

# UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL



53973/

Distr.  
LIMITED



E/CN.14/SW/INF.8  
12 March 1969

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA  
Regional Meeting on the Role of Women  
in National Development  
Addis Ababa, 17-26 March 1969

## THE EMPLOYMENT AND VOCATIONAL PREPARATION OF GIRLS AND WOMEN IN AFRICA

(Background paper presented by the International Labour Organisation)

### Introduction

It is generally recognized that women's participation in economic and social life is one of the vital factors in national development and that women should be strongly encouraged to take an active and responsible part in this process. Recent studies of human resources development have shown that, in planning a strategy of human resources related to the needs of economic and social development, it is essential to take girls and women more fully into account despite the fact that there is at present a certain amount of unemployment and underemployment in numerous countries.

Africa is no exception to this rule and African women themselves have often expressed the desire to play an effective role in the life of their countries. The present document is intended to highlight the main trends in the employment and training of women in Africa and the various occupational fields where they can contribute to economic and social development. It is based very largely on a report prepared for the ILO's Second African Regional Conference (Addis Ababa, 1964) and on the conclusions adopted by that Conference.

### Employment opportunities for women in Africa

#### General observations

Women's employment in Africa at present varies considerably from one country to another, very often in direct relation to the level of women's education and training. New employment possibilities for women develop along with increasing opportunities for acquiring specialized skills. Moreover, with the advancement of Africans to higher posts which used to be held by Europeans, new openings are becoming available to men and women alike and they are obtaining greater opportunities of promotion and advancement in government, in industry, in commerce and in offices. This is one of the reasons why there has been such a great increase in employment of women in office work. The same is true of shop assistants and is beginning to be true of domestic service in some countries. It has not yet happened on the same scale in factories, though women are gradually being allowed to take up some kinds of employment which were formerly considered to be men's work, such as weaving and machine sewing.

Although a process of rapid urbanization is taking place in various parts of Africa, the bulk of the population is still engaged in subsistence agriculture and the vast majority of the female population is in this sector. In a recent document prepared for the ILO African Advisory Committee 1/ it

1/ "Employment Policy in Africa", document prepared for the Third Session of the African Advisory Committee (Dakar, 10-20 October 1967), AFAC/III/3.

was estimated that in the African continent as a whole at least 80 per cent of the working population was employed in the traditional sector (subsistence agriculture, small-scale trading and traditional handicrafts). Moreover, in most African countries the possibilities of substantial labour absorption by the modern sector over the next years are very limited, as can already be noted from the development plans which have been drawn up in various countries.

For example, the Kenya Development Plan (1966-1970) provides for the creation of a total number of jobs outside the traditional agricultural sector which will not even be sufficient to absorb the increase in the economically active male population during the plan period: the number of new jobs provided for is 340,000, whereas the economically active male population is expected to increase by 400,000. The Uganda Plan (1966-1971) provides for the creation of 60,000 wage-earning jobs in the non-agricultural and 38,000 in the modern agricultural sectors. This means that during this five-year period only about a quarter of the additional economically active population will find wage-earning employment (the economically active population is increasing by between 70,000 and 80,000 persons per year).

These data show that as long as the labour force is growing more rapidly than job opportunities in the non-agricultural sectors, agriculture, and more particularly subsistence farming, emphasizes the necessity for enlisting them in all efforts to bring about changes in this sector.

#### Employment situation

Recent employment data, based on the latest available censuses or surveys, show wide differences in women's work participation rate and in the proportion of women in the total labour force (4.8 per cent in the UAR and 50.7 per cent in Madagascar <sup>1/</sup>). However, it is extremely difficult to draw any general conclusions from these data since they are influenced by various factors, including the various definitions of the economically active population used in the different countries. In many countries, for example, relatively large numbers of women assist on farms or in other family enterprises without pay and there are differences from one country to another in the criteria adopted for determining whether such workers are to be included within the economically active population. It is true that the low female work participation noted in some countries reflects prevailing cultural patterns which tend to discourage women from engaging in economic activity. It is nevertheless surprising to see such wide differences between countries of roughly comparable stages of economic development and this would suggest that the main explanation lies in differences in national statistical practices.

It is also difficult to separate self-employed women from those engaged in family undertakings or in subsistence farming, but it seems fairly clear that their numbers are considerable in some regions. The numbers employed in family undertakings vary from country to country within the region since there are many areas of Africa without cash crop farming.

<sup>1/</sup> Cf. ILO 1967 Yearbook of Labour Statistics, Geneva.

The types of employment available to women who wish to make a cash income vary to a great extent according to the degree of formal education received. While women with little or no formal education are limited to unskilled work in agriculture or sometimes in the towns, women with primary education may find employment in shops, in domestic service and in hotels, and also as chargehands, forewomen and supervisors in factories where there are women without education employed at unskilled work. Openings also exist for them as announcers and programme assistants in broadcasting services, as X-ray operators, clerks, cashiers, accountants, shorthand typists, secretaries, bank employees, office machine operators and so on. Women are also employed as agricultural officers in many departments of agriculture, e.g. in Nigeria, and as bus conductresses and as telephonists, especially in West Africa. The occupation of telephonist has become almost exclusively a female one in many parts of Africa. Women with education have also started to go into business on their own account - a kind of corollary to the activities of the traditional market women - and they can be found in a few instances as independent farmers, owners of taxis and buses, owners of shops, etc. Another occupation which women have taken up in recent years is that of hairdresser and beautician.

Women are found in many other types of employment which in some countries do not actually require a university education but require a very good secondary education, such as dentistry (large numbers), pharmacy, radio-therapy, social welfare work, police women, air hostesses, laboratory technicians, drawing office assistants, journalists, information officers.

Women with university education may enter the professions, such as law, medicine and teaching. There is nothing to prevent women from taking up scientific posts and there are a few engineers, geologists and agronomists. In the newly independent countries governments have led the way in making posts available to men and women on an equal basis and qualified women are now found in high posts in the civil services.

Many of the occupations mentioned above have been taken up by women only the last few years or so and absolute numbers are still very small. The first step having been taken, however, more and more women are entering these fields. It has meant breaking down tradition in quite a number of cases. This seems to have been done with considerable success in many countries.

#### Fields in which opportunities might be developed for women

Employment of women in African countries comes up against many difficulties, some linked with customs and tradition and attitudes and natural preferences of women themselves, others with economic factors limiting the framework of employment opportunity. These difficulties were set out at some length in the report to the African Regional Conference and it was noted that the two most important ones seemed to be the lack of education and training for women and the lack of employment opportunities.

It cannot be denied that there is a good deal of unemployment or underemployment among men and women in many parts of Africa, but it should not be assumed that for this reason efforts to widen employment opportunities for women should be discouraged. In many countries unemployment co-exists with a shortage of various types of skilled and trained people which slows down economic growth. Furthermore, as elsewhere, women tend to be more suitable for many kinds of work and vice versa, and therefore their employment need not compete with that of men but may be complementary to it.

Some indication of the fields of work where employment of women may be encouraged may be found in government replies to a United Nations questionnaire on the role of women in the economic and social development of their countries, prepared in accordance with resolution 1133(XLI) of the Economic and Social Council. <sup>1/</sup> One reply notes, for example, that wherever the natural aptitudes of women can be utilized more effectively, as in the textile industry, food industry and machine-made products industries, etc., the role of women in industrial production should be increased. It is noted also that efforts should be made to organize and rationalize the process of marketing food commodities, which is almost entirely carried out by women in the urban market plan and that women should be encouraged to organize co-operatives for wholesale buying and selling as well as to open business enterprises in women's and children's clothing, food, objets d'art, etc. The role of salaried women in commercial enterprises (shop assistants, typists, counter staff, cashiers, secretaries, etc.) could be increased, in view of their special aptitudes for such jobs. In the fields of health, education and social work, where women are not only numerous in certain countries but also occupy positions of responsibility, their role could be further developed especially in social work and education.

In countries where traditional concepts about women's role in economic and social life persist and where the pace of industrialization is slow, agricultural and rural small-scale and cottage industries are considered to be fields in which women's role might be increased. Many governments have insisted on the necessity of helping women to become real farmers, engaged in breeding livestock on a small scale, raising poultry, kitchen gardening, bee-keeping and the cultivation of silkworms.

In Sierra Leone the sectors in which the employment of women is to be promoted are, by order of priority, education, agriculture, and trade and commerce. In Zambia the accent is put on the need to improve general health, specifically among pre-school children, and to enlist women in self-help, resettlement and urban development schemes.

---

<sup>1/</sup> See United Nations document E/CN.6/493/Add.1, 22 January 1968.

### Employment of women in the rural sector

In view of the economic importance of agriculture and subsistence farming for the economy of the African countries in the coming years, and in view of the increasing role women are called upon to play in the transformation of this huge traditional sector, further thought should be given to the ways in which they may contribute to the modernization and development of this sector.

A recent study on East African countries <sup>1/</sup> notes that the slow development in agriculture has much to do with the low status of women in that part of Africa. Subsistence farming is to a large extent done by women. "The pattern seems to be rooted in African traditions, where men were hunters and warriors and women had to take care of the household, including cultivation of the soil. But women who among other things have to take care of the children are handicapped in this field. They are as a rule less literate and probably less apt to respond to information about new production methods..."

The most important thing in the rural sector is to help women increase agricultural yields and experience has shown that beneficial innovations are difficult to introduce when women are not consulted about or prepared for change or innovation.

Increased productivity cannot be achieved through educational and training methods alone, however. Women in rural areas are often overburdened with a number of menial but essential duties which prevent them from devoting enough time to training (growing of food crops, household duties, water-carrying, provision of food in the fields they cultivate which are often several miles from the village, rearing of children, etc.). Such tasks could be considerably reduced through labour-saving equipment (electric grinding machines, waterpumps, etc.). It has also been pointed out that women's participation in nutritional and health projects tends to have indirect but good results on agricultural production. Examples are available of the positive effects of dietary improvement on production in areas where a poor diet has caused absenteeism and lack of initiative and better health knowledge helps to overcome chronic disease and infection which in many African countries greatly impair the working capacity of the people.

Women may also be encouraged to take part in or even initiate food-processing operations geared to local needs, like the manufacture of jam and the drying of fruit and vegetables, as well as to develop economic methods of canning fruit juice for local consumption.

---

<sup>1/</sup> Possible Ways of Speeding up Economic and Social Development. Lecture given at the Institute's East African Seminar on Labour Problems in Economic Development held at the Kikuyu Adult Studies Centre, University College, Nairobi (2-28 April 1967).

Handicraft and cottage industries also offer a wide scope for the employment of women. In several African countries handicrafts stimulate to a large extent development within the traditional sector (in Nigeria, for example, handicrafts provide work for some 500,000 people). Initiatives to develop and organize handicrafts have already been undertaken in some countries. In Senegal, the Arts and Crafts Department, created for the co-ordination of all activities in this field, is to concentrate during the Second Development Plan on a programme of regional development resulting in the creation in each regional capital of a craft centre, which will assist in providing training and advice for the craftsmen's production co-operatives in each region. Girls and women will have to be closely associated with such handicraft projects, particularly in the traditional fields where they have special ability.

Finally, mention should be made of women's role in community development projects. The report on community development and national development prepared by an ad hoc group of experts appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations recognized that true community development is not possible without the understanding, co-operation and effective participation of women. 1/ Nutrition, crafts and productive house enterprises, such as poultry-keeping, are spheres in which women have to be encouraged to participate within the framework of a total community effort, and often through co-operatives.

#### Education and preparation for employment

##### General trends

As has been pointed out, employment opportunities for girls and women depend to a great extent on the level of their education and training. It is therefore essential for their preparation for work that they have full and equal opportunities in basic education and training. This is one of the basic principles laid down in the recommendations concerning technical and vocational education and vocational training adopted by UNESCO and by the ILO in the same year, 1962. 2/ The UNESCO recommendation states that: "Since developments in society require from women, besides family and domestic activities for which training can be given, a much wider participation in all types of occupations, the facilities for women in technical and vocational education should be the same in importance and range as those offered to men. Men and women should have equality of opportunity for access to all types and levels of technical and vocational education. A special effort should be made in order to give to women the possibility of personal fulfilment in the vocational field through technical and vocational education."

1/ The Relation between Community Development and National Development (E/CN.5/379/Rev.1).

2/ UNESCO recommendation on technical and vocational education, 1962. ILO vocational training recommendation, 1962 (ED.64/D.24/17: pamphlet off-print of the two recommendations).

In African countries, however, girls lag behind boys at all levels of education and training. There is, therefore, a great need to expand education and training facilities for them and to improve the quality of their basic preparation for life and work.

Facilities for girls should be expanded along lines which enable them to respond to changing employment conditions. It is important to give girls full opportunities for training for productive work which is really useful to the nation's economic and social development and not to prepare them for occupations of little or no use in the building up of the national economy.

The ILO's report on the vocational preparation of African women noted that training for girls and women was developing very slowly. It tended to concentrate somewhat conservatively on the careers traditionally regarded as "women's work" such as teaching, nursing and dressmaking, as well as to fail to distinguish clearly between home economics training for the home and family and vocational training for gainful economic activity. The report stressed the danger that governments, in drawing up their training programmes, would fail to take the necessary account of the needs of girls and women in the light of the evolution of their participation in economic and social life. The position has not really changed much since 1964.

One of the basic problems concerning African countries in the field of education and vocational preparation has been that the rate of expansion in both population and primary education is higher than the rate at which opportunities for "trainee jobs" leading to rewarding employment are expanding. Governments have therefore been led to seek to gear education and vocational training more directly to agricultural expansion, accelerated rural development and agricultural productivity, these being considered as prerequisites to successful industrialization and overall national growth.

In recent years, various experimental projects have been launched in some countries designed to give agricultural or handicraft training to school-leavers who cannot be absorbed in industry or secondary schools (Nigeria, Dahomey, Central African Republic). In the first instance these projects provided training for boys only, but in some cases home economics sections have been introduced for girls. Often these programmes are implemented for land settlement purposes, like in Nigeria, where after successful completion of a training course, the trainee is settled on his own holding and works at least two years for regular wages in the co-operative community until the farm begins to yield steady income. It has been observed by an author reviewing this kind of youth programme that the absence of a trained wife is a handicap to a young settler. However, the number of young women taking vocational agricultural courses is infinitesimal. What is normally called training for girls scarcely ever goes beyond home-making and child care.



### Education at school

Recent data on the enrolment of women in educational institutions show that in spite of the great progress achieved in promoting education for women their enrolment at all levels is still far behind that of boys in most African countries. 1/ Nevertheless, the enrolment of girls, especially in primary and secondary education, is increasing regularly, not only in absolute figures but also as a percentage compared with that of boys.

For the whole of Africa girls formed in 1963 37 per cent of the total primary school enrolment. At the university level no progress has been registered since 1950 in girls' enrolment (21 per cent).

The reasons why fewer girls go to school than boys and why they leave school after a shorter period than boys have often been analysed. The meeting held in 1964 by UNESCO on Access of Girls to School Education in the Arab States 2/ pointed out that the obstacles hindering the access of girls to education were due to a series of interwoven economic and social factors, such as lack of personnel and facilities, financial limitations both on the part of national authorities and individual families (from which girls are likely to suffer more than boys), social traditions and attitudes towards the role of women in society and the high rate of drop-outs among girls in order to help in the family and with younger brothers and sisters. It was noted, however, that opposition to education for women was declining as a result of both economic development and social changes.

Among measures suggested to increase the school attendance of girls, a great many are of a social character, such as free school supplies and grants for primary boarding schools, school canteens, medical services and inspection, as well as the improvement and expansion of teacher training, especially of women teachers and the adoption of double shifts where facilities are limited.

### Vocational education and training

It is not possible to give a detailed picture of vocational training opportunities for girls in African countries. It is only possible to look at certain trends.

In a study made on East Africa 3/ it was noted that "for African girls, opportunities are more limited by the ignorance of some school staffs as to the opportunities which in fact exist. We were informed

---

1/ UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, Paris, 1965.

2/ UNESCO/ED/FAR/3, February 1964.

3/ G. Hunter, Education for a Developing Region - A Study in East Africa, 1963.

more than once that nursing, teaching and domestic science were the only opportunities for girls, which was, of course, almost true up to about 1955. In fact, a considerably wider range of opportunities is now opening up for girls with school certificates or better, partly in government offices and partly in industry and commerce."

A recent report prepared by UNESCO for the Commission on the Status of Women entitled "Access of Girls and Women to Technical and Vocational Education" examines the opportunities open to girls in technical and vocational education in private and public institutions, chiefly at the secondary level. 1/

In nearly all the countries surveyed, the access of girls to technical and vocational education came much later than for boys and very often after the enactment of official legislation. While in law the principle of non-discrimination in respect of access by girls to technical and vocational education was universally accepted, priority was often given to boys in the development plans. Moreover, while regulations placed no restriction on the admission of girls, neither did they impose any obligation to admit them; thus, private educational establishments could be reserved quite freely for one sex or another.

Some countries have provided special job training for girls who have access only to certain specified sectors, such as Dahomey, which offers them secretarial training and training for household management, and Morocco, which admits them only to courses in dressmaking, household arts, the training of co-operative workers (option fine sewing), hairdressing, secretarial work and book-keeping.

Special female technical education exists in 13 African countries, consisting in most cases of theoretical and practical training in household management, dressmaking, embroidery, millinery, knitting, laundering, ironing, cookery and child care. There are also courses for the training of children's nurses, social workers, family aides, mother's helpers, rural domestic economy instructors, household arts instructors, camp counsellors and youth hostel counsellors. Finally, there is training at a higher level for nurses, dieticians, midwives, welfare officers, supervisors of dressmaking, dress manufacture or the setting up of knitting machines. Ghana also has training for girls in small shopkeeping.

In certain countries (Chad, Central African Republic, Togo, Congo (Brazzaville)) where the educational lag among women is particularly marked at the primary education level because of low school attendance and a higher drop-out rate for girls than for boys, it was noted that there were fewer female entrants to technical and vocational education because they did not come up to the standard required for admission.

---

1/ ECOSOC/E/CN.6/498, 2 January 1968.

Examining the problem of admission to technical education of young married women, the UNESCO study observed that there were very few countries with a positive policy in regard to this matter. In Mali, many female students are married, since young women in ordinary secondary education who marry are encouraged to continue their vocational and technical education. In Ghana, married women are also normally admitted. On the other hand, married women are not admitted to technical and vocational education in Upper Volta, Morocco, Guinea (with the exception of the training school for midwives), and the Ivory Coast (except for the technical teachers' college).

In the field of financial assistance and scholarships, it was reported that the principle of the equal rights of boys and girls is generally applied in Africa. Some countries (Gabon, Central African Republic, Chad and Niger) have even pointed out that although education is free the boys and girls attending technical and vocational institutions are all scholarship holders.

Percentages of girls in total enrolments in technical and vocational education in Africa

	From 0-10%	From 10-20%	From 20-30%	From 30-40%	From 40-50%	50% and over
Upper Volta	3					
Nigeria	4					
Congo (E)	7.5					
Ghana		10				
Somalia		14				
Mali		15				
CAR		17				
Guinea		19.5				
Congo (DR)			21			
Malawi			24.5			
Ivory Coast				33		
Senegal				33		
Dahomey				37.5		

Source: UNESCO report to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (ECOSOC/E/CN.6/498 of 2 January 1968, Table 1).

It can be seen from the above table that the percentages of girls enrolled in technical and vocational education is very low in Africa, as in 10 out of the 13 countries this percentage is under 25. The difference with boys' education is not only quantitative but also qualitative. Job training is much less diversified for girls than for boys. Only one country, Guinea, lists girl students in the industrial training sector: technology of chemistry and related sciences: 27 girl students out of 154. Only one country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, lists girls under communications (18 girls out of 130 students). Two countries, Guinea and

Senegal, report girl students in agriculture. In the other countries girls are listed only under commerce and clerical occupations and to a lesser extent applied arts and sciences.

It should be remembered that technical and vocational education is not the only way girls can prepare themselves for employment. Some are trained through apprenticeship, especially in traditional handicrafts, but opportunities for such training for girls represent only a very small percentage of apprentices - 14 girls in a sample of 250. Girls are also trained for a variety of occupations in special centres outside the school system. Practical work is combined with theoretical example and general education.

Finally, a number of African countries are seeking to meet the needs of early school-leavers by developing pre-vocational training of elementary standard directed towards preparing boys and girls to perform many simple tasks needed within their communities. Girls are generally included in such schemes and it is recognized to be important to ensure them full access to such training and to adjust the range of occupations in which the training is given to their special requirements.

#### Fields in which vocational training might be developed

However incomplete, the information available on vocational training of girls and women shows the frequent disparity between the facilities provided for them and both the range of occupations in which they could be employed and the actual opportunities open to them in certain occupations. Action is required to expand the vocational training available to them, taking special account of the differences in their level of education and of the great number of them who have no education at all.

For women with little or no education, a favourite form of self-employment is marketing. Efforts need to be made to encourage these women and train them to work in co-operatives for the buying and selling of their products. Such co-operatives seem to exist already in Dahomey and in Guinea.

On the outskirts of quite a few towns in Africa enterprising families, especially the women members, have started market-gardening, bringing in the produce of fresh vegetables to the towns for sale at hotels and in markets. This helps to provide a useful source of earnings for women living not too far from towns.

When women live too far from a place of employment to be able to take a wage-earning job or have too many young children to be able to leave them alone while they go out to work, they may be taught such crafts as pottery, basketwork, metal work, mat making, sewing, knitting and weaving, not only for domestic purposes but also for sale. Women can be encouraged and trained to make goods which can be used in the country itself and are saleable, and helped to organize the sales - through co-operatives or through State-owned shops (as in some northern African countries).

An example of the kinds of employment for which existing vocational training opportunities do not meet the current and foreseeable demand is office work: typing and shorthand, secretarial work, office accounting, general office work, operation of office machines, etc. The other occupations in which training could usefully be given to girls who have attended school for six years or so are high-class dressmakers, housekeepers, wardens, dieticians, caterers, hairdressers, matrons, etc.

Accelerated training for specific kinds of work in factories can also be given to girls who have little or no education - for special jobs such as supervisors, welfare workers, trainers, etc. Training in journalism and broadcasting, if organized, could also offer interesting prospects to girls.

There are today many educated girls who could be qualified to enter many of the professions and occupations mentioned above if only the necessary vocational training were made available to them. In a few years' time, the number of educated girls will be even higher and there will be more possibilities for them. In view of the time it takes to organize vocational training, it seems essential to plan ahead so that these girls acquire the necessary preparation for the opportunities opening up for them.

In some African countries, initiatives have been taken recently by governments to organize vocational training on sounder bases, such as the establishment of national training and operational centres or institutes and the introduction of national apprenticeship systems. In the framework of these new institutional set-ups, studies and surveys might be carried out on the various vacancies in individual occupations which could be filled by women and recommendations should be made on the appropriate training programmes to be developed for them.

#### Rural training

The importance of activating rural women for progress and modernization in rural areas has already been stressed. Unfortunately, however, provisions for educating and training rural women are non-existent or badly oriented in most African countries.

A number of media exist for providing education and training for the rural population: rural training centres, on-the-job training in development projects, settlement schemes, extension services, rural youth organizations, co-operatives, etc. As a rule, though, girls and women are not included within these schemes and are provided almost exclusively with family-oriented home economics. This is very necessary and desirable but it is not enough.

It is often observed that vocational training facilities should lead to employment and that, as most women in agricultural areas are self-employed, it is not always feasible to establish training programmes for them. The same remark applies to boys, the majority of whom will not utilize their training except for work in a family farm.

As far as possible, programmes for rural youth should therefore prepare both boys and girls either for future self-employment or for gainful employment and should be closely geared to the economy of the region and local needs. The traditional division of tasks between the two sexes should be taken into consideration in the preparation of the training curricula so as to give the girls sufficient training in home economics without neglecting their agricultural preparation. This type of project is being undertaken currently in Mali and Tunisia with ILO's assistance.

The need to do more to expand training opportunities for girls and women has been widely recognized, nationally and internationally. The problem now is to translate this recognition into practical terms, giving them the possibility of learning and earning and providing them with adequate opportunities, along with boys, for vocational training in modern techniques of agricultural development.

#### ILO activities on behalf of women

The ILO's approach to the problems of women workers - urban as well as rural - has evolved with the changing trends in economic and social development throughout the world.

While in the early years from 1919 on the ILO's activities were essentially designed to protect the health and welfare of women workers, in recent years the work has broadened and is directed more specifically at helping women to obtain better training, equal opportunities for employment and equal pay and treatment in employment. The fundamental objectives are twofold: to safeguard the health, maternity and motherhood functions of women and to promote practical equality of opportunity and treatment for women workers.

To achieve these ends, the ILO has established a series of international instruments relating to women's employment. <sup>1/</sup> As a general rule ILO instruments are equally applicable to men and women. Special conventions applying to women only have been adopted only in circumstances where it appeared necessary to provide special health protection or to assure equality of opportunity or treatment for women, as in the fields of the regulation of night work, maternity protection and equal pay for equal work.

Since 1959, a Panel of Consultants on the Problems of Women Workers, made up of persons representing governments, employers and trade union views, was set up to advise and assist the Office on the needs and problems of women workers and on ways of meeting them. The last meeting of these consultants, held in 1965, considered problems relating to the vocational guidance and

---

<sup>1/</sup> The standards incorporated in these instruments are summarized in a separate document (ILO/W.2/1968).

training of girls and women, ILO action to advance the economic and social status of women in developing countries, and implementation of ILO standards relating to the employment of women. It made a number of proposals concerning future ILO action in relation to these questions and placed special stress on the need to promote action for women in developing countries.

Occasionally, women's problems are examined on a regional basis in regional ILO conferences or seminars. For example, the Second African Regional Conference of the ILO, held in Addis Ababa in December 1964, discussed the problems of women workers in the region and adopted two resolutions: in view of their relevance, the texts of these resolutions are appended to this document. The first one lists principles and measures relating to the employment and conditions of women and urges African States members to apply these as rapidly as national conditions allow. The other concerns the action which the ILO might take to advance the status of women in African countries and suggests some of the directions which ILO efforts might take.

In the framework of the activities to be undertaken under its regional employment plans (Latin America, Asia and Africa), the ILO will seek to ensure that the needs of women are given adequate attention. This may involve, in particular, developing effective ways of reaching rural women in order to enable them to participate more fully in the economic and social advancement of their communities. It may also involve efforts to widen training and employment opportunities for girls.

The ILO's technical co-operation activities place special emphasis on efforts to bring about a better use of available human resources and to improve working conditions, to widen employment opportunities and to improve vocational qualifications and productive efficiency. Girls and women are supposed to benefit from the technical co-operation activities as well as boys and men, but in practice their opportunities tend to be more limited as their potential role in national economic and social development is underestimated in a great many countries, with a resultant lack of government requests to advance their economic and social status.

Particularly in the field of vocational training, which in recent years has accounted for the great bulk of ILO's technical assistance resources, girls have not benefitted from this assistance to the same extent as boys, primarily because it has been requested for areas in which women are not traditionally employed.

In some fields of ILO technical co-operation, however, increasing numbers of girls and women are being reached. For example, in Tunisia, the ILO is helping with a project of pre-vocational training which includes girls as well as boys, and, with the assistance of the Swedish Government (SIDA), it is planned to set up a national centre for the vocational training of girls, attached to the National Institute for Vocational Training at Rades, which will prepare girls for commercial and clerical occupations at

various levels, hotel and catering occupations, sewing and dressmaking, child care and some industrial work (design, planning and laboratory work). In Algeria, the ILO has been requested to organize vocational training for girls within the National Institute for Adult Training, and to provide assistance for the training of clerical and secretarial workers.

In Sierra Leone, the ILO is assisting, in co-operation with the Swedish Government and the World YWCA, a two-year vocational training course in office work, dressmaking and home management. The Government of Kenya has also received assistance from the ILO, in co-operation with the Swedish Government, in the field of secretarial and clerical training with the aim of training girls to fill posts in the Kenyan Civil Service. In the Central African Republic a clerical training centre (with a 6-10 months' training course) has been created with the assistance of two ILO experts; the bulk of the trainees are girls. The ILO is providing technical co-operation in the same field to Cameroon, Gabon, Upper Volta, Liberia, Mali and Rwanda.

In Morocco, a Special Fund project has been set up to organize and develop a training centre for office employees. Much attention will be given to the training of secretaries, and new prospects will thus probably be opened to increasing numbers of girls.

In the field of handicrafts, ILO experts have conducted surveys, e.g. in Libya, Botswana, Mauritania, which recommend methods for developing handicrafts in many of which women have an important stake.

A project aimed at bettering conditions of women in rural areas has been started in Syria in the field of carpet weaving with an ILO expert's assistance. Twelve training centres have been opened, each having a production section, engaging girls who have received training in the centres. There is a good demand for this type of training and type of work. Women working in these centres have developed sufficient confidence to work on their own and some of them have actually started working at their homes. Each centre has about 20 trainees and each training course lasts five months. At the end of 1968, four more centres will be added and existing production will be expanded.

A meeting of experts on the role of handicrafts in the national economy in developing countries has been held at New Delhi from 4 to 16 November. The working papers provide useful information on the scope of women's work and on their conditions of life in this sector of the economy.

New employment and training opportunities will be opened for girls and women in the framework of technical co-operation projects in the field of hotels and tourism, which for many developing countries constitutes a significant source of revenue and foreign exchange. Such projects will be implemented in Cyprus and probably in Singapore and Tunisia.

Effective use of existing technical co-operation programmes to promote the training and employment of women requires both the active interest and



co-operation of governments and international organizations and the availability of a sufficient number of women with the necessary educational qualifications to undertake further training together with the desire to do so.

Research and study form a basic part of the ILO's activities on behalf of women in the developing countries. It is to be hoped that this work may be intensified so as to underpin efforts to advance the economic and social status of women in the African region.

Finally, it should be emphasized that the work of the ILO on behalf of women is an integral part of the overall activities of the United Nations family, each working within its special field of competence and in co-operation with one another. The ILO participates regularly in the work of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. It works with UNESCO in the fields of education, literacy, vocational guidance and vocational and technical education and training of girls and women and with FAO in respect of women's role in rural development and home economics. It also co-operates with WHO in the field of maternal and child health and with WHO and the United Nations Social Development Division in fields of mutual concern, including the development of child-care services and facilities and other community development activities of particular concern to women. At the regional level, it co-operates closely with the regional economic (and social) commissions of the United Nations as well as with other regional organizations concerned with advancing the status of women.

TABLE 1

Women in the labour force as a percentage of female population  
and of the total labour force

\* Official estimates

Country	Year	Female population ( '000s)	Women in the labour force		
			Number ( '000s)	Percentage of female population	Percentage of total labour force
Algeria (non-Europ.)	1954	4,025	1,015	25.2	32.2
Botswana	1964	279	125	44.9	49.8
Cameroon* (Africans)	1962	1,836	700	38.1	39.9
Cape Verde Islands	1960	107	61	57.0	57.5+
Central African Rep.*	1962	651	250	38.4	52.1
Congo (DR)(Afric.)	1955-57	6,551	3,247	49.6	51.5-
Dahomey	1961	1,062	557	52.5	50.2
Gabon*	1963	230	100	43.5	45.5-
Ghana	1960	3,327	1,046	31.4	38.4
Ivory Coast*	1964	1,841	871	47.3	47.1
Liberia	1962	513	148	28.9	35.9
Libya	1964	751	23	3.0	5.7
Madagascar*	1965	3,213	1,630	50.7	50.9
Malawi (non-Africans)	1961	10	2	15.8	25.0
Mauritius -	1962	339	33	9.8	17.6
Rodrigues		9	1	10.8	16.7
Morocco	1960	5,817	346	5.9	10.6
Mozambique	1950	2,994	154	5.1	9.2
Niger	1960	1,314	80	6.1	10.4
Nigeria	1952-53	15,911	6,627	41.7	44.4
Portuguese Guinea	1950	258	162	62.8	51.9
Senegal	1960-61	1,578	543	34.4	41.2
Seychelles	1960	21	7	34.2	38.9
Sierra Leone	1963	1,100	334	30.3	35.6
South West Africa	1960	261	45	17.1	22.2
Sudan	1956	5,127	1,354	26.4	28.0
Swaziland	1956	123	5	4.0	9.3
Tanzania					
Tanganyika (non-Af.)	1957	56	4	7.2	10.3
Zanzibar and Pemba	1948	126	50	39.8	32.5-
Togo	1958-60	750	292	38.9	46.2
Tunisia	1956	1,826	386	21.2	29.1
UAR	1960	12,849	618	4.8	7.9
Uganda (non-Afric.)	1959	41	5	12.0	17.2
Zambia (Europeans)	1961	35	9	25.3	27.3

Source: 1967 Yearbook of Labour Statistics, International Labour Office, Geneva, pp. 9-15.

\* economically active population includes employers, persons working on their own account, salaried employees and wage earners, and, so far as data are available, unpaid family workers. It does not include students, women occupied solely in domestic duties, retired persons, persons living entirely on their own means, and persons wholly dependent upon others.

TABLE 2

Percentage of women in total labour force in selected major occupational areas

Country	Year	Professional, Administrative, technical & executive and related workers	Managerial workers	Clerical workers	Sales workers	Craftsmen, production process workers & labourers not classified elsewhere	Service, sport & recreation workers
Ghana	1960	19.7	3.1	7.4	80.4	25.9	29.1
Liberia	1962	26.6	9.1	12.8	35.1	3.4	12.7
Libya	1964	13.8	1.1	6.4	1.3	11.2	6.7
Malawi (non-African pop.)	1961	35.8	6.4	51.3	9.3	1.2	30.3
Mauritius	1962	41.6	4.1	23.8	7.9	5.4	54.3
Morocco	1960	14.9	3.2	25.6	4.0	19.6	27.3
Sierra Leone	1963	26.6	8.9	16.0	46.6	9.2	6.5
South Africa (Rep. of)							
White pop.:	1960	38.2	9.3	51.8	37.5	6.7	26.7
Others:	1960	48.8	6.1	9.5	12.0	4.2	71.5
Southern Rhodesia	1961	36.0	6.5	66.4	44.3	4.2	41.9
South West Africa	1960	38.1	8.6	43.6	33.4	1.1	65.0
UAR	1960	22.3	47.8	4.6	5.6	3.5	14.9
Zambia (Europeans)	1961	31.1	5.9	67.2	57.4	1.0	32.2

Source: 1967 Yearbook of Labour Statistics, International Labour Office, Geneva, pp. 138-150.

TABLE 3

Percentage distribution of female labour force by major occupational groups

Country	Year	Profes- sional, technical & related workers	Administra- tive, execu- tive and managerial workers	Clerical workers	Sales workers	Farmers, fishermen, hunters, lumbermen & related workers	Craftsmen, production workers classified <sup>#</sup>	Service, sport & recrea- tion workers	Total
Ghana	1960	1.2 1.19	0.1- 0.04	0.3 0.32	28.0 28.009	58.2 58.23	10.6 10.57	1.6 1.62	100.0
Liberia	1962	1.4 1.37	0.1 0.13	0.4 0.39	2.6 2.64	93.8 93.74	1.0 1.02	0.7 0.69	100.0
Libya	1964	11.1 11.106	0.4 0.36	7.4 7.36	1.7 1.72	18.9 18.94	46.3 46.306	14.2 14.19	100.0
Malawi (non-African pop.)	1961	35.1 35.06	3.9 3.89	37.7 37.66	13.6 13.63	1.9 1.94	1.3 1.29	6.5 6.49	100.0
Mauritius	1962	11.0 10.97	0.2 0.23	4.2 4.21	3.7 3.68	41.0 40.99	9.4 9.402	30.5 30.48	100.0
Morocco	1960	4.3 4.34	0.1 0.14	4.7 4.707	2.2 2.21	42.5 42.47	24.8 24.78	21.4 21.33	100.0
Sierra Leone	1963	0.9 0.88	0.1- 0.064	0.3 0.33	6.6 6.65	89.7 89.68	2.1 2.09	0.3 0.27	100.0
South Africa (Rep. of) White pop.:	1960	17.9 17.87	1.9 1.86	51.3 51.35	13.0 13.03	1.1 1.12	9.3 9.26	5.5 5.46	100.0
Others	1960	3.8 3.79	0.1- 0.059	0.4 0.38	0.8 0.84	17.9 17.89	7.2 7.17	69.8 69.84	100.0
Southern Rhodesia (Non-African pop.)	1961	16.8 16.802	2.2 2.21	55.2 55.22	13.3 13.33	1.3 1.27	4.7 4.68	6.5 6.45	100.0
South West Africa	1960	3.9 3.89	0.3 0.27	5.9 5.904	2.3 2.26	57.6 57.55	1.6 1.64	28.4 28.46	100.0

TABLE 3 (Cont'd)

Country	Year	Professional, technical & related workers	Administrative, executive and managerial workers	Clerical workers	Sales workers	Farmers, fishermen, hunters, lumbermen & related workers	Craftsmen, production workers & labourers elsewhere*	Service, sport & recreation workers	Total
UAR	1960	13.4 13.408	1.6 0.99	3.2 3.17	8.6 8.59	36.2 36.15	11.0 11.05	26.6 26.606	100.0
Zambia (Europeans)	1961	21.5 21.46	2.1 2.14	53.9 53.89	12.2 12.203	0.8 0.79	3.2 3.16	6.3 6.32	100.0

Source: 1967 Yearbook of Labour Statistics, International Labour Office, Geneva, pp. 138-150.

\* Including workers in mines, quarries, operating transport and related occupations whose total is generally less than 0.5 per cent of the female labour force.

TABLE 4  
Estimated female enrolment by level of education and by major areas and regions,  
1950, 1960 and 1963\*

Region	Year	Number of girls enrolled (in thousands)			Girls as percentage of total enrolment (both sexes)			
		At the first level of education			At the third level of education			
		All three levels	At the first level of education	At the second level of education	All levels	At the first level	At the second level	At the third level
AFRICA	1950	364	341	23	0.1	23	21	11
	1960	1,651	1,548	102	0.8	34	25	12
	1963	2,106	1,923	181	2.0	35	28	13
Eastern	1950	702	684	18	0.0	33	23	8
	1960	1,680	1,608	71	0.6	36	30	14
	1963	2,129	2,021	107	1.1	37	31	17
Middle	1950	81	76	4	0.0	7	16	-
	1960	707	686	22	0.2	28	22	3
	1963	1,075	1,037	37		31	21	6
Northern	1950	767	698	64	5	30	24	11
	1960	2,101	1,832	248	22	34	28	17
	1963	2,630	2,283	316	32	34	29	19
Southern	1950	899	771	117	10	50	44	36
	1960	1,507	1,299	191	17	50	47	33
	1963	1,663	1,430	216	17	50	48	33
Total Africa	1950	2,812	2,570	227	15	30	30	21
	1960	7,647	6,974	633	40	36	31	21
	1963	9,604	8,694	858	52	37	32	21
World Total	1950	96,420	77,466	16,904	2,050	43	41	32
	1960	143,804	110,310	29,656	3,839	43	42	33
	1963	165,529	123,534	36,830	4,165	43	42	35

\* Table 8b Statistical Yearbook, UNESCO, 1965.