

O. R. S. T. O. M.  
Institut Français de Recherche pour  
le Développement en Coopération

---

C. I. E.  
Centre International de l'Enfance

---

Séminaire International - Paris 14-19 janvier 1985  
International Workshop - Paris 14-19 janvier 1985

LA PLACE DES FEMMES DANS L'AUTOSUFFISANCE  
ET LES STRATEGIES ALIMENTAIRES

WOMEN'S ROLE IN FOOD SELF-SUFFICIENCY  
AND FOOD STRATEGIES

---

SYNTHESE ET RECOMMANDATIONS  
SYNTHESIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## INTRODUCTION

### REASONS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE SEMINAR

The food situation in the Third World is constantly becoming worse. It is characterized by a serious decrease in food production, unequal distribution and proportionally increased imports : the industrialized nations control today two thirds of the world's food trade.

The major causes for this food deficit, which is expected to increase in the coming years, include the introduction of a market economy in the traditional systems, the emergence of a market for agricultural produce geared to Western consumers, leading a transformation of the local systems of production. The social cost can be very high : exclusion of small farmers, inaccessibility to the means of production due to a lack of financial resources, land concentration, rural exodus and accelerated growth of cities where low-income populations are the most severely hit by widespread under and un-employment.

While facing such a situation, very few countries indeed have developed policies for food self-sufficiency : agronomic research and loans systems have chiefly benefitted export crops within the fragmented context of aid projects as numerous as they are competitive. Decisions on such projects are made without consulting the participants and they are seldom aimed at improving producers' income and living conditions. Moreover they totally ignore the women's role in production, processing and marketing of agricultural produce. By not considering this fundamental contribution of women to the economy, development policies have lead to greater poverty and injustice.

It is then quite obvious that success in food policies and strategies, based on the valorization of peasant strategies, must call for the participation of women. These are a position of interface between social changes and international mechanisms. The seminar is based on political and realistic assertion : we intend to show and prove to the planners, decision-makers and researchers, that women are not mothers only. That their work, overlooked as it is, is a decisive contribution to their families' survival and to that of the coming generations.

The ORSTOM taking the initiative of organizing this international seminar on "Women's role in food self-sufficiency and food strategies", intended to demonstrate its will to expand the field of research work on the Third World, making it more relevant by clearly acknowledging the critical importance of women within economy and society - both in development and the food crisis.

It is an important decision, requiring of its partners in research and cooperation policy a reconsideration of the concept of development. Clearly and for the first time, France has shown at last that this approach already developed by a number of countries in the past ten years, is no longer a matter of indifference.

By inviting decision-makers from European nations and international institutions, to participate with the researchers in the analysis of the crisis, the organizers hoped to reinforce the understanding, as well as the acceptance of the idea that women are directly concerned in all efforts aiming to a more just society, that their participation gives greater efficiency to the proposed solutions intended to solve serious food problems, and that the refusal to consider them is unrealistic, leads to failure and short and long-term social malfunctions.

Consequently the seminar's two major objectives were :

- to draw up research priorities in order to improve available knowledge about women's roles in all processes of social and economic change related to the food crisis ;
- to draft political recommendations so that women be actually taken into account when development projects and food strategies are prepared.

## ORGANISATION

The International Seminar took place in Paris from 14 to 18 January, 1985, and was organized with the assistance of the International Childhood Centre, which allowed us to use both its premises and its secretarial facilities. The seminar received financial support from the External Relations Ministry in charge of Cooperation and Development, the Centre of Development of OECD, the Sahel Club, the Ford Foundation and the French Committee for UNICEF. We wish to thank all those who provided their support.

The participants in the seminar included 49 researchers (42 of which were women), 22 decision-makers and 38 observers, representing a total of 24 nations.

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Enclose herein, are the speeches delivered at the opening session by Mrs Yvette ROUDY, Delegate Minister in charge of the Ministry for Women's Rights, and at the closing session by the representative of Mr Christian NUCCI, Delegate Minister in charge of the Ministry for Cooperation and Development, and a summary of the proceedings followed by the recommendations expressed both for policy and research.

The papers are grouped into chapters which organize and illustrate the problem under study.

An appendix includes the "provisional synthesis" paper which was read at the plenary meeting on the first day, an index of themes, an index of geographics, the list of participants, observers and decision-makers, as well as the organisation of the three workshops.

## POLICY AND RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

### INTRODUCTION

On the basis of their knowledge of women's roles within the various national and regional food systems, seminar participants agreed that it was necessary to stress the importance of development strategies that promote the *diversification* of food economics in the Third World.

### 1. RECOMMENDATIONS ON DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

All seminar participants confirmed that proposals aiming at getting development strategies, as a whole, to take women more fully into account are not only a matter of equal treatment requirements - their goal is rather to increase the efficiency of food policies.

#### 1.1. Women in statistics

The three workshops deplored the lack of data on economic activities of women and emphasized the need for reliable statistics on women as a prerequisite for planning to be more equitable and more efficient. This would mean that distinct data series for each sex should be collected systematically in all development projects.

Furthermore, in view of the excessively high cost of national surveys (census and other types) and of their very low yield in terms of analysis and application, it is recommended to look into possibilities for working out *data collecting strategies* which would make it possible to use smaller samplings and means that would be more appropriate to local human, technical and financial resources, in order to produce reliable and comprehensive (nutrition, morbidity, mortality, production, seasonal phenomena, etc...) data which might be used in a more practical fashion by the relevant government agencies. Thus *observation points* ought to be set up for well differentiated situations, in order faithfully to reflect the complexity and diversity of the countries concerned.

### 1.2. Women and State

A part of national development strategies is to promote actively the involvement of women in project identification, formulation, implementation and assessment phases ; consequently it is also recommended to reinforce the access of women to the places where action for food strategies is decided on and organised.

The seminar stressed the need to require that all States establish a legal framework to guarantee the rights of women.

### 1.3. Women's access to land

As regards *land distribution* policies related to agrarian reforms, to irrigation or settlement projects, etc..., the three workshops make the following recommendations :

- in the event of title-deeds being attributed individually, they should benefit women as much as men.
- in the event of title-deeds being given to "households", the women who in fact are the family heads should receive them.
- when farm organisations are responsible for implementing these land policies, steps should be taken for women to be represented in the decision-making bodies of these organisations.

In more general terms, it is recommended that land allocation patterns be subjected to systematic scrutiny in order, where necessary, to work out alternative solutions that be different from the present ones based on the male head-of-household and on blood relations, which automatically precludes women.

In addition, it is also recommended that these land redistribution schemes include appropriate measures to avoid the women losing their traditional right to use certain pieces of land.

#### 1.4. Women's access to employment and to income

On the basis of the data supplied for the three continents (Asia, Africa, Latin America) the seminar stressed that women's income, far from being a mere side-line, was in fact a most essential part of family income, and consequently recommended :

That measures be taken to facilitate women's access to income, in particular by the following means :

- giving a priority to female family heads when employment in development projects,
- granting equal wages to men and women for similar jobs,
- allowing women to have equal access to permanent posts, in particular in the agro-food and rural industries,
- enforcing the ILO labour standards (the industrial crisis has intensified the practice of piece-work and outwork, thus keeping women away from factories and from labour-union rights),
- maintaining and improving productive activities carried out by women (production, food processing, handicrafts, distribution), while protecting them from the competition of cooperative or State-run structures (marketing circuits, subsidised sectors).

To give women easier access to employment by providing certain social services, which are necessary even in rural areas, in particular day-nurseries and day-care centres.

#### 1.5. Women and farm products

The role of women in production is acknowledged to be a key-element in food strategies ; consequently it is recommended to adopt all appropriate measures in order to improve their productivity : access to new plant varieties, to credit, to inputs, improvements in the women's crops...

Necessary incentives should be provided to promote and to reinforce food crops and mixed crops (or the seasonal rotations in food crops), in order to achieve food self-sufficiency at the level of families, regions and nations, as well as permanent soil utilisation and sustained small-scale food trading.

In the present food crisis context, the seminar recommended that the crucial importance of tubers be recognised in a number of food systems, both in rural and in urban areas, in view of their potential for production stability as compared to grain crops.

This means that appropriate technical solutions should be studied in the fields of processing, storage, transport (bottlenecks, time spent working, energy...)

Subsidy systems for food products should be changed in order to restore the image of local products in the consumers' eyes.

Market-gardening ought to be encouraged in poor urban areas and in slums.

#### 1.6. The role of women in the urban food system (informal sector)

Insofar as the informal food sector, which is largely run by women, has demonstrated its ability to respond and adapt to local and national needs and to changes in needs, it is recommended to provide active support to women participating in this strategically important sector for urban food supplies, so that it can expand : alleviation of tasks through simple techniques, *recognition of the legitimate existence of the sector* ; and removal of police repression in the markets, access to credit, reduced taxation on private transport vehicle and on market places, expansion of storage areas, removal of certain measures prohibiting interregional trade in some countries.

#### 1.7. Women as family heads

The seminar pinpointed the negative interrelations between the ever-increasing degradation in the economic and food situation and the destructuring process in family systems. The latter phenomenon leads to a greater percentage of women in towns, and more specifically, to an unprecedented surge in the number of single women who are *de facto* family heads, although not *de jure*, and who must take on family responsibilities single-handed. For this reason, it is recommended to promote and to guarantee the rights of these female family heads : right to a job, to resources, to land, to credit...

In order to help the women, particularly those who are family heads, it is recommended to support women's organisations which allow them to express their claims and to be recognised by the States as having a political existence ; these organisations should be assisted in expanding their national and international communication possibilities.



#### 1.8. Training and communication

The seminar emphasised that training efforts for rural and urban women will only become satisfactory if, as a prerequisite, time constraints affecting women are taken into account.

It is necessary :

- to train female extension staff in agricultural production, processing and marketing techniques,
- to make the - male - extension staff more aware of the needs and knowledge of women through changes in study curricula, field exercises, case studies, etc...
- to train technology-using women in technology management and maintenance.

The seminar recommends that some funding be allocated for the development of training courses which would incorporate the results and implications of research carried out on sexual differentiation in development and in households ; these courses should be intended generally for decision-makers as well as for officials working in agronomic research centres, centres for urban studies, centres for technological studies, etc...

It is necessary to reinforce exchange channels for women in the field of South-South, as well as North-South research and action. Such communication between women, as well as the access to information, calls for the setting up of infrastructures and of means, at the national or subregional level, both in the North and in the South.

It is recommended that all women have access to information and to birth spacing methods.

#### 1.9. Women and Food aid

In preparing requests for emergency food aid from international donors, national-level political debates should involve representatives who are in a position to explain women's needs, in order to identify present needs and acceptable products.

Some specific recommendations have been put forward concerning women :

- to take into account the women's needs (nutritional contents, processing and cooking work, dietary patterns) in the restricted range of products offered in food aid,

- to expand South-South operations in order better to cover the demand for food products which are not usually supplied or produced by the donors,
- to ensure that women be involved in aid distribution mechanisms at the local level ; if food aid is to achieve its objectives and to benefit the target-populations, the distribution system should preferably be decentralised and should use health or training centres as a base, for example or any other rural grouping in which women are active - this precludes cooperatives for instance, because, here, women are hardly represented, at any rate not at decision-making levels.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS ON RESEARCH

The seminar insisted that there was an urgent need to develop research work - particularly finalised research - on the social and economic roles of women in order to improve not only the actual designing of development, but also the implementation and results of development.

The seminar emphasized the urgent need for analysis and improvement of mechanisms enabling planners, agronomic researchers, and extension staff to apply research results in gender issues (working out alternative forms and materials for the introduction and dissemination of research results). Research workers should, as far as possible, take into account the planners' needs and priorities in selecting their programmes.

### 2.1. Women in statistics

To identify and quantify women's work in the whole food production cycle - on a crop-by-crop basis - from field to home and/or market, including the proportion of unpaid female farm work.

To develop rational methodologies in order to quantify - at the regional, area or national level - the aggregate output of farm women, the surface area of their fields, the inputs available to them, the distribution of their crops for household consumption, sale, exchange, as well as any other activities they pursue, paid or unpaid.

To analyse models and determinants in resource distribution, including the sexual distribution of food within the household.

### 2.2. Women's employment and income : rural and urban areas

To examine female employment trends in a number of occupations : for instance, wage-earning farm labourers, farm commodity processors, traders in farm products or in processed or preserved products. Employment trends should be related to changes in the international division of labour on the one hand, and on the other to local health and welfare conditions.

To consider health and nutrition as part and parcel of food strategies. To have a closer look at the effects of farm policies (including the use of pesticides) on women's health, the impact of seasonality on employment and on the availability of food, the substitution of a highly labour-intensive crop for a less time-consuming one which might have lower nutritional values.

To carry out research work to define whether there has been an increase or a decrease in remunerated job opportunities for women in areas affected by certain large-scale technological changes, such as the Green Revolution, and what are the characteristics of these phenomena.

### 2.3. Analysis of food strategies : prospects

To carry out a critical analysis of criteria used by international agencies in identifying food crises and countries suffering from food deficits. It would be desirable, *inter alia*, to include as relevant criteria the domestic production by sex and the distribution of all the basic food crops.

To work out an overall perspective of food systems by analysing the links between production, post-harvest activities, distribution, and food preparation and consumption.

To define the positive and negative interrelations between national food - self-sufficiency - strategies and the provision of food security in the poorer classes in rural areas, with an analysis of women's role at both levels.

To study to what extent aggregate food output statistics conceal a shift in purchasing power towards the cities and/or towards improved living conditions for rural people.

To mobilise resources in order :

- to channel research work increasingly towards developing the genetic potential of secondary crops and garden crops,
- to support ecologically well-balanced food production systems, including mixed crops.
- to study ways and means of increasing the quality of processing techniques with a view to generating new markets.
- to study modes of selection achieved by the women in mixed crops depending on needs and on marketing conditions ; to define the basic reasons of these approaches.
- what are the constraints in attempting to increase outputs : manpower availability, markets, inputs ?

To study in what way forms of State interventionism hinder the women's role in production.

To start up research work in order to improve tuber varieties and to develop experimental research in women's fields, taking into account women's knowledge and needs (nutritional value of leaves, combustion value of refuse, etc...).

In addition, it would be desirable to study the nutritional contribution of the produce of gathering and to include that in an analysis of the yields achieved in crops grown by women.

#### 2.4. Price policies

To study to what extent price policies (including supported price policies) have discriminatory effects on traditional crops or on "women's crops".

To assess the effects of relative prices in terms of household self-sufficiency, including the relative prices of cereals and of secondary products, as well as the consequences of various price regulation or non-regulation policies.

#### 2.5. Land allocation problems

To study and to assess accurately the women's position over a period of time in terms of ownership, tenancy and access to land, these elements being viewed as resulting from "farm modernisation" processes, from settlement projects, from increased pressure upon arable land, from cash crop promotion, from environmental degradation.

To study the impact of different land occupation systems, and women's access to land, upon food production and family well-being.

### 2.6. Technology and time in women's lives

To study the differences between men and women farmers as regards their priorities, their resources endowment, production systems, management practices, responses to new technology being introduced...

To survey and list post-harvest practices on a regional basis, in order :

- to identify specific problems and bottlenecks for which technical solutions may already exist,
- to start new research on the means to improve all the post-harvest operations carried out by women, including local storage, processing and preserving techniques,

To study the problems related to women's access to domestic energy in rural and urban areas (deforestation, price increases, changes in dietary patterns, etc...) as well as the new forms in which certain farm products are used (for instance, cassava used as a source of domestic energy).

### 2.7. The crisis in the economy and in the family

In view of the importance given by bilateral and multilateral aid agencies to family survival strategies, it is a matter of some urgency to start highlighting the effects of the crisis upon family systems. Some indicators of that crisis have been noted : alarming increases in the numbers of women as heads of families, increases in male, but also female, migration, increases in child labour, etc...

To analyse the effects of seasonal or long-term male migrations upon women, families and farm production.

To initiate research on the newly emerging family systems, particularly in cities. This would mean, *inter alia*, a reappraisal of the terminology which is used, but which is growing increasingly inadequate to new phenomena, the gap between dominant "family" ideologies and actual reality, the contradiction between the functions expected by the States to be fulfilled by the "stereotyped family", and the inability of the newly emerging family groupings to respond to those expectations.

To analyse female strategies - strategies of resistance, to induce transformation strategies - evolved by women to cope with the domination mechanisms under which they fall, as well as with the crisis situations which they must face.

### 2.8. City growth and the informal sector

In view of present and future city growth rates, it is most important to intensify research on women in cities, and more specifically :

- To review and list the activities of women in cities, particularly in the informal food sector, in order to show how necessary and legitimate this sector is, and to analyse the consequences of these activities for family structures (change in family links, number of children, children's education, health, etc...)
- To study changes in male/female relationships,
- To study the new category of women who live alone with their children : widows, unmarried mothers, divorcees, wives of immigrants...
- To measure the effects of a city environment upon the women's and the children's health, education, and new forms of group arrangements among women,
- To measure women's participation in a fragmented labour market, depending upon age, civil status, ethnic group...

### 2.9. Women's groups

To analyse cultural, economic and political mechanisms that encourage or hinder the grouping together of women ; to analyse women's groups or associations as responses to the family's poor adaptability to the crisis.

### 2.10. Famine indicators

Since both political leaders and researchers too often identify famine only in the form of its last, irreversible, phase, it is recommended to carry out comparative research into the whole set of biological, demographic, sociological, economic, ecological and State-rela-

ted factors, in order to work out relevant indicators making it possible to achieve not only better forecasting of crises and of their consequences, but also more appropriate responses. It might thus be possible to improve the early warning and prevention systems of Northern organisations.

### 2.11. Women and training

To perform a critical analysis of existing types of training in development projects at governmental and non-governmental levels, in order to apply on a large scale the more appropriate models, and to propose training methods that would best match the specific needs of rural and urban women.

### 2.12. Women and food aid

To examine food aid distribution modes in order to suggest the proper places where women could receive food aid directly (decentralised education or health institutions and centres, etc...). In any event, it is becoming increasingly urgent to study the impact of food aid upon rural women, depending on which products are supplied.

A SUMMARIZED REPORT  
(based upon discussions)

by Jeanne BISILLIAT

1. FACT-FINDING : THE CONSEQUENCES OF DEVELOPMENT ON WOMEN

The provisional synthesis document (1) based on the 29 papers received prior the seminar showed the concordance of the negative effects on women brought on by development patterns applied over the past 20 years, in spite of regional, national, political, cultural and economic specificities.

This coherence was confirmed by participants throughout the meeting and was reinforced by the results of a survey carried out in 30 countries by the World Food Council, made available to us at the plenary session on the first day.

Inasmuch as the same points of this report are the subjects of the various papers, we shall merely list them here :

- Lack of reliable statistics on the economic role of women, be it in the rural or the urban sector, makes any accurate and efficient planning effort impossible.
- Lack of reliable data on the means of production (farmland areas), and on the production of women (type of product, quantity).
- Women's non-access to land in major projects or in settlement plans, contrary to customary law which entitles them to the usufruct of certain plots and fields.
- Lack of recognition of the informal food sector, both in rural and urban areas, which, to a large extent, supplies cities with food.

---

(1) See appendix.



- The direct relationships between major projects, Green Revolutions, and the decrease in women's production and income, as well as the increase of work-time, leading to bottlenecks, particularly dangerous in the post-harvest phase (storage, preservation, processing, marketing).
- The increase in female migrations.
- The lack of agricultural research in crops grown by women.
- The intensification of single-crop systems at the expense of mixed crops, with which women are well acquainted.
- Women's non-access to loans, inputs, cooperatives, and extension services.
- The realization that women's income is not merely aside-line, but an absolutely essential contribution to family survival.
- The unduly heavy constraints in women's worktime (water, domestic energy, lack of appropriate technology) which have a serious impact upon their health, their education and that of their children.
- The importance of women's groups or associations which enable them, through various solidarity mechanisms, to be in a better position to fulfil their obligations, and to exert some group pressure upon the relevant authorities.
- The relations between population growth, lack of economic autonomy for women, and mother and child health.
- The relations between the decrease in women's income, in kind and cash, and the increase in poverty, family destructureation and child labour.

The generalization is meaningful *per se*, and very specific : development policies have been, are and will be failures - from the angle of economic efficiency and social balance - as long as women are not considered as participants and on an equal footing with men, of all the processes of change which transform societies.

## 2. FOOD POLICIES

The three workshops looked into the additional concepts of crisis - including the food crisis - and of food strategies.

It should be stated first that the various diagnoses made on the food crisis are not consistant. If, accorging to FAO, 27 out of the 36 poorest nations of the world are in Africa, the World Food Council num-

bers only 12 and Oxfam 5. What are criteria used by donors to allow such substantial variations ?

In a majority of cases, the food crisis results from a number of more general orientations adopted by the countries. The seminar participants outlined two major patterns :

- 1/ A concentration on promoting and exporting certain crops, justified by the theories of comparative advantage which simultaneously implies the need for food aid. Under such conditions, efforts to set up a food policy are circumvented by considerable national and international pressure leading to an increased dependency of developing nations : thus, the large grain lobbies, being opposed to the establishment of national storage capacities, or allowing a price competition, drive the underprivileged countries into disastrous situations.
- 2/ Green Revolutions have won the grain production battle by concentrating investments on the richer areas and farmers, but they did not solve the distribution problems, so that the production of poor regions has been allowed to stagnate or to decline ; regional imbalances have become even more acute and poverty pockets more substantial, increasing the numbers of landless, jobless and penniless peasants.

Productivity, malnutrition and poverty : could this trio now so frequently encountered in development projects be considered a possible model of development ? Economic analysts should urgently learn to integrate social costs. In both models, the participants emphasized the fact that we are facing a number of North-South interdependence phenomena which, actually, are overdeterminant in food policies or strategies : a country agreeing to the establishment of an army base on its territory in exchange of unlimited food aid cannot be really interested in developing its own food production ; countries should also be careful not to antagonise their urban populations, for fear of serious social disruptions in the short term ; lastly, the dependency of nations only accentuates corruption : crisis always have their profiteers.

According to the participants, the famine phenomenon makes it possible to show the irrelevance of a vision which places politics in an abstract dimension. For instance, all too often what we discreetly call "drought", is nothing but the end of a lengthy process of climatic but also economic and biological degradation, conditioned by short-term political choices. The seminar condemned the attitude of considering

famine in its final stage, this media-exploitable phase where the appeal for sympathy merely conceals a political inability and/or refusal to face problems when they arise. An efficient system should be set up in order to measure vulnerability markers before the effects of famine become irreversible, and relevant measures can be taken. The fact that we do not have an appropriate terminology for this is no coincidence : it provides a justification for past, present and future decisions. It supports a system of mutual dependency which can be profitable to a number of people, and it tragically shows how totally inadequate development policies can be, if they are set up only in terms of production with no concern for the populations.

Such an interface between international and national constraints reduces the nation's operational margin while reinforcing the tendency to preserve the *status quo*. In this perspective, peasants' power - which, according to the participants, in a number of countries, is far from being achieved - cannot be a meaningful alternative, after the generalized failure of development. We should no longer think of development as something neutral. Peasant "strategies" do exist. In spite of all the difficulties, they made it possible to prevent the shattering of economies, and their dynamics are deeply based on the women, either as producers, wage earners or providing family labour.

### 3. DEVELOPMENT, WOMEN AND THE CRISIS OF THE FAMILY

However, in spite of their increasingly acknowledged and analysed contribution, women are not included in development policies or food strategies. Although more and more is said about their roles, neither the Lagos plan, nor the Berg Report, nor the Lome III agreements, to quote only a few nor the various national food strategies, take seriously women into account as real economic agents. Cultural or political blindness ?

This invisible relation between women and the State need clarifying. The Northern domination over Southern nations favours and reinforces this occultation of women, and their organizational potential is still too small to be recognized as a force to be considered. These two points highlight the need for women to set up both nationally and internationally, more efficient pressure groups, which could really be heard in the discussions on the elaboration and implementation of a different type of development.

Participants stressed and expressed their concern over the interrelations between the global crisis, the food crisis, the risk of social deconstruction and the malfunctions in social reproduction. Under these conditions, if women are not granted access to adequate economic resources - a situation made worse by the whole migratory phenomenon - they will be less and less likely to accept family patterns in which the men increasingly shrink away from their responsibilities (marriage instability, increasing divorce rates, increasing numbers of female family heads, growth in adolescent fertility, increasing numbers of urban women, etc...), or to accept the old forms of sexual division of labour ; they will want to work out other types of response. The crisis of the family is therefore at the very heart of the problem, and here too, participants stressed a basic contradiction : do the States and decision-makers think - or do they pretend to think - that the family unit can still absorb and attenuate the effects of the crisis, in order to postpone the introduction of social policies that are so urgently necessary for the poorer population groups ? The family is no longer - for reasons obviously related to the choice in favour of technically oriented economic policies - "that wonderful institution, so adaptable" to any situation. Once again the gap between the political sphere and social reality is blatant. Participants also stressed that in times of great hardship social and cultural phenomena of regression emerge, penalizing the women : return to forgotten religious values, reactivation of ideologies that punish unorthodox behaviour, encouragement of extremism and integrism... A process of change is inherent to these ambiguities and to this battle, a lost one in the long run, for a return to remote past. Survival strategies are necessarily less and less family-based, becoming more individual, or reduced to the nuclear women-and-children unit. In this overall context of structural upheaval we should consider, as an example, the following fact : a disturbing increase in child labour - the only remaining resource for the poorest families and women - which all too often leads to ethically unacceptable exploitation, leading to stagnating school enrolment rates, in spite of growing population numbers. For their survival and that of their children, women must all too often forfeit their educational function, the long term effects of which we are not yet in a position to assess...

#### 4. LESSONS FROM THE PAST : TOWARDS A PROSPECTIVE ACTION

A three-fold certainty : first, food policies or strategies, in their present form, cannot provide adequate responses to the food crisis since they merely use another language to reproduce the same distortions and the same absence of women ; second, if social and economic systems still operate at all, it is certainly due to women's tenaciousness and courage, rooted in their biological responsibilities, also called strategy of survival, a word the participants criticized for its positive connotation. Lastly, it is impossible to consider alternatives which, from the outset, would not take into account all problems of gender, on both social and economic levels.

Specific orientations and actions are emerging with a view to fairer and more efficient development ; they are given below under the "political recommendations" heading, but a few points should be mentioned here.

On the basis of their knowledge of women's roles in the various national and regional food systems, the participants agreed to stress the importance of development strategies promoting *diversification* in Third World economies. Such policies are obviously beneficial to a population well-being, nutritional balance and employment, and at the same time they lead to a better balance in land use and a better adaptation to ecological conditions. These policies differ from the strategies which tend to concentrate on large-scale imports from Northern industrial nations, or on a restricted range of crops and technologies promoted by national production plans.

According to the participants from Africa, Asia and Latin America, success in food policies based on diversification depends nevertheless on the political will to promote the spirit enterprise in women, which up to now has been extremely important in adaptation mechanisms under the crisis, and food crisis.

Looking beyond the present-day regional differences, there was a consensus on the need for measures to be taken for women, as consumers, to be able to meet the needs of their families, either with their produce, their wages or other sources of income. Also, the idea that the food crisis should be viewed in the long-term was often mentioned. Present day's upheavals are such that today's recommendations - no matter how necessary for the near future - may well be totally out of date

some ten or twenty years from now. It is therefore advisable to wonder about what women will or might do then, and to work out choices and alternatives. For instance, who knows whether twenty years from now, the women who will have been induced to work as traders rather than producers will not, once more, be the losers because of the establishment of large-scale distribution circuits, which may well in the end kill the informal food sector ?

In addition, the participants pointed to the interrelations between production, water and energy, which call for long-term solutions if populations are to regain control over their environment.

But discouragement is already at work here and there : it is something impossible to cook what one has produced, and such situations require rapid responses. Domestic energy problems are not of secondary importance ; they are an increasingly significant part of the overall energy crisis and they urgently call for research to be done in the field of alternative energy sources and their use.

Workshop 1 had a lengthy discussion about production incentives through adequate prices policies, while also showing their limits. On the other hand, an efficient alternative in the short and long term is to promote mixed and secondary crops, tubers, but also crops suited for dearth conditions. In agricultural research, this calls for a shift towards these lesser known plants and for an adjustment of the methods of experimenting, which should be geared to women's needs and knowledge.

To produce for export or to produce for food implies a choice involving macro-economic policies radically different. In order to achieve national self-sufficiency, it is necessary first of all to provide the conditions that lead to food security in rural areas. This means that the theory of comparative advantages must be considered not only between North and South, but also on the rural and urban levels, as on the one of households, men or women. It is necessary to give these men and women a chance to choose this or that crop, this or that income providing occupation - an increasing number of women prefer to buy more expensive cooked food which saves more time for productive activity - to choose, to sell now or to sell later certain perishable foods, thanks to the improvements in processing and preserving techniques, to multiply possibilities thereby reducing risks, a lesson that women have fully integrated into their management of daily life, since they are always

obliged to carry out a number of productive tasks in order to face seasonal or other difficulties which they encounter throughout the year.

It is therefore necessary to broaden the scope of action for the women so that they can work out jointly with men the responses to their own and their children's needs. This is development of another kind, an alternative based on negotiations involving all the social participants concerned. It is true that their responsibilities in family reproduction and their subordinate position make women highly conservative. But, paradoxically, this role as custodians of the family gives them the strength to question the *status quo* through social innovation and inventiveness they put into practice, as shown by all the informal groups, the social and political activist movements set in motion by women all over the world. For each different situation, tenaciously, they work out strategies of resistance or transformation. The participants felt that every effort should be made to help them reinforce the last ones so they can occupy the place that is theirs in political and economic life.

It was unanimously asserted that the foremost objective of our reflection and of our action is to make the role of women socially visible and understandable. This requires an effort in the coming years, to train and to mobilise all those who deal with development at various levels and in various fields. To change their way of thinking and their behaviour is essential if women are to move out of marginality and to fulfil their social and economic roles alongside the men, thereby bringing more justice in development.

## 5. RESEARCH

While knowledge on gender and its issues in development has expanded over the past decade, there is still plenty to do in order that the macro and micro-economic roles of women be better known and taken into account in overall reflection and planning. The research recommendations made by the various workshops are given below and they are grouped by themes. One of the priorities for research, mentioned by all the participants, is to secure reliable statistics based upon relevant indicators, in order to measure women's contributions to family, village, regional and national economics. Then there is a whole range of research items aimed at a clearer perception of interrelations between agricultural

policies, women's income and employment, access to land, family crisis, workloads, mothers' and children's health... It was also emphasized that new technologies ought to be developed with the women, so that they can have more control over their time, improve their earnings and obtain some training. Research on urban women - a category which is constantly growing - is also felt to be crucial, as well as research on family destructure and the destabilization phenomena as a whole : women as family heads are a very sensitive subject of research, for a better understanding of the social changes to come and of the aspects to fertility control.

There has also been some substantial discussion about the objectives of this research work. Obviously, the essential functions of research on women are to uncrease and improve available knowledge, but also - this was shown in all the relevant discussion - to make it all clear so that the various results of research be useful at all levels of reflection and action. Participants felt that the valorization of such results is indispensable for women in particular but also for all research efforts. It seems clear that women researchers need to convince, even more acutely than the others. Whatever the historical and cultural factors underlying such a demand, they certainly affect and will continue to affect for quite a while the future of research on women. The participants thus expressed a distinct preference for finalized research, which does not preclude basic research. This concern is rooted in the dual perception of the urgency of solving the problems, and of the necessity of taking into account as much as possible the needs expressed by the women themselves. Consequently, researchers are considered to be in an excellent position to act as a link between populations and the State - at various levels - link whose task it is to decipher women's specific roles and needs in relation to the men's.

Furthermore it appeared that research on women naturally comes within the context of a critical analysis of development as it exists. It cannot be separated from a political approach since, at it progresses, it must question its own efficiency : one and a half billion women in the Third World, 80 % of which are the poorest among the poorest.

This action-oriented perspective also takes into account the warnings expressed about research being used only for the sake of resear-



chers. The urgent need for increased national capacities for research on women was also emphasized.

Two closely related points were the subject of lengthy discussions: that of information and communication. The lack of information centres on women and development was mentioned as a serious constraint for Third World researchers wishing to work in that field. A possibility would be to set up sub-regional documentary units, while at the same time developing and systematizing communication and information flows between countries, regions, and researchers. In another respect, the women researchers of the Third World were critical about the high cost of publications, making their acquisition impossible even though these books are indispensable for their work. It is a serious situation of dependency and domination increasingly unacceptable if North-South relations are to be improved.

It was acknowledged that it is urgent to study in depth the methodological problems related to that form of research, inasmuch as it is to be an interactive process between researchers and the populations they study, researchers and State, researchers and development agencies. Consequently, one of the goals of research will be to outline possible fields of negotiated interventions - for and with the women.

Finally, the participants insisted that research work on women - and this is a priceless contribution - makes it possible to give some perspective and some critical analysis of development research as a whole, such as it has been conducted, designed and conceptualised up to date. New tools, and new methods are being worked out for a new code of ethics to emerge gradually.