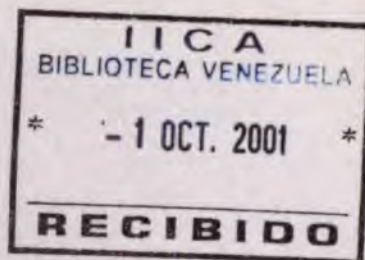


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WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY IN THE  
**WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY IN THE  
NEW VISION OF RURAL REALITY**

*A proposal from IICA for strategic action*

Document presented at the Eighth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and The Caribbean; Lima, Peru; February 8-10, 2000; subsidiary organ of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)





Inter-American Institute of Cooperation on Agriculture  
Rural Development Directorate

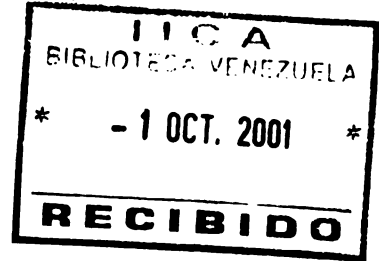
# **WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY IN THE NEW VISION OF RURAL REALITY**

*A proposal from IICA for strategic action*

**San Jose, January 2000**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD.....	1
I. Conceptual Framework on Gender.....	3
II. Women's Gender Situation and the New Vision of Rural Reality.....	10
2.1. The Principal Problems of Rural Women.....	10
2.2. Traditional Responses to the Problems of Rural Women.....	11
2.3. Elements of a New Strategy on Women and Gender within the Framework of the New Rural Reality.....	12
III. Situation of Rural Women in Latin America and the Caribbean.....	14
3.1. Sociodemographic Profile.....	16
3.2. Poverty Conditions.....	17
3.3. Work and Employment.....	19
3.4. Access to Resources.....	22
3.5. Education.....	22
3.6. Health Conditions.....	23
3.7. Decision-Making and Sociopolitical Participation.....	25
3.8. Human Rights and Regulatory Framework.....	26
3.9. Institutional Structure and Public Policies.....	27
3.10. Sociocultural Context.....	29
IV. Foundations for Strategic Actions by IICA in Promoting Rural Women and Gender Equity Within the Framework of the New Rural Reality.....	31
4.1. Regulatory and Programmatic Framework.....	31
4.2. IICA's Response.....	34
V. Basic Political Conditions and Key Conceptual and Methodological Elements for the Framework of the New Rural Reality.....	38
VI. Guiding Principles of the Alternative Strategy for Promoting Women and Gender Equity in Sustainable Rural Development.....	41
6.1. Sustainable Rural Development Based on Social and Gender Equity.....	41
6.2. Developing New Relationships in Sustainable Rural Development.....	42
6.3. Empowerment and Development of Human Resources as the Central Focus of Public Policies in Each Country.....	43
6.4. Creation of Spaces for Relating to Urban Women.....	43
VII. An Agenda for Discussion and Action.....	44
BIBLIOGRAFIA.....	46





## FOREWORD

As this century begins, a proposal that introduces a gender perspective in development actions requires much less justification than it would have just five years ago. Indeed, today there is ample consensus that the inclusion of gender perspective in development strategies is not only based on a need for greater justice regarding women's participation, but also on the conviction that when women and men share responsibility in aspects of human development with a view to sustainability, results are greater in terms of effectiveness and efficiency.

This document sets forth the main arguments in support of the proposal for strategic action, entitled *Women and Gender Equity in the New Vision of Rural Reality*, presented by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) as a contribution to analysis and debate of this topic in the hemisphere. This is a conceptual and propositional effort in the process of construction, and IICA would like to invite other cooperation agencies and persons interested in the theme to join in this process.

IICA has based this effort on the existence of broad consensus among different international and regional organizations, and on an understanding that the fundamental question is how to implement this consensus in practical terms. Despite this consensus, the task that has not been an easy one thus far for the different entities involved. This proposal also stems from a different viewpoint of the rural world: a new vision of rural reality based on observation of the current situation and on an understanding of the phenomenon that create it and then maintain it with first generation effects, constraints and the alternatives they produce, and the interaction between them. In other words, there are growing advantages with respect to demand and the capacity for interaction, advantages that are becoming available to rural populations and societies. But there are also significant limitations in accessing this potential and opportunities for staying in industry, due to the structures of rural economic organization.

The important thing to understand is that rural reality today is different from the one that existed two decades ago, and consequently, the solution to its unresolved problems must take these new conditions into account. A new vision of the rural reality is characterized by the following elements:

- a) the rural-urban continuum and the obsolescence of formal definitions for these spheres;
- b) the multidimensional concept of space and territory in the rural milieu;
- c) modifications in social organization for economic activities;
- d) the polyfunctionality of rural space;
- e) the organization of the rural life style;
- f) local expression of democratization;
- g) political-administrative decentralization;
- h) the gender situation of women and their participation in productive activities
- i) the participation of young people of both sexes in productive activities; and
- j) the management of the environment and natural resources.

We hope that this publication, made possible thanks to support from the Swedish International Development Corporation Agency (SIDA), will enrich the efforts that various people and organizations are making on behalf of sustainable development. We at IICA view sustainable rural development as a process of transformation in rural societies and land units, centering on human beings, participatory, with specific policies directed at overcoming social, economic, institutional, ecological and gender imbalances, and seeking to broaden opportunities for human development for every man and woman in the population.

Clara Solís-Araya  
Director  
Rural Development Directorate

## **I. Conceptual Framework on Gender**

The "new vision of rural reality" is the result of changes in development style that generates modifications in macro-level policy, which in turn causes mutations in mechanisms of production, marketing and social organization.

The new development style adopted by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean-consonant with a neo-liberal conception of economics and the organization of production-constitutes an underlying instrument giving rise to macro and sectoral policies that have modified the conditions in which the marketing-production function of the rural area operates, and which exercises a significant influence on its social and cultural organization.

Nonetheless, changes in the rural milieu cannot be attributed to a group of phenomenon alone. These modifications also originate in the effects of globalization, in itself the product of immense development in technology. When applied to communications and various investment facilities around the world, it takes on its own dynamics that increasingly penetrate the economic activity of nations and their productive sectors. The changes in information and knowledge associated with globalization generate transformations of life style, of demand for products, of the vision inhabitants of certain sectors have of their own condition, of the management of environmental resources and of elements in the culture of groups and their particular organizations.

Today it is recognized that globalization and its effects do not respond to forms of ideological planning, nor does it reflect an exclusively economic phenomenon, as thought. To the contrary, these processes have direct consequences for the different spheres of the human being and society, processes with advantages and dangers that must be faced in a dynamic way, and somehow planned for.

The fact is that permanent exposure to information of various types, received via the phenomenon of mass and massive communication, arrives practically unfiltered to almost all strata of society, directly affecting them in accordance with their capacity to process and handle information and knowledge.

The new vision of rural reality is also associated with the result of greater economic, productive, social and political integration in different sectors of the economy. With the market functioning as a common denominator for resource allocation and competitiveness, the immediate tendency of the economy- which is also exposed to international competition through the process of opening- is a harmonization of prices and marginal productivity in its different sectors. This signifies that dependency among sectors is increasingly greater and that investments are planned in such a way as to make returns similar within the different sectors of the economy, save for limitations on information and the entry and exit of capital inherent to industry.

One very important aspect is the trend of economies in developing countries, similar to transformations in the economies of industrialized nations. The proportion of jobs and sources of income generation are tending to concentrate in the tertiary sector, which is growing more rapidly than the primary or secondary. Rural life in Latin America and the Caribbean has not escaped the trend. This explains the importance of non-agricultural income and rural employment, and within this group of activities, the growing preponderance of personal services, transaction and other types of services "purchased"

by rural inhabitants, a change from conditions existing a couple of decades ago (Moyano, 1998; Silva, 1999.)

Modifications in the rural reality are also the result of demographic changes occurring in Latin America and the Caribbean. These center on two major phenomenon: a) decrease in the rate of population growth, and b) the location of population, given currents of migration within and even between countries that have changed demographic conditions in rural areas, reducing the proportion of the population remaining in those areas.

Added to these demographic changes are an increase in physical contacts between urban and rural zones, access to basic services in the rural sphere- services that were almost exclusive to urban centers two or three decades ago- and continual exposure to the media and to information. This leads to a combination of factors that generate transformations in the condition, culture and organization of rural societies.

Nevertheless, there are other results, external to the processes described earlier but which also affect rural life in one way or another. In particular, it is important to observe increases in the concentration of wealth in certain rural groups, while at the same time there is an almost systematic exclusion of other groups, such as women, young people of both sexes, and indigenous populations. The heterogeneity of the rural sector is strengthened to the degree that income distribution, creation of surplus and access to assets differs among the various strata of current rural societies. While this is a combined effect of the results mentioned and the structure characterizing countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region- societies today considered to have the worst distribution of wealth in the world- it is important to recall the difficulty of rising above distributive aspects in the style of development and in a market-centered productive system. The ability to compete in this commercial system and in a more open economy is made more difficult for individual men and women producers and groups without full access to assets, both private and public. For those persons and producer groups that do have assets, possibilities for competing are greater and the capacity to create surplus through marketing and productive functions is a great deal higher (Berdegué and Escobar, 1995.)

The new vision of rural reality is thus an interaction between the results mentioned and the effects and externalities, both positive and negative. This new vision is based on observation of the current situation and on an understanding of the phenomenon that create it and then maintain it with first-generation effects, constraints and the alternatives they produce, and the interaction between them. In other words, there are growing advantages with respect to demand and the capacity for interaction, advantages that are becoming available to rural populations and societies, but there are also significant limitations in accessing this potential and opportunities for staying in industry, due to the structures of rural economic organization.

The important thing to understand is that rural reality today is different from the one that existed two decades ago, and consequently, the solution to its unresolved problems must take these new conditions into account. A new vision of the rural reality is characterized by the following elements:

- a) the rural-urban continuum and the obsolescence of formal definitions for these spheres;
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- e) the organization of the rural life style;
- f) local expression of democratization;
- g) political-administrative decentralization;
- h) the gender situation of women and their participation in productive activities
- i) the participation of young people of both sexes in productive activities; and
- j) the management of the environment and natural resources.

This new vision of rural reality is founded on the conviction that “sustainable rural development”<sup>1</sup> necessarily includes that of gender equity<sup>2</sup> in at least two basic senses. On the one hand, it is impossible to conceive of human development that only—or mostly—benefits half of the population. On the other hand, experience indicates that those societies that make full use of the capacities of all its members, based precisely on their diversity, achieve a higher degree of development. Today it is understood that gender equity is not just a matter of justice, but a question of efficiency and productivity.

As stated by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) “As long as women continue to be excluded from the development process, this process will continue to be weak and uneven (UNDP, 1995.)” In a general sense, this idea is not new. More than a century and a half ago, that classic among economists, John Stuart Mill, stated that the best way to determine the degree of civilization achieved by a country is by observing the situation of its women. In other words, everything points to women being correct when they claim that reaching this conclusion at the end of the twentieth century shows the weight that discrimination for gender reasons has had and still has on social life and the thinking of humanity.

However, it is no coincidence that gender equity is being promoted with new resolve in the context of current development projects, precisely at the moment change is also being proposed for these paradigms. There is a growing body of evidence suggesting that the worldwide transformations now underway—which some attribute to economic globalization and others consider the advent of a truly new era—are not only economic in origin, but

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of “sustainable rural development” (SRD) has been defined by IICA as the process of transformation in rural societies and their land units, centered on people and broadening human opportunities, based on national strategies and specific policies for overcoming social, economic, ecological, and institutional imbalances (IICA, 1998.) Another IICA definition describes SRD as a “set of actions guided by a national strategy and policy, specifically designed to alter the factors responsible for social and economic inequities and the spatial, political, social, economic and institutional imbalances that limit rural sector development, ensuring the effective participation of the population in the benefits of development (IICA, 1995b.) The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) offers a simpler definition of SRD, as “ongoing improvement in the living standards of the rural population, which does not require continuous external financial support or erode the natural resource base (IDB, 1997a.)”

<sup>2</sup> According to Gomáriz (1994), the concept of gender refers to a set of characteristics assigned to men and women in a society and acquired during the socialization process. These consist of the responsibilities, behavioral guidelines, values, preferences, fears, activities, and expectations that a culture assigns differently to men and women. In other words, *gender* defines what it means to be a man or woman in a given culture. As a result, different requirements and needs are derived for the personal development/fulfillment of men and women. The term *sex* differs from *gender* in that the latter refers to sociocultural rather than biological differences. As a social construction, gender is subject to historical, cultural, and social modifications, and to those stemming from changes in social organization. As a category of analysis, it is based primarily on the social relations between men and women. Thus, *gender equity* alludes to the idea of justice, recognition of the gender condition of each sex, and the differences between both, without implying any basis for discrimination.

also include changes in gender relations among their central themes. These changes imply basic modifications in the public and private spheres, leading to a profound transformation in societal terms of the juncture between micro and macro.

For UNDP, this change “will mark a significant milestone in human progress and, along the way, will change the majority of premises currently governing social, economic, and political life (UNDP, 1995.)” In other words, the transformation of gender relations to include a perspective of equity has been engraved on the current change of paradigms. This is true in terms of cause, as well as effect—both as part of the problem and its solution.

Failure to take this fact into account may result in losing sight of sustainable rural human development, in both political and technical terms. However, it should be clearly understood that this issue requires more than assistance, the approach used in the past, and one that limited women's options. Elimination of the historic discrimination against women is a task that must be addressed by humanity as a whole. A society that proposes to make the most of the capacities of each individual, based on equal rights and opportunities, needs an inclusive perspective—one that embraces the gender characteristics of women and men alike, so that both can assume joint responsibility in public and private spheres.

It is impossible to contemplate accelerated growth or equitable development without equal opportunity for men and women. Today, inclusion of a gender perspective in development issues is an economic as well as an ethical need. There is abundant empirical evidence on the problems that arise when 50% of the population (women) is excluded from the mainstream of development, and the high costs of rejecting at least a good part of the potential of this human resource. During the twenty-first century, this topic will undoubtedly constitute a fundamental element of public policy, discourse, and economic and social theory. Indeed, it is interesting to note that the most recent economic literature clearly recognizes the explanatory limitations of models that do not incorporate the “gender” variable. This literature suggests that “as socially-constructed institutions, markets also reflect and reinforce gender disparities,” and that “inequalities in gender relations are an obstacle to the attainment of macroeconomic objectives (López/IDB, 1999.)”

In Latin America, it has already become apparent that despite the fact that official statistics undervalue female participation in the job market, during the last four decades the number of women entering the labor force has grown faster than that of men. In 1960, only one in five economically active persons was female, yet by 1990, women accounted for one in three. In the Bahamas, Canada, Haiti, Jamaica and the United States, for example, women constitute approximately half of the economically active population (EAP.)

Nevertheless, advances toward gender equity have been slow and insufficient. To see this one need only look at the index on development related to women and the index on women's empowerment, both of which are calculated and published by the UNDP in its reports on human development. The first patently obvious truth is that there is “currently no society where women have the same opportunities as men, with no distinction between North and South.” These differences are across the board. Although women's labor participation is growing, they suffer from salary discrimination and greater unemployment rates. Women are the most affected by poverty, and are severely underrepresented in administrative, executive, and political positions in both the legislative and executive

branches. They have made their greatest advances in the areas of education and health, but not in the economic or political spheres.

Examples of this last point include the continuing “invisibility” and undervaluation of women’s labor. According to the 1995 UNDP *Human Development Report*, if women’s activities were seen as market transactions, they would represent 70% of world production, and the current calculation in 1995 dollars would have to be adjusted upward by some US\$23 billion.

There can be no doubt that if these conditions are indicative of the general reality, then those facing rural women are much harsher in terms of inequity, access to productive resources, quality of life, and invisibility. This fact is borne out in innumerable studies on the topic. That is precisely the central focus of analysis this document. The intention is not only to call attention to the effects of this reality in building a society of greater solidarity and equity but, primarily, to highlight the restrictions it imposes on growth and on the sustainability of any development model that may be proposed.

Likewise, the theme of rural reality, which was put aside during the decades of structural adjustment and limited to discussion of lower tariffs on agricultural products and the demands of globalization, has again emerged as a central topic in rethinking the development model. It is clear that “with the globalization process, there are winners and losers among and within the rural sectors of Latin American countries” (López/IDB, 1999.) In addition, the performance of the rural sector performance has been unsatisfactory, and once again the need is being expressed for macroeconomic policies to be accompanied by appropriate sectoral policies (López/IDB, 1999.)

These findings are now accompanied by reflections about the nature of the rural reality, which goes beyond economics and agriculture, to spatial, cultural, and yes, why not say it, human aspects. The concept of *rural capital* is now being talked about, a term that includes all the elements mentioned previously but also include natural capital (López/IDB, 1999.) The point of departure is the recognition that rural society is a way of life (generally linked with urban society), characterized by a specific order established within the space in which it operates. Although social relations within these societies are dominated by the interests of rural actors pursuing agricultural activities, within the perspective of an extended agriculture, these relations are also based on other areas of production that are directly linked, whether these involve transformation or services (IICA, 1998<sup>a</sup>.)

This topic is essential if the aim is to understand the phenomena affecting society as a whole (“rural poverty is both the result and, simultaneously, the cause of structural imbalances at the national level—IICA, 1998<sup>a</sup>”), something which is not possible without incorporating the territorial dimension, (not just the productive dimension.) Moreover, this perspective requires the promotion of public policies within a multisectoral and multidimensional dynamic, fostering an “institutional framework that empowers the capacity of individuals and groups to act (IICA, 1998<sup>a</sup>.)”

It is crucial to develop sustainable rural development policies and strategies to functionally link rural and urban areas, and encourage processes to reduce poverty; increase agricultural production; diminish spatial imbalances and the rural-urban gap; strengthen coexistence, democratic institutions, and social capital; overcome legal obstacles that hinder the population’s access to goods and services; develop instruments for the use and management of rural habitat in ecologically fragile areas; promote access of women and

indigenous populations to the benefits of development; create favorable conditions for integrating rural youth in productive activities; and foster a broader exercise of citizenship. Only then can we attain development that is balanced, and characterized by solidarity, equity and sustainability (IICA, 1998a.)

The incorporation of gender as part of the framework of the new vision for sustainable rural development could not be more opportune and necessary. It cannot be denied that, in practice, dialogue on agricultural and rural development has lacked a gender perspective. Women's invisibility in this sector has been dramatic. Despite irrefutable evidence of the "feminization of agriculture," the impact of this dynamic on sectoral policies has been marginal.

This topic has mostly been addressed as a short-term and social problem. Nevertheless, women's participation in the agricultural sector and rural activities, in general, is neither circumstantial nor temporary, but structural and permanent. As a consequence, the problem should be approached from both a social and a productive perspective. Even though the majority of these women and their families live in poverty, assistance policies are not the solution. Women's poverty stems from the nature of their integration in the productive process and decades of accumulated deficiencies in their human capital formation. Their living conditions are not simply due to economic conditions, but also to the predominance of inequitable and unequal gender relations.

With respect to rural and agricultural development, the absence of this perspective in public policy formation has limited its effectiveness and resulted in the failure of a host of initiatives aimed at modernizing and diversifying small productive units. This is the result of ignoring the family character of these units and thus, the specific dynamic in which they are framed: the relations among a unit's family members, which constitute the nucleus of diverse economic, reproductive and social activities. As long as knowledge of this reality is incomplete and there is no understanding of the true role women play in the rural and agricultural milieu (in economic, cultural, social, and political terms) or of the effects of gender inequality on their living conditions, strategies designed for this sector will not achieve objectives for development that balances social, productive, and environmental factors, nor will they attain any sustainable improvement of the population's living conditions.

It is equally important to propose a gender perspective that does not attempt to generalize the situations of women into a single reality; there is no one "rural woman," there are many. Consequently, just as a comprehensive policy is required for addressing the topic of gender, differentiated policies are needed to address the topic of rural women.

This has far-reaching policy and political implications. With respect to policy formation, to date marginal actors have been asked to assume a predominant role. One clear example is provided by the system of rural and agricultural institutions, which up to now has been viewed as an agent that "collaborates" with social institutions in addressing this problem, but not as a central actor in the problem itself.

With respect to political implications, it is evident that discussion of decentralization, the intensification of democracy, and citizen participation have placed new emphasis on the land variable, with significant implications for the political system and the development of a new institutional framework. Today it is understood that social capital plays a primary role in a country's development. A study by the World Bank found that 66% of a country's growth is



explained by the accumulation of social and human capital. Investing in people (human capital), together with the development of capacity for dialogue, shared values, and networks of solidarity (social capital) are seen today as clearly essential elements, not only for sustaining peace within society, but also for growth itself. Within this perspective, there has been broad recognition—which is already a step forward—of the important role of women in the formation of human and social capital. The challenge now lies in promoting policies to combat the obstacles still faced by women as a result of their gender and thus pave the way for more equitable participation in these areas.

It is from this new vision of rural reality that we examine here the situation of the hemisphere's rural women in terms of gender equity, in order to present the political, conceptual, and programmatic elements for a proposal of strategic action on behalf of rural women and gender equity, offered by the Institute of Inter-American Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA.)

## **II. Women's Gender Situation and the New Vision of Rural Reality**

IICA's proposal for strategic action to promote rural women within the framework of the new rural reality is based on the following elements derived from the appraisal carried out thus far in the hemisphere:

- Strategies, policies and programs developed for agricultural modernization and rural development have not ensured the active participation of all social actors and have been deficient in their conception, methods, and implementation.
- Agricultural and rural development programs aimed at integrating women have focused on improving their "condition" without affecting their "position," and emphasized their reproductive roles.
- New rural development themes are not incorporating the demands, interests, or capabilities of women and men in the different socioeconomic groups that make up the human map in the rural world.
- The adjustment required to correct the deficient situation outlined so far began only relatively recently, and its operational development has been limited. Consequently, it will require a greater effort, which translates into institutional adjustments, both in international cooperation agencies and national organizations and institutions.

### **2. 1. The Principal Problems of Rural Women**

During the 1980s, but even more recently, a significant number of studies have been made on problems affecting rural women in the region. International and regional agencies have contributed to building an understanding of the situation experienced by rural women. The problems are clear and there is an extensive list of proposals for action. These range from the need to fill research gaps; the oft-repeated urgency of raising awareness in decision-makers and strengthening the formation of those in charge of implementing rural sector programs in our countries; to the clarity (from a strategic point of view) of promoting public policies for women and gender equity at the national and sectoral levels.<sup>3</sup>

The following section offers a systematization of the main problems facing rural women in their different realms of experience, and not only those related to agricultural activities.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Problems Associated with Agricultural Production**

- Invisibility or underreporting of women's participation in the rural economy;
- Wage and income discrimination
- Difficulties in accessing land
- Difficulties in accessing credit
- Business management and marketing difficulties
- Training and technical assistance needs
- Absence of strategic public policies

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<sup>3</sup> See: FAO, 1986; UN, 1989; IICA, 1991; Cazanga, 1993; IICA, 1993; Chiriboga *et al*, 1995; and Kleysen, 1996a and b.

<sup>4</sup> Systematization taken from Grynspan, 1997.

### **Problems Associated with the Rural Sociocultural Context**

- Invisibility of women as the possessors of rights and as social actors;
- Vulnerability of their human rights (violence, etc.);
- Persistence of rigid discriminatory stereotypes;
- Inadequate living conditions (health conditions, etc.);
- Discrimination with respect to housing ownership;
- Fragility of social rights (association, etc.)

Among the gamut of problems facing rural women are the crises common to traditional agricultural economies—those based on the intensive use of family members to perform manual labor and characterized by weak or nonexistent integration in supralocal or supranational markets. Increasingly, women working in agriculture are being relegated to manual, non-mechanized tasks, leading to the feminization of certain productive orientations, as well as to situations where men are “absent” in small or marginal operations that represent a secondary source of family income.

Likewise, the restructuring of the agricultural sector has had very different consequences for men and women in terms of labor. With the transformation in the composition of local labor markets and the growing importance among families to pursue multiple income-earning activities in the rural milieu, incursion into nonagricultural activities has also been different for men and women. Consequently, an examination of the situation of rural women must refer to the concept of gender as a social category of analysis with respect to the power relations that determine women’s participation in our countries’ social, political, and economic life.

Rural women have lost opportunities in labor activities that have been traditional female strongholds. Consequently, their options to being confined to domestic tasks have involved taking on a residual and “substitute” role for non-existent machinery or absent men; or a disorganized participation in a labor market undergoing—from a variety of perspectives—a slow shift away from farming activities. In most cases, this process is still too rigid to absorb women’s demand for nonagricultural employment.

### **2.2. Traditional Responses to the Problems of Rural Women**

The traditional responses to these problems have consisted of either inadequate policy proposals or simply an absence of specific policies for rural women.

With respect to **agricultural production**, traditional responses have primarily consisted of:

- a) Macro policies that fail to take into account the critical role women play in the rural economy;
- b) Development of regional programs for rural women that were not part of macro agricultural policies at the national level; and
- c) A large number of isolated plans with no strategic perspective.

The traditional response to problems associated with the **rural socio-cultural context**, has been characterized by:

- a) The absence of national policies to promote women and gender equity; and

- b) National policies to promote women that have failed to penetrate rural areas, or national policies that cover rural areas, but that fail to take into account their specific needs (which generally means policies for urban women that have been mechanically applied to their rural counterparts.)

One example that illustrates the inefficiency of this type of traditional response is the Policy for Campesino Women promoted by the Colombian Government in 1984 (one of Latin America's pioneers in this field.) The policy established a series of measures to "increase rural women's participation as beneficiaries of State programs, recognizing their status as potentially efficient producers, but with insufficient access to support services with a conceptual approach focusing on Women in Development. This was the predominate approach at that time, which emphasized measures and programs directed exclusively to benefit women, without considering the interrelations or social and economic differences stemming from the specific roles performed by men and women<sup>5</sup> (Vargas del Valle, 1997.)"

This policy "had no component to ensure conceptual or operative coordination with the policies, programs and services of state agencies. Consequently, government institutions were hindered in their attempts to adjust their aggregate supply of services and programs to the specific needs of women within a more general context of equity and development. In general, agencies such as Colombia's Integrated Rural Development Fund (Fondo DRI), the Colombian Institute for Agrarian Reform (INCORA), and the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), limited their activities to the promotion of simple, clearly-defined projects aimed at generating income on behalf of small groups of women. However, these represented isolated and marginalized efforts outside the institutional scope of activities" (Vargas del Valle, 1997.)

### **2.3. Elements of a New Strategy on Women and Gender within the Framework of the New Rural Reality**

Given that this traditional response has failed to address the situation adequately and efficiently, a new vision of the rural reality implies that a strategy must be developed to coordinate comprehensive policy covering these three areas: rural women, gender equity; and sustainable rural development. The policy should take into account those aspects related to agricultural production, as well as the rural sociocultural context.

**In the area of agricultural production, the strategy would promote:**

- a) The adoption of macro policies based on highly reliable information regarding the real participation of women in the rural economy;
- b) The development of sustainable programs and projects not solely aimed at access to resources, but also at regulatory and practical changes in productive activities;
- c) Regional women's programs that are not based on the interests of cooperation agencies, but on the elements listed above.

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<sup>5</sup> It should be pointed out, however, that one important result obtained from the application of this 1984 policy was the creation of numerous women's groups. These organized groups have significantly influenced the movement of campesino women's organizations in Colombia. Moreover, subsequent efforts by successive presidential administrations, made with a view to promoting a gender equity policy, particularly for rural women, have been based on the recognition of past errors as a means to significantly improve their activities.

**With respect to the rural socio-cultural context, a new strategy would entail implementation of national policies to promote women and gender equity that would provide for the establishment of:**

- a) Real coverage of rural areas; and
- b) Policy measures that take into account the specific characteristics of the rural context.

### III. Situation of Rural Women in Latin America and the Caribbean

The point of departure in determining the situation of the female population residing in rural areas is the awareness that there is no one "type" of rural woman, but rather a diversity of realities in which rural women live and experience. Moreover, despite this heterogeneity, all rural women share certain general characteristics and conditions corresponding to the situation of the countries in which they live.

Essentially, the diversity of "types" of rural women in the region is related to such variables as age group, ethnicity, education, health conditions, fertility, and others. However, all rural women are subject to gender-based discrimination<sup>6</sup> and from their integration in productive activities, disadvantages that hinder full exercise of their human rights. Consequently, the majority of rural women live in conditions of poverty, and their contributions to the economy are not sufficiently valued or recognized. These situations vary at the state and subregional levels, depending on general socioeconomic conditions, the degree of institutional development with respect to women and gender issues, and the existence/absence of public policies to promote women, including those designed specifically for rural women.

Based on general sociodemographic information and that obtained from agricultural censuses, rural women may be classified into three categories, based on their degree of involvement with agricultural production:

- 1) Registered agricultural producers (economically visible producers);
- 2) Women living in agricultural families, but economically invisible as producers (not registered as landowners or tenants); and
- 3) Rural women who do not participate in agricultural production.

This typology indicates the importance of taking different activities into account for each sector of rural women. Unfortunately, the statistical dimension of this classification has not been carried out in many Latin American and Caribbean countries. Recently, an effort to perform this measurement took place in Honduras. According to this study, of the total number of rural women over 10 years of age (estimated at 1,020,000), women producers (economically visible) constitute only 3%, or 30,000. Women living in agricultural families (economically invisible producers) constitute 71% or 720,000; and rural women that do not directly participate in agricultural production constitute 26% or 270,000 (UNDP, 1998.)

It can be inferred from this statistical information that although the majority of rural women are non-landowning producers (women living in agricultural families), a significant number of rural women do not fit the image of the *campesino* woman directly involved in agricultural production. Thus, it is essential to determine whether the corresponding figures in other Latin American countries are similar.

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<sup>6</sup> A set of characteristics assigned to men and women in a society that are acquired during the socialization process. These consist of the responsibilities, behavioral guidelines, values, preferences, fears, activities, and expectations that a culture assigns differently to men and women. In other words, *gender* defines what it means to be a man or woman in a given culture; hence, different requirements and needs are derived for the personal development/fulfillment of men and women. The term *sex* differs from *gender* in that the latter refers to sociocultural rather than biological differences. Gender, as a social construction, is subject to historical and social modifications, as well as those derived from changes in social organization. As a category of analysis, it is based primarily on the social relations between men and women. (Gomáriz, 1994.)

There is an additional type of system used to classify the participation of rural women in the labor force:

- a) ***Agricultural producers***
  - i. Non-intensive producers on the plot who do not directly work the land, but purchase inputs and seeds and take care of the family orchard/vegetable garden and small livestock
  - ii. Producers that, in addition to the above, work on the plot and make production decisions (primarily women that live near the plot)
- b) ***Agricultural cooperative members***
  - i. Cooperative members
  - ii. Women that work alongside the men, but who are not members themselves
- c) ***Agricultural businesswomen that work primarily in the market and in the exchange of goods*** (especially in the Caribbean and the Andean Region)
- d) ***Agricultural day laborers who work on large farms*** (young women, single women and women heads of household make up between 20 and 80% of the labor force, depending on the country)
- e) ***Salaried workers*** (the most recent phenomenon in the region; these workers are estimated to make up over 80% of the labor used in processing and packaging fruit for export and in flower cultivation)
- f) ***Rural microbusinesswomen*** (most work in informal-sector activities, out of the home, and earn low incomes)
  - i. Microbusinesswomen that pursue non-agricultural activities (primarily handicrafts and weaving);
  - ii. Agricultural microbusinesswomen (primarily involved in agribusiness processing.)
- g) ***Women that pursue non-agricultural activities*** (services sector or other manufacturing activities not included among those listed above.)

This second classification system provides an additional breakdown of the elements included in the first typology. Thus, the first two categories of the first system correspond to the first four categories of the second (to which the subcategory “agricultural microbusinesswomen” should also be added.) The third category (“rural women that do not participate in agricultural production” is broken down into the last three categories of the second system.

Moreover, it is important to cross reference this information on the economic participation of rural women—both visible and invisible—with that obtained on the position women hold in the family. This data is especially important with respect to the roles of women as sole heads of household (permanently or temporarily), as wives/companions, and daughters and dependent females (minors and the elderly.)

In general terms, rural women of Latin America and the Caribbean live in socioeconomic, legal, political, and cultural conditions that are inferior to those of their male counterparts. Women have less access to productive resources, such as work, water, land, tree

products, forest species, technology, agricultural inputs, credit, markets, agricultural extension, training, and even labor. Increasingly, women have less access to social services, such as education, health information and health care, and family planning. Moreover, they face historic and cultural limitations stemming from the socialization of their gender identity, making it difficult for them to improve their living conditions. Women are the ones that must “mobilize to compensate for losses” attributable to economic crises, structural adjustment programs, or a lack of resources in the home, whether by generating additional income or by compensating for their reduced access to basic services, primarily in health (IDB, 1997c.)

This complex situation gives rise to “disproportionately negative repercussions” for women due to problems of poverty, food security, and environmental degradation. “The causes and effects of these repercussions are systemic in nature and, generally, have serious implications for agricultural and rural development, as well as for all initiatives directed toward improving nutrition levels, the supply and distribution of food and agricultural products, and living conditions for rural populations (IDB 1997c.)”

As a result, the term “feminization of poverty”—used by the UN to describe the plight of women attributable to the economic crisis of the 1980s, structural adjustment programs, armed conflicts, and drought—has recently been extended to the “feminization of agriculture,” a concept that has recently entered the vocabulary in order to characterize the growing concentration of women in agricultural activities (IDB, 1997c.)

Although significant advances have been made toward improving living conditions for women, including rural women, these “have not been sufficiently systematic in their approach to bring about a reversal in trends toward the feminization of poverty and agriculture, nor to reduce the burden on women stemming from environmental degradation. In fact, policies that adversely affect rural women still persist in many parts of the world. Such policies have the effect of slowing down or even reversing progress already achieved in the areas of mother-infant mortality rates, women’s health (reproductive) and nutrition, access to productive resources, training, and education (IDB, 1997c.)”

The following sections describe some of the main characteristics of rural women in the region, according to different factors.

### **3.1. Sociodemographic Profile**

According to several studies, in Latin America and the Caribbean there are approximately 150 million people living in rural areas; half are women. This figure represents 30% of the region’s total population. However, the numbers vary according to country and region. In Argentina, the Bahamas, Chile, Uruguay and Venezuela, only 15% of the total population live in rural areas, while more than half the population of Central America and the Caribbean is rural. The rural female population, like the general population, is largely composed of young people. However, the female population has been getting older during the last 40 years: those under 5 years of age account for 10% of the total; from 5 to 14 years 20%; from 15 to 24 years 19%; from 25 to 49 years 35%; and over 50 years 16% (CELADE, 1991; FLACSO, 1995.)



With respect to households headed by women, their number has risen in both rural and urban areas. This is due to the registration of women with authorities, as well as to other factors such as migratory flows of male laborers, forced migrations for environmental reasons political-military conflicts, and changes in the family structure (IDB, 1997c.)

According to an IICA/IDB study on women food producers, the percentage of women heads of household in rural areas ranges between 8 and 57% for the region. In Paraguay this figure is 8%; in southern Brazil 12%; in Peru 13%; in Uruguay 14%; in Bolivia 17%; in Colombia 19%; in Panama 27%; in Honduras 29%; in Nicaragua 31%; in Ecuador 33%; in Costa Rica, Suriname and Venezuela 34%; in Guyana 40%; in Guatemala 43%; in Barbados and El Salvador 47%; and in Jamaica 57% (Kleysen, 1996.)

In terms of the marital status of rural women, marriage continues to be the norm. There are high numbers of married women in some countries and subregions: in Argentina, 52% of women are married; in Chile 49%; and in Costa Rica and Mexico 46%. Countries with the lowest percentages of married women are Cuba (22%), the Dominican Republic (25%), Nicaragua (27%), and Panama (28%.) Moreover, these countries have the highest levels of cohabitation (or common law marriage), either equaling or surpassing their percentages of married women. There is a downward trend in marriage, while the number of women who opt for cohabitation, separation, and divorce is on the rise. Women cohabiting with their partners account for one of every five women in the Dominican Republic (22%), Panama (28%), Nicaragua (27%) and Cuba (21%), while the lowest levels are found in Chile (2%), Uruguay (5%) and Argentina (7%) (FLACSO, 1995.)

The fertility rate of rural women ranges between 2.8 and 7.0 children per woman of childbearing age. The lowest fertility rates are found in Uruguay, Colombia and Costa Rica, whereas Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Peru and Paraguay have the highest, with more than six children per woman<sup>7</sup> (FLACSO, 1995.) Fertility rates are especially high in Central America and countries that have significant indigenous populations. These high rates are attributable to a series of determining factors, such as a mother's age at the birth of her first child, the level of education attained, and socioeconomic level.<sup>8</sup>

### **3.2. Poverty Conditions**

According to the World Bank (1996), in Latin America one-fourth of the population lives on less than US\$1 per day. The most generalized concentrations of poverty occur in Central America and northeastern Brazil, where 60% live below the poverty line. According to the IDB (1997d), 39% of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean is considered poor and 17% indigent, totaling approximately 209 million people (1994 data.)

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<sup>7</sup> Uruguay 2.8, Colombia 3.8, Costa Rica 4.1, Panama 5.4, Ecuador 5.5, El Salvador 5.9, Venezuela and Paraguay 6.1, Peru 6.2, Bolivia 6.3, Nicaragua 6.4, Guatemala 6.5, Honduras 7.0 (FLACSO, 1995.)

<sup>8</sup> In this regard, the IDB (1997c) holds that "it is very likely that having a large family will continue to be advantageous and contribute to the social and economic security of poor rural women, both in the short- and long-term, especially in the lesser developed countries. This is attributable to the great reliance on child labor in the absence of agricultural and domestic technologies to reduce the need for manual labor, and to the absence of social security networks." As has been pointed out in different international meetings (UN Conferences on Environment and Development and on Population and Development), in order to change reproductive behaviors, fertility rates and ultimately, general demographic tendencies, it is crucial to improve the legal and social status of women.

In spatial terms, according to the IDB (1999a) and CEPAL (1999), 54% of the region's rural households are below the poverty line (30% urban) and 31% are in conditions of extreme poverty<sup>9</sup> (10% urban.) This indicates that the number of rural poor in Latin America is approximately 78 million, 47 million of which live in conditions of extreme poverty. The IDB estimates that more than 70% people living in absolute poverty are women (IDB, 1997c.)

In conditions of poverty, Central American women "are tacitly responsible for carrying out a strategy for family survival and for coordinating the stages and opportunities of the productive process of the family farm. On occasions when there are severe liquidity and credit restrictions, women make it possible to continue the productive cycle and constitute the only contact with the market economy. (...) Women, due to the diversification of the tasks they perform, organize and link together the different stages of the agricultural cycle, including downtime (Chiriboga *et al*, 1995.)"

According to FAO (1988), 66% of the rural poor are small campesino farmers (47 million), 30% have no land (21%) and 4% are indigenous peoples<sup>10</sup> (3 million.) According to the IDB (1997d), small-scale producers and campesinos dominate in the region. Of the total 17 million productive units, 4 million are small-scale and 11.7 million are small landowners.<sup>11</sup> In other words, there are a total of 15.7 million productive units, each with less than three hectares of land.

These figures indicate that "approximately two thirds of the rural poor are agricultural producers and (...) at least one third of them are *minifundistas* or smallholders with little possibility of overcoming their conditions of poverty through agricultural development. This means that more than half of the rural poor have either no access or only limited access to the productive resources needed to generate adequate income by pursuing their own agricultural production activities (almost 40 million or 55% of the total rural poor—IDB, 1997a.) Projections in this regard point to a larger increase in the segment of the rural poor lacking agricultural potential as opposed to the segment with access to adequate resources.

All this supports the view that "rural poverty is more severe than urban poverty." And this is not only due to the larger proportion of households in conditions of extreme poverty, but also because rural poverty "is more difficult to overcome (IDB, 1997a.)" With respect to obstacles faced by this population, the IDB identifies four factors that can affect rural

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<sup>9</sup> The poverty line is defined as insufficient income to meet daily nutritional requirements and other basic needs (health, clothing, education, and transportation.) The extreme poverty line is defined as insufficient income to meet minimum daily nutritional requirements. Poverty indicators include the indigent population. Analysis by CEPAL and the IDB is based on household surveys administered in the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

<sup>10</sup> According to the FAO (1988), *indigenous population* refers to "the native population of Amerindian descendants, including indigenous populations with a hunter-gatherer tradition (tribal groups of tropical forest areas of the Amazon and Orinoco basins and from Central America and Panama) and those of a sedentary agricultural tradition, descendants of pre-Columbian, Andean and *Mesoamerican* civilizations." However, this organization points out that, traditionally, only the first group was counted (approximately 3 million people) and not the vast numbers of small *campesino* farmers, descendants of pre-Colombian civilizations, which if included, could surpass 30 million people.

<sup>11</sup> The number of small landowners has increased by 47% between 1980 and 1990 (IDB, 1997d.)

transformation in the region. One of these is, precisely, gender relations and the condition of women.<sup>12</sup>

Estimates by the FAO indicate that half of the income of Latin American campesino families is derived from activities carried out by women. Moreover, 15% of poor rural households cover their daily needs from this contribution; between 20 and 35% of these households have eliminated their poverty with this income (FAO, 1986.)

According to a World Bank study that summarizes recent studies on rural poverty in Latin America and analyzes poverty in the context of several countries of the region, economists working in this area have underestimated the enormous negative effects attributable to factors such as family size and dependency on per capita income. The study indicates that if poor rural families were able to reduce both their size and dependency ratio (number of dependents divided by the number of workers) to levels at a par with their non-poor counterparts, their per capita income would increase by almost 35% (López and Valdés, 1997.)<sup>13</sup>

This topic leads to an analysis of the fertility rates of women from poor rural families. In the opinion of the authors, recent studies suggest that, more than simply a question of family planning, the most important means for reducing fertility is through the development of public policies to improve women's situation. These should include opportunities for women to increase their income, increase their education levels, and improve their status in society. According to the study, the main reason why poor families have such high dependency ratios is due to the large number of children and not the number of unemployed adults (including the elderly.) Consequently, the study concludes that any strategy seeking to diminish the level of rural poverty must necessarily promote policies to improve education and labor conditions for women.

### **3.3 Work and Employment**

Different studies and organizations have confirmed the close relationship between women and the rural milieu. Women produce one-half of all foodstuffs consumed worldwide (IDB/UNDP, 1993.) In regions such as the Caribbean, women produce between 60 and 80% of basic foodstuffs (IDB, 1997c.) Moreover, in many countries, women are in charge of managing farms, transporting firewood and water, and raising animals (while men, companions and older children work on commercial farms or in urban centers) (IDB, 1997a.)

In Latin America, where the agricultural system of domestic orchards/vegetable gardens is one of the most complex known, women have "important responsibilities and considerable knowledge of agriculture and food systems. Women frequently take on a large share of the work and make decisions on a variety of postharvest operations, such as the storage, handling, and marketing of products, in addition to playing a main role in food preparation

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<sup>12</sup> In addition to gender relations, this category included ethnic and poverty relations. Other factors are a) integration and competitiveness; b) the new role of economic agents; and c) progressive degradation and, consequently, revaluation of the environment.

<sup>13</sup> The size of poor family households averages 1.2 persons more than that of non-poor households, and have dependency ratios double that of non-poor households. On average, reducing a household by one member will increase per capita household income by between 4 and 12%, whereas reduction of one dependent increases per capita income by approximately 10%.

away from the farm, whether in small businesses or as salaried agribusiness workers (IDB, 1997c.)”

Consequently, the IDB asserts, “it is extremely important to consider the role of women (...) when analyzing any rural development alternative to ensure the efficiency of investments and actions undertaken, including activities in the area of agroforestry technological development (IDB, 1997a.)”

Since the 1980s, the rural labor force has been decreasing: from 32.4 million in 1980 to 28.8 million in 1994. However, the female portion has been increasing, from 3.4 to 4.4 million over the same period. “The progressive contribution of women to family income has been responsible for keeping a growing contingent of the region’s rural households out of poverty (or for diminishing its effects.) The decreasing relative importance of agricultural activities and production for home consumption, the expansion of commercial and services sectors, as well as the presence of salaried work in rural areas have facilitated the incorporation of women in labor markets. Moreover, these changes have also made women’s participation more visible. Women operate and own between 30 and 60% of all microenterprises in the region, and have recently become one of the fastest growing subsectors (IDB, 1997a.)”

According to an IICA/IDB study on women food producers in the region, a recalculation of the volume women represent in terms of the economically active population (EAP) in the agricultural/rural sector—due to problems of underreporting official figures are lower—found “that the number of women participating in agricultural economies may grow from between two and five times, which necessarily changes the perception that their participation is marginal (Kleysen, 1996.)” This recalculation holds, for example, that the number of economically active women in Central America is not 184 thousand, but 800 thousand, due to the underreporting of female labor at a rate that ranges from between 125 and 500%. With respect to the Andean region, the recalculation indicated the presence of 5 million “invisible” women in the agricultural sector, which means that female employment in the rural sector has increased to 10 million: 168 thousand women in the Southern Cone (Paraguay and Uruguay), or underreporting of 254 and 69% respectively; and 170 thousand women in the Caribbean, or three times more than the official number.

In the developing world, in spite of the fact that rural women work up to 16 hours a day—60 or more hours per week—doing domestic, agricultural, or other tasks (production; preparation, marketing and food processing; gathering firewood and carrying water; carrying out other domestic chores; childcare and care of the family in general), most are not directly remunerated for their work. On average, women work one-third more hours than do men, but receive only one-tenth of a man’s income. Clearly, rural women “are overemployed in terms of hours worked and underemployed with respect to perceived income (IDB 1997c.)”

For example, in Central America, “women participate intensively in productive activities on campesino production units and on small agricultural holdings. Estimates indicate that these women represent on the order of 25% of the EAP in agriculture of Central American countries, spending an average of four hours per day performing agricultural tasks in small production units, where they participate in the majority of productive activities (Chiriboga *et al.*, 1995.)”

Women respond especially well to technological change and thus have the potential to make production more dynamic.

Women's participation in agricultural tasks is both structural and permanent—regardless of the diversity found in productive units or the agricultural cycle (cultural differences considered.) “In general, women participate throughout the process, from preparing the land to postharvest activities. It has been observed that women's participation is more concentrated in tasks such as weeding and sowing, as well as in harvesting and postharvest activities. The time women dedicate to agricultural activities fluctuates between 2 and 6 hours per day, or a 4-hour daily average for the region, representing nearly 25% of their work day (Chiriboga *et al*, 1995.)”

With respect to livestock, women's participation is significant, both in terms of small animals and heavy livestock (Kleysen, 1996.) Nevertheless, the extent of this participation is different with respect to both. In terms of small animals, women participate in practically all of the associated chores. However, in the case of heavy livestock, women help with specific tasks such as feeding, grazing, and milking, while their male counterparts perform others, including breeding and animal health. With respect to small animals, women perform 60% of feeding and grazing activities (men 29%), and 34% of animal product extraction activities (men 8%.) For heavy livestock, women's participation in feeding and grazing activities is 45% (men 38%), and 41% in product extraction activities (men 31%.)

Women play an essential role in implementing survival strategies in the rural milieu, both in terms of productive and reproductive activities. In the case of strategies for substituting tasks performed by other members of the family unit, women may substitute for men. However, in strategies that seek to diversify household activities, women continue to be in charge of all these and receive practically no help (women of different ages.)

In other words, rural production units, like other areas of work (outside the home), follow a gender-based division of labor. However, it is flexible with respect to the economic opportunities of the different members of the household. This is not the case with reproductive or domestic activities, for which women are primarily responsible, as men do not substitute or help with these activities.

It is understood that two of the most important survival strategies in rural areas are the diversification of activities in which family members participate and substitution of one another (of the same sex and between both sexes) in these activities<sup>14</sup>. In terms of gender, women play a more important role than men do in these strategies, given that they must substitute men in the family productive activities (Kleysen, 1996.)

According to IICA/IDB, the contribution of the region's rural women to family income ranges between 27 and 66%, counting both economically compensated and non-compensated activities carried out within the production unit, and income generated outside it (Kleysen, 1996.) The main difference between men and women in this regard is that the women's contribution is derived primarily from within the production unit, especially agricultural and livestock activities, while men work at salaried jobs away from the farm.

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<sup>14</sup> The other important strategy involves diversified land use.

"For the majority of campesino women, income derived from family orchards/vegetable gardens and associated activities constitutes the only financial resource over which women have control and decision-making power. (...) Women's participation is essential with respect to production decisions in the family productive unit, and (...) with respect to technological changes. (...) In cases where family members work outside the family productive unit, women's participation in productive activities increases and intensifies. (...) There is a serious identity problem affecting women, in that they generally do not perceive themselves as producers. Despite the fact that between 70 and 90% of the women interviewed reported performing agricultural activities, only between 30 and 40% of these identified themselves as producers (Chiriboga *et al*, 1995.)"

### **3. 4 Access to Resources**

Despite the important contribution women make to the rural and family economy, they have not enjoyed equitable access to land, credit, capital, agricultural extension, and training services. However, there is an inherent contradiction here, given that women are the primary users of water, soil, and forest resources, both for the basic survival of their families and as a source of secondary income.<sup>15</sup> Although in recent years there has been progress at the legal and institutional levels in this regard, "residual discrimination continues to persist <sup>16</sup>(IDB, 1997a.)"

With respect to technical assistance, it is estimated that only 5% of women working in agriculture throughout Latin America and the Caribbean have received training in productive activities (Kleynsen, 1996); nevertheless, when they do, it is inadequate in terms of their productive and reproductive roles.

Moreover, it has been found that, despite the active participation of women in economic activities and in the development of systems designed to offer them credit, women continue to lack access to the institutional credit sources needed to continue working and expanding their activities (FAO, 1986.) Consequently, women frequently seek credit from non-institutional sources (and accept the associated consequences.)

Access to land and the security of ownership continue to pose an obstacle to rural women. "The titleholders are their husbands, fathers and brothers, which in practice, hinders women from seeking credit from official sources or joining agricultural associations through which they might obtain inputs to stabilize and foster their production systems. The ability of rural women to access agricultural services worldwide represents only one twentieth of that available to men (IDB, 1997c.)"

### **3. 5. Education**

According to FLACSO, the educational level of young women has improved in recent decades, but there continues to be a high illiteracy rate among adult women, particularly in

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<sup>15</sup> According to the IDB, "it is necessary to recognize the technical skills rural women possess with respect to the sustainable use of resources, conservation, land use and water planning, pest management, forest exploitation and conservation, and the management of phyto and zoogenetic resources (IDB, 1997c.)"

<sup>16</sup> Clearly, this has to do with inadequate gender training and awareness among officials and technicians working in the rural sector.

countries with significant indigenous populations (FLACSO, 1995.) For example, 60% of rural Guatemalan women are illiterate, as are half of Bolivian women and 46% of Peruvian women. In the case of indigenous women, this figure is 74% in Guatemala and 76% in Paraguay. Moreover, rural women also have a low level of schooling, with less than half having completed primary school (Kleypen, 1996.)

Thirty years ago, rural women in the region significantly lagged behind both rural men and urban women in education. While urban women still have many more years of schooling than do rural women, the gap has closed considerably with regard to rural men. In the majority of Latin American countries, rural men and women have similar illiteracy rates. In some instances, the rate of women is even lower than that of men. However, it should be mentioned that progress in formal education has not translated into parallel improvements in professional education, which reflects the reality and needs of rural women.<sup>17</sup>

Shortcomings in education for rural women in the region persist even though this group's importance in rural development, their families, and countries in general has been recognized worldwide.

*"There is a direct correlation among the educational level of women, the fertility rate, family health, women's participation in the labor market, and their level of income. Negative discrimination in the average income of women is strongly associated with their lower number of years of schooling as compared to men. Investing in women's education is a way of reducing the transmission of poverty from one generation to the next (IDB, 1997b.)"*

*"Women's education is one of the investments with the greatest return in terms of environmental protection (World Bank, 1994.)"*

*"There is no doubt that investing in women's education is essential to fostering economic growth. Studies show that women's education can increase productivity and improve health, nutrition, natural resources management, and family planning. Educated women have smaller and healthier families, tend to have greater income, and foster the education of both their sons and daughters (IDB, 1997c.)"*

*"Even though some progress has been made in the participation of women in educational programs, their numbers are still insufficient in comparison with those for men in many countries. The benefits that could be reaped from the social development of women's education, continue to be an untapped potential (IDB, 1997c.)"*

### **3.6. Health Conditions**

Over the last three decades, major advances have been made in women's health in the region. One indicator that summarizes these achievements is increased life expectancy at

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<sup>17</sup> With respect to Honduras, *The Report on Human Development* shows that the educational shortcomings affecting rural women are very serious, particularly among women over 30. Of particular importance is the fact that they are practically excluded from professional education, especially that related to agricultural production (UNDP, 1998.)

birth for the female population; the regional average increased from 53 to 71 years (and from 50 to 66 for men.) However, this progress has not been equal in all fields of health, and there are also significant disparities among countries.

The countries that have made the most progress are Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Mexico, Panama, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Those with lesser achievements are Bolivia, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Peru.

Rural areas face infrastructure problems in health, water, and sanitation, affecting the entire population and with specific connotations for women, particularly in terms of reproductive health and births attended by trained medical personnel (translating into higher infant and maternal mortality rates.)

According to PAHO (cited in FLACSO, 1995), coverage for piped water services is only 48% for the rural population in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 86% for the urban population. Only 31% of the rural population, as compared with 81% of the urban population, have sewage removal systems.

The most general indicators definitely show a situation favorable to women in the region. For example, their life expectancy is greater than that of men. However, there are major shortcomings in certain basic fields for women, such as reproductive health. There is no complete and systematic information about reproductive behavior and no national registries on the use of family planning methods, except among married women or those cohabiting with a partner. Nor is any information available on abortions, and data are insufficient to learn about the wishes and demands of women regarding the number of children they would like to have.<sup>18</sup>

Life expectancy in rural areas is lower than in urban areas. According to available data (FLACSO, 1995), life expectancy in rural areas is between two and five years less than in urban areas. In Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico, these differences are similar for women and men (life expectancy is two years higher on average in urban areas.) In Panama, there are greater differences by sex (life expectancy for urban women is more than double that of urban men, in comparison with their rural counterparts.)<sup>19</sup>

Available data demonstrate the gap between urban and rural areas in the region with regard to births attended by medical personnel. In several countries, there is 90% coverage in urban areas, and less than 50% in rural areas (FLACSO, 1995.)

The fact that rural women often receive less food than men should be underscored. This holds true both in absolute terms and with regard to their nutritional needs (IDB, 1997c.)

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<sup>18</sup> Information available on 15 to 19-year old rural women in the region in legal and common law marriages who use some form of contraception is as follows: Guatemala 14% (as opposed to 43% of urban women); Bolivia 19% (vs 39% urban); El Salvador 30% (59%); Ecuador 33% (53%); Paraguay 39% (57%); Peru 41% (66%); northeast Brazil 49% (66%); the Dominican Republic 50% (60%); Colombia 59% (69%); and Mexico 59% (33%). (FLACSO, 1995.)

<sup>19</sup> Life expectancy for rural women is 60 (66 for urban women) in Colombia, 67 (69) in the Dominican Republic, and 68 (71) in Mexico. For men, these figures are 57 (62), 63 (65), and 63 (67), respectively. In Panama, life expectancy for rural women is 71 (77 for urban women), and 70 for rural men (72 for urban men.)



### **3.7. Decision- Making and Sociopolitical Participation**

Information available on decision-making processes in rural family units in Latin America and the Caribbean shows that women play an important role, which generally goes unrecognized (Kleypen, 1996.)<sup>20</sup> Women make 31% of productive decisions and 45% in consultation with men, while men make 25% of these decisions independently.<sup>21</sup> With regard to family and domestic reproductive concerns, decisions are practically the exclusive responsibility of women, with few men taking part in this process.

In the public sphere, educational disadvantages, the distance from decision-making centers, and the traditional cultural context in which rural women live hinder them (more so than urban women) from taking part in an equitable manner in society and politics and in all spheres of public decision-making. There is no information at the regional level regarding these factors. The limited data available suggest the need to differentiate between the means of participation for rural campesino women and those not directly linked with agricultural production, because when the former participate it is through rural or development organizations, while the latter play a more direct role in political parties and other organizational structures.

One area where society does not recognize women is in cooperative production. According to the UNDP, although women take part in the majority of cooperative activities in Honduras, census data show that they are not present in this sector. This statistic reflects the fact that the official members of cooperative organizations are men, not women. This problem particularly affects rural women of campesino families (UNDP, 1998.)

Campesino women face many disadvantages. Nonetheless, it should be pointed out that various campesino women's organizations have been organized in several countries throughout the region, sometimes as a result of tradition and in others, as a result of state initiatives.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> For example, the study carried out by IICA/IDB showed even though half of decisions concerning requests for financing are made between women and men in southern Brazil, women place the request in only approximately one-third of cases (Kleypen, 1996.)

<sup>21</sup> The leading trends are: a) shared decisions implying high levels of uncertainty and high levels of risk to the economic wellbeing of the family (requests for and use of financing and credit, what and where to plant, the amount of production to be sold or consumed, the use of earnings from the land and of monetary income); and b) decisions made only by men or women (depending on their relative degree of responsibility for the associated activity. Those involving less risk, or that are more routine, fall to women (type of livestock to raise, marketing, maintaining family farm records.) Examples for men include the type of inputs and tools to buy and use. In some countries, the organization of productive labor and the general management of agricultural activities are either shared or are the sole responsibility of men or women.

<sup>22</sup> This has been the case in Colombia with the National Association of Campesino and Indigenous Women (ANMUCIC), and in Honduras with the National Association of Campesino Women (ANAMUC.) In Brazil, since the end of the 1970s, rural women workers have been emerging as specific social actors. In 1982, the Movement of Women Workers brought together women field workers from Paraíba, and in 1984, consolidated the Movements and Organizations of Low-Income Women in Paraná. This represented a rural-urban bond that was indispensable in the major marches for agrarian reform. The Movement of Women Farmers brought together four thousand women in 1985 in Chapecó alone. In Bolivia, the National Federation of Campesino Women in Bolivia (Bartolina Sisa) was founded in 1980. Its purpose was to organize and guide rural campesino women in actively participating in social, economic, and political demands, making them independent of the stances taken by union organizations for men. Several conferences have been held to

According to the IDB, the participation of women in various organizational structures "is vital in exercising political pressure in order to achieve greater equality in development and to improve the social and economic circumstances of women (1997c.)"

### **3.8. Human Rights and Regulatory Framework**

According to various analyses, and even when many laws in existence are not explicitly discriminatory against women, the application of law favors men.<sup>23</sup> This is the case, for example, with regard to access to land. Men carry out the majority of transactions for lack of "institutional systems obligating them to take into account the criteria of women directly affected by these decisions (Chiriboga *et al*, 1995.)"

In rural areas, the basic problem is difficulty in accessing the application of existing laws. These circumstances are more dramatic for women because they face the added difficulties of their traditional responsibilities with respect to caring for the home. If it is complicated for urban women to exercise their rights within the family, the situation of rural women can only be imagined.

Within this context, all the studies show that the situation of rural women is characterized by extremely limited knowledge of their rights, which is later compounded by difficulty in accessing justice systems.

In addition, there is a working hypothesis based on isolated information stating that, at minimum, infringement of the rights of rural women is no less serious than that suffered by their rural counterparts.

"The introduction of conventions, agreements, new legislation, policies, and programs has meant a decisive step toward providing women with greater access to the use and control of productive resources. However, the rural population is often unaware of women's legal rights or has few legal resources if these rights are violated (IDB, 1997c.)"

This situation is particularly serious in the case of domestic violence, one of the most extreme forms of rights violations. Although there is no specific information for rural areas, it is estimated that if one-third of homes suffer this form of violence at the national level, the proportion must be similar for rural homes.<sup>24</sup> The difference lies in greater difficulties in preventing and addressing domestic violence in rural areas, even in countries with policies to eliminate this social scourge (Cost Rica, Bolivia, Chile, and Brazil.) Essentially, the lack of protection for rural women is notably greater in this area of human rights.

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reinforce their autonomy and gender identity. In Honduras, campesino organizations are more numerous. Notable examples include ANAMUC (1974), the Honduran Federation of Campesino Women (1978), the Committee for the Comprehensive Development of Campesino Women (CODIMCA, 1985), and the Group of Catholic Campesino Women. In the Dominican Republic, in 1983, the National Confederation of Campesino Women was founded (CONAMUCA.) In Paraguay, in 1992, eighty groups of campesino women and small women farmers were counted (FLACSO, 1995.)"

<sup>23</sup> Several countries in the region have laws that limit, set conditions for, and discriminate against women's access to productive resources (Kleysen, 1996.)

<sup>24</sup> Perceptions of households that suffer domestic violence: Mexico 34%; Costa Rica 34%; and Chile 29% (national public opinion surveys.)

### **3.9. Institutional Structure and Public Policies**

In spite of the importance of understanding and awareness of the repercussions that macroeconomic policies have on rural women, little research has been carried out on the effect of structural adjustment reforms on agricultural and rural development.<sup>25</sup> This lack of data and of information systems with breakdowns according to sex, as well as a gender analysis of this same information, still keep those who make legislative, policy, and planning decisions from adequately taking into account the repercussions that macroeconomic policies have on women (and other disadvantaged sectors of the population.) In addition, there is a general lack of specialists on agricultural and rural development and macroeconomic policy who have experience and knowledge in applying a gender perspective in their analyses (IDB, 1997c.)

The IDB points out that among the most important advances made in recent years is the creation of "new programs to promote the participation of women in decision-making at various levels. This is partially accomplished through the creation of national women's organizations and institutionalization within technical ministries of agencies in charge of promoting the role of women in development. This has been an important measure for guaranteeing that women's issues are taken into account in national programs and policies. However, technical shortcomings, restricted access to financial and human resources, and limited direct participation among the supposed beneficiaries have often mitigated the direct effect of these initiatives on rural women. (...) The establishment of networks and alliances among rural women and those who defend their interests at NGOs, governmental ministries, and development organizations has led to the creation of national and international forums to promote women (IDB, 1997c.)"

With the exception of few countries, the reality of rural women has not been taken into consideration when designing sectoral policies, which affects productivity in the agricultural sector by alienating the productive process from a major production resource (women) in the small productive units (Chiriboga *et al*, 1995.)

Several countries in the region have made progress in this direction, designing and implementing plans and policies for women and gender equity at the national level, while taking into account actions and strategies for rural women. Examples include Chile (initiated in 1994); Costa Rica and Canada (1996); and Panama, El Salvador and Paraguay (1997.)

Some countries have policies or plans specifically for equality in rural areas. Chile, Costa Rica, and Colombia<sup>26</sup> have specific plans, whereas El Salvador and Panama have included this area as a chapter in their national plans.

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<sup>25</sup> According to IICA/IDB, "stabilization and adjustment policies have played a role on women's degree of participation in agricultural activities. When the men in a family need to look for work off the family farm, the participation of women increases, which could represent a more permanent trend in increasing the participation of women in productive agricultural activities (Chiriboga *et al*, 1995.)

<sup>26</sup> In Colombia, the design of national public policies for women stems from a parallel plan for rural areas. In other cases, rural plans have been designed parallel to or as a complement to national plans. For example, in Costa Rica, the National Plan for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (PIOMH), implemented between 1994 and 1998, included a relevant subject area that was converted into a specific five-year plan in 1997 for the agricultural and environmental sectors (an addendum to the PIOMH.) This addendum includes the following core subject areas: 1) equal opportunity in accessing and controlling land; 2) access and control of

These cases notwithstanding, in terms of public policies and the institutional structure as they relate to women and gender equity in the rural and agricultural sectors, the region does not offer services and programs that take into account the real dynamics of rural societies. In some cases, they may even reproduce and legitimize discriminatory cultural patterns against women. In addition, "the weakening of the role of the ministries of agriculture in state structures is compounded by a very small and technically weak institutional foundation for gender equity, where the culturally-based rigid division of labor and functions is reproduced in the mechanisms and forms of institutional work. Thus, matters related to women as producers tend to be marginalized, have few resources, are not included in decision-making at institutions, and are not financed with countries' regular resources (Kleysen, 1996.)

Of course, efforts have been made to promote gender equity in several countries in the region.<sup>27</sup> However, various studies have concluded that these initiatives are insufficient for effectively including the needs of rural women into the core approaches of national development, equitably distributing resources, and incorporating gender equity into public agenda priorities.

An IICA/IDB study (1990-1995) provides a very clear panorama in this regard. While this study is based on the analysis of women food producers, it can be expanded to include all rural women.

"In general, agricultural public policies have not comprehensively and systematically taken into account gender differences in food production and the structure of rural employment. Isolated attempts to implement specific policies for rural women, or to implement certain components in macro policies and programs, have not resulted in systematized experiences that can be reproduced in other countries. Ordinarily, policies explicitly geared towards eliminating gender inequalities have been weak, with assistance-based aspects in certain cases, limited institutional structures, and high dependence on external cooperation resources. It was found that the lack of operational instruments has hindered gender analysis in programs and projects that make it possible to implement agricultural policies.

In recent years, state agencies and governments have responded to the complex reality of participation by gender in production, management, and reproduction processes of small farms in a limited, incompatible, and disadvantageous manner for both campesino economies and women. This

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national resources and sustainability of their management; 3) access to rural financing; 4) access and control of technology transfer and training services; 5) access to labor markets and agricultural and non-agricultural employment, and in making female producers more visible; and 6) increased participation in business management (agribusiness and marketing.) These six areas encompass 117 separate actions, grouped under 25 strategic objectives. Four institutions and a program take part in its implementation: the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock; the Ministry of the Environment and Energy; the Institute of Agrarian Development; the National Council on Production; and the Rural Development Program.

<sup>27</sup>Agrarian legislation with discriminatory regulations regarding women's access to the distribution of land and its deeding has been modified. National policies have been designed on behalf of women, and, in some few cases, are specific to rural women. Governmental institutions have been created (offices on women, inter-institutional commissions, ministerial secretariats, etc.) to coordinate the application of these policies and programs. Training has been provided to technical and management teams, and specific programs have been created for providing services and resources (Kleysen, 1996.)

response has been limited, in light of the extent of this sector's economic participation in the domestic supply of food and the participation of women in this process because the majority of countries have tended to respond with short-term public policies that are not integrated into overall development efforts, or with marginal, assistance-based programs.

Responses have been incompatible with social equity objectives that governments have repeatedly set forth in their development plans, or with the objectives of food security that were a constant in economic policies of the past decade. Measures that have undermined the supply of food and have restricted the work productivity of women and men campesino farmers have done nothing more than weaken the sector and reproduce or increase the social and gender inequalities denounced for decades.

Finally, responses have been disadvantageous for small farms/ranches and campesino women, encouraging the concentration of income and resources, eliminating rural development programs (and thus the offer of services and resources for poor groups), reproducing discriminatory cultural patterns against women, and ignoring the participation of women (Kleysen, 1996.)”

### **3.10. Sociocultural Context**

There continue to be certain cultural mores that maintain and legitimize the division of productive labor (identified with men as providers) and reproductive labor (identified with women ensuring survival.) In this way, the economic labor of women is ignored and made secondary, with no social and economic value assigned to it.

Women in rural areas live in a more traditional sociocultural context in terms of gender relations. This has been a constant in research carried out to date. It is interesting to note that this more traditional perspective exists in spite of the obvious real need for the increased participation of rural women in productive processes and decisions key to sustaining the family.

A blatant and notorious illustration of this is reflected in women's answers during surveys or censuses, when asked if they perform economic work. A rural woman will frequently give a negative response when the interviewer asks this question, even though she may actually be holding chicken feed in her hand at that precise moment.

These traditional conceptions were seen again in the preliminary results of the first Latin American survey at the national level on masculinity and gender identity. This survey was made in 1997 by the Center for Women and Family, the governmental body in charge of women's issues in Costa Rica. When rural women were asked who was the best person to act as head of household, a high percentage, 40%, responded that men should fill this role. However, only 25% of urban women gave this response.

When asked what were the most important areas of their lives, there was a radical difference in the responses of men and women. Although a high proportion of men said that the most important area was work, few women expressed this idea, with the vast majority of women stating that family life and their children were most important. Forty percent of rural women said that the family was most important, and less than 5% said that

work was. These responses were more marked in comparison with urban women where percentages were 35% and 10%, respectively.

Responses of both men and women showed that rural men participate less in domestic chores. Eighty-five percent of rural women stated that their partners did not wash dishes or did so very seldom, whereas 71% of urban women responded in this way. The fact that rural men participate less in domestic chores is basically due to cultural preconceptions, rather than to actual living conditions. The problem is that this results in an enormous increase in the overall workload of rural women, as can be seen in research on the use of time.

When asked how they preferred masculinity to be expressed, there was a notable difference between rural and urban women. The majority of rural women preferred men to dedicate themselves exclusively to supporting the home, whereas the majority of urban women wanted both men and women to work together within and outside the home, confirming that androcentric culture is more prevalent in rural areas. The former case implies greater rigidity of gender roles, which, in addition to increasing the overall workload of women, tends to ignore women as legal persons and active rural development agents.

#### **IV. Foundations for Strategic Actions by IICA in Promoting Rural Women and Gender Equity Within the Framework of the New Rural Reality**

##### **4.1. Regulatory and Programmatic Framework**

As an inter-American cooperation agency, IICA is responsible for helping to achieve real equality of opportunities for women and men. This commitment is reinforced by various plans of action, conventions, and agreements that have been approved and adopted by states, governments, and various inter-governmental organizations at the regional and international levels.

Because of their content and approach, the following are very important to the subject being addressed: the Platform of Action from the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995); the Regional Program of Action for Women of Latin America and the Caribbean 1995-2001 (Mar del Plata and Santiago, 1994); and Chapter 24 of Agenda 21 from the Conference on the Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992.)<sup>28</sup> Because of their unifying nature, the following are also important: the agreements made at summits of presidents and heads of state in the 1990s (i.e., Summit of the Americas and Summit of Central America); and the United Nations Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In terms of sustainable rural development at the hemispheric level, the resolutions of political bodies in the region are essential. Examples include the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), and the Central American Agricultural Council (CAC), a subregional body.

The Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women<sup>29</sup> has been approved and ratified by all countries in the hemisphere, except for the United States. Article 14 of the Convention states that the "States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of this Convention to women in rural areas. (UN, 1979.)"

In addition, all the objectives of the eight priority areas of the Regional Program of Action for Women of Latin America and the Caribbean 1995-2001 are of vital importance in improving the living conditions of rural women in the Region. The program is based on recognizing "differences among women" and "seeks to provide special attention" to certain sectors of women, including rural women (paragraph 18.) For this reason, some of the program's strategic areas include activities that relate directly to or explicitly mention the specific conditions of rural women. Examples include paragraphs 39, 52, 59, 70, 114, 115, 132, 134, 135, 137, 140, 141, 142 and 218.

Moreover, both the First and Second Summit of the Americas (Miami 1994 and Santiago 1998) identified the promotion of women and gender equity as priority areas, incorporating these topics into the summit plans of action. Governments thus committed themselves to

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<sup>28</sup> The plans or programs of action resulting from these conferences place special emphasis on the specific situation of rural women and on the need to address their situation in terms of the priority areas identified for improving the condition of women and achieving gender equity.

<sup>29</sup> Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 and placed into effect in 1981.

"eliminating all forms of discrimination against women" and strengthening "national mechanisms and governmental organizations, as well as the corresponding regional and subregional networks in charge of promoting legal equality among women and men (Plan of Action, Second Summit of the Americas, Santiago, 19 April 1998.)"

Resolution 829 of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), known as *Full and Equitable Participation of Women for the Year 2000*, instructed IICA, as a member of the Inter-American System, to modify its programs in order to incorporate strategies and goals in keeping with the Plan of Action of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM.) Resolution 829 also stipulates updating mechanisms and procedures for subsequent follow-up and evaluation.

Resolution 829 was approved in 1986 and has been reinforced by subsequent resolutions in 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, and 1996. In this last resolution (AG/RES 1588), the General Assembly agreed that women's participation should be promoted in national development processes and in accessing decision-making positions.

As part of the inter-American priority cooperation agenda, IICA member countries have identified the Participation of Women and Youths in Rural Development as a strategic area. Based on this, the subject of women/gender has been incorporated into the last two IICA Medium-Term Plans. The 1994-1998 Plan identified rural women as key actors in the development process and emphasized their importance in sustainable rural development (IICA, 1994.) The 1998-2002 plan explicitly reiterates these themes in its strategic areas for cooperation services<sup>30</sup> (particularly in the areas of rural development); in its priority fields of action,<sup>31</sup> where they are established as part of the objectives to improve the living conditions of women in rural communities; and in its support programs to include rural women and youths in agrifood chains and rural economies (IICA, 1999.)

At its highest level, the IICA mandate is regulated by the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), a body comprised of representatives from the ministries of member countries. The main functions of IABA are to: a) oversee inter-American dialogue on agriculture (in order to guide its transformation in accordance with the mandates drafted at the Summits of the Americas); b) act as a specialized advisory body to the Summits of the Americas on issues related to agriculture and the rural milieu; c) progress in solidifying a more articulated and coordinated inter-American strategy on agriculture; and d) approve the strategic institutional plans and regulations of three IICA bodies (IABA, the Executive Committee, and the General Directorate) (IICA, 1999.)

The main recent decisions taken by IABA on the subjects of women and gender occurred in 1997 and 1999. In 1997, IABA agreed to "implement the Program for Strengthening the Incorporation of Rural Women: Social and Economic Democratization in Productive and

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<sup>30</sup> There are six strategic areas for cooperation services: a) policies and commerce; b) science, technology and natural resources; c) agricultural health; d) rural development; e) training and education; and f) information and communication (IICA, 1999.)

<sup>31</sup> IICA's priority fields of action are defined as a thematic subset of strategic areas where the General Directorate will focus its cooperation activities. These fields are: a) inclusion of agriculture in commerce and the process for integrating the Americas; b) strengthening technological innovation systems; c) integrated development and management of natural resources; d) strengthening agricultural and livestock health and food safety; e) improving living conditions in rural communities; f) strengthening education and training; g) modernizing the agricultural institutional structure; and h) repositioning agriculture in inter-American dialogue (IICA, 1997.)



Marketing Activities," and instructed the Director General of IICA to adopt the necessary measures for its implementation<sup>32</sup> (Res. 330-IX-0/97,IICA, 1997.) Thus, since 1998, within the framework of PADEMUR (a hemispheric initiative to promote gender equity and the development of rural women) and in particular with the support of the SIDA-financed project on Gender and Sustainable Rural Development, IICA, through its Sustainable Rural Development Directorate, has made ongoing efforts in this regard. It is endeavoring to raise awareness and provide technical support to various IICA bodies on the importance and relevance of including the gender focus in IICA work, both within the institution (personnel policies and regulations) and the technical cooperation it offers.

As a result of IICA's sustained technical effort, two of its highest bodies, the Executive Committee and the IABA, approved two far-reaching resolutions in 1999. At the request of the Canadian Government, the IICA Executive Committee agreed in July 1999 to promote the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in institutional policies (Resolution 320.) This was based on the resolutions of the OAS General Assembly, previous IABA and CAC agreements, commitments resulting from the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Summits of the Americas, and conferences of first ladies, as well as IICA's previous work in promoting rural women and on conventions signed with various cooperation organizations (primarily the IDB and SIDA.

As a follow-up to this resolution, the Executive Committee and the IABA approved resolution 342 in October 1999, whose goals are to:

1. Mainstream a gender perspective in the IICA institutional system and request that the Director General make the legal, regulatory, and operating modifications that would make it possible to comply with this mandate; and
2. Request that the IICA Director General provides assurances that IICA's gender policy is also reflected in the Institute's technical cooperation actions and instruments.

The Central American subregion has Perhaps made the most progress in policy decision-making concerning mainstreaming of gender perspective into rural-sector policies in these countries. Thus, in recent years, CAC has adopted major agreements on sustainable rural development with a gender perspective, and has incorporated IICA's work in a concrete sense. In 1997, CAC approved the Strategic Guidelines for Incorporating a Gender Perspective in Developing the Agricultural Sector in Central American Countries. It includes specific measures for governments regarding the institutional restructuring of the sector, sectoral policies, the creation of mechanisms, the equitable participation at all levels of these policies, the improvement and application of legislation, the strengthening of the national institutional structure in the areas of women and gender, and the provision of resources (Agreement 7, San Pedro Sula, 18 April 1997.)

In 1998, CAC adopted several agreements related to this subject and IICA actions (San Salvador, 25 April 1998.) One such agreement requests that the Directorate of Rural Development "institute the Central American Initiative for Sustainable Rural Development,

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<sup>32</sup> Literally, the Resolutions states: "a) Adopt technical and financial measures in accordance with the Budget Program that are needed to initiate implementation of the Program; b) establish a special fund to raise funds to finance IICA activities in the framework of the Program; c) coordinate with multilateral, bilateral, and technical financing organizations to establish a joint, permanent effort in support of implementing the program components in Latin America and the Caribbean (IICA, 1997.)"

which includes continuing the Program for the Integration of Rural Women in Agrifood Chains, as well as other initiatives such as building a regional rural development fund; supporting countries in formulating and implementing projects; creating and strengthening microenterprises for production, transformation, and services; and exchanging successful experiences among countries within and outside of the Region. (Agreement 8.)" CAC has also decided to support IICA in its dealings with ASDI "to help strengthen and ensure collaboration with countries on the subjects of gender, communication, and sustainable development (Agreement 9.)"

All these regulatory and planning instruments are based on the international community's conviction that equal opportunity for women and men is a question of human rights and a basic condition for achieving sustainable development. These instruments recognize both sexes as actors in development, and that, as such, both should have equal access to decision-making, resources, and the benefits of this process. By accepting it as a truth that women have been at an historic disadvantage in participating in sustainable development, it is understood that this condition precedes unequal relationships between the sexes, where women face limitations in accessing and controlling resources and the benefits of development.

In addition, it should be remembered that the problems of rural women stem from the gender circumstances of women, as well as from being campesinos. The difficulties of rural women should not be isolated from the perspective of men campesinos facing the polarization of a proletariat class because of the unequal and contradictory emergence of capitalism in the countryside.

For governments as well as public, private, and nongovernmental institutions, the commitments undertaken assume the implementation of a set of measures that would spur fundamental changes. In accordance with the instruments mentioned, in order to advance from discourse to action, these organizations must initiate public policies to promote women and gender equity. These policies would be put into operation through national plans of action and under the responsibility of the state institutions working in this area. The main entities responsible for adopting such measures are governments with the support of organizations such as IICA, playing an essential role in the nongovernmental sector by monitoring compliance with planned actions.

In the Americas, few countries have yet implemented national plans of action for women and gender equity in order to concretize state policy in this area. Even fewer have established or drafted a specific section for rural women within their national policy on women. Certain cooperation organizations and European governments are supporting certain governmental initiatives in the region, but none have made it their goal to foster state policies for rural women and gender equity in the rural milieu. This is a potential area where IICA could carry out strategic efforts as part of sustainable rural development.

#### **4.2. IICA's Response**

Over the last several years, IICA has helped mainstream theoretical perspective regarding the situation of women and men according to their gender circumstances. Accordingly, IICA has implemented various programs and projects based on an approach that is known as "Women in Development (WID)," where the first phase emphasized specific initiatives for women. The second stage consisted of IICA efforts to mainstream a gender

perspective into the work of IICA personnel, corresponding to the "Gender in Development" (GID) approach. Primarily, this focused on training, developing methodological guides, research, and direct advisory services for IICA projects designed to mainstream this approach.

Since the early 1990s, in particular, IICA has been working to better define an institutional policy promoting women and gender equity. Methodological instruments have been developed over the last ten years to include gender concerns in investment and technical cooperation projects (1993) and to incorporate this subject into the works of various governmental and non-governmental organizations. An example of the latter is the Communication, Gender and Sustainable Development Project carried out between 1993 and 1998 with SIDA funds. The production of a research series has been similarly important, within the framework of the program "Analysis of Policy in the Agricultural Sector in Relation to Rural Women Food Producers in Latin America and the Caribbean," executed by IICA from 1992 to 1995 and financed by IDB.

The way IICA has balanced its institutional work and philosophy with regard to women and gender shows that, in spite of the efforts and experiences during those years, IICA has not had an institutional policy to guide its actions as a cooperation agency in these areas. This notwithstanding, IICA has managed to develop major projects that have helped transform the traditional vision of various organizations related to agriculture and the rural milieu (even though the majority of times these actions have been disjointed and lacking the reference and strategic framework of an institutional policy.) This situation has translated into a lack of conceptual and instrumental mainstreaming of the gender approach in development on the part of IICA officials, as well as into the absence of strategic planning of actions at the national and regional levels.

Within the framework of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), the presidential agreements adopted at the Second Summit of the Americas (Santiago, 1998), and the resolutions adopted by OAS, IABA and CAC on gender and rural development, IICA is endeavoring to reform its vision of this subject. It recognizes that one of the essential focuses influencing all actions is gender equity and participation in which women have the same opportunities as men. Thus, IICA's current proposal for a new vision of rural reality is visualized as "a basic pillar for responding to the commitments undertaken in forums related to sustainable development and eliminating poverty (IICA, 1998.)"

This goal to promote the institutionalization of a gender perspective in IICA technical cooperation as well as within the institution itself led IICA to initiate PADEMUR. The objective of PADEMUR is to promote and support activities aimed at improving the gender-related aspects of the situation and condition of rural women in Latin America and the Caribbean in order to strengthen their participation and role in sustainable rural development, through social, political, and economic empowerment.

In this way, IICA is part of the international consensus reached at the Fourth World Conference on Women—an event that undoubtedly represents "an essential step from declaratory conferences to those that seek a concrete commitment to action (García, 1996.)" The fact that, after a great deal of controversy, it was possible to reach an international consensus on the need to solidify actions, made this conference a point of no return after which certain basic debates seemed to be definitively resolved. There is general agreement that in the post-Beijing era, discussion focuses more on how to achieve equality of rights and opportunities than on the obvious fact that inequalities exist between

women and men. Essentially, commitments resulting from the Beijing conference will inevitably lead to public policies for achieving gender equity (García, 1996.)

This challenge, which all countries that attended the conference have vowed to meet, signifies a major change in the hemispheric status quo regarding work to improve the condition of women. The Beijing Conference concerns the need for actions to be strategic in order to achieve equal opportunity, leaving behind the phase of short-term disjointed actions carried out by administrative bodies, as well as non-governmental and cooperation organizations (García, 1996.)

The document, "Proposal for a Guiding Conceptual Framework for 1998-2002: Implementation and Value of Sustainable Rural Development for IICA Technical Cooperation," states that "as an inter-American cooperation organization, IICA has a responsibility to help meet the real goal of equal opportunity for women and men. This commitment is bolstered by various plans of action, conventions, and agreements, approved and adopted at both the international and regional levels by states and inter-governmental organizations (IICA, 1998a.)"

According to this new conceptual proposal, IICA "views rural development as a process of change and transformation for rural societies, based on the participation, strengthening, pluralism, and development of initiatives that expand and strengthen economic, social, productive, and human opportunities to ensure equity." IICA recognizes the existence of new protagonists and actors, whose roles must be intertwined in an innovative manner. One of the central focuses of this institution is "gender equity and the participation of women in the context of equal opportunities with men (IICA, 1998a.)"

It should be borne in mind that the institutional policy being proposed by IICA on gender and sustainable rural development is in keeping with guidelines that leading financial and cooperation organizations established after extensive analysis.

For example, according to FAO, one of the ten leading trends in the new model of agriculture consists of recognizing "the feminization of rural activities, on the family farm and away from it, with the appropriate orientation of policies and services for the specific needs of women."<sup>33</sup> This organization feels that the most important issue at the present moment is to discern the concrete consequences that such tendencies have in designing and implementing public policies. Along these lines, three types of consequences are identified. One is spatial, i.e. related to the land; the second has to do with the rules of the game (institutions), and the third is related to the protagonists, the rural actors. According to FAO, it is a matter of designing state policies that would guarantee continuity and strategic vision because their development is based on a fundamental consensus (FAO, 1997.)

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<sup>33</sup> Model based on the Declaration of Rome drafted at the World Summit on Food (1996.) The other trends are: a) agriculture with greater freedom in terms of the market and state intervention; b) expanded agriculture in terms of economic activities; c) contract-based agriculture in terms of associations and alliances; d) flexible agriculture that takes maximum advantage of linkages already existing in the market; e) agriculture based on training human resources and fostering knowledge; f) agriculture that is responsible to society and the environment; g) agriculture in keeping with an increasingly urbanizing world; and h) agriculture that takes into account accelerated globalization and the need to maintain a responsible macroeconomic policy (FAO, 1997.)

Various studies have criticized the models of the institutional structure and organization of policies implemented in the 1990s in the region. The studies hold that this structure has increased rural poverty by introducing a bias against agriculture; for example, focusing the majority of cross-sectoral policies on commercial agriculture; and providing little benefit to the poor rural in terms of credit and land reform projects.

Given this situation, new proposals point out the urgency for updating macroeconomic and cross-sectoral policies as well as institutions so that they are on par with the objectives to increase the competitiveness of the sector and reduce rural poverty (Echeverri and Ribero, 1997.)

The World Bank proposal consists of strategies to solidify a free market economy (goods and factors) and to increase public investment in physical infrastructure and human capital. Some international nongovernmental organizations propose promoting "decentralized and participatory programs, channeled in accordance with demand and which, therefore, respond to the real needs of users in terms of their differences and specific traits (Echeverri and Ribero, 1997.)" One of the principles of the new rural development strategy proposed by the World Bank for the purpose of increasing productivity, income, and quality of life for the rural population, consists of having family farms and non-agricultural initiatives generate broad-scale paid employment opportunities for women and men (World Bank, 1997.)

## **V. Basic Political Conditions and Key Conceptual and Methodological Elements for the Alternative Strategy to Promote Rural Women and Gender Equity within the Framework of the New Rural Reality**

Three basic political conditions are needed for the successful implementation of a new strategy.

**a) Cross-sectoral coordination** would help to coordinate adequately the actions in the rural milieu with those related to rights and opportunities. This implies coordination among four types of main actors:

- agricultural and rural institutions (ministries of agriculture, agrarian development institutes, etc.);
- institutions for the advancement of women (strong national mechanisms);
- social development institutions; and
- community development institutions, particularly local governments and community organizations representing civil society.

Developing a successful strategy means having all the actors interact simultaneously so that all the "sectoral" actors interrelate, as do the various "territorial" actors. Combining the sectoral focus with the territorial one is essential for achieving the sought-after comprehensiveness. It must be recognized that the majority of governmental actions are organized in sectoral terms, and that rural development requires an incorporation of the territorial dimension. Thus, government actions can only have the desired impact if the sectoral focus is incorporated into the community and regional milieu. Both focuses must view women not as the objects of the actions, but rather as the protagonists of their own development and, consequently must generate a participatory institutional structure that promotes the progress of women and active citizenship.

**b) Coordination of the State and civil society in the rural milieu**, focusing first on women, but integrating the population as a whole, local development organizations, and local governments.

**c) Coordination and compatibility of international cooperation with national processes**, are developed based on the above two elements (cross-sectoral coordination and coordination with civil society.)

As has been mentioned, major progress has been made in some Latin American countries that have instituted national policies or plans to advance women. In countries such as El Salvador and Panama, actions related to rural women are detailed in a separate chapter of the national policy. In others, such as Colombia, Chile and Costa Rica, a specific plan has been drafted for the rural milieu.

Following is a list of the main methodological elements that IICA considers important in developing the alternative works needed on women, gender, and sustainable rural development from the new vision of rural reality:

- The idea that there is just one type of rural woman must be abandoned. The reality of the countries in the region is very diverse, as is the reality of rural women. There is no single type of rural women, but rather various differing types with a common situational

gender framework. For example, rural women must be differentiated in terms of age, ethnicity, and their participation in production. The last element refers to non-intensive women producers, intensive producers, agricultural cooperative members, marketers, agricultural day workers, salaried employees, and rural microbusinesswomen.

- While the problems facing rural women are related to situational poverty, the incorporation of rural and agricultural women in production is neither temporary nor situational, but structural and permanent. For this reason, understanding their gender situation and condition is essential to modernizing and diversifying agriculture and the rural sector and, by extension, to sustained economic growth. The solution does not reside in initiating assistance policies because of the type of poverty facing rural women. It is the result of how they are included in production and of the absence of public policies that take into consideration their role in productive labor.
- Advancing rural women and female agricultural producers in order to achieve gender equity is an ethical, social, and economic imperative. The failure to address this issue-ignoring how the work of rural women and their specific gender circumstances- has been largely responsible, in turn, for the failure of many efforts to develop and diversify the campesino and rural economies.
- When gender is not included, the effectiveness of public and institutional policies is reduced.<sup>34</sup>
- The development of rural women cannot be resolved through the contribution of funds, unless this support is used in establishing general conditions for the sustainable development of women. For example, some elements of these conditions would include:
  - a) Decision-making and political and administrative regulations (for example, with regard to the distribution of land, access to resources, access to credit, etc.); and
  - b) Consideration of macro public policies, including those for agriculture.
- Gender equity for rural women is not only related to agricultural activities. Rural women have certain aspects in common with their urban counterparts (in terms of rights, violence, etc.), even though rural areas demonstrate their own specific types and characteristics of these aspects.
- Developing gender equity requires two lines of action:
  - a) Strengthening the autonomy of rural women; and
  - b) Relating it to society as a whole, and primarily to the other gender.
- One implication of the previous point is the abandonment of approaches focusing solely on rural women. In practice, there should be more efforts toward mixed projects, training on gender and rural development for men, etc.

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<sup>34</sup> As pointed out by IDB, there is a direct relationship between the access women have to income and the administration of family resources and the improvement of food safety in the home and the nutritional wellbeing of its members. This is a central feature of the policies and programs designed to improve food and nutrition safety (IDB, 1997c.)

- The problems of rural women must be included in national gender equity policies (as has been the case in Colombia, El Salvador, and Costa Rica.)



## **VI. Guiding Principles of the Alternative Strategy for Promoting Women and Gender Equity in Sustainable Rural Development**

For IICA, the promotion of a new strategy must be based on the guiding principles listed below, which, in turn, will make it possible to develop strategic lines of action.

### **6.1. Sustainable Rural Development Based on Social and Gender Equity**

There is a general recognition of the contribution women make in the campesino and national economies through their work in the biological and social reproduction of the species and the generation of income for the family unit. Many programs carried out by various governmental and nongovernmental organizations have placed an emphasis on improving the performance of women in these areas through technical training and the creation of funds to finance income-generating activities (generally for services.)

However, actions are still pending that would strengthen the position of women within the family unit and increase their potential impact in achieving an equitable distribution of productive and reproductive jobs in the family and an equitable distribution of income and/or satisfaction of the different needs of the family members.

To accomplish this, women need to recognize the various roles they play in society and believe that the social order can change to benefit the development of the capacities of all family members. In many instances, women's access to productive resources comes up against their unwillingness to identify themselves as producers interested in obtaining tools for agricultural production, because society has socialized them and gratifies them in their role as mothers, responsible for meeting the basic needs of family members. Thus, when fulfilling their responsibilities as producers they consider these contributions as something they do without personal interest, something they do out of love for their family and its wellbeing and prosperity. Laws of economics concerning the value of work and remuneration have no meaning for a major sector of rural women.

A key element of this strategic line of work is reconstructing current rural development scenarios, using the appropriate tools to explore the different positions men and women occupy in productive activities, and the degree to which they enjoy the fruits of these activities, from the viewpoint of all the actors taking part in rural development: producers of various ages; social organizations; governmental and nongovernmental organizations directing actions for the sector; etc.

Traditional appraisals of the rural sector have been skewed to the viewpoint of men and of the sectors that control rural economies, such as chambers of commerce, big business, government officials, and financiers. On many occasions, members of the small farming sectors representing the majority of the population are consulted without being given the information they need to participate in debate about the foundations of rural development. As a consequence, these sessions turn into opportunities for expressing disagreement, and are later used to justify decisions supporting productive activities demanded by the economic agents controlling the national and international markets.

In defining macro and micro social strategies needed to eliminate inequitable conditions, future scenarios for the rural sector should be constructed, and rules of the game are clearly presented with respect to empowerment of or threat to the development of

productive activities and/or activities that could have an impact on the growth of employment sources. Here, the scope should extend beyond the microenterprises that have been the end-goal for women up to now. This has left them with the same burden of domestic chores and awarded them only a minor quantity of negotiating power in family matters.

As part of the collective negotiation process to develop such scenarios, concrete goals must be specified, taking advantage of progress made and the opportunities generated by the linkages that could be established with the market for sale of production, for agribusiness and/or for opening up sources of employment in non-agricultural activities.

In defining these goals, not only economic but cultural, social, and political concerns should be taken into account. The latter should be evaluated in terms of equity in the distribution of productive and reproductive activities within the family; occupational, business, and marketing training for family members; group access to investments in industry, agribusiness, and/or services that can be provided; access to productive resources; and production support services, such as preventive health care, childcare centers, and community cafeterias.

Once the goals are defined, any legal, administrative, cultural, and/or services-related obstacles that could interfere with their attainment should be determined, so that feasible proposals can be drafted regarding mechanisms and instruments for eliminating these barriers.

The goals established and alternatives for facing obstacles will constitute the central structure for a rural sustainable development agenda reflecting the specific situation of the social group concerned, one that shares the national and regional interest of the Americas in constructing sustainable rural development in everyday life, erected on a foundation of social and gender equity.

## **6.2. Developing New Relationships in Sustainable Rural Development**

For any development effort to be sustainable, it is essential to modify the vertical decision-making processes that have prevailed in rural development. Since in each culture women and men have different forms of participation, this line of action should generate alternative and complementary ways for the population to exercise its political participation and make reality the principle of equal opportunity a reality in the diverse spaces of their lives: family, organizational, community, religious, etc.

The other indispensable condition is the facilitation of conditions enabling women to construct their own spaces of relating, unthreatened by forms of exercising male power, where they can integrate their identity as rural worker with that of mother, strengthening their personal resources so that they can access and control the benefits of production, independently of whether they are paid or not.

In the case of rural women who belong to family units with access to land, only by strengthening their identity as producers will they be able to exercise their rights to access various productive resources and participate in the distribution of the social and economic benefits of agricultural production, based on their own criteria and interests.

The means for developing this line of action include the design and application of personalized training strategies taking advantage of the experiences of people and/or organizations that work on behalf of equality and equity in and outside of the country. These strategies would also strengthen the institutional capacity of men and women to promote different production and employment initiatives based on equity, making it possible to satisfy the different needs of the group involved.

### **6.3. Empowerment and Development of Human Resources as the Central Focus of Public Policies in Each Country**

One of the greatest constraints to insertion in the new, highly competitive schemes of production is the presence of a broad sector of the rural sector with few job qualifications for taking part in non-agricultural and/or business activities.

As a result, governments must ensure that policies and budgets are in place for continual upgrading of human resources. They should also contribute to opening up opportunities that provide rural women with the necessary conditions for entering and remaining in technical training, as well as connecting with work later on, whether as salaried employees or as their own boss.

Thus, investments must be made in childcare, scholarships or loans for job training, education to modify the values that designate motherhood as the main function of women, etc.

### **6.4 Creation of Spaces for Relating to Urban Women**

These spaces are needed to address the gender inequalities shared by both urban and rural women, such as domestic violence, obstacles blocking their entry into higher-level positions in the job market, violations of their worker rights (the right to organize, sexual harassment), limited access to health services, etc.

## VII. An Agenda for Discussion and Action

The lines of strategic action proposed below are based on the recognition that the situation of women in rural areas is diverse and heterogeneous, even within the same country. It is colored by their differences in age, place of residence, domestic load, productive activity, individual access to productive resources, the schooling available, and other factors.

The way women participate in the rural economy—as permanent or seasonal unpaid family labor, as farm producer, as a paid farm worker and/or as a salaried, permanent or seasonal worker in non-agricultural activities—is marked by the different social, economic or political determinants that are structural, and arise from the formation, dynamics and importance of the economic sector in each country.

As a consequence, an alternative strategy on gender within the framework of the new rural reality must be diverse in nature, and take into consideration the individual characteristics for insertion into the rural economy assumed by women from different social sectors, different geographic zones and different productive activities, as well as perspectives of the agricultural sector in each region of the country.

While the main aspects that must be addressed within the framework of the alternative strategy may not necessarily be novel, they nevertheless continue to be fundamental for achieving sustainable rural development with gender equity:

- a. ***Promotion of public policies on gender equity with national coverage, and specific policies for rural women.*** This involves designing, implementing and following-up on national plans (not isolated actions) to achieve greater gender equity in the economic, cultural, social and political spheres, also implying that in the realm of private life, greater co-responsibility between men and women must be encouraged with respect to domestic and family chores—just as the State must also facilitate this type of cultural change in the population. Several countries have taken steps in this direction, such as Chile, Canada, Costa Rica, Panama, El Salvador and Paraguay. We must learn from experience and move on. Likewise, national plans must include concrete plans of action for the advancement of rural women, and these should aim at giving women significantly greater access to productive resources: land, credit, technical training and marketing. The region has made important progress in this area, as well, particularly in Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, El Salvador and Panama.
- b. ***Creation of integrated information systems with a breakdown of data by sex, and in accordance with gender indicators.*** Reliable information systems are needed that reflect the true situation of women in the agricultural sector and in rural activities. In this sense, it is vital that ongoing statistical mechanisms be developed to provide important information that can be applied as well to indicators on women's participation. Information is essential if this issue is to be taken into consideration by decision-makers in the political arena.
- c. ***Improvement in human capital formation with an emphasis on girls, rural young people of both sexes, and adult women, particularly in the areas of health and education.*** This concerns providing and facilitating real access and attention to formal education and technical training (especially for adult women) and reproductive health. Attention must also be given to new problems of rural

health connected particularly with women (for example, more women using agrochemicals, with the corresponding repercussions on personal and reproductive health.)

- d. **Promotion of an appropriate regulatory framework:** A civil code that protects property rights, inheritance and participation in goods deriving from cohabitation, co-ownership of goods granted by the State, actions against domestic violence and sexual harassment, the exigency of workers' rights and their adaptation to characteristics of the rural sector, strong institutions for the advancement of women and defense of their rights, etc.
- e. **Greater democratization and development of social capital:** strengthening of local governments and community participation, decentralization that provides space for women and their access to political participation in local governments and decisional organisms at the community level.
- f. **Development of basic infrastructure** (particularly in the area of health and communications) and promotion of an urbanization process in keeping with the integration of rural-urban spaces and with a gender perspective.
- g. **Strengthening of the private sector**, which involves the promotion of activities for existing mixed or women's organizations (cooperatives or business, *campesino* and professional groups) as well as organizations dedicated to women's issues or to the advancement of women and gender equity (with urban and rural coverage.)
- h. **Promotion of research for decision-making purposes**, to fill in information gaps in this area at the regional, national and local levels. This implies financial and technical support to prepare surveys and other instruments for gathering information (e.g., on rural family income, funds that young people or women send from outside the country, non-agricultural and non-domestic work.)
- i. **Production and dissemination of informational and formational material** directed at rural women, public officials, and nongovernmental and local organizations whose main purpose is to raise awareness of women's human rights and how to make them effective.
- j. **Promotion and Implementation of formative programs in the area of gender equity and rural development**, aimed at the technical and administrative personnel of public and private institutions related to the advancement of women, particularly rural women. The objective of this line of strategy is to strengthen the technical capacity of governmental and nongovernmental entities, as well as cooperation agencies and local development groups.
- k. **Solidification of strategic alliances**, both inter-institutional and inter-sectoral, at the local, national and regional levels. This involves linkage for coordination between agencies for cooperation and financial support, state and inter-governmental entities, nongovernmental organizations, and local development organizations.

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