Year has helped focus attention on women and sex discrimination around the world. The very fact, however, that there is need for an International Women's Year to foster awareness about women's condition and stimulate interest and action to improve their status underlines the subordinate position of women. While women are discriminated against in all societies and life sectors, some changes have already occurred that represent tangible improvements in some aspects of their status. These changes are uneven because, due to different combinations of cultural, socioeconomic, political, and historical factors, existing sociopsychological and structural barriers have been overcome more or less easily in different societies and social classes. In addition, the "status" of women is not a unidimensional concept but a configuration of statuses in different life sectors (education, occupation, politics, family, etc.) which are not necessarily interrelated. Thus changes and improvements in one indicator of the status of women are not necessarily related to a proportionate improvement in other indicators. There is evidence that (a) the equalization of men's and women's educational options is not necessarily related to the equalization of employment options,¹ (b) the equalization of men's and women's educational or/and occupational options is not related to the equalization of familial and social-mobility options,² and (c) the equalization of educational and occupational options is not related to the equalization of political options.³ Thus, even when significant advances are made in the over-all educational achievements of women, this does not necessarily signify that women will have the option to work when they are wives and mothers, as much as similarly educated men. Prevailing values and sex-role stereotypes may allow women to become educated, but may not

¹ Constantina Safilios-Rothschild, "The Options of Greek Men and Women," *Sociological Focus* 5 (1972) 71-83.

² *Ibid.*; also Constantina Safilios-Rothschild, *Women and Social Policy* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1974).

³ *Id.*, "Social Indicators of the Status of Women," paper commissioned by the United Nations Secretariat for the International Women's Year, 1975; *The Status of Women in Canada*, Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, Ottawa, Sept. 28, 1970.

allow them to work when they are mothers. Recent data from a transitional society like Greece indicate, e.g., that while the principle of equal educational opportunities for men and women is widely accepted, married women's employment option is still accepted primarily by a minority of middle-class and upper-middle-class men and women.⁴ Nor do significant advances in women's educational and occupational achievements necessarily open the same political options to women as is true for men.

Because the different indicators of the status of women are not highly interrelated, it is necessary to examine the changes in the status of women as well as the persisting barriers separately in each life sector. It must be noted that while during the last decade a variety of social indicators of social development were developed and used in collecting information, these indicators have seldom tapped the status of women. Thus, even when a social indicator (e.g., life expectancy or literacy rates) could have been quite useful if broken down by sex, the lack of this breakdown renders it inadequate for measuring either the status of women or the degree of social development. Consequently, the analysis that follows concerning the status of women in different life sectors will often suffer from lack of information with regard to crucial indicators.⁵

It must also be noted that many of the available social indicators have limitations due to male and middle-class biases. They tend to concentrate on and to tap dimensions which are more relevant for urban or/and middle-class males than for the rest of the population, these biases being more striking in the area of economic contributions as well as political participation. Thus, particularly the economic contributions of the majority of women around the world (as well as of low-income men in developing societies) are mostly unassessed and unrecognized. Hence women are not recorded as having advanced in status until they cross over to the male (and middle-class, urban) model of economic roles and thus can be included in social indicators and compared with men's achievements.

The status of women will be examined in the following five crucial life sectors: (1) educational and vocational training, (2) employment and other economic roles, (3) marriage and the family, (4) power and political participation, (5) health and nutrition.

Before starting the examination of the status of women in each life sector, it is important to note that women do not uniformly represent half of the population in all societies. At the one extreme, women represent less than one third (31.58%) of the population in Luxembourg, a little

⁴*Id.*, "Options" (n. 1 above).

⁵*Id.*, "Social Indicators" (n. 3 above).

over one third (38.14%) in the United Arab Emirates, and approximately 45% in the Central African Republic, French Guiana, Brunei, Iran, Kuwait, and Equatorial Guinea. At the other extreme, in Lesotho 56.8% of the population are women, 54% in the Congo, the U.S.S.R., and the German Democratic Republic, and 53% in Gabon.⁶ These large variations in the man/woman ratio are at least partially due to migratory sex selectivity and sex differentials in mortality due to wars, revolutions, and national uprisings as well as childbearing. Of course, the man/woman ratio varies also widely from age group to age group.

EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

The most basic indicator of the status of women is the rate of illiteracy. The most recent data provided by UNESCO indicate that while female illiteracy by 1970 was practically eradicated in the developed countries, where only 4.3% of all illiterates are women, it is still plaguing developing countries, in which 60.2% of all illiterates are women.⁷ Women's illiteracy rates continue to be high, especially in Africa and to a somewhat lesser extent in Asia. In 1960, only 12% of the female population 15 years and over in Africa was literate and 16% in 1970, while 37% of the female population 15 years and over in Asia was literate in 1960 and 43% in 1970. Thus, despite meager advances in African and Asian women's literacy during the last decade, the majority of them are still illiterate and the discrepancies between men's and women's extent of literacy are large. In 1970, more than two times as many African men as women were literate, and 20% more Asian men than women. Also, the rate of improvement in men's literacy in Africa and Asia is respectively 2.5 and 1.5 higher than the rate of improvement in women's literacy. Hence it is clear that unless specific compensatory mechanisms are instituted to diminish the gap between men and women and improve the women's status with regard to this elementary indicator, several decades will pass before the majority of adult Asian and African women have become literate. Latin American women seem to have a better status with regard to literacy: 63% of them were literate in 1960 and 73% in 1970. Furthermore, women's access to literacy nears equality with men, since 72% of men in 1960 and 80% in 1970 were literate, indicating the smallest gap existing between men's and women's literacy in the Third World.⁸

Of course, these over-all rates by continents cover up considerable

⁶ *Statistical Yearbook, 1973* (United Nations Publications, Sales No. E/F.74.XVII.1) Table 18, pp. 67-79.

⁷ UNESCO, *Statistical Yearbook, 1971*, Table 1.3.

⁸ UNESCO, "Report on Women and Education and Training" (United Nations Publication, E/CONF. 66/BP11, 1975).

variations from country to country, from rural to urban context, and from social class to social class. Thus, while 56.2% of Ceylonese women were literate already in 1963,⁹ only 18.72% of Indian women were literate in 1971, in contrast to 39.45% of men.¹⁰ Furthermore, the situation for Indian women was worse in rural areas, where only 13.17% of women in contrast to 33.76% of the men were literate, while in urban areas 42.26% of the women were literate and 61.28% of the men.¹¹ And in general, in most developing societies the percentage of illiterate rural women is considerably larger than the percentage of illiterate urban women. In Turkey, e.g., while in 1969 only 32.7% of all women were literate, 55.1% of urban women were literate.¹² Also, there is evidence that low-income urban women living in slums have consistently much higher illiteracy rates than other urban women. Thus, only 21% of the women living in the Madras slums were literate, while 48% of all Madras women were literate¹³ and the corresponding figures for Delhi were 20 and 36%.¹⁴

Furthermore, there are usually tremendous variations among different age groups: the younger the age group, the greater the percentage of literate women. These trends do reflect the increasing tendency to educate girls even in societies in which still a large portion of the feminine population is illiterate.¹⁵

The UNESCO statistics with regard to women's participation in literacy courses in 44 countries show that in 16 countries women are still underrepresented, comprising less than 35% of the students.¹⁶ Thus it is important to underline the fact that the status of the majority of women in the developing countries, particularly of Africa and Asia, is quite low as measured by such a basic indicator as literacy. And it must also be underlined that no improvement in the status of these women can be expected before illiteracy has been practically eradicated and literacy combined with basic skills for a variety of economic and productive roles.

The reasons for which women's illiteracy persists in developing nations will become clear as we discuss the obstacles to girls' enrollment and the

⁹Subadra Sriwardena, "The Education of Girls and Women in Ceylon," *International Review of Education* 19, 1 (1973, Special Issue The Education of Women) 115-20

¹⁰S Anandalakshmy, "Introductory Statement on the Subject of the Status of Women as a Factor Influencing Fertility" (United Nations Publication, ESA/SDHA/AC 2/11, June 21, 1973)

¹¹*Ibid*

¹²*Census of Population, 1965 Social and Economic Characteristics of Population* (Ankara, Turkey, 1969)

¹³P K Nambiar, "Slums of Madras City," in A R Desai and S D Pillai, eds., *Slums and Modernization* (Bombay, 1970) pp 179-80

¹⁴A R Desai and S D Pillai, "Slums of Old Delhi," in Desai-Pillai, *op cit*, p 203

¹⁵Nadia Haggag Youssef, *Women and Work in Developing Societies* (Population Monograph Series 15, University of California, Berkeley, 1974) pp 42-49

¹⁶UNESCO, "Equality of Access of Women to Literacy" (ED/MD/14, 1970) p 14

reasons for their high dropout rates. Educational statistics are usually enrollment rather than graduation statistics, despite the fact that the latter type of statistics provides more salient information in determining the status of women. The available enrollment figures for 1971 show that despite moderate gains African and Asian women are the least enrolled women at all levels and particularly at the secondary and college level, while Latin American women are almost as often enrolled as women in developed countries. Furthermore, female enrollment at all levels is much lower in rural areas than in urban areas and in low-income than in middle- or high-income urban districts.¹⁷ In Amman, for example, in the slum districts female enrollment at the elementary-school level ranges from 47-49, while in higher-income districts it ranges from 64-65.¹⁸ In developed countries, on the other hand, female enrollment at the elementary-school level was equalized already in 1960 with male enrollment, and at the secondary-school level in 1970.

Female college and university enrollment, despite a considerable upward change, still lagged behind male enrollment.¹⁹ However, women's enrollment at the college and university level in some developing nations is at present as high as or higher than in developed countries. In Ceylon, e.g., already in 1966, 37% of university students were women, while at that time 38% of the university students in the United Kingdom and 40% of the students in the United States were women.²⁰

The situation, however, appears even less optimistic for women's educational chances in developing countries when the school dropout rates are examined. In 1970, only 54% of the girls 6-11 years old enrolled in schools in developing nations remain in school six years later (the corresponding figure for boys being 60).²¹ This over-all figure again masks considerable variation in the school dropout rates of girls in developing countries by rural-urban residence, social class, and society. Thus, in general the dropout rates for rural girls are much higher than those of urban girls, and the dropout rates of urban low-income girls much higher than those of middle- or upper-class urban girls.²² Obsta-

¹⁷ Constantina Safilios-Rothschild and the UNICEF Secretariat, *Children and Adolescents in Slums and Shanty-Towns in Developing Countries* (United Nations Publication, E/ICEF/L.1277/Add. 1, 1971) pp. 58-59.

¹⁸ *Social Survey of Amman, 1966* (Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, in co-operation with the United Nations Economic and Social Office in Beirut, March, 1969).

¹⁹ UNESCO, "Report on Women and Education and Training" (n. 8 above).

²⁰ Siriwardena, *art. cit.*

²¹ UNESCO, "Report on Women and Education and Training" (n. 8 above).

²² Nambiar, *art. cit.*; Marie Eliou, "Scolarisation et promotion féminines en Afrique francophone (Côte-d'Ivoire, Haute Volta, Senegal)," *International Review of Education* 19, 1 (1973) 30-46.

cles to greater female enrollment as well as to girls' dropout and failure rates in developing nations are most often: the lack of schools; the preference of boys over girls in the available school facilities; the scarcity of rural schools that require rural girls to walk long distances and to be exposed to various dangers; the need for the baby-sitting and housekeeping services that a young (even a six-year-old) girl can provide; the scarcity of financial resources that often dictate only one child can go to school, and boys are then preferentially treated; religious beliefs that dictate that the teachers of young girls can be only women, combined, in some societies, with a relatively low number of women teachers; and cultural and religious beliefs that de-emphasize the importance of education for women.²³ Probably the following two sets of factors could be singled out as those that contribute most significantly to girls' losing interest in schoolwork and school attendance: (a) their having to help with household tasks, farm tasks, and child care that interferes considerably with their ability to study and follow the pace in schoolwork; and (b) teachers' open, direct, or occasionally more subtle discriminatory behaviors, their low expectations from girls, and their beliefs that education is wasted on women.

According to a UNESCO report prepared in collaboration with ILO that examined the vocational training received in 1964 by women in 46 countries, women's access to technical and employment-g geared training is quite low in both developed and developing nations. The report indicates that the discrepancies between men and women are particularly striking with regard to access to training at the level of technician that prepares for employment in jobs and trades requiring a high level of qualification.²⁴ More recent UNESCO statistics provide information concerning the percentage of women in vocational and technical education in 1971 ranging from 2% in Niger, to 6% in Afghanistan, to 18 in Morocco and Cuba, 21 in Ghana, 23 in Iraq, 25 in Romania, 26 in Pakistan, 30 in Kenya, 40 in Costa Rica, 48 in France, 50 in West Malaysia, and 51 in Venezuela.²⁵ These percentages are not, however, very meaningful because of the prevailing sex differentiation in the existing vocational-training programs. In most countries vocational training is differentiated by sex and girls are barred from boys' technical and vocational-training programs. Thus, girls are only trained for "feminine" skills such as home economics, embroidery, sewing, and

²³ *Ibid.*; Desai and Pillai, *op. cit.*; UNESCO, "Report on Women and Education and Training" (n. 8 above); Economic Commission for Africa, "The Role of Women in African Development" (United Nations Publication, E/CONF.66/BP/8, April, 1975).

²⁴ UNESCO, "Technical and Vocational Training" (ED/MD/3) pp. 27, 94.

²⁵ UNESCO, *Statistical Yearbook, 1973*, pp. 166 and 188.

handicrafts, i.e., largely nonemployment-g geared skills.²⁶ The available African data, e.g., show that domestic science constitutes more than 50% of the training offered to women. Subjects like animal husbandry, kitchen gardening, or poultry-keeping are occasionally included, while agriculture and co-operative education are only seldom included, despite the fact that women are responsible for more than 70% of the agricultural labor.²⁷ In developed societies the situation is often similar. In the progressive province of Hesse, West Germany, e.g., the number of apprenticeships for different skills and trades was found to be three times larger for men than for women,²⁸ and women are often precluded in many countries from "masculine" skills and trades.

The results of acute sex discrimination in the area of technical and vocational training hits hard exactly the groups of women who most badly need employment or must improve their knowledge in order to increase food productivity, i.e., low-income urban and rural women in developing nations. Thus, while food production in many countries of the Third World is in the hands of women, the absurdity of sex discrimination deprives them of agricultural training and in this way contributes to lower yields and to famine.²⁹ Similarly, because urban low-income women have no access to salable skills, they have to work as unskilled workers at very low salaries and under poor working conditions; or they become prostitutes; or they try to earn an income through illegal activities such as brewing; or through baking, hawking, or some other type of small home-industry.³⁰

The reasons often advanced for the existing sex differentiation in the technical and vocational training offered to men and women are: (a) women are not interested in and have no aptitude for other than the traditional feminine skills compatible with their lives as housewives and mothers; and (b) women do not wish to and do not actually work in industry and "masculine" jobs for which technical and industrial skills are needed.³¹

There is evidence from developing countries, however, that when

²⁶ Safilios-Rothschild and UNICEF Secretariat (n. 17 above); and ECA, "The Role of Women in African Development" (n. 23 above).

²⁷ ECA, "The Role of Women in African Development."

²⁸ Alice H. Cook, *The Working Mother: A Survey of Problems and Programs in Nine Countries* (New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University, 1975) pp. 18-21.

²⁹ Eliou, *art. cit.*; Solomon Odia, "Rural Education and Training in Tanzania," *International Labor Review* 103 (1971) 13-28.

³⁰ Safilios-Rothschild and UNICEF Secretariat (n. 17 above); ECA, "The Role of Women in African Development" (n. 23 above).

³¹ Safilios-Rothschild and UNICEF Secretariat (n. 17 above).

“masculine” technical and vocational-training programs are open to women, they are attended by women. For example, at the regional technological institute at Ciudad Maders in Mexico, where technical studies at the secondary level are offered, 14 out of the 44 student electricians are women, 10 out of 27 mechanical engineering students, and one third of the trainees in industrial chemistry.³² Also, in Ghana, where all government vocational-training schools and centers are coeducational, a growing number of women take the courses offered. At the Accra Polytechnic commercial studies, e.g., 24 women and 22 men were enrolled in 1965/66, and 67 women and 49 men in 1969/70.³³ It seems, therefore, that the availability of vocational-training programs rather than the girls’ aptitude and interest determines the extent of their enrollment in these programs.

The second argument mentioned above is not valid either, since about one third of workers in manufacturing industries, clothing and footwear industries, chemical industry, electrical engineering, and paper industry are women in several Latin American countries.³⁴ But due to their lack of skills, these women workers have to work at the lowest, unskilled level without any chance to ever escape from it.

We could conclude, therefore, that the status of the large majority of women in most developing countries, especially in Africa and Asia, with regard to education is quite low, since they are still plagued by illiteracy and lack of employable technical and vocational skills, including agricultural. Furthermore, the educational status of African and Asian women is particularly low in rural and low-income urban sectors in which the large majority of women live. Urban upper-class, upper-middle-class, and increasingly also middle-class women graduate from secondary school and attend the university, but they represent only a small percentage of the female population and thus they accentuate the class differentials in women’s educational options that further compound the existing sex differentials.

In developed societies, in which men’s and women’s access to (but not necessarily graduation from) primary and secondary school have been over-all equalized, women’s educational status can be differentiated on the basis of the range of educational options available to women in each society in terms of professional, semiprofessional, and vocational careers. Unfortunately, at this point only information concerning the range of professional fields is consistently available to allow cross-cultural com-

³² “Youth and Work in Latin America, II: Youth Employment Prospects,” *International Labor Review* 90 (1964) 150-79.

³³ Miranda Greenstreet, “Employment of Women in Ghana,” *International Labor Review* 103 (1971) 117-29.

³⁴ “Youth and Work in Latin America” (n. 32 above).

parisons and conclusions. Data from the middle and late 60's show that Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, the U.S.S.R., and Finland provide the widest range of educational levels, with Argentina, Austria, Greece, and Japan following. In countries in which women have a wide range of educational options at the university level, the "masculine" occupations which are most often redefined as "feminine" are pharmacy and dentistry, while occupations such as chemistry and medicine most often become equally open to men and women and lose a sex-specific label. Fields like law and architecture seldom become "feminine" fields (with the exception of Greece, where architecture became a "feminine" field) but women enter them in considerable numbers. Finally, "technical" fields like engineering, aeronautics, or agriculture tend to remain "hardcore" masculine occupations.³⁵

Despite considerable progress, therefore, women's education is still lagging behind. Even the elementary goal of literacy has not yet been achieved for the majority of women in Africa and Asia. While the present generation of women has a much better chance for literacy in all countries, probably universal literacy will not have been achieved for the next 2-3 generations. Despite the fact that the barriers to women's literacy and education are known, little concerted effort is made to eradicate them. Furthermore, the exclusion of women from technical and vocational training, including agricultural training, seriously discriminates against women in all societies and contributes to the underdevelopment of the Third World. But even in the case of most advanced societies, women's educational options must be considerably enlarged before educational equality is reached. Recent changes in the United States, stimulated by the Women's Liberation Movement, have already enlarged women's educational options at the university level, by women's admittance to masculine fields such as medicine and law, but the advances are not as yet spectacular or even throughout all masculine fields.

EMPLOYMENT AND OTHER ECONOMIC ROLES

The available statistics concerning women's employment are besieged by several methodological shortcomings discussed in detail elsewhere.³⁶ Here it suffices to mention that statistics concerning the labor-force participation of women are inadequate and of little validity, because

³⁵ Constantina Safilios-Rothschild, "A Cross-Cultural Examination of Women's Marital, Educational and Occupational Options," *Acta sociologica* 14 (1971) 96-113.

³⁶ Safilios-Rothschild, "Social Indicators of the Status of Women" (n. 3 above); *id.*, "Methodological Problems Involved in the Cross-Cultural Examination of Indicators Related to the Status of Women," paper presented at the American Population Association Meetings, Toronto, Canada, April 1972.

they do not reflect accurately the extent of women's employment and give no indication concerning marital status and extent of employment participation (part-time or full-time). Statistics concerning women's participation in the labor force are particularly misleading in countries of high unemployment and thus of lesser value in the case of developing societies. In general, the best indicators of women's employment are (a) the percentage of women employed of all women in the working ages, (b) the percentage of married women working of all working women, and (c) the percentage of women working full time.³⁷ Information with regard to all three indicators is not available for all societies, and even when it is available, there are serious comparability problems. The census definitions of employment for women in different countries are not the same, because women unpaid family workers in rural or urban areas are included in some censuses and excluded from others.³⁸ Actually, information concerning the percentage of women in the category "unpaid family workers" is useful, since it indicates the extent to which women can work outside the home and the extent to which they have a right to remuneration for their work. In Pakistan, e.g., the over-all low status of women is reflected in the fact that 68.3% of employed women are unpaid family workers.³⁹

Furthermore, it is difficult to assess the economic contributions of women, especially in developing countries, because three sets of indicators of economic activity are usually missing: (a) indicators that assess the extent to which rural and urban low-income women (and men) play economic roles (in other ways than by means of conventional employment) and participate in local development efforts such as community development programs, different types of co-operatives (e.g., consumer, marketing, health, credit) or self-help projects; (b) indicators that allow the assessment of women's productivity in rural areas not only in terms of food production but also in terms of food preservation as well as marked participation in different types and levels of markets; (c) special social indicators tapping and assessing the contributions of housewives to the economy through the performance of household tasks, child care, and a variety of services rendered to the husband and the entire family.⁴⁰

The recent compilation of information concerning the economic roles of African women by the Women's Programme Unit at the Economic Commission for Africa represents a pioneer effort that illustrates the serious underestimation of women's economic roles in the absence of the

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Lee L. Bean, "Utilization of Human Resources: The Case of Women in Pakistan," *International Labor Review* 98 (1967) 391-410.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Safilios-Rothschild, "Social Indicators of the Status of Women" (n. 3 above).

above three sets of indicators. They estimate that 60–80% of agricultural labor in Africa is carried out by women. More specifically, they estimate that 70% of food production is done by women, 50% of domestic food storage, 100% of food processing, 50% of the responsibility for animal husbandry, 60% of marketing, 90% of brewing, 90% of the labor involved in securing water supply, and 80% of the labor involved in securing fuel supply; 70% of self-help projects are undertaken by women. In Kenya, e.g., it is estimated that women provide 80% of the self-help labor involved in building roads, schools, village centers, etc.⁴¹ Because, however, these important economic roles played by women cannot be classified under the traditionally defined regular gainful employment, the census of many African countries omits them altogether or seriously underestimates them.

Keeping all these limitations in mind, we can turn now to examine whatever cross-cultural employment data are available and the trends they indicate. The ILO *Yearbooks of Labour Statistics* for 1971, 1973, and 1974 indicate that the lowest percentage of economically active female population can be found in all Arab countries, Iran, and Pakistan, in which the percentage varies from 1.8 in Algeria to 8.0 in Morocco and 8.3 in Iran.⁴² Women in these countries, therefore, have in fact a very low status, since it is only a tiny minority of the female population that is literate (little over 1/10) and economically active (around 1/20).

The Central American countries come in second lowest (closely followed by the Latin American countries), with the economically active female population ranging from 8.2 in Guatemala and 10.4 in Mexico to 11.4 in Nicaragua, 17.7 in Panama, and 21.5 in El Salvador. Four European countries, Spain, Italy, Netherlands, and Malta, have less than 20% of economically active female population, while in the remaining European countries percentages vary from 26.2 in Belgium to 48.1 in Romania.⁴³

Finally, countries with over half the female population economically active are predominantly in East, West, and Central Africa: Lesotho, Madagascar, Upper Volta, Burundi, and Guinea Bissau. In addition, many of the countries with over two fifths of the female population economically active are also situated in Africa in such countries as Botswana, Chad, Ivory Coast, United Republic of Tanzania, and Gabon.⁴⁴ Thus African women, despite their very low educational status, are not inhibited from playing economic roles, although much of their economic activity is limited to agriculture and their economic roles may

⁴¹ ECA, "The Role of Women in African Development" (n. 23 above).

⁴² ILO, *Yearbook of Labor Statistics*, 1971, 1973, and 1974, Table 1 in each.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ ECA, "The Role of Women in African Development" (n. 23 above).

not often fit traditional Western employment models. This is a case in which educational and employment indicators for women are poorly interrelated.

When the percentage of women in the labor force is calculated over the base of female population in the working ages, as has been done for selected European countries, the picture changes considerably and the highest percentages of working women can be found in East Germany and the U.S.S.R. (80%), followed by Sweden (53.7), West Germany (47), and the lowest in Norway (23.8), Netherlands (22.6), and Belgium (25.8).⁴⁵ While this type of indicator is clearly more accurate for developed societies, it may tend to underestimate women's economic activity in developing societies, unless the working age is extended considerably at both ends.

Other indicators concerning the employment of women which are sensitive in tapping ongoing social changes and in accurately reflecting the status of women in this area of employment are (a) percentage of women employed who are married with husband present and children younger than three years old; (b) percentage of women employed by specific type of occupation; (c) degree of discrepancy between men's and women's wages and salaries, controlling for level and type of position, level of employee's skill, and length of service; and (d) percentage of women in top administrative, managerial, and executive positions.⁴⁶ While all four indicators are extremely important for the more refined measurement of the status of women in the economic sector, only spotty data are available for a few and mostly for developed societies.

With respect to the first indicator, there is considerable evidence that the extent to which women are integrated into the labor force can be measured by the degree to which married women are working.⁴⁷ In addition, the extent to which mothers work, especially mothers of more than one young child, is a further sensitive indicator of women's integration in the labor force.⁴⁸ The available evidence indicates that there has been an increase in the labor participation of married women and mothers of young children, especially in North America and in Eastern European and Scandinavian countries.⁴⁹ We know that in 1972 in Sweden 53.7 of the women in the labor force were mothers of children

⁴⁵ Marjorie Galenson, *Women and Work: An International Comparison* (New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University, 1973).

⁴⁶ Safilios-Rothschild, "Social Indicators of the Status of Women" (n. 3 above).

⁴⁷ Jerzy Berent, "Some Demographic Aspects of Female Employment in Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R.," *International Labor Review* 101 (1970) 175-92.

⁴⁸ Galenson, *op. cit.*; Cook, *op. cit.*

⁴⁹ Berent, *art cit.*; Cook, *op. cit.*

under 7, while in 1968 this percentage was only 42.1,⁵⁰ and that in 1969, 48% of the Swedish working women had children under 3.⁵¹ Similarly, motherhood, when the child is under 6, and working status seem to be most compatible in Finland, East Germany, and Romania and least compatible in Japan, Canada, Denmark, West Germany, Great Britain, and Norway.⁵² The greater the extent of this incompatibility and the greater the numbers of women affected, the lower the status of women in the employment sector, since work discontinuity affects adversely not only the women directly involved but the over-all image of working women as "temporary" and therefore not seriously committed workers. There is only sporadic information, however, from developing societies concerning the extent to which the mother role is compatible with the working role when the children are very young. It can only be hypothesized that these roles are quite compatible due to the existence of some type of extended family.

With regard to the second indicator, information is most often available concerning women's occupational distribution by broad occupational categories, an indicator that does not reflect accurately the occupational status of women in different societies, since significant variations usually exist within occupational categories. In general, the larger the women's range of educational options, the larger also their range of occupational options. Thus we find that the U.S.S.R., Finland, Poland, Hungary, East Germany, and Bulgaria (as well as the other Eastern European countries), which offer women the widest range of educational choices, also offer them the widest range of occupational choices. Thus, even in a hardcore masculine occupation such as engineering, 25% of engineers in Bulgaria are women, 22 in East Germany, 33 in Hungary, 18 in Poland, and 40 in the U.S.S.R.⁵³ Other cross-cultural trends in women's occupational distribution are the following:

a) Up to now in most societies women have been allowed to enter only low-prestige and low-pay occupations that are labeled "feminine." While there is nothing "feminine" about occupations labeled feminine, their only characteristic is low prestige and low pay.⁵⁴ In all societies and times, the "masculine" label is attached to occupations with higher prestige and pay than "feminine" occupations. The same occupation may be "masculine" in one society and "feminine" in another because of

⁵⁰ Cook, *ibid.*

⁵¹ *Women in Sweden in the Light of Statistics* (Stockholm, 1971).

⁵² Cook, *op. cit.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Safilios-Rothschild, *Women and Social Policy* (n. 2 above).

its relative standing in comparison to other occupations. Medicine, e.g., a high-prestige and high-pay occupation in the United States, has been an almost exclusively "masculine" occupation. In the U.S.S.R., however, where a physician is paid 110 rubles and the highly skilled blue-collar worker 120 rubles,⁵⁵ medicine is a "feminine" occupation. Similarly, when the occupation of secretary or "house servant" carries considerable prestige and a relatively good pay, as has been the case in some African nations, men dominate it. But when other occupational avenues of greater prestige and pay become available, men abandon them, and women are allowed to enter them when they have assumed the characteristics of a "feminine" occupation—that is, lower prestige and pay than male-dominated occupations.⁵⁶

b) Even within "feminine" occupations the minority of men usually occupy the best-paid and most prestigious positions as well as all decision-making and supervisory posts. In the U.S.S.R., e.g., although 4 out of 5 physicians are women, 4 out of 5 physicians of high rank are men.⁵⁷ Also, while air hostesses on American (and most other) airlines are women, the few men are pursers, playing a supervisory role and enjoying a greater prestige and pay. The recent breakdown of this sex-differentiated organizational structure in the United States represents an important victory due to its visibility and despite the small number of women involved.

c) Women's entry in a "masculine" field does not tend to decrease the prestige or level of pay attached to an occupation, only when women enter it not because men have abandoned it but because ongoing ideological and other social changes break down structural barriers and women's stereotypic constraints. In several European societies, e.g., pharmacy became equally or predominantly "feminine" without any negative effect upon pharmacists' prestige or remuneration. The same holds true for fields such as dentistry or architecture. Similarly, the recent entry of American women in law and medicine due to the Women's Liberation ideology has not in any way altered the prestige and high pay attached to these occupations.

d) When women manage to enter in considerable proportions a "masculine" field such as dentistry or pharmacy, they are usually able to enter other "masculine" fields as well, such as medicine, law, or architecture, although there may be a time lag before entry in other masculine fields takes place.

In view of the above discussion on women's cross-cultural occupational

⁵⁵ Cook, *op. cit.*

⁵⁶ Safilios-Rothschild, *Women and Social Policy*.

⁵⁷ Norton T. Dodge, *Women in the Soviet Economy* (Baltimore, 1966).

patterns, it becomes clear why available data consistently show that the pay of women is only a fraction of men's pay, ranging from 40 to 80%. The concentration of women in low-pay fields and low-pay positions within any given field accounts for the over-all significantly lower wages and salaries of women. Furthermore, even when women are employed in exactly the same jobs with men, they are usually paid less than men, most often regardless of the type of legislations existing regarding "equal pay for equal work."⁵⁸ This is produced by either outright discriminatory practices against women or by means of subtler discriminatory practices that assign slightly different labels and job classifications to women's jobs that render the comparison with men's salaries impossible, since only women are employed in some types of low-paid jobs.⁵⁹ Another factor responsible for the lower salaries of white- and blue-collar women workers is their significantly lower degree of unionization and their lesser tendency to strike and fight for their rights.⁶⁰ In the United States (and most other countries) slightly over 10% of women workers belong to trade unions.⁶¹ Sweden⁶² and Finland⁶³ represent outstanding exceptions to this trend, with Finnish working women belonging to unions almost as frequently as men. The male domination in union membership, but even more importantly in union leadership, has led to unions' disinterest in women and in helping equalize their salaries.⁶⁴ Actually, as things stand now, many union and nonunion shops have different categories for women's and men's jobs that provide men with the more prestigious, responsible, and better-paid jobs—and unions often write separate work agreements covering women's and men's jobs, thus institutionalizing sex discrimination.⁶⁵

The few data available on the degree of discrepancy between men's and women's wages and salaries controlling for all work-related relevant factors show that women are consistently paid less in all societies and

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*; Cook, *op. cit.*; ECA, "The Role of Women in African Development" (n. 23 above).

⁵⁹ Cook, *op. cit.*; Safilios-Rothschild, *Women and Social Policy*; Nobuko Takahashi, "Women's Wages in Japan and the Question of Equal Pay," *International Labor Review* 106 (1975) 51-68.

⁶⁰ Giselle Charzat, *Les françaises: Sont-elles des citoyennes?* (Paris, 1972).

⁶¹ Judy Edelman, "Unions on the Line: Myths vs. Reality," *Up From Under* 1 (1970) 34-37.

⁶² Gunnar Qvist, "Landorganisationen (LO) en Suède et les femmes sur le marché du travail, 1898-1973," *Sociologie et sociétés* 6 (1974) 77-91.

⁶³ Elina Haavio-Mannila et Eeva-Liisa Tuominen, "La situation de la femme au travail en Finlande," *ibid.*, pp. 93-103.

⁶⁴ Alice H. Cook, "Women and American Trade Unions," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 375 (1968) 124-32; Lucretia W. Dewey, "Women in Labor Unions," *Monthly Labor Review* 94 (1971) 42-48.

⁶⁵ Cook, *ibid.*

continue to be underpaid despite a variety of correcting mechanisms set to work in some developed societies. Thus, data from Poland, the United States, Canada, and Sweden show quite similar trends despite many differences in official policies and the nature of the women's work involvement.⁶⁶ Finally, with respect to the last indicator, whatever cross-cultural data exist show an extremely high degree of agreement in that women hold an extremely low percentage of top, decision-making, or policy-making, powerful, prestigious, and highly-paid positions. This trend holds true regardless of the over-all percentage of employed women, the type of occupational distribution, or the nature of existing laws. Thus, this trend has been documented for Poland⁶⁷ and the U.S.S.R.⁶⁸ as well as the United States,⁶⁹ Canada,⁷⁰ all African nations,⁷¹ and Australia.⁷² It must be noted, however, that in several developing nations such as India, Thailand, or Ceylon, a number of women can be found in top decision-making and policy positions. While such women are quite visible in their positions as prime minister, or minister, or director of a large hospital or a large business undertaking, percentage-wise they are few and their positions do not reflect an improvement in the status of all women. The paradox can be explained in terms of their social-class background. They are usually upper-class or upper-middle-class women who are favored over middle-class men in societies with rigid social stratification systems and a particularistic, familistic orientation.⁷³

We can conclude that in both developing and developed societies women are not able to make maximum economic contributions and are excluded from all prestigious and high-paying occupations and positions. But even within the "feminine," low-prestige, and low-pay occupations in which they are allowed to engage, they are paid less than men and cannot attain supervisory and decision-making positions, accessible only to men. In addition, women in the Third World, particularly rural and urban low-income women, play a variety of significant economic and productive roles which are not usually assessed and rewarded.

⁶⁶ Magdalena Sokolowska, "Some Reflections on the Different Attitudes of Men and Women toward Work," *International Labor Review* 92 (1965) 35-50, Safihos-Rothschild, *Women and Social Policy* (n 2 above)

⁶⁷ Sokolowska, *ibid*

⁶⁸ G Barker, "Les femmes en Union soviétique," *Sociologie et sociétés* 4 (1972) 159-91, Claude Alzon, *La femme potiche et la femme bonniche* (Paris, 1973)

⁶⁹ Safihos-Rothschild, *Women and Social Policy* (n 2 above)

⁷⁰ *The Status of Women in Canada* (n 3 above)

⁷¹ ECA, "The Role of Women in African Development" (n 23 above)

⁷² S Encel, N Mackenzie, and M Tebbutt, *Women and Society An Australian Study* (Melbourne, 1974)

⁷³ Safihos-Rothschild, *Women and Social Policy*

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

The status of women in this area can be measured on the basis of several indicators such as (a) age at marriage—legal minimum and actual age, (b) age difference between spouses, (c) women's right to free choice in marriage, (d) women's right to property and divorce, (e) rate of remarriage of widows and divorcees, (f) mean number of children born to married women, (g) percentage of women marrying younger men, (h) type of division of labor within the family, and (i) the extent to which women have a choice as to whether to marry or not, as well as to the age by which they must marry.⁷⁴ In addition, many other indicators of familial options would be extremely valuable in assessing women's status in the family, such as the extent to which women can initiate or reject sexual relations with their husbands, but such information is only sporadically available and cross-cultural comparisons are not possible.

Cross-cultural data are available with respect to minimum legal age at marriage and show that at present three countries have 12 as the minimum legal age at marriage for women: Chile, Panama, and Peru; six have 14: Argentina, Mexico, Guyana, Philippines, Hungary, and Italy; and three societies have 15: Mauritius, Turkey, and Costa Rica.⁷⁵ In addition, several societies in Africa and Asia either have no minimum legal age at marriage or circumvent the legal minimum in practice. There is evidence, e.g., that in Algeria, despite the minimum legal age at marriage set at 16 for women, girls of 12 or 13 are married secretly and their position is regularized at the marriage registry only when they become 16. Thus, in 1967 more than three quarters of Algerian women were already married by the age of 20.⁷⁶ And in India, despite legal provisions against it, girls are wed before puberty and children are engaged to marry.⁷⁷ There is no question that the status of women is quite low in societies in which girls are made to marry before 15, and in those sectors of the population within which such early marriages are widely practiced. It is obvious that such early marriages and early motherhood, which usually is the result, interfere with the girls' chances for education and training.

In the 60's, in many developed societies, the actual age at marriage tended to decrease due to a transitional stage in the status of women during which women could get jobs and thus did not have to wait until the man had a well-paying job.⁷⁸ This trend has proved detrimental to the status of women, because it interfered with women's chances for

⁷⁴ Safilios-Rothschild, "Social Indicators of the Status of Women."

⁷⁵ United Nations, *Demographic Yearbook*, 1972.

⁷⁶ Evelyne Sullerot, *Woman, Society and Change* (New York, 1971).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

college education and for the development of high career commitment and achievement aspirations. There are some indications, however, that in the 70's this trend has again started reversing itself. In the United States, e.g., the age of marriage is going up.⁷⁹

With regard to the age difference between husband and wife, the available cross-cultural data are poor. In general, it can be assumed that many marriages in which the husband is considerably older than the wife indicate a low status of women and unequal exchanges between marital partners. Because women have no access to income and status, they have to exchange youth and attractiveness for status and financial security. Small age differences between spouses, on the other hand, do not necessarily reflect a higher status of women. They may instead reflect a higher level of development in which younger men can achieve adequate status and financial security so that women do not have to marry older men in order to secure status and financial security. The percentage of women marrying men five or more years younger than themselves is, however, a good indicator of the status of women, since the higher this percentage, the more women are employed and the more they have achieved sufficient fame, wealth, and status to be fascinating to younger men and the more they are able to exchange these "scarce and desired goods" for youth and attractiveness.⁸⁰ Actually, it has been found that there is a good correlation cross-culturally between women's economic activity and the percentage of women marrying younger men.⁸¹

Women's legal right to divorce is a very important right that in the 60's has been granted even in countries such as the Arab states, Iran, and a Catholic country like Italy (for the first time it was extended to both men and women in the 70's). In addition to women's legal ability to divorce, it is important to note that divorce rates have increased throughout the world for a variety of reasons, one of which is of interest here: women's increasing ability to support themselves that allows them to divorce when their marriage is unbearable. Considerable evidence from societies in which women, due to lack of skills, could not support themselves except by becoming maids or unskilled workers has shown that women had to tolerate unhappy and oppressive marriages because they could not return to their parents and had no other alternatives. Thus, it can be

⁷⁹U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, National Center for Health Statistics, *Vital Statistics of the United States, 1970 3: Marriage and Divorce* (Rockville, Md., 1974).

⁸⁰Safilios-Rothschild, "A Cross-Cultural Examination..." (n. 35 above); *id.*, *Women and Social Policy* (n. 2 above); *id.*, "Dual Linkages between the Occupational and Family System: A Macro-Sociological Analysis," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, forthcoming in December 1975.

⁸¹Safilios-Rothschild, "A Cross-Cultural Examination..." (n. 35 above).

said that the considerable recent increases in divorce rates in the United States, Canada, Hungary, Sweden, Denmark, and Czechoslovakia⁸² may be at least partially due to the increasing economic independence and self-sufficiency of women that renders divorce an option to an unhappy marriage.

There are some indications that as long as the status of women is low in society and women are viewed as objects (that become "used" after marriage), the remarriage rates of widows and divorcees are very low, and much lower than the marriage rates of single women of the same age groups. But since few detailed data are available about most societies, it is not possible at present to describe the status of women around the world with regard to this variable.

Coming now to fertility, the evidence is overwhelming that the higher the status of women, the lower is their fertility.⁸³ There is an especially strong relation between women's education and fertility level, the decline in fertility being associated with even small educational achievements on the part of women when the over-all educational status of women is low. Thus, in societies such as the African societies or India where women's illiteracy is high, women's fertility declines when a woman is literate and has attended a few grades of school. On the other hand, when the over-all educational status of women is higher, declines of fertility are brought about by much higher educational achievements, such as at least some years of high school or high-school graduation.⁸⁴ As long as women's status in a society is very low and prospects for future improvement are poor, mothers as well as fathers are anxious to have at least two sons in order to have some financial security in old age, and in search for these sons they end up having a large number of children.⁸⁵ Once women's status, especially in terms of education, training and economic independence, improves, there is a decline in fertility, because mothers in increasing numbers work and do not wish to spend their entire lives bearing and rearing children; girls tend to be valued as much as boys by their parents; and parents increasingly have high educational aspirations for their children, including their daughters. Thus fertility reflects the actual status of women as well as prospects for improvement.

An area in which it is important to examine the status of women is the

⁸²United Nations, *Demographic Yearbook*, 1972.

⁸³United Nations, "Study of the Interrelationship of the Status of Women and Family Planning," Conference background paper, World Population Conference, Bucharest, 1974.

⁸⁴Constantina Safilios-Rothschild, "Socio-Psychological Factors Related to Fertility in Urban Greece," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 31 (1969) 595-606.

⁸⁵Thomas Poffenberger, *Husband-Wife Communication and Motivational Aspects of Population Control in an Indian Village* (Department of Child Development, M. S. University of Baroda, India, 1968).

degree to which they are free to choose a mate. While forced marriages have drastically declined in most traditional societies, they can still be found in Algeria⁸⁶ and other Arab countries as well as among the traditional segments of the population in Latin American, Mediterranean, and Asian societies. It has been found, e.g., that arranged marriages are much more frequent among Greek women living in villages and small towns, and among the low-income urban women who are the least educated and hold the most traditional, stereotypic views concerning the roles of men and women.⁸⁷ Among middle-class and upper-middle-class urban women, on the other hand, arranged marriages have practically entirely disappeared. On the other hand, there is some evidence that even women college students in a country like Pakistan or Japan reject only partially the notion of arranged marriages, in that they want to have a definite say as to whether or not they accept men proposed by their parents.⁸⁸ But most of them tend to be afraid to shoulder the responsibility entailed in choosing their mate entirely on their own. Furthermore, in urban Japan arranged meetings between boys and girls are used as a sort of guided dating that may or may not lead to marriage.⁸⁹ It seems, therefore, that women must have enjoyed for more than one generation high educational and employment status and freedom of movement before they can feel confident to take the choice of a mate in their hands.

An area in which the status of women in the family is reflected quite accurately is the division of labor within the family. The lower the over-all status of women, the more unequal is the division of labor within the family, with women being assigned the responsibility for carrying out all the time-consuming child care, housekeeping, and other family tasks and activities. The more married women are not allowed to work, the more "natural" it becomes for them to carry the entire burden of family responsibilities, since they have more "free" time. Even when in some developed societies husbands *help with* some tasks, their contributions remain peripheral and unreliable. In fact, husbands tend to help mostly during family crises such as the wife's illness, pregnancy, or right after

⁸⁶Fadela M'Rabet, *La femme algérienne et les algériennes* (Paris, 1969).

⁸⁷Constantina Safilios-Rothschild, *The Modern Greek Family 1: The Dynamics of the Husband-Wife Relationship* (Athens: National Center of Social Research, forthcoming in 1976); Choong Soon Kim, "The *Yon'jul-hon* or Chain-String Form of Marriage Arrangement in Korea," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 36 (1974) 575-79.

⁸⁸J. Henry Korson, "Students' Attitudes toward Mate Selection in a Muslim Society, Pakistan," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 31 (1969) 153-63; Robert O. Blood, Jr., *Love Match and Arranged Marriage: A Tokyo-Detroit Comparison* (New York, 1967) pp. 35-59.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

the birth of a child. Otherwise they help when they feel like it, mostly during weekends, and with tasks that are not very time-consuming and that they can label "masculine."⁹⁰ It is interesting to note at this point that in developed societies such as the United States, in which most people live in houses rather than apartments, there is evidence that despite the availability of a variety of "time-saving" gadgets housewives spend 55 hours per week in housework, as they did 50 years ago. While they now spend less time preparing food and cleaning up after meals, they spend an equal time in housecleaning and more time shopping, performing "managerial tasks," and on child care.⁹¹

There is considerable evidence that in many societies the improvement of women's status, particularly with respect to the availability of the option to work for married women, does not alter their status in the family. Thus, even when married women work outside the home, in most societies their position in the family is not significantly improved with regard to the division of labor. Their husbands help them more than is true in the case of housewives, but they cannot be relied upon, since they seldom carry out some specific tasks consistently or share a household responsibility with their wives. In Yugoslavia, e.g., only 3.7% of the husbands help their wives when they are housewives, while 11.4% of them help their wives when they are working.⁹² Similar trends have been reported for Hungary and the Scandinavian countries.⁹³ But in a number of developing societies, even when women work, husbands do not help their wives, as is true for India, Greece, and most Latin American, African, and Asian nations.

The "double burden" of women is unbearable unless their income allows them access to hired help, or their mothers or other female relatives can be relied upon for free housekeeping and child-care help. Hence the existence of traditional or "modified" extended families facilitates the work of married women in developing (and developed) societies in which they cannot expect any help from their husbands.

The only exception to the above trends has been Sweden, where in 1971 it was reported that 72% of the husbands *shared* (not helped with)

⁹⁰ Alexander Szalai, ed., *The Use of Time: Daily Activities of Urban and Suburban Populations in Twelve Countries* (Paris, 1972).

⁹¹ Joann Vanek, "Time Spent in Housework," *Scientific American* 231 (1974) 116-20.

⁹² Zlata Grebo, "La famille dans une société en évolution: Problèmes et responsabilités de ses membres: Yougoslavie," United Nations Interregional Seminar on the "Family in an Evolving Society; Problems and Responsibilities of its Members," London, July 18-31, 1973 (United Nations Publication No. ESA/SDHA/AC.3/Wf.20).

⁹³ Veronica Stolte-Heiskanen and Elina Haavio-Mannila, "The Position of Women in Society: Formal Ideology vs. Everyday Ethic," *Social Science Information* 6 (1967) 169-88.

washing up with their wives, 66% shared cooking, and 63% shared cleaning.⁹⁴ This, however, constitutes an anomaly in the world trends, although there are some indications that increasingly American young couples are replicating the Swedish model.

For the vast majority of working women around the world, therefore, their work role does not lighten their burden of family responsibilities. Thus, despite the fact that working women, at least in developed societies, tend to simplify some housekeeping tasks and to have some help from husbands, children, and mothers, time-budget studies in nine societies have shown the oppression of women within the family. In the U.S.S.R., e.g., it has been found that women work three times as much as men in the house and spend on the average 2.5-4 hours during weekdays and 5 hours during Sundays doing housework and taking care of the children.⁹⁵ Here men enjoy 1.9 times more leisure than their wives, in that they travel and study 1.2 times more often than their wives, engage in sports 2.2 times more, etc. Furthermore, another study has shown the dismal picture for Russian women: 52% of the husbands do not help at all or help only one hour per week, despite the fact that most of these husbands were married to working women.⁹⁶ Similar data have been reported from other Eastern and Western European societies.⁹⁷ The conclusion is clear: working women as well as housewives have a very low status in the family and have little right to leisure time, even in terms of rest and reading. This oppression is even more spectacular in the case of working women who fight continuously with time and who are plagued with fatigue.

The main obstacle to the equalization of men's and women's status in the family and the equalization of familial responsibilities and duties as well as privileges are the traditional sex-role stereotypes that tend to rigidify and differentiate the roles played by men and women according to sex. Social movements such as the Women's Liberation Movement, backed by egalitarian family laws, can help bring about a redefinition of husbands' and wives' roles, as is happening in Sweden.

POWER AND POLITICS

There are indications that the improvement of women's educational and occupational status does not necessarily bring about an improvement in their political status. To some extent the same obstacles which bar women from the top occupations and positions account for women's

⁹⁴ *Women in Sweden in the Light of Statistics* (n. 51 above).

⁹⁵ Alzon, *op. cit.*; Barker, *art. cit.*

⁹⁶ Barker, *ibid.*

⁹⁷ Szalai (n. 90 above); France Govaerts, *Loisirs des femmes et temps libre* (Brussels, 1969).

low political participation. In addition, politics as well as any other type of decision-making has been defined as a masculine job entailing intrigues and maneuvering considered to be incompatible with the "feminine" personality. Because of these stereotypes and because men want to keep the political monopoly, women are not trained for leadership and are not socialized for political roles, unless they happen to have a politician as father or husband.⁹⁸ And because of the prevailing sex-role stereotypes, women are seldom nominated for political office and are seldom elected.

While the right to vote is by now granted to the large majority of women around the world, it has not yet been granted to women in the following nine countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Nigeria (in six states), Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen, as well as in two Swiss cantons.⁹⁹ Furthermore, women are often indirectly deprived of the right to vote because they do not meet requirements relating to education, economic status, civil capacity, or family status. The literacy requirement is particularly prejudicial to women, especially in societies in which large segments of the female population are illiterate. Thus, a large number of women in the following societies cannot vote because they are illiterates: Afghanistan, Iraq, Kenya, Nicaragua, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Uganda, and Venezuela.¹⁰⁰ In this respect, then, the women's low educational status is highly related to and directly responsible for women's lack of political participation, even by means of voting.

With regard to women's actual participation in political leadership, a general conclusion that applies to most countries is: the higher the level of political leadership, the tinier women's rate of participation. Thus women tend to participate relatively more at the local level, especially in the United States, Canada, the U.S.S.R., Finland, and Australia, about which data are available.¹⁰¹ For many of the developing nations, no data are available about women's participation in local politics and it is not possible at this time to evaluate whether the above trend also holds true in their case. Furthermore, even in developed countries in which women's participation in local councils, municipal councils, and other

⁹⁸ Martin Gruberg, *Women in American Politics* (Oshkosh, Wis., 1968); Kirsten Amundsen, *The Silenced Majority: Women and American Democracy* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1971).

⁹⁹ "Women in Political Life," background paper prepared by the United Nations for the International Women's Year Conference, Mexico City, May 1975.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Sullerot (n. 76 above); *The Status of Women in Canada* (n. 3 above); Encel, Mackenzie, and Tebbutt, *op. cit.* (n. 72 above); and Elina Haavio-Mannila, "Sex Roles in Politics," *Scandinavian Political Studies* 5 (1970) 209-38.

local leadership is higher than at higher levels, it is not as high as it should be, though many of the usual barriers to women's political participation at higher levels are not present.¹⁰² Moreover, women tend to be nominated and elected to local political offices more often in capitals and large cities than in small towns and villages of developed societies, due to the greater degree of adherence to traditional sex-role stereotypes in the latter.¹⁰³ In addition, it must be pointed out that while in the case of men local political offices serve as steppingstones to higher-level offices, the same does not hold true for women whose upward political mobility is small or nil.

At higher levels of political leadership, women's level of participation is extremely low in most countries for which information is available, even in the three countries in which the head of government is a woman (Argentina, India, and Ceylon). The only exceptions to this are the Scandinavian and Eastern European countries, where in the 70's the political participation of women at high levels rose considerably. Thus, in 1972, 21.5% of the members of Parliament in Finland were women, and in Sweden 21%.¹⁰⁴ In the U.S.S.R., 31.3% of those elected to the Supreme Soviet in 1974 were women,¹⁰⁵ but in Poland the percentage was only 15 in 1972.¹⁰⁶ In addition, 2,500 judges in the U.S.S.R. were women, while few or any of the judges are women in other developed societies.¹⁰⁷ In other Western societies, the level of women's political participation in national political bodies rarely surpasses 9 or 10%, and it is even poorer in Latin American, Asian, and African countries. An outstanding exception is Guinea, where 27% of the members of the National Assembly and 16% of the Regional Assemblies are women.¹⁰⁸

We can conclude, therefore, that the political participation of women at all levels is low with the exception of Scandinavian and Eastern European countries and Guinea. Only specific measures aiming to overcome the sociopsychological, structural, and economic obstacles to women's political participation can increase the level of such participation.

¹⁰² Encel, Mackenzie, and Tebbutt.

¹⁰³ Haavio-Mannila (n. 101 above).

¹⁰⁴ Herta Kuhrig, *Equal Rights for Women in the German Democratic Republic* (Publication of the Committee for Human Rights, No. 5; Berlin, 1973).

¹⁰⁵ United Nations Seminar on National Machinery to Accelerate the Integration of Women in Development, Country Paper by the U.S.S.R. (ESA/SDHA/AC.6P.14, Ottawa, September 1974).

¹⁰⁶ United Nations, "Implementation of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Report of the Secretary-General" (E/CN.6/571/Add. 2) Table 4.

¹⁰⁷ Encel, Mackenzie, and Tebbutt (n. 72 above).

¹⁰⁸ ECA, "The Role of Women in African Development" (n. 23 above).

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

An easy over-all evaluation of women's health and nutritional status can be obtained by examining women's life expectancy in comparison to that of men. In most African countries men and women have a very low life expectancy, ranging from a very low of 25 years for men in Gabon, and 26 years for men and 28 for women in Guinea, to 41 years for Cameroon, Mauritania, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Sierre Leone, for which the life expectancy at birth is not given broken down by sex. In no African country is the life expectancy for women at birth higher than 61.9 years, which is true for Mauritius. At the other extreme, the highest over-all life expectancy for women at birth is found in European countries and especially in the Netherlands (76.7 years), Sweden (76.5), Iceland (76.2), France (76.1), Norway (76.0), and Switzerland (75.0), as well as in Canada (75.2) and the United States (75.3).¹⁰⁹

While there is a correspondence between women's life expectancy and other social indicators of the status of women, the relationship is by no means perfect. In some societies, such as the Netherlands and Switzerland, women's health and nutrition is good and their life expectancy high, due to a high degree of societal development, without any considerable concomitant improvement of the status of women in other life sectors.

While in most societies women's life expectancy at birth tends to be slightly better than that of men, in the following countries women's life expectancy is lower than that of men: Nigeria (37.2 versus 36.7 years), India (41.9 vs. 40.6 years), Jordan (52.6 vs. 52.0), Khmer Republic (44.2 vs. 43.3), Pakistan (53.7 vs. 48.8), and Sri Lanka (61.9 vs. 61.4).¹¹⁰

The lack of more detailed life-expectancy data for women according to working status does not allow us at present to test the hypothesis that women in the same occupations with men who work for a similar length of time and in similar positions will have the same life expectancy as men. Also, the trend found in the United States and some other developed societies for married women to have a lower life expectancy than single women or married men cannot be tested cross-culturally.¹¹¹

Because detailed morbidity statistics broken down by sex are not available for most societies, it is difficult to assess women's health status with regard to specific illnesses. It is, e.g., not possible to test cross-culturally the extent to which the recent trends found in the United States, Sweden, and a few other Western European countries, according to

¹⁰⁹ United Nations, *Demographic Yearbook*, 1972.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Walter R. Gove, "Sex, Marital Status, and Mortality," unpublished paper, 1972.

which women's rates of all types of mental illness are twice as high as those of men,¹¹² hold in other societies and in which ones. It is possible that such high rates of mental illness in women are found only in societies in which women's status is being considerably improved and women experience the strains of the transition to a higher status.

It is important to note that, probably due to prevailing sex-role stereotypes, women's health is most often discussed in terms of prenatal care, child delivery, and diseases of their reproductive systems and very seldom in terms of health care and illnesses unrelated to pregnancy and childbearing. This stereotypic view of women's health needs does in fact influence the type of health care made available to women as a priority, especially in developing nations, as well as medical research concerning the manifestations of different diseases in women.

Finally, with regard to the nutritional status of women, while there are no systematic data, anthropological evidence from several traditional societies indicates that young girls are often given less food than boys, especially when there is a scarcity of food. The available nutritional surveys have consistently shown that adult women and preadolescent girls tend to be malnourished to a greater degree than other family members, particularly in rural areas and urban slums of developing nations. Thus, food-consumption surveys conducted in Asia have shown that children tend to be more malnourished than adults and, among adults, women tend to be more malnourished than men.¹¹³ A nutrition survey conducted in Nigeria in a low-income area in the town of Abeokuta and in a village showed that pregnant and lactating women did not have the required amount of calories and suffered from extreme calcium deficiency during pregnancy, and that adolescent girls were nutritionally disadvantaged with respect to protein, riboflavin, and calcium requirements.¹¹⁴ Similarly, a high incidence of anemia as well as calcium and thiamine deficiency was found among pregnant slum women in many Asian countries, due to poverty as well as prevalent food taboos, especially during the last months of pregnancy (as is true in parts of Burma, Indonesia, Malaya, and the Philippines).¹¹⁵

¹¹²Walter R. Gove and Jeannette F. Tudor, "Adult Sex Roles and Mental Illness," *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (1973) 812-35.

¹¹³"Food and Nutrition," in *Problems of Children and Youth 2: Selections from the Documents of the Conference on Children and Youth in National Planning and Development in Asia* (UNICEF, Bangkok, 1966) pp. 48-49.

¹¹⁴Aboderim and M. Bello, "Factors Influencing Food Consumption and Health Practices and Attitudes," in *Report of Nutrition Survey and Applied Nutrition Program, Abeokuta, 1968* (Ibadan, 1968) pp. 83-109.

¹¹⁵"Food and Nutrition" (n. 113 above).

CONCLUSION

Having examined the available data concerning the different indicators of the status of women, we can conclude that, despite some progress in some areas, the status of women is still quite low. There is still a long way to go and several generations of women must struggle and persist before a woman has the same options and opportunities as a man in all life sectors. If we accept that a society is modern when it "is successful in removing social and structural constraints and in establishing appropriate compensatory mechanisms so that all individuals, regardless of their categorical membership such as age, sex, race, religion, ethnic origin, or social class, can have equal access to a wide range of options in all life sectors,"¹¹⁶ no society can claim to have achieved modernity. In some societies such as the U.S.S.R., the Eastern European nations, China, and Cuba, political ideologies helped break down many (but not all) barriers to women's educational options, as well as some barriers to women's occupational options. In some Western, developed societies such as the United States, Canada, England, and the Scandinavian countries, a women's liberation ideology promoted by a women's movement or a sex-role debate has led to the removal of some structural and sociopsychological barriers to women's options in education, employment and occupation, political participation, and family life. But even in the latter societies in which wider and more pervasive changes have taken place, sex discrimination has not been eliminated and probably it has not even decreased. It only changed form: from open, direct sex discrimination to subtle, sophisticated sex discrimination, which tends to be more effective and difficult to fight.

The status of the majority of women who live in the Third World is still low and ongoing social changes either do not affect their status or tend to even further deprive them of options and opportunities. Thus, industrialization and the westernization of the markets in many African societies led to a lower status for women, because women were not trained to function at this level of social development.¹¹⁷ Similarly, the mechanization of agriculture tends to exclude women from agriculture, since no provisions are made to make agricultural training available to women, thus allowing them to continue to play their traditional productive roles more effectively in a changing agriculture. The majority of women in the Third World are still illiterate and lack any type of vocational, technical, or agricultural skills that would allow them to participate in and

¹¹⁶ Constantina Safiliou-Rothschild, "Toward a Cross-Cultural Definition of Family Modernity," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 1 (1970) 17-25.

¹¹⁷ Ester Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development* (New York, 1970).

contribute to the social and economic development of their nations. Probably unless the proposition that "The position of women in a society provides an exact measure of the development in that society"¹¹⁸ is accepted as an axiom, the societal barriers to the improvement of the status of women will not be removed and sex equality will not be achieved.

¹¹⁸Gustav Geiger's proposition quoted in Sullerot (n. 76 above).