

SHADOWS BEHIND THE SCREEN

Economic Restructuring and Asian Women

SHADOWS BEHIND THE SCREEN

• ♦ •

Economic Restructuring and Asian Women



ARENA • CIIR • JUNE 1995

ASIAN EXCHANGE
Vol. 11 No. 1 • June 1995

Publishers:

Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (ARENA) &
Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR)

Issue Editor:

Maggie Paterson

Cover Design & Lay-out:

Tony Manipon

Opinions in Asian Exchange do not necessarily
reflect the viewpoint of ARENA.

Materials appearing in the bulletin may be reproduced
with due acknowledgment of sources and a copy sent
to the publisher

ISSN 0256-7520

Asian Exchange Annual Subscription Rates
(Including air mail costs, in US dollars)

	<i>(two issues)</i>	
Japan, Australia & New Zealand	20.00	
Rest of Asia (individual)	10.00	
(institution)	20.00	
Africa, Latin America	20.00	
US & Europe	40.00	

Cheques to be drawn and crossed in favour of
ASIAN REGIONAL EXCHANGE FOR NEW ALTERNATIVES, LTD.

For further inquiries please write to:

ARENA
Flat B1 2/F, Great George Bldg.,
27 Paterson St., Causeway Bay, Hong Kong

or

P.O. Box 31407,
Causeway Bay Post Office, Hong Kong

E-mail: arena@hk.net

CIIR
Unit 3, Canonbury Yard
190A New North Road,
London N1 7BJ, United Kingdom

E-mail: ciir@geo2.poptel.org.uk

Editorial Note:

This issue of the Asian Exchange is our contribution to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. The project on the "Impact of Economic Restructuring on Asian Women" is a collaboration between the Asian Regional Exchange for Regional Alternatives (ARENA) and the Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR).

ARENA is a regional forum for the promotion of alternative paradigms and development strategies. It publishes this biannual journal and a bimonthly newsletter, the *Communiqué*, tackling social issues, analysis and change. It has five major programs: gender, social movements, alternative development, victims of development and state of Asian peoples covering the various modalities of research, conferences, publications and advocacy.

CIIR is an independent charity working to overcome poverty and injustice in the developing world. CIIR publishes on socio-economic, political, human rights and church issues in Asia, Latin America and Southern Africa on development issues including causes of third world poverty. The International Cooperation for Development, a department of CIIR, provides technical assistance to projects in Latin America, the Caribbean, Southern Africa and the Middle East.

Acknowledgments

This issue is dedicated to all women in Asia who've quietly struggled in small acts and big leaps amidst all the difficulties and challenges. Firstly, we owe our deep gratitude to the women who shared their lives in between grit and tears, without whom this book will not be feasible and will end meaningless.

Thanks to all partners and friends who shared their time and opened their hearts towards the realization of this project: the ARENA gender programme team Urvashi Butalia, Lau Kin Chi and Lee Jung Ok; the secretariat who undertook the initial stages of project development Corie Law, Beena Sorab, Denise Tong, Maitet Diokno and Ed Tadem; all writers for their patience and tolerance to our constant nudging and gentle pressure even with their 48-hour days juggling scholarly work and activists tasks. Special thanks too to Maria and Sansan of the Committee for Asian Women and Lakshmi of the Documentation for Action Groups in Asia for sharing their insights in project development. Also to Akhing and Kathy for always being there to fall back on especially on things which concern numbers and technology.

Our thanks also goes to CIIR friends: Maggie Burns who oversee the project from the other side of the globe, Angela Warren for her participation during the workshop and to Maria Stankovich for patiently compiling the additional materials. My warm regards to Maggie Paterson, the editor, who shared the labour pains and birthing with me in the most intense period of the project.

To friends who have kept me on the ground with their constant challenge of clarifying feminist views and positions. To you all, my love and solidarity.

NENG MAGNO

Contents

<i>Editorial Note</i>	iii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	iv
<i>Preface</i>	vi

SECTION 1: REGIONAL REFLECTION

Women, the Economy and the State by <i>Elizabeth Uy Eviota</i>	3
Strategies and Options for Women by <i>Elizabeth Uy Eviota</i>	19

SECTION 2: COUNTRY PROFILES

SOUTH CHINA & HONG KONG:	
Women Pay for Economic Miracle in China and Hong Kong by <i>Lau Kin Chi</i>	35
SOUTH KOREA:	
A Success Story Written in Sand? by <i>Lee Jung Ok & Son Dug Soo</i>	79
INDIA:	
India's Poor Buckle Under the Burden of 'New Economy' by <i>Malavika Karleker & Priya Viswanath</i>	105
VIETNAM:	
From War and Isolation to a New World <i>Le Thi Quy</i>	133
THAILAND:	
Counting the Cost of Economic Growth <i>Teeranat Karnjanauksorn</i>	163
PHILIPPINES:	
Surviving Globalisation: The Struggle of Filipino Women <i>Maureen Pagaduan, Dazzle Rivera & Ana Dizon</i>	187

SECTION 3: APPENDICES

Preface

"I have often thought that it is so easy to be a man. Just enjoy life, eat, sleep without having to be worried for others. They only think of themselves, please themselves..."

— **Sa King, Thailand**

"My sister who graduated from theological university was both my mother and my sister after my mother passed away."

— **Yu, Korea**

THE PROJECT TO STUDY global economic restructuring and its impact on the lives of women was initiated by the Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (ARENA, Hong Kong), in collaboration with the Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR, UK), in 1994. Globalization is a worldwide phenomena but its results are particularly strongly felt in countries of what is known as the Third World. In this respect, the south and southeast Asian region provide a range of examples of how this process is affecting the lives of ordinary people, particularly women, as well as some pointers towards what countries going in for economic restructuring, can expect.

The project began by ARENA contacting NGO's and individuals who were involved in activism and research on the subject. The basic idea of the project was circulated to interested groups and responses, suggestions, changes were solicited. The actual selection of studies was done through discussions between the two project holders and was guided by a number of criteria that are detailed below. Once countries had been identified, and research and preliminary drafts of papers prepared, ARENA and CIIR held a joint workshop, with all paper writers and the editor/introducer, to discuss the drafts, to look at possible additions, and to share ideas for future work. All along, what was important for both the project holders was that the exercise be a collective and open one, with a basic structure but no rigidities about methods and frameworks. The six studies that are included in this edition of Asian Exchange are the result of this process.

At an early stage in this process we asked ourselves the question: why add to the already considerable body of material on the question of

global restructuring and gender ? Was there anything new to be said, or were we simply repeating, albeit differently, an exercise that had been done over and over ? On reflection, we thought perhaps not: there seem to be a number of very good macro studies around, but it seemed to us that very little attempt had been made to explore the micro dimensions of the kind of change we were witnessing in the region. In other words, while grand narratives do exist, we know little of how ordinary people, and more especially marginalized people such as women, resist these, survive them, question them, and how they create their own histories of courage and survival. Very little of this gets documented in official and academic studies.

The next question we were faced with - and again this is something which is not uncommon - was to do with the choice of countries to include. Clearly, there is no way in which a study such as this can be comprehensive and still remain containable within the covers of what is defined as a book or a journal. What criteria, then, do we exercise in the choice of countries: what gets included and what should be left out ? It was through a series of discussions with activists and academics that the choices readers see here came about. We thought a comparative study which looked at some countries which were fully blown NIC's and those that were would-be, or wanting-to-be NIC's could provide an interesting perspective, and perhaps some representation across the region. A second criterion governing selection was the willingness, or otherwise, of NGO's/ individuals/ women's groups within particular countries to take on the work of collecting testimonies, and putting them together in the kind of papers you see here.

To some extent, a certain amount of unevenness is built into the very nature of such an exercise. There are many reasons for this. Each of the countries being analysed here is at a different stage of political and economic development, each has a different (or indeed many different) culture(s) and history(ies); thus, while similarities may exist, it is also true that change of any kind will affect each place, and its people, differentially. More than this, however, was the fact that we felt it important that the work of research and writing be done by activists (some of whom are also academics) who are in touch with ground realities in their areas of work. As is well known by now, for people such as activists who have stated political commitments, access to sensitive information is not always easy. While globalization may wear the mask of liberalness, the functionings of global capital are in many ways lacking in transparency, and access to information is often difficult. More, while in some cases States that have defined themselves as democratic, had - and continue to have - some accountability to their citizens, and citizens have some claims on the functioning of those States, globalization does away with such accountability. Why should a multinational enterprises lay them-

selves open to research and questioning? What claim, they may well ask, do researchers have of them? In some limited way, the State cannot abdicate this responsibility with impunity (although we know it has been done all too often). The testimonies you see here are what activists in particular political situations have been able to garner with whatever resources they have, and with the utmost care being exercised not to endanger or adversely affect the lives of the women they interact with.

This is not to make apologies or excuses for any inadequacies the reader may find. Rather, it is to encourage readers to look at the material not with what have come to be known as the criteria of academic "standards" (for the very nature of this exercise is to question the making and canonising of such "standards"), but to often read "against the grain" of what is being said on paper, to see the subtexts and hidden realities that may lie underneath. In some political situations, for example, it is still not possible to be outspokenly critical, in others the path of global economic restructuring is still too new to judge, but if we listen carefully to the women's voices that accompany the critical pieces here, we find that to them, the implications of the macro paths chosen by governments and international bodies, have a harsh reality whose patterns and portents they can already perceive quite clearly in their lives.

Because the work of collecting and compiling life stories for this project was done by women activists, it carried with it a sensitivity and understanding that is all too rare in today's world of competitive academics where the poor are often just the fodder for researchers. Not only was great care exercised to not implicate women who were being interviewed, but many important stories had to be left out because their telling could have politically affected the women concerned. The narratives included here then, need to be seen not as the end result of intensive research, but as the starting point of a search which attempts to look, emphatically, at how ordinary women's lives are affected by the macro changes that are taking place in the world economy. Such "interested" research may not meet the standards of "objectivity" required by academia. But this work does not pretend to any objectivity. Rather, the assumption here is that there is no such thing as "objective" or "neutral" research, and that involvement with the subject does not necessarily mean the research is lacking in rigour. The studies here are not mere studies, they are firmly located in the activism of the women's movement - indeed they make no apologies for their activist agenda.

In their research, for example, the writers of this volume discovered there were many things the women they spoke to hinted at, but were not willing to speak about or address clearly. For example, the throwing together of single women (i.e. women on their own, or those away from their families) in factories and workplaces, seemed to be leading to many more same-sex relationships. Could this be seen as an expression of sexuality

that had hitherto been repressed? Or could it be said that global restructuring was actually affecting and changing the sexuality of women? Or was it that because there were no men around, the need for closeness, the women's desires, could only find expression with other women? Even the existence of this subterranean change was difficult to pinpoint and meant, for those conducting the interviews, that they had to listen "in stereo" so to speak, to understand the hesitations, the silences, the pauses. Unfortunately, little of this can be expressed in the transition from oral narratives to paper. What did emerge clearly was that women were increasingly becoming part of the global market, not only in terms of their labour but also in terms of their sex - for one issue that they were willing to talk about was the globalization of sex work, both voluntary and forced. The reader will find, however, that most of the life stories here do not address the question of the globalization of sex work. This was a decision taken jointly: it was felt that the subject was being addressed in much more detail by women's groups in the region, and therefore the stories in this book could perhaps look at other issues.

Global economic restructuring has changed, and is changing, many of the givens of our lives. More, it has removed - and continues to do so - many of the moorings in the lives of the poor people. Women, already at the margins in all societies, are particularly affected by this, and affected in many ways. For, in the short term, such restructuring does open up new spaces for some women, giving them access to the public sphere that has hitherto been closed to them, giving them even some income to call their own, and in some cases giving them some spaces to build a kind of supportive community of women which stands in, albeit in limited ways, for the loss of family and community that certain kinds of jobs may entail. But this apparent freedom also comes at a cost - which the studies here so poignantly illustrates. Increasing insecurity in jobs, no accountability on the part of the employer, harsh conditions of work leading to health hazards, rejection for those who are seen to be even marginally unfit for many women who have been able to cross international borders in search of work, the mobility that globalization has been able to provide has also meant a kind of statelessness, a location in state of limbo, with no nation willing to take responsibility for them. There is ample evidence of these, and other kinds of problems in the stories recounted here.

Other, hitherto unknown, elements have also entered the picture. Globalization of economies has also led to the globalization of one of the most powerful players in this "game" - the media. As in all other cases, the word "globalization" is something of a misnomer - there is no global sharing here, rather, there is an imposition of the culture and power of the more powerful nations, those of the north and the west. For women in the south and the southeast Asian region, media representations pose once again the dilemma of the seeming "freedom" of speech and expres-

sion that may not have been available to many, and the simultaneous homogenization of images, with the blonde, blue-eyed housewife reaching out to villages in Indonesia, India and Thailand.

The uncertainty wrought by these processes has also opened up a space for religious fundamentalism, seemingly an ideology that offers an "integrated" view of nations and peoples, but in actuality a fascist, and deeply political world view that has little to do with religion. Women are particularly affected by this by this: called upon to protect the "community" when its religious identity is perceived to be "under threat", they have actively participated in fundamentalist movements, while at the same time being the victims of the increasing fundamentalist backlash we see in the region. For us, the question to ask here is what has created the uncertainties in women's lives that have allowed fascist ideologies to thrive?

A player who is all too often ignored in any discussion on major economic changes is a small, but significant, player: the small women's group, or the confederation of such groups that go to form women's movements. The studies included here are grounded in the realities of the women's movements of their particular countries. It is these movements that provide their context, and it is within these that women have found the power and the strength to resist and question. In each of the studies there is ample evidence that all over the region women have provided support to their sisters, and it is this solidarity which has sustained women. As from Korea put it: "My sister who graduated from theological university was both my mother and teacher after my mother passed away." In the end therefore, what we hope the result of the joint ARENA/CIIR project on global economic restructuring and its impact on women's lives will provide, will be evidence of the courage of the women whose stories are told here, and of the countless others whose stories are contained within these, and indeed of the women's movement in the region whose resilience and ideologies are of an order that far exceeds their actual size.

URVASHI BUTALIA

SECTION **1**

R E G I O N A L R E F L E C T I O N

Women, the Economy and the State

Elizabeth Uy Eviota

THE CONSEQUENCES of rapid industrialisation for women in Asia have been obscured by a preoccupation with the economic growth rates of two generations of 'economic tigers', the Newly Industrialising Countries or NICs. The emphasis on rapid growth also ignores the region's economic, political and cultural diversity, and its experience, shared with the rest of the Third World, of the dire effects of a world economy in disarray.

This section discusses rapid industrialisation and its effects on women across several Asian countries. The discussion focuses on specific economic programmes: export-oriented strategies structural adjustment and economic liberalisation and in socialist economies, on the growth of the market. What is the thinking behind these programmes? What are the effects on social and personal life? And why have there been different consequences for women and men? These programmes represent phases in a worldwide process: the accelerating internationalisation of capital, the increasing integration of Third World countries into the global economy and changes in the role of the state. They are also projects where women figure prominently and in different ways.

GENDER, THE ECONOMY AND THE STATE

Women's specific position in the economy derives from the intersection of economic programmes (ie patterns and rates of economic growth), the role of the state in these programmes and the reality of women's subordinate position in society. The common experience of gender inequity across countries and societies allows men prior and privileged access to the scarce and valued resources of society, including wages, employment, leisure, health care, education, personal autonomy and decision-making. Women's subordination takes such forms as segregation in certain jobs and certain levels of the work force, a secondary position in the economy,

uniformly lower wages relative to men, double time burdens of paid market work and unpaid reproductive work, lower levels of educational attainment, lack of control over their own sexuality and lack of formal political power. Gender inequities in the allocation of resources, access to social and economic opportunities and the distribution of social services translate into inequities of income, control over income, and health.

Gender inequity takes many other guises. For example, gender stereotyping is responsible for women's low rate of political participation because politics is deemed not to be an appropriate sphere, or results in their recruitment to certain jobs because they are thought to have particularly suitable gender characteristics (eg docility). Gender inequity is also mediated by the household, as in women's double burden of work, in male control over female sexuality, in men's primary access to paid work as 'head of household' or in the preferential treatment of male children. The family/household is a core institution of society, but it is not a corporate entity with unitary interests. Gender relations within the household interweave access to work, control of earnings, domestic tasks and the satisfaction of personal and sexual needs. The household's response to economic forces is an interplay of cultural and economic variables, of options for its members which open and close on the basis of age and sex. Gender inequity is embodied in the market and the state; and as social structures and institutions, both the market and the state can work for or against women¹. On the one hand, the market treats women as individuals in their own right. Women, like men, can sell their labour or its products and get a cash income of their own. However, insofar as women have a double burden of unpaid reproductive and paid productive work, they cannot compete with men in the market on equal terms. Women are considered secondary or supplementary productive workers because they are the ones with primary responsibility in the home². Generally, women are held responsible for household management, ensuring that household members are fed, clothed and cared for, while men are expected to provide some of the money or materials required to carry out these tasks. Women's ties to the home define their role in the labour-force while men's productive work is not constrained by the ideology of domestic work.

A major consequence of women's secondary role is their position in the labour-market: while women may be preferred for certain jobs or tasks, they are generally less likely to be hired for waged work and more likely to be laid off during recessions. And partly because of this, women uniformly receive lower pay. Women's secondary position also means they must seek to survive outside the formal wage economy, especially in times of labour surplus; as a consequence more women enter the informal sector. While the informal sector may have advantages for women because it gives them an independent income and working hours are generally flexible, the work is low-skilled, low-productivity, and unwaged, which exacerbates class and gender inequalities.³

Work is also defined in a very narrow way. Macroeconomic analysis and policy formulation take for granted reproduction and maintenance of human resources, work which falls largely on the shoulders of women and is unpaid. As a result, when policy reforms are drawn up to re-allocate resources, there is no explicit consideration for women's unpaid reproductive work. Thus economic goals may be achieved at the cost of a longer and harder working day for many women. The human cost is only revealed in statistics on their health and nutritional status.⁴

The state, on the other hand, assumes a specific role for women and frequently perpetuates and reinforces ideological, social and economic processes that subordinate them⁵. The state often sees women as part of a productive team, working as unpaid family labour or subsumed under the male, or as part of a household where their main task is to take care of the members while men work for pay. This view flies in the face of reality: the survival of households is possible only with the combined incomes of women and men and in at least 20-25 per cent of households, on women's income alone⁶. Typically state policy addresses women in terms of the 'soft' sectors, eg health and education, rarely in the 'main' sectors of production and productivity. One result of this is that public sector projects tend to ignore the needs of women as producers and thus direct resources, training and services towards men.

However, the state can sometimes be made to respond to women's needs and contributions as both producers and reproducers, and sometimes even to women's capabilities. For example, a state which puts greater emphasis on social development can be encouraged to improve women's material condition; while a state which justifies failure to intervene against domestic violence by the separation of public and private spheres, and yet seeks to regulate the sexual behaviour of its citizens for purposes of population control, can be made to see its contradictory position.

In the relationship between gender, the economy and the state, the consequences for women have differed within countries, by social class and by patterns of economic growth; and across countries, by differences in human and social development and in cultural attitudes. In South Asia and China, for example, where gender hierarchies are more rigid and the expression of male privilege more evident (eg the preference for sons) than in Southeast Asia, there are more restrictions on women's participation in the economy and access to education and health care⁷. In this instance the state can be an instrument for both cultural change and an alternative economic programme.

ECONOMIC PROGRAMMES: THE IMPACT ON WOMEN

Export-oriented industrialisation

The first 'tiger' or 'dragon' economies were the British colony of Hong Kong, the city-state of Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea. The second

tier of NICs in Asia usually includes Malaysia, Thailand and China and sometimes Indonesia, the Philippines, India and Sri Lanka.

From the late 1960s, intensified competition prompted many multinational corporations (MNCs) engaged in light manufacturing (eg garments, electronics, toys) to relocate or sub-contract labour-intensive operations from the industrialised world to a number of Third World countries in Asia. Because of large labour surpluses in these countries, MNCs could buy labour at much lower cost. This low cost labour consisted largely of a particular group of women:

The development of an export sector based on low labour costs soon became a growth strategy because it was seen, especially by development planners from the industrial states, as giving Third World countries a competitive advantage in the international economy. Along with the emphasis on exports the strategy required the local economy to open up to foreign private capital and imports. It also meant diversification of the economy; the emphasis on industries and services resulted in the neglect or erosion of domestic agriculture leading to loss of income for farmers and to food shortages.

Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea used exports to fuel their industrialisation process and a combination of favourable internal and external economic and political factors enabled them to achieve the competitiveness of NICs. Favourable internal factors included a skilled labour force, relatively low income disparity, effective land reform, an efficient agricultural sector and a strong interventionist state; favourable external factors were a buoyant global economy, limited competition from other Third World economies, and, for Taiwan and South Korea, massive US aid and tolerance of economic protectionism⁸. Economic growth in these countries, however, was accompanied by increasing concentration of wealth as well as structural imbalances and regional inequalities.⁹

Other Asian countries adopted a similar export-led growth programme in the 1970s (eg Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines) although their exports relied more on exploitation of natural resources than light manufacturing¹⁰. However these countries did not fare as well as the NICs: world trade had slowed down and industrial countries had adopted protectionist measures against Third World exporters¹¹. Countries which adopted export industrialisation in the 1980s, for example India and China, and in the 1990s (Vietnam), replicated the economic practices of the earlier strategies; but they also faced an unfavourable economic environment.

How did this growth strategy affect women? Export-oriented industrialisation brought large numbers of women into the manufacturing labour force. The growing international competitiveness of export manufacturing in many Asian countries was based mainly on the low-paid labour of women. Thus export-oriented industrialisation in Asia (and also in Latin America) was for the most part 'female-led'.¹²

The employers' preference in many Asian countries was for women, particularly the young and single among them, who were deemed skilled and docile, and likely to accept low wages. The availability of waged work for this group of women broadened their social and personal options to some extent. For example, many of them came from peasant families where their main task was housekeeping and options for paid work were either domestic service or labour on the land, both extremely low-paying jobs¹³. Manufacturing employment brought a first-generation of women wage earners and factory workers into direct contact with international capitalist production, and the experience was sudden and dramatic¹⁴. These women valued highly the social freedom connected with living away from home and independent waged work. Independence allowed women some options, one of which was to delay marriage and childbearing, although delay sometimes arose from the unmarried daughter's obligation to contribute remittances to the household income¹⁵. On the other hand, some traditional societies did not provide a social role for unmarried and unaccompanied women past customary marriage age, so that many of these women were subject to social censure.¹⁶

Even if it did provide women with jobs the very nature of the work made women more expendable for capital and tended to sharpen gender inequalities. Export-oriented industries often recreated disadvantages generally associated with the informal sector: workers' right to organise and collective action were suppressed, employment was insecure, the minimum wage was often waived, labour was casualised through apprenticeship status, and productivity quotas replicated the intensity of piece-work¹⁷. Women's work in MNCs and export manufacturing subordinated them more directly to a global market; as a result they became more vulnerable to its fluctuations. Thus the frequent hiring and firing of labour characteristic of these industries deprived women of economic security and instead reinforced their secondary position in the labour market. Especially in electronics, where the turnover was high, management practices also reaffirmed sexual stereotypes and male supervisors often exploited female sexuality as a control mechanism¹⁸.

In garments, the female workforce was usually divided into factory workers and subcontracted workers; but far from complementing each other the large pool of subcontracted workers in the urban and rural informal sectors discouraged factory workers from asking for wage increases¹⁹. Garments were usually produced under sweatshop conditions while in electronics and in agri-business assembly-lines, workers were exposed to hazardous substances and conditions throughout the production process. Home life was no improvement as women were crowded into barrack-like dormitories, making for easier control by male managers or easier access for men to sexual services.²⁰

But the concentration of women in one place also had its advantages: it engendered solidarity and militant collective action. Women's militancy

inevitably brought them into conflict with factory management but it also brought them into conflict with trade-union officials, almost always male, earning higher incomes and reluctant to support their efforts. Women workers, (those in export production or processing zones in the Philippines and South Korea, for example) were among the most militant and their movement among the most dynamic, despite strong ideological assumptions about women's docility²¹. In many cases, women's militancy was held in check by the police and military.

Export-led industrialisation also resulted in social and personal changes. First, when young women became primary income earners, long-term consequences arose for gender relations, including women's position and role in the family. For some, this new economic role meant an improvement in their status within the family; but for others it was simply an additional burden without a corresponding social reward. Second, export manufacturing led to the rapid formation of a new female industrial proletariat of a specific age group and to changes in the sexual division of labour. With the preference for certain groups of women went a specific segregation of tasks: a female labour market was created. While this market ensured women some jobs, it also protected the male labour market with its higher wages, and foreclosed options for women to upgrade their skills with economic and technological change. Third, the relatively high educational standards demanded by many multinationals recruiting for industry and agri-business meant that higher levels of education had simply led to higher educational requirements for hiring. As a result, the same proportion of relatively less-qualified women, even if their educational levels were higher in absolute terms, would continue to fill lower-level jobs. Fourth, as industry required specific groups of women because of their perceived submissiveness, docility, and other attributed gender traits, male-dominant and authoritarian structures were reinforced. Finally, on a personal level, young women's experience of factory life was that of a job-created gender hierarchy. Young women were confronted with specific definitions of what masculinity and femininity were within the workplace, and which sex was superior in skill and competence, and which sex had authority and the power to discipline. These definitions shaped women's attitudes and expectations and institutionalised gender differences.²²

Another group of women who were not absorbed by manufacturing but were affected by outward-looking strategies and the drive to earn foreign exchange were those who worked in sexual services. Tourism was (and is) a big foreign exchange earner and governments promoted it actively; but tours often had less to do with the cultural landscape or geography than with the sexual services of Filipino, Thai and Korean women.

While export-oriented industrialisation did absorb some young women, many more women were left to work in largely stagnating sectors such as domestic or subsistence agriculture or in personal services and petty trade.

In agriculture, land reform was undertaken (with varying degrees of success) with the aim of increasing production in line with domestic consumption needs and to create the incomes and demand to sustain an internal market for manufactures²³. However, land reform programmes often reduced women's control over land by ignoring their traditional use-rights and giving land titles solely to male heads of household. Also, these programmes often directed training and services only to men.

The diversification of the economy with export-led industrialisation, and the transformation of agriculture, encouraged rural to urban migration. In the Philippines, for example, the preference for male labour led more young women to leave for the cities and for other countries. In cities, women have ended up in low paying, labour intensive factory jobs or, and this also goes for those who migrated abroad, in domestic and personal service, including sexual services.

Export-led industrialisation allowed the limited expansion of a middle class in the NICs and other Asian countries and women from these classes have been able to improve their own material welfare and their access to education. For example, a number of these women, with better than average education and the wherewithal to engage in politics, would come to provide the leadership for a women's movement. Sectors of this movement have called attention to social and gender inequities and have themselves provided alternative strategies to improve the condition of women.

Structural adjustment programmes

Structural adjustment programmes were set up in countries with huge balance of payments deficits resulting from the world economic crisis of the 1980s. The fundamental cause of the crisis can be traced to the measures taken by the industrialised countries to address their own economic imbalances: primarily a decline in the rate of increase of productivity²⁴. However it was the oil price increases that aggravated their economic difficulties.

In the early 1970s, an oil price increase generated a huge financial surplus which the major oil exporters deposited with Western banks. In an attempt to recycle the surplus, the banks offered 'cheap money' at variable interest rates to Third World countries as loans for development purposes. Many countries took advantage of the offer; some borrowed heavily.

But in 1978-79, another oil price increase precipitated a major world recession. Growth rates fell rapidly, commodity prices plummeted and industrial countries resorted to protectionist measures. Despite the recession, world military expenditures soared, further increasing the foreign debt of poor countries and reducing the sums available for civil expenditure. In addition, development aid from the First World dropped sharply and private lending virtually disappeared. Third World countries could neither earn nor borrow what they needed. Hence the debt crisis.

The end result for heavily indebted countries was increased social and economic polarisation and political instability.²⁵

But another difficulty was to emerge. Third World countries were now forced to go to the only lenders who would still lend to them: the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank. But in order to obtain these loans, countries had to agree to an IMF-sponsored stabilisation programme, or a World Bank structural adjustment programme. The stated purpose of these programmes was to enable indebted countries to recover from economic crisis, to service their debt and to maintain a flow of credit so they could pursue economic growth projects. In the process many governments were forced to hand over to the IMF their role of directing economic development.

Stabilisation and structural adjustment programmes varied from country to country but consisted mainly of liberalisation and austerity measures across a broad range of sectors. Debtor countries were to effect severe cutbacks in government expenditure and employment, in credit creation and in subsidies in order to increase savings and balance budgets. As a result, in heavily indebted countries the incomes of the poor, already suffering from the debt crisis, were further eroded, prices rocketed and basic government social services such as health and education declined.²⁶

The effects of economic crisis and structural adjustment programmes also varied for each country depending on its position in the global economy, the size of its accumulated debt and the extent of its adjustment. Compared to Latin America and Africa, Asia suffered least: the growth rates of most Asian countries fell, some considerably, but still remained positive and their levels of indebtedness were for the most part moderate by international standards²⁷. The exception was the Philippines which suffered negative growth rates in the 1980s and into the 1990s, and was one of the most heavily indebted countries in the world.

In the region in the 1980s, some countries followed IMF prescriptions fully; others only partially. Still others adjusted on their own without the IMF. The NICs which had diversified into manufactured exports and were hence less affected by worsening terms of trade, were better able to adjust to changing global conditions. China and India were less affected by the economic crisis because of their sheer size, making them less dependent on the international economy and therefore to the deterioration in trade access and financial flows. In Southeast Asia, Malaysia had no IMF or World Bank initiated structural adjustment programme, Indonesia adjusted its economy only in a limited way and Thailand, contrary to IMF demands, kept some of its protectionist structures. What sustained these Southeast Asian economies during the crisis of the 1980s was the massive infusion of foreign capital in the form of Japanese investment in search of low-cost production sites after the yen's dramatic appreciation in 1985²⁸. But the Philippines, one of the most structurally adjusted of countries, was cut off from capital inflows. The Philippines' painful expe-

rience of the human cost of structural adjustment paralleled that of the heavily indebted Latin American nations²⁹. The country, which already had one of the worst records of income inequality in the region, saw a further deterioration in the living standards of the majority of its citizens.

The burden of structural adjustment fell disproportionately on the poor, especially women and children. Women as a group have always been particularly vulnerable in times of economic contraction. The belt-tightening that came with adjustment reduced women's employment security, increased their time burdens, cut into their already meagre incomes and affected their health as social services contracted.

Cuts in education services reduced women's educational opportunities either because of sheer lack of funds or because of a preference for educating male household members. Lack of education had been both a cause and effect of women's lower status. Real wage and income levels fell as prices rose, so women increased their activity in the informal sector and their unpaid work in subsistence agriculture. With reduced health and child care services women had to assume even greater responsibilities. This lengthened both waged and unwaged working days. Elimination of food subsidies, together with falling wages and rising prices, also reduced women's spending power as food providers. Often this resulted in shifts to cheaper or less nutritious food for household members, especially the women and children, or to smaller amounts of even less nutritious food. And when households have to cut down on their food, women and girls consume less food than men and boys.³⁰

Thus, in periods of structural adjustment, malnutrition and infant mortality rates increased as did proportions of high-risk pregnancies and babies with very low birth weights. Educational standards declined, especially for women. The problems were particularly acute where women were the major or sole support of their households. In the 1980s, the Philippines, with negative growth rates, experienced all these increases and declines. In India, government expenditure on food subsidies declined. Indonesia experienced higher rates of infant and child mortality. South Korea experienced a decline in female per capita daily calorie supply.³¹

But economic contraction combined with cuts in health services also had implications for women's fertility and the number of children they bore. The value of children tended to increase as the need for additional wage earners or farmhands increased; at the same time public expenditure on health services was reduced³². In India, one state response exacerbated women's loss of personal autonomy: a soft loan intended as a 'safety net' for the structural adjustment programme was directed primarily at fertility reduction to the neglect and detriment of women's basic health and reproductive needs.

Rapid population growth outpaced increases in productivity, land was increasingly diverted to cash crops, and environmental degradation took

its toll. The result was growing poverty and landlessness among the rural population. Women eased out of agriculture ended up in the urban informal sector in industrial and service jobs. As a consequence many households were split up, with pooled incomes drawn from more than one sector.

Efforts by households to increase incomes during economic recession led to overseas migration by both women and men, but the state also encouraged the export of labour-power because of the foreign exchange remittances overseas workers send home. In the Philippines, for example, the majority of women who emigrated to other countries worked in domestic or personal services; a few became mail-order brides but some also ended up in prostitution. Yet most of these emigrant women were college-educated; many were teachers and nurses, two of the lowest-paying professions in the country³³. As in the case of the export of male labour-power, the export of able-bodied, relatively better educated women created a brain- and skill- drain for exporting countries, while productive land in the countryside was abandoned.

Emigration has deep social consequences because it often results in the disintegration of families and households. In some cases, emigration has resulted in the abandonment of families and households. But it also has deep personal consequences. Emigration in itself means that women are able to seek a way out of situations they find subordinating or oppressive and to exercise options for themselves. By sending remittances, women have also begun to play a central role in the maintenance of their families. And as they take on major income-earning roles they confront the sexual division of labour. But while work abroad may be higher paying and fulfilling for some women, it has been painful or violent for others. Emigrant women who have lived in a world of fear, degradation, insanity and sexual abuse. Rape has been a common occurrence in some areas. And murder has been the fate of a few.³⁴

The debt crisis and structural adjustment programmes also devastated the environment: the pressure to earn foreign exchange led to massive and unsustainable extraction of natural resources for export. At the same time, increasing poverty drove women and men to exploit lands and forests more intensively³⁵. Export-oriented policies required construction of large infrastructure and industrial projects which displaced rural communities and often, once in operation, discharged toxic chemicals into their surroundings. These processes reduced both agricultural productivity and the availability of water, forest and sea products, thus limiting access to food, fuel and income sources. In response, women in the countryside and in upland indigenous communities have collectively resisted landlords, military squads and multinational contractors in defence of their right to work the land and have access to its fruits.

Global economic liberalisation

A structural adjustment programme entailed not only rescheduling of debts and provision of new credits but also adjustment of the national economy to the imperatives of the global market³⁶. Economies were required to divert substantial resources away from sectors serving mainly domestic needs towards export development, in order to generate foreign exchange and improve the balance of payments. Thus structural adjustment programmes and export-led strategies of industrialisation, were part of a political and economic restructuring process, a prelude to globalisation and the establishment of a 'new world order'.³⁷

Globalisation means global economic liberalisation, developing a global financial system and a transnational production system, based on 'a homogenised worldwide law of value'³⁸. This current economic orthodoxy is characterised by the deregulation of markets and prices, the privatisation of enterprise, the retreat of the state and the liberalisation of trade³⁹. Trade-related regionalisation efforts such as APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) are intended to structure global economic integration. The Uruguay Round of the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), whose negotiation extended from 1986 to 1993, came into effect on January 1, 1995. States have two years to ratify it. According to its advocates, the purpose of measures contained in the agreement is to achieve greater global production efficiency and improved global welfare by increasing world trade. The World Trade Organisation now replaces GATT and will monitor global economic liberalisation. However, opposition to such measures has been mounting in many countries. It is argued that the excessively narrow focus on 'efficiency' is fundamentally at odds with the improvement of welfare. It is likely that the GATT will have detrimental effects on Third World countries with huge labour surpluses and heavy debt burdens⁴⁰. GATT's constraints on national economies may effectively inhibit the use of trade-related policy as an instrument of industrialisation, the very strategy which enabled a few countries to achieve NIC status. Furthermore, the reduction in government intervention will prevent replication of the experience of Japan and the NICs, whose economic growth programmes were carried out by strongly nationalist and interventionist states⁴¹. Many see in globalisation as well the loss of community.

Globalisation or the new world economic order has had, and will continue to have, profound implications for women, their work and their life chances, depending on their country's position in the global economy. For example, the NICs, which have achieved a competitive basis for their export products, are in a stronger position relative to other Asian countries to respond to the demands of global restructuring⁴². But as they enter high-technology manufacturing, unless the prevailing practice of recruiting women for lower-skilled operations is broken down, women are likely to be left out of this next phase of industrialisation.

Economic liberalisation measures will have, at best, mixed effects on women and this perhaps only for the more industrialised countries. It will have detrimental effects on the production and productivity of the majority of Third World Asian women.

The principle of comparative advantage which is the thinking behind GATT means that women, as a reserve of low-cost labour, will remain a primary source of manufacturing competitiveness because local industry will continue to be limited to low technology operations. So far most technological change in production methods in the Third World has intensified labour specialisation, through the improvement of tools operated manually under labour-intensive methods. In the industrial countries the drive towards automation and higher technology by transnational corporations (TNCs) has already begun to de-skill women's labour and make them redundant; preference is now being given to higher level skills of men.⁴³

In countries where agriculture is still a major part of the economy, GATT-mandated elimination of quantitative import restrictions, access requirements for imports and progressive lowering of tariffs will erode domestic production of rice and major subsistence crops⁴⁴. Many agricultural workers, women and men, will be laid off, but some male labour will be re-absorbed by increased production of other cash crops. Women, however, will not be re-absorbed and the emphasis on cash crops will devalue women's work in subsistence agriculture and staple crop production. Emphasis on export agriculture will erode food security and lead to food shortages.

Technological changes in agriculture are expected to accelerate with international exchanges but if the past is any guide, these will generally benefit men more than women.

In the industrial services sector the revolution in communication and information processing, especially that connected to international trade, may provoke limited demand for female labour, but again women are more likely to be the lower-paid handmaidens and office servants than administrators or managers. The entry of MNCs into services may displace the smaller entrepreneurs and professionals, both women and men, and curb the development of a local industrial services sector.

The economic liberalisation of communication especially of the media will help globalise consumption patterns and increase the focus on women as consumers.

The informal sector and women's work in it will probably expand because it provides complementary services, such as subcontracted outwork, to labour-intensive, factory-based industrial enterprises geared towards export. Many women eased out of agriculture will also end up in the informal sector of petty trade or personal services.

Where the public sector is a major employer of women, the privatisation of state enterprises will reduce work opportunities for women or

casualise their labour. Rolling back the state will further decrease subsidies for social services such as education and health.

Globalisation may encourage further emigration which could provide one avenue of advancement for women, as long as they are absorbed by the industrial sector, rather than personal services. But contemporary migration flows must be understood within the context of relations between labour-sending and labour-receiving countries. The relationship between these countries is one of unequal exchange of commodities, capital and labour. While the inequalities are wider and deeper in exchanges between North and South, inequalities also exist in South-South exchanges. For example, within the region, women from Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand who work in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Singapore do so in the most onerous conditions for wages lower than those paid to local female labour and much lower than those paid to local men. Their sexuality and the way they express it are also very much circumscribed by both management and the state.

Growth of the market in socialist economies

For some decades, China and Vietnam were command economies where the state organised production and allocated resources. They succeeded in generating some economic growth. But the weight of their bureaucracies, competition from the global economic system and inability to generate adequate investment capital has forced these states to reform their administration, decentralise decision-making and open up to global markets. The agricultural sector has played the lead role in this economic transition.

Both China and Vietnam have benefited from new opportunities for trade, investment and technical innovation from the NICs and Southeast Asian countries. As with other socialist countries, their accomplishments in human and social development have been considerable; however, the transition to freer markets has brought some deterioration in health and education standards. These countries had a relatively low level of income inequality, but this, too, has been affected by the transition. The population and labour force in China and Vietnam are still predominantly rural, and any capital-intensive strategy in industry is likely to increase income inequality.⁴⁵

Economic liberalisation has taken hold in socialist economies. China, since the reforms of the late 1970s, has seen a considerable increase in overall growth rates following a rise in agricultural productivity and, especially in the Southern coastal region, the establishment of special economic and production zones. Vietnam is slowly opening up to the world market after a severe trade embargo imposed by the West and the loss of Soviet trade and financial aid.

The experience of women in transitional economies such as China and Vietnam are generally similar to those in capitalist countries under-

going structural adjustment⁴⁶. Where the transition has been gradual, women, especially those with education or who possess appropriate skills, have been able to find a niche in the new society; but other women have not been able to do so. For example, in China, women's work burden has increased as men move away from farms and into industrial work and young daughters have had to drop out from school to help their mothers. Women without education or the skills demanded by the new economy are unable to find work; without the protective system of social security, some women have resorted to begging in the streets.

Women and global economic projects: a summary

Women's experience with recent economic programmes has been contradictory. The shift to export-oriented strategy made more jobs available to women, creating a specific female industrial labour force; but the conditions of employment and the characteristics of this type of industrialisation also sharpened gender inequalities. A global economic liberalisation programme emphasising outward-looking strategies will probably continue to employ women for low-paid, labour-intensive work on assembly lines, but it may also displace large numbers of women (and men) engaged in subsistence agriculture or staple crop production when lands are converted to more profitable cash crops or to corporate farming. Other technological and sectoral changes will have mixed effects on women and their work. In the socialist economies, the growth of the market has benefited some women but impoverished others. But wherever women have gained or held on to paid employment, they are still paid less than men because of the tasks involved; changes in the international economy have not disturbed this inequality: they have even intensified the subordination of women in this respect⁴⁷. The lesson from the NICS, South Korea being the best example, is that economic growth may well improve the material condition of women and men but even with a strong interventionist state, growth does not readily create gender equity⁴⁸. Improvements in health, education and provision of basic needs do not automatically transform social prejudices and biases; nor do they eliminate the allocation to women of responsibility for the maintenance of the household and its members.

While global economic integration may have produced limited benefits for some women, economic crisis has exacerbated 'the ordinary' effects of underdevelopment for the majority⁴⁹. Economic crisis and the structural adjustment programmes imposed by the Bretton Woods institutions, have made women, especially poor women, disproportionately worse off. Structural adjustment programmes not only feminised poverty, making more women poor, they also made poor women poorer. Where economic growth increased income inequality or where slow or negative rates of growth increased the incidence of poverty, expectations arise for

the state to address poverty and employment and provide for basic needs. And in slow growth economies where state resources are inadequate, it falls on women to take up the slack.

While greater international interdependence undoubtedly contributed in some measure to world economic growth in the early post-war period, it also created vulnerability. Greater international interdependence meant increasing subordination of national economic development and national sovereignty to international considerations driven by the interests of the most powerful players. Events in the past two decades have shown the inherent fragility and instability of a world political economy oriented to corporate and profit-oriented interests. This, combined with the consequences of unequal international economic relations, helps to maintain gender inequality.

Strategies and options for women

Elizabeth Uy Eviota

THIS CHAPTER draws out the common and uncommon themes in women's personal experiences of the intersection of gender, the economy and the state. Beneath the common experience of subordination in almost all aspects of social, political and economic life, each woman's life story, told in Country perspectives (from page ..), brings out the different forms of subordination. These arise from differences in class and ethnicity, in patterns and rates of economic growth, in state structures and the role of the state in economic and social development, and in cultural and religious systems.

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES: COMMON AND UNCOMMON THEMES

How have individual women experienced subordination through these different filters? Women's experiences change throughout their life cycle: women have had to negotiate changes in marital life, the coming and going of men; in friendships and supportive relationships, with the loss and gain of family and personal networks; in the family, in the birth, growth, and sometimes death of a child; and in economic security as they move from one job, from one place, to the next.

Central to all these women's lives, be they single or married, has been the role of caretaker and nurturer of the young and elderly. Women as daughters, sisters, wives and mothers are assigned the major social responsibility of caring for children and the elderly. Men as husbands and fathers come in and out of their lives but bear little or no responsibility for caring except for a cash contribution (often only occasional) to the household. As girls or young women they go to work and send money home for parents and younger siblings; as wives, mothers and daughters they see to the everyday needs of husband, children and elderly parents, and as grandmothers, they are responsible for rearing grandchildren left to their care.

As a consequence of this responsibility, women have had to seek any available means of survival. They have moved from job to job, from place to place, often working at more than one job to make ends meet. Women have had to put in long hours of work at their paid job and when they come home, still do the bulk of housework, even in extended households. Women never fail to mention this constant in their lives: the double burden and the long, hard working day.

The working class women's work history shows an intermittent pattern of labour in invariably low-paid jobs. Usually they work as in low-productivity subsistence traders, subcontracted, piece-rate or assembly-line factory workers, or hire themselves out as maids or laundry women. Working conditions are often difficult, the hours long, the discipline strict. Treatment of workers is harsh, and payment delayed or irregular. Factory workers often face hazardous working conditions; one has been crippled by a factory accident. A number of co-workers have died in fires because of poor or non-existent safety precautions, overcrowding, and inadequate escape routes. In some areas factory workers are not allowed to form unions; indeed in many Asian countries workplace legislation is rudimentary or non-existent.

Women who migrate to cities and to other countries for work find themselves discriminated against because of their ethnicity, or because they are peasants, or are disenfranchised because they have no security of residence. Living in a foreign land, they often find themselves deprived of their basic human rights.

Authoritarian regimes have used the military against their own people, to wipe out perceived supporters of insurgency, to enforce unpopular development schemes or to suppress trade union activities. As a result, women have suffered harassment, violence and other forms of abuse.

Women from socialist economies in transition may now have more freedom to move around and appear to have more social and economic options. However, this has sometimes been accompanied by new forms of social control, economic exploitation and personal insecurity.

For the women in this book, home and social life have offered few rewards. Their living quarters are no improvement over their workshops: they are almost always small, crowded and bare, their living conditions difficult, and tenure insecure. They sometimes find that the land on which they live and from which they earn their livelihood can be appropriated at any time by government projects or business concessions.

Marital relationships are sometimes marked by violence from abusive (and frequently adulterous) husbands, who soon abandon wife and children. The women have had little education, sometimes because their parents could not afford one, but in more cases because the cultural preference is for the education of sons. As sisters, they frequently find, when growing up, that they have to make sacrifices for a brother's welfare or education. As mothers, they may not always agree with the cultural pref-

erence for sons, but they are usually bound by culture and state law. As they move out of their homes and villages, they lose their network of kin and friends and their sense of community. If they are single and past the desirable marrying age, they express the fear of being looked at unkindly by society and the loneliness of solitary life; yet they are also aware of the risks of married life as they see many single female parents around them. But in a variety of ways women have helped other women kin to find work, to improve their skills, to survive the pressures of factory work and city life, and provided companionship to those who have been left alone.

There are also differences among the women, in social class, in their responses to experience and their plans for the future. The experiences of the Korean and Vietnamese middle class women in our stories show that, given the instability of the global economy and fierce competition in the market, a degree of wealth does not guarantee financial security and peace of mind; nor does wealth necessarily improve relationships with men. Of the working class women, some leave the future to fate, but others see opportunities for change. The fulfilment of their hopes may come with better education for their children; or they look to government to alleviate their poverty. Many of the women have taken major steps to improve their own and their families' chances of survival, migrating to the city or going abroad, or trying to establish their own business. A restless, and questioning few have taken steps to change the circumstances that create poverty and insecurity, by joining trade unions, participating in community action against eviction from their land or homes, joining a women's movement, or asserting their right to determine the number of children they wish to bear.

Many of these experiences and responses are not new in the growing literature on women of the South; but what can be pointed out here are the intersections of specific economic changes, in most of these cases rapid economic growth directed towards a global market, with the persistence of older cultural values and gender relations.

One of these points is the unremitting commitment of women to family and children amidst fast-paced economic change. These stories reveal how, across most Asian cultures, the interests of women as mothers have become so fused with those of their children that this connection seems to pour out of every activity and thought of their daily lives. Much has been said of this commitment, this devotion, this sacrifice, but these women's stories emphasise the stark contrast to the behaviour of men. In the face of poverty and adversity, women never waver in their commitment to family and children, while men have been a very variable case. Men sire children but they do not always father them. Women's commitment has included not only emotional nurturing but also the material, day to day, nurturing of husband and family. The emotional and material nurture provided by men has ranged from non-existent to occasional. One may argue that the ideology of separate spheres (the women's place is in the

home, and men's place is everywhere else) is very much at work here. But the stories of these women show that men are not even performing the responsibilities that supposedly do belong in their sphere: material contributions to the household. A sexual division of labour is an illusion in these women's experiences: they do the work in the home and they also do the work outside it. There is neither a division of tasks nor a division of spheres. Some say that it is because of their devotion to children that women tend to overlook the inconsistency of men in carrying out family responsibilities, to tolerate their inconstancy to marriage vows or endure their physical abuse; it is also this commitment that has prompted their willingness to take on any work for the survival of the family. Still some women have shown that devotion to children need not necessarily mean living through an abusive relationship with the father. And so a number of these women have opted to get out of oppressive relationships.

A second point is the intersection between gender, family, community and rapid industrialisation. Many Asian societies undergoing rapid industrialisation, still maintain traditional values, such as the emphasis on closeness among relatives. For women, this closeness to relatives may at times be a source of conflict, but it does provide a sense of solace and validation. The women in our stories have usually found this connection with other female kin (mothers, daughters, sisters, and even mothers-in-law) more than with husbands or male relatives. Part of this connection to other women may come from the shared experience of being a subservient group and part from tradition, but it does appear to be a value still cherished by these women and appears to shield them, at least for the time being, from the atomised and isolated existence of many women in the industrialised countries of the North. However, migration to work in cities, export processing zones or even to foreign countries, and the drive towards globalisation, threaten this sense of family and community as they bring in new, individualist values more consistent with industrialised societies in the West.

However, patriarchal aspects of traditional culture also persist. As the Korean and other experiences reveal, while the women's movement has done much to put in place laws which do away with gender inequality (such as laws on property inheritance, employment, and sexual violence) tradition and cultural practice which privilege men still have a significant impact on judicial attitudes, community norms and social behaviour.

A third point of intersection is that between gender and class, which has been affected by the speed of industrialisation in these countries and the fragility of the global economy around them. The single-minded pursuit of increased economic growth without regard for equitable distribution of its benefits has widened disparities between rich and poor, increased environmental degradation and raised social tensions. It has put men, often traditionally regarded as the primary economic providers, in a precarious position, resulting in deteriorating living standards for fami-

lies and households. This precariousness has led many men to take out their frustrations on women and children or to abandon their families outright. Women and children then join the growing ranks of homeless persons, beggars and street children that crowd Asia's megacities.

Working class women have borne the brunt of this type and phase of industrialisation. Recruited into low-wage sweatshop global assembly lines, then thrown out and unable to find another paying job in time of recession, they have sought to survive in the informal sector. They have provided the basic services reduced or abandoned by a weakened state adjusting to economic crisis, or have offered their bodies for sale to make ends meet.

In Korea, working class women remain in the forefront of industrialisation, but their position in the workforce has yet to improve. Women are still the bulk of the manufacturing labour force, but they remain in the rank and file and are still rare in managerial and professional positions; few join trade unions. Women in England of an earlier century are said to have had similar experiences during the years of the industrial revolution, although industrialisation there was qualitatively different. Whether or not particular groups of women are incorporated and the ways in which they are incorporated into industrialisation brings home the point that industrialisation is clearly a gendered process.

The situation and perspectives of women in the NICs and aspiring NICs are affected by their position in the social structure. Korea's NIC-hood has seen the emergence of a new middle class whose women, though better educated, have withdrawn from productive work into a life of domesticity. A few of these women have been influenced by feminist perspectives and now provide much of the leadership of a primarily working class women's movement. This pattern of incorporation of women into industrialisation, their participation in wage work, the emergence of a new educated middle class and the growth of a women's movement, has occurred in other countries, eg the Philippines and India, and has implications for women's responses to the economy and the state.

ALTERNATIVE PROCESSES AND PRACTICES

How have women responded to these experiences? Asian women's experiences of subordination intersecting with economic change echo the experiences of women in many countries of the South and also some in the North; they are not experiences confined by territorial and cultural boundaries. For this reason women's responses have taken both national and international dimensions.

Across a range of countries in both North and South the responses have started with small 'consciousness-raising' groups, where women were politicised and activated by sharing their personal experiences. Women have always been taught to defer to the knowledge of others, usually

men, and to consider their own needs as secondary; now the consciousness-raising process which teaches them the 'authority of experience' has changed that view and enabled them to rely on their own expertise. But more than simply sharing experience, getting women together has made them aware that their own personal subordination is not an isolated phenomenon: subordination lived in their everyday lives and perpetuated from generation to generation is part and parcel of the institutionalised, entrenched subordination of women in society. By connecting women's experience to a society-wide structure of power and powerlessness, the consciousness-raising process has profoundly transformed their sense of identity and involvement.¹

The collective process and participatory approach of these groups has provided these women with both the method and the vision to make changes, not only in their own community but also in society at large and on the global stage. Women have become much more aware that change is not simply a question of personal attitudes and behaviour but of deeply embedded social, political and economic structures. And if change must be made, those who will be most affected by it must be actively involved in making it. Consciousness-raising groups have grown first into small organisations, then into national associations and coalitions and finally into a national and international movement. The women's movement at both national and international levels is diverse, with many strains, varying strategies and different, sometimes contradictory, short-term goals, in part because of the different categories of experience filtered by ethnicity, race, class and other factors. But in most cases the common purpose is to help women fulfil their potential, or to use a current phrase, to 'empower women', to enable them to forge roles of their own choosing and to create a world of their own making.

Women in the movement agree on the need for change and on the need to organise actively for it; there is a realisation of what needs to be done, but there is also a realisation that things will not get done unless there is organised pressure to do it. This is true especially with respect to the issue of gender equity where the failure to recognise the problem is the problem.

Thus women themselves acknowledge the continuing need for advocacy, and women's empowerment receives major emphasis. This means giving women 'a sense of internal strength and confidence to face life, the right to determine choices, the power to control their own lives within and outside the home; and the ability to influence the direction of social change towards the creation of a more just social and economic order nationally and internationally'.² This individual empowerment emphasises women's freedom of choice and power to control their own lives, both at the personal level within the household and at the level of the wider society, in social, political and economic change.

The challenge now is to translate these individual empowering strategies into organised forces that can restructure economies and states to make them more responsive to women's needs and to women's contributions in their varied roles.

THE ECONOMY AND THE STATE: AN AGENDA FOR WOMEN

This section discusses how, as a group, women can deal with the economy and the state. Initially, they can work for reform within the system, to improve women's condition; but ultimately they must adopt alternative economic and political strategies which will work for gender equity. Several reforming initiatives have already been taken nationally and internationally; but these have had, at best, mixed results. The condition of women, despite a wide array of experiments, has in many cases not merely remained the same but worsened. This means that women's interests are not best served by attempts to carve a niche for women or to insert women's components or WID (Women in Development) issues within projects, programmes and policies governed by some hard economic rationale. For women's groups, therefore, the task is to create pressure for implementing alternative strategy.

The nature of power relations within the present global economic system sets certain limits to change. Many women see these limits and therefore their demands for change are often couched in terms of existing institutions and ideologies in order to alleviate the specific aspects of women's subordination, particularly those of impoverished women in the South. At the same time, however, women can challenge these limits with a substantive critique of the prevailing system, for instance by questioning development paradigms. Such challenges give women's efforts the critical dimension necessary to develop and maintain a larger vision of social transformation and thus frame demands for change that confront and reveal the limits of prevailing orthodoxies.³

The role of women's groups and women-oriented non-government organisations (NGOs) in challenging institutions cannot be underestimated. These groups have been crucial in the empowerment process: developing the capacity of women, especially poor women, to define, defend and exert their rights. Women's groups are often the initial instruments by which women are able to assert their rights to their own person and labour, to land and the fruits of the land, to decent shelter, to economic and social opportunities, and to active participation in state processes. The vibrancy of women's groups arises out of a very immediate and intimate awareness of subordination, and as women themselves continue to catalogue their own experiences, they realise the need for personal and social change and the capacity to effect it.⁴ The stories of the women from Thailand show how awareness of subordination can lead to active participation in a public process, such as seeking justice through the court system, which

can bring about benefits for other women and for the community at large.

Women's groups are often small and sometimes fragmented, but they are always effective in advocacy and usually effective in service delivery, in the absence of state investment in social development. In this role, women's groups and NGOs involved in service delivery and advocacy can often put pressure on the state to adopt alternative programmes. While the state itself reflects the interests of men and of powerful and organised social and economic groups, including foreign governments and donor agencies, it can sometimes be made more responsive by increased pressure from marginalised but large organised groups. But a concerted demand from women themselves is necessary. And this requires efforts to engage grassroots women on concrete issues arising directly out of their own personal experience (initially, at least) rather than out of an overall women's agenda for social change. Hence the need to relate to the key institutions through which women's lives are organised: the family, the workplace and the state.

The family remains a contradictory institution for women. Women's experience within the family is sometimes negative, involving economic dependence, servitude, and violence. But the family also offers women social validation through their roles as wives and mothers and is the site of supportive and caring relationships. The family is a complex reality for most women and as an area of change presents very real problems for advocacy groups. Many institutions exert their influence on women, but it is the family and the ideologies surrounding it that have the most powerful impact on women's attitudes and behaviour. Therefore any attempts to liberate women's potential must necessarily challenge the oppressive aspects of the family. In these Asian cases the problems range from abandonment by men to domestic violence, to the cultural preference for sons and the systematic weeding out of females (most especially in China, India and South Korea), women's double burden of housework and paid work, child care and child-rearing responsibilities of employed women and the state's birth control policy encroaching on women's health and reproductive rights.

Women often see the economy as an abstract structure with its own dynamic; however, its concrete effects are mediated by the practices of men, women and such institutions as the state. But the state has also been a contradictory institution for women. It plays a major role in perpetuating and reinforcing processes that subordinate women but many women also see in the state an instrument for change, for alleviating poverty, redirecting the economy, legislating gender equality. Take the case of India where, on the one hand, despite a sustained campaign by women's groups, the provision of facilities for child care has been ignored in the new economic reform programme. Yet, on the other hand, recent policy statements indicate a redirection of priorities towards placing human development at the centre of economic reform strategies. This should

increase budgets for primary education, basic health care and women's and children's welfare.

Some women's groups refuse to deal directly with the state, primarily because they do not believe it possible to make concrete gains through intervention in or working with government structures, and because of the danger that engaging with the state may result in co-optation. The reality however is that the state is not necessarily a monolith, but rather a structure vulnerable to pressure. Furthermore, most grassroots women view social and economic change as the main responsibility of government. As with other social institutions and structures, such as the family and the economy, advocacy groups have to relate to and use, but at the same time confront, the state.

Women's groups therefore must both expose the limits placed on change by the overall structure of power and believe in the possibility of change engendered by existing ideologies.⁵

First, this orientation increases the likelihood of making concrete gains. The threat of exposure can motivate the state apparatus to respond if it hopes concessions will veil the underlying power structures and appease an angry group. On the other hand, should the state refuse to make such changes, the women's movement can still move forward; blatant disregard for the needs of women tends to provoke anger against the system, and greater willingness to seek ever more wide-ranging changes - witness the actions of a group of women in taking over corrupt and efficient ration shops in West Bengal in India. Although the gains made through this process may not fundamentally transform the social order, they can provide much-needed services and legislation, and a sense of victory essential to continued commitment.

Second, and as part of a larger strategy, this orientation can expose the limitations of development programmes and ideologies, thus creating the political space for a broader based movement for social change. For example, the emphasis placed by Asian women on education as a way out of poverty makes schooling, especially for poor women, an important area of state intervention. Women's groups can pressure the state to institute education modules which will give women a positive self-image, self-confidence and a critical awareness of social structures.

With this orientation, women's groups can direct concrete political action towards the state in a variety of ways. For example, organised and sustained pressure can influence the state on how it spends people's money, what sectors of the budget it can cut in times of economic crisis; in its solutions in structural adjustment and austerity measures, in strategies to promote productivity and economic growth, and in the allocation of productive resources.

States in the South are often unable to ensure the reproduction of communities, so they have sought to promote, for example, 'income-generating projects' for poor women and such strategies as communal self-

help associations as a means of survival. Indeed the state has often encouraged these types of self-provisioning activities precisely because it is unable to provide formal work and social services to many of its citizens. The task of women's groups and NGOs is, on the one hand, to provide a critique of the development paradigm and the political practices that have engendered this situation and, on the other, to pressure the state to reallocate resources so as to prioritise basic needs, rather than, for example, debt servicing, political expenditure, military equipment or physical infrastructure projects.

In the past two decades, in response to women's efforts, state policy makers and project designers have experimented with ways of improving women's condition. These have included projects such as welfare provision, integrating women into development, and mainstreaming women into existing planning frameworks. Some Asian governments have made significant strides in improving women's condition, others have not; some Asian countries have had energetic women's groups and NGOs working for gender equity, but others, for political, religious or cultural reasons, have had to rely on government action.⁶ The experience of Vietnam shows that it is not sufficient for a state to be formally committed to gender equality; a state must also be practically and concretely committed to it. Vietnam has taken steps to eliminate the gender subordinating impact of Confucianism in many aspects of social life; but simply appointing women to the state bureaucracy, for example, has not really done much for women; women became largely a 'token' force, because abilities and training needs were often overlooked. Recent economic reforms have tried to remedy this by establishing institutions such as training schools which have opened up social and economic opportunities for women. With these opportunities, women can achieve bureaucratic positions on merit.

In some countries women's groups and NGOs have tried to influence national development policy to make markets and the state more gender-sensitive, especially by integrating women's needs and interests in productive sectors such as agriculture and industry. Some have promoted gender equity in the labour market through the expansion of employment opportunities and women's bargaining power, in order to alleviate the adverse effects of economic growth. A number have called for laws, regulations and programmes that directly affect the working lives and economic well-being of women. Others have moved away from projects and programmes and questioned development paradigms themselves.⁷

Some women's groups have worked to reshape national development plans. For example in India and the Philippines the participation of women in planning has generally made the government aware of gender and more accountable on gender issues.

While experiments in improving women's condition have sometimes been useful there is a need to go beyond particular projects and programmes and to make planning and the planning process itself take ac-

count of gender. Projects and programmes which promote greater equity in labour markets, expand employment opportunities, or reverse the effects of unbalanced growth are all valuable but they remain piecemeal initiatives with limited potential. As long as the core of the process is unchallenged, gender equity will remain a peripheral concern.

Gender equity becomes part and parcel of planning when the state pursues economic growth with social equity, sustainable livelihood for women and men, social justice, and ecological sustainability and renewability⁸ and at the same time builds local capacities, enhances citizen participation, and encourages a sense of community and social cohesion. In these areas, the state has to take the initiative, otherwise the demands of capitalist profitability will take precedence over social equity.

A state can improve women's condition if it invests in social development, helping women acquire education and training, and improving the general health of the population by providing services like child care and sanitation; if it establishes the legal and institutional framework to regulate the market, strengthening the access of the poor and other disadvantaged groups to economic and social opportunities; if it acknowledges women's, especially poor women's, productive and reproductive roles, and recognises women in their own person.⁹ The state can also introduce more socially oriented legislation, as in the Indian proposal which seeks to make legislation 'enabling' rather than 'controlling,' thus 'privatisation need not always be solely investment oriented; it can become producer and user oriented' for example, by levying a child and health care tax on industries, insisting on school for workers' children and encouraging a progressive consumer movement.¹⁰

Many women's groups have gone beyond the state into regional and international fora such as international agencies and organisations. They have set up meetings, summits and conferences to sensitise the international community to the condition of women and to place the problem of gender equity on the international agenda. Now, with the globalisation of the market, this task has become more urgent and more visible.

States and international agencies must immediately redirect their policies and programmes if the dire effects of indebtedness and structural adjustment policies on the poor, especially on women and children, are to be overcome. One way women can participate in these policies and programmes is to insist upon the human factor in what is seen as a predominantly financial problem. Evidence can be presented that adjustment policies have undone much of the social progress achieved in many countries in the South.¹¹ Women from the North can take steps to inform and educate the people of industrialised nations about their co-responsibility for indebtedness. No real global stability can be achieved unless debt relief is linked to development strategies that will enable the impoverished majority of the South to help themselves.

NGOs in both North and South have conducted education, campaigns,

research, and training to work out strategies at the international level (for example, debt and debt management), and at the local level (adjustment policies taking account of the needs of the poor). They have also monitored the adjustment process. NGOs have been engaged on several fronts, the legal (eg challenging the legality and morality of the debt), social and ethical fronts (coordinating with other social forces such as trade unions, religious groups and people's organisations to lobby for debt relief or cancellation); the economic front (lobbying banks and multilateral institutions). They have also supported the creation of international organisations to lobby for a new international economic order which would benefit both the North and the South. Some local NGOs have initiated self-help projects or have organised to press for changes in their governments' priorities. Women's groups, in the Philippines and more recently in India, for example, are raising the awareness of community groups about the effects of indebtedness and structural adjustment; they have also influenced the direction of development aid tied to structural adjustment loans. Other groups have focused on action-oriented research and training to develop women's professional and entrepreneurial capabilities; women in academic institutions combine research and practice to evaluate standard macro- and micro-economic analyses and to document their negative impact on women, while others provide women's groups with analyses of current problems. Regional researchers and development professionals have also met in public fora to discuss the economic crisis, debt and adjustment policies and to examine alternative economic policies and programmes. The research and publications from these meetings, and the results and analyses arising, are important in challenging current economic orthodoxies on economic growth.¹³

This recent phase of the internationalisation of capital has been characterised by an unprecedented globalisation of labour: the massive movement of workers across towns, cities and national boundaries, has created social conflicts, behavioral stresses and violence. Especially for countries which have achieved NIC-hood or are single-mindedly pursuing it, the marginalisation of rural areas has led to deteriorating living standards for women and men in the countryside, while cities cannot house those who have sought refuge in them. Global restructuring has contributed to demographic shifts, ethnic conflict, internal displacement, increasing impoverishment, unbalanced economic growth and the growth of megacities.

The effects of economic liberalisation and the deregulation of the market are acute in many Asian countries. And the experience is far from painless, especially for women. Cost cutting for the sake of competitiveness has often led to the freezing or reduction of wages in sectors which primarily employ women, or to stagnation and massive displacement in staple crop agriculture, a traditional employer of women. As a result, more women are becoming impoverished. But the special position of women workers in

the globalised economy could mean that women can begin to play a major role in the search for alternatives. Given their personal experiences, women workers in organised groups have the capacity to challenge the globalised economy, the prioritisation of the market and profits over basic needs, family, community and the environment and to challenge the privileges of men.

SECTION 2

COUNTRY PROFILES

Women pay for economic miracle in China and Hong Kong

Reform has given China economic momentum and widened horizons for its people. But the implications of political and economic change for workers, especially women, both in China and Hong Kong are profound.

K C Lau reports.

THE TIANANMEN PROTEST of 1976 marked the beginning of the end of the Cultural Revolution era with its stringent control over aspects of people's lives from jobs to education to family life, with its people's communes, heavy industrialisation, and rhetoric of equality, progress and growth.

In 1978 when Deng Xiaoping took the helm to steer China out of economic stagnation and seclusion, the reform package was generally applauded from within and outside China. Peasants had more freedom to cultivate their contracted plot of land or to move around outside their villages, workers had the opportunity to change jobs, students could enter public examinations for university entrance, consumers found more goods available in the market, foreign investors started to own factories or property in China, and China's international trade picked up momentum. 'Opening' and 'reform' have become positive keywords for the post-1978 changes.

The implications of these changes for women are complicated. The apparent increase of choices in employment and daily life may bring more personal freedom, but also leaves the individual more vulnerable to a market whose manoeuvres are dictated by global capitalism as well as local forces. Individuals may grasp opportunities which offer definite benefits, but these same opportunities can entrap them as victims. Internal labour migration is a good illustration.

China's new openness is most evident in its moves to attract foreign capital to the manufacturing sector through provision of cheap labour and land. This was the basis of the four Special Economic Zones set up in the early 1980s, and the 1984 designation of 14 coastal cities and three regions as 'economic and technical development zones' (Pearl River Delta, Yangtze River Delta, and southern coast of Fujian). Here China has proved a strong competitor outdoing other processing zones in Asian countries such as the Philippines, Thailand or Indonesia. Besides providing indus-

trial infrastructure and offering privileged conditions to foreign ventures, the Chinese government made corresponding changes in its domestic rules. Most significant was the move to ensure a large supply of extremely cheap labour by relaxing constraints on labour mobility, ie the strict residence system which prohibited peasants from leaving their home villages. Now, peasants can take up employment in the cities provided the employer applies for a temporary urban residence, which expires as soon as the worker quits the job. Peasants finding a 'temporary' job also acquire a temporary change of status from peasant to *min gong*, or 'peasant-worker'. Without a job in the cities or Special Economic Zones, they have no right to stay, or become a long-term "burden" on urban resources.

The 'peasant-workers' are not protected by official trade unions as they are not officially 'workers': in addition, factory owners in general resent unions. Working conditions are deplorable. Wages are meagre, averaging about US\$40 a month but sometimes as low as US\$12. Workers at a foreign-owned factory in Xiamen, Fujian Province, received only US\$13 a month, 47 per cent lower than the official minimum of US\$25. In an electronics factory in the Zhuhai Special Economic Zone, the official minimum wage was regarded instead as a maximum, and average wages were only half the minimum.

Working hours are long. A survey of 14,000 workers from foreign-owned factories in Guangdong Province found that most worked 10-12 hours a day, seven days a week. A survey in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone found workers in foreign-owned factories work on average 100 overtime hours every month, with some reaching 180 hours. A Taiwanese-owned factory in Kunshan, Jiangsu Province, forced workers to do 70 hours of unpaid overtime work every month. A factory in Shandong Province, owned by Korean capital, forced workers to do 100 hours of overtime work or forfeit their basic wage.

The working environment is usually very harsh, with little attention to industrial safety or health. In 1993, throughout China, 19,798 people died in industrial accidents. A survey showed poison and other special risks in over half the factories in Shenzhen. Fire hazards in Guangdong Province were the worst in the country, costing US\$250 million in 1994 alone. The fire that broke out on 19 November 1993 in the Zhili Toy Factory in Shenzhen caused 87 deaths (85 women, two men) and 51 wounded, half of them seriously burned or crippled. These factories are particularly serious fire risks because buildings house factory, storehouse and cramped workers' dormitory under the same roof. In many dormitories, the average living area for a woman worker is less than 1.5 square metres.

Industrial safety on the production line is also a serious problem. Within one week, it was reported, five workers at a Hong Kong-owned spare parts factory had their hands mutilated, yet the employer did nothing to install protective measures. After two more accidents, and a com-

plaint to the labour department by one of the maimed workers, the factory owner simply relocated to Dongguan.

These atrocious conditions are endured by workers made vulnerable through job insecurity. They can be sacked at any time if their performance is not satisfactory, and then they lose their city residence rights. But even highly exploited work in manufacturing is still a lucrative option: one month's wage can exceed earnings from a whole year's toil on the land and large numbers of peasants still flock to the cities for jobs. The countryside is simply too poor: official figures for peasants' per capita annual income in 1992 was US\$95, and at least five per cent of all peasant households had a per capita annual income of less than US\$35. A survey conducted by 21 universities in China in 1989 showed that 31 per cent of all provinces in China had a per capita income below US\$35.

About 70 per cent of the workers in the Special Economic Zones are women, mostly 16 to 22-year-olds from the countryside. Many have had primary education, and most would aim to work for a few years, save some money, and return to their village to marry, after which they might never leave the village again. For these women, the adventure is both exciting and frightening. Their wages certainly help improve family finances, and some savings can be used to start a small business back home. But few young women would be able to keep toiling in such dehumanising working environments but for the kinship enclaves that help individuals find jobs, master skills, overcome hardship, and protect them from bullying and injustice.

Outrage at the working and living conditions for labour in foreign-owned factories has pressurised the government to bring in new labour legislation, effective from January 1995. The law stipulates a working week of 44 hours, with overtime restricted to a maximum 36 hours a month. It is not clear, however, to what extent this law will provide effective protection for workers.

The question of compensation for workers was highlighted after the first serious fires, such as the raincoat factory in Dongguan on 30 May 1991. Initially, with no clear regulations on compensation for peasant-workers, some victims handicapped for life were compensated with only US\$120. After sustained negotiations and protests, the authorities have become more responsive. The more insistent survivors of the Zhili toy factory received compensation of US\$16,000, which still fell far short of providing a living allowance to the victim for life, but others were persuaded to agree a one-off payment of US\$5,500.

The exodus of workers to the south can alleviate the problem of surplus rural labour in some areas. But in others it creates a shortage, and a consequent under-use of farmland. In the Shangge Village in Feidong County, Anhui Province, 158 of the village's 185 men and women of working age left for the cities, leaving 86.5 per cent of the farmland unattended. This is a serious problem in poorer villages. In most places, young girls

aged 15 to 20 tend to go away to seek work, and come back to marry and settle, whereas men would stay away for longer periods. Increasingly, the hard labour of farming and sideline production falls on the shoulders of women.

Rural women are heavily overworked. The 'opening' of China and its integration into the world market is not confined to the Special Economic or Development Zones: rural industries flourish too. To overcome inadequate communication and transport, the factories rely on home-based work. Even in remote villages, women work up 16 hours a days on farm work and additional home-based piece-rate work.

Female labour is increasingly significant in the rural household, but this has done little to alter entrenched sex-discriminatory values, such as the insistent craving for a son to pass on the family line. Women's reproductive rights remain a highly controversial issue in the countryside.

The development pattern of reform has generated many contradictions. Household access to farm plots increases the demand for working hands, the reduction of rural social welfare provision increases old people's dependence on their children, and the traditional paternalistic custom of daughters marrying and leaving their parents' home remains. So, despite government campaigns on birth control, most rural families have two children, with sons more valued than daughters. In evading government control, many women run high risks in giving birth without proper medical care, with serious implications for the safety and health of both mother and child.

Hong Kong, before formal sovereignty returns to China on 1 July 1997, has already been intricately engaged in China's reform. Hong Kong capital employs over six million labourers in south China, and Hong Kong is a stepping stone for foreign investors. But for workers in Hong Kong, the past decade has not been very rewarding. Most electronics and textile factories have moved to the mainland attracted by cheaper land and labour, and the Hong Kong government has also been systematically importing cheaper labour from the mainland: the number already exceeds 200,000. Unemployment is growing with women the most affected. A woman aged over 30 has great difficulty finding a job, and the unemployment of 'housewives' is not very visible.

With international capital moving into China, the plight of workers in Hong Kong resembles that of workers in the Philippines or Indonesia. China is a big power both in terms of its huge population, and also its competitiveness in offering international capital a paradise of minimal production costs and maximum profits.



Interviews by W Lam,
YY Chung, and ML Wu

Happy with a daughter and a son

*Mei Hua, 27, married,
comes from a village in
Hubei Province. She and
her husband are very
poor, but she feels herself
fortunate.*

THE GOVERNMENT must control the population, because China has too many people. But in our case, my husband is the only son, and if we did not have a boy, there would be no-one to pass on the family line. My maternal grandmother had four daughters and no son, and she suffered a lot. She was blamed for not giving birth to a son, and could not raise her head in front of other people.

I married at 20, the earliest age a girl can marry according to the law (it is 22 for men). Most girls in the countryside marry as soon as they are allowed to, and become mothers the following year. Marriage is usually to someone from a nearby village, and arranged by parents. I married for love, which is unusual. I met my

husband at school: he was two classes above mine. I have finished junior high school which not many girls do - in my village only about four of 50 women aged between 20 and 50 finished junior high, and about 30 had primary education.

My first child is a girl. I was not sorry because to tell the truth, a daughter is more considerate and will come back to see you if she does not marry too far. A daughter-in-law may not treat you well. According to government regulations, if the first child is a boy, you are not allowed to have any more. If the first child is a girl, you can have one more child but only after five years. Then, whatever the sex, you have to stop. After the first birth, everyone has to take contraceptive measures. I did, but within two years found I was pregnant again. This happened to many of my friends too.

My husband and I decided to keep the baby, but I could not risk staying at home to have the baby. We had to avoid my pregnancy becoming known as I would have been forced to have an abortion, as required by law, even as late as more than seven months pregnant. Once the baby is already born, there is nothing they can do but to ask you for a fine. So, at three months pregnant, I left to take refuge at the home of an aunt. Many young village women have left to seek work in the south, so no-one would be suspicious about my absence. I could not have done this so easily if not for the changes under economic reform. I gave birth to this boy (he is very naughty), and next day returned with him to the village. I had to pay the 2,000 yuan penalty fine. As we are poor, the township officials were lenient (one of my kin works there), and allowed us to pay by instalments. We had to sell all our pigs, and I still have not fully paid after three years. But I pay the fine with gladness; it is worth it to get a boy.

Keeping pregnancy secret means women cannot see the doctor either. Normally, the midwife would come for check-ups and be paid by the local health bureau. So, I hid in my auntie's home, and I dared not ask the midwife to come. When I delivered my boy, only my mother was there to help. The delivery took over 30 hours. I had such pain that all I could think was that death would be very welcome. I did not think of my husband, I did not think of my daughter even though I love her very much.

I still shiver when I think of the delivery. I think I almost died. My mother was beside me, and when the baby was eventually born, mother boiled a pair of scissors in hot water, and cut the umbilical cord. Everyone did it like this. No woman in our village has died as a result of childbirth, but there have been some infant deaths. A cousin of mine delivered her baby boy at home, and he died in four days of tetanus. She was so sad.

Two months after the birth, I had a sterilisation operation. If the baby was a girl, I am not sure I would have accepted the operation. I might have made another attempt.

We have 3 mou (0.5 acres) of arable land. We can harvest about 500kg of rice per mou, and 100kg is given to the government as tariff. The government purchase price is too low, only 94 yuan for 100kg of rice, so we do not sell our rice to the government. When we had pigs, we kept some rice for our own consumption, and the rest for pigfeed. It takes four months for a pig to grow to about 90kg, and at 6 yuan a kilo, the net profit from each pig, after deducting fodder and tax, is about 260 yuan. Most families raise three or four pigs if they can afford the fodder.

If my husband could find a job in the township factory, he could earn more. He was not quick enough when openings came up at the porcelain factory, where a worker can earn 94 yuan a month, working only 26 days. He could work on the land in the early morning, then go to the factory. That would have meant more work for me on the land. But I have heard the porcelain factory will be closed down soon, because of so many complaints about pollution. The soil is polluted and it affects the productivity, and polluted water is now causing health problems in our village.

A disease on the increase is vaginitis which is rather serious among women. In our village, doctors say it is aggravated by our methods of laundry. Women cannot hang their underwear in the sun, because in the traditional view, if a man walks under a woman's underwear, it means he is subordinate to her, which is very humiliating for him. So we hang our clothes in our damp kitchens.

I breastfeed my babies, because I do not have the money to buy baby milk powder which many better-off families tend to do. TV advertisements seem to show that milk powder is more nutritious and superior.

Not every family has a TV set, but those who go away to earn money often come back with a TV set and other electrical appliances. The old custom of brideprice has been revived with economic reform, and it is

common for a bride's family to ask for expensive furniture or appliances such as sewing machines, TV sets or refrigerators. I think this rural custom is ridiculous. It becomes a heavy burden on the man's family, and the woman herself is victimised as she will have to spend years working to help repay the debt. It is a headache for every family when the son is about to get married, and many families begin saving money when the boy is still small. When I married, my parents were very considerate about the bride-price although they first objected to the marriage because my husband was too poor. They did not ask for a TV or hi-fi; they asked for a bed, a wardrobe and an electric fan, and then they gave it all to me. But still, my husband had to borrow money to supply the brideprice and we still have not fully repaid the debt! We might have to sell this furniture if this year's harvest is not good.

Information comes mainly through radio or TV. We do not read newspapers, and we do not have books. We sometimes visit families with a TV, and one family in our village has a video recorder and some cassettes; they occasionally invite neighbours to watch movies, mostly westerns or Hong Kong-produced thrillers, with a lot of fighting and violence. I rarely go. I know the men also gather there to watch pornographic movies, which are considered immoral in the village. Once I heard that township police caught them watching porn movies, and some of them were beaten up and fined. According to people who come back from Guangzhou, these films are trendy in the cinemas nowadays.

Work is hard. I work non-stop from morning till night. My mother-in-law looks after the babies when my husband and I work on the land. Apart from housework such as washing clothes or cooking, I take in 'outwork' from a local factory, sewing plastic luggage bags, to earn about 15-20 yuan a month. I get six hours of sleep, getting up at 6am and going to bed at midnight. Most village women have some sort of outwork. The factory van brings the work to many villages. I work hard to pay our debts - and by the time my two children go to school, I will have to spend almost 400 yuan a year on school fees and textbooks.

Every day I feel very tired. I am 27, but I have backache and stomach aches. We only seen the doctor if we are seriously ill as it costs 2-3 yuan for consultation and medicine each time. We are born rough persons, and have no need of gentle care.

Basically I am happy. My husband does not abuse me. Some men ask a lot from their woman in the 'bedroom'. But if I am too tired, my husband respects me and does not force me. We are among the poorest families in the village, we don't even have pigs, but we can still feed ourselves. I am not unhappy. I won't live my life in regrets and sorrows. My wish is to get my children to school, including my girl. If they are well educated, they might be able to leave the village, and have a good future. There is no future for a person here, depending on the land for a living. For my self, my greatest wish is to save enough money to build a house of bricks. I feel

ashamed of this shabby mud house we live in. If I can build a brick house, my son could get married in the house. He is only three years old, so there is no rush.



Xao Hong — a future crippled

Xiao Hong, 22, single, left her village in Hunan Province to help her family income. The terrible Zhili toy factory blaze destroyed her dreams.

AFTER THE FIRE, I was in hospital in Shenzhen for a month, and then I was transferred to a hospital in my native town because I did not have residence rights in Shenzhen. My whole body was burnt, and I was in great pain. I was very depressed. I knew I would never walk again. I dared not think of the future. A relative visited me in hospital, and later told my parents to come and take me home.

I am the eldest. I have a younger sister and brother. Around 1980, my family was allocated about 3.5 mou of arable

land and about 2 mou of hill land. The family's circumstances improved in the early 1980s. Apart from growing rice, we raised chickens and pigs. But in the mid 1980s, the prices of seeds, fertilisers, insecticide and tariffs all increased, and our family income, about 2,500 yuan a year, was not enough to support all our schooling. When my younger brother started in junior high school, my father decided my sister and I should quit school and to help the family. My father did most of the farming work and my mother the poultry raising and housekeeping, and there was not much for me to do on the land.

The whole family had high hopes for my brother. We hoped to get him to university but knew it would be difficult because not only must one score high marks in the public examination, one must also have a lot of connections and we country people have none at all. It is very rare for one of us to get to university; even getting to senior high school is difficult. In the junior high, my brother attended three sessions every day totalling 10.5 hours. Everyone knows a country student must work extremely hard or does not stand a chance. Still, we hoped my brother could get as much education as he could, and we hoped to have money to build a new house for him to get married.

A cousin had gone out to work for a year in a factory in the south and came back during Chinese New Year with exciting stories of the outside world. She did not tell us the bad side, she wanted to be respected by villagers. I thought, since the family could do without my labour at home, I could go back with her. It took me some time to persuade my mother, who was worried about my leaving home. After the Chinese New Year, I

and four other village girls followed my cousin to the Special Economic Zone.

We had heard that the working conditions in the factories were tough, but we were fascinated by the idea of exploring the colourful urban life. We were young (I was only 17), we had company, and we knew it was our only chance. We planned to work for a few years, save some money, and return to the village to marry and settle down. None of us had any illusion we could stay in the city, or marry a city man.

My first job was in an export-processing garment factory in Longan, Shenzhen where my cousin had been working. The factory was a Sino-Hong Kong joint venture; the Hong Kong capitalist provided capital, machinery and the raw materials, the China side provided labour, land and infrastructure. The factory was small, just over 100 workers, all but three of whom were from rural areas. As *min gong* (peasant-workers) we were not regular workers. When we found a job, the factory management would apply for a temporary residence permit which had to be renewed every year. If we could not find an employer, we could not stay in Shenzhen.

I was not happy with my first job, because our wages, which should have been paid at the start of each month, were always delayed for at least a month. The boss's pretext was that we had not worked hard enough, and did not finish the orders in time, so the Hong Kong boss lost money and could not pay our wages. But we had worked very hard. It was a piece-rate system, and the more we worked, the more we earned. Every one of us had come from far away homes to earn money: there was no question of us being lazy. Delay in paying wages was common. A kinswoman who worked in a raincoat factory had her first two months' wages held as a sort of deposit, which, the factory said, would be given to her on completion of one or two years of work. Her nominal wage was about 300 yuan a month, but she could get only 50 or at most 80 yuan. She was angry but could not quit the job because the factory was holding so much of her wages.

I worked there for one year, earning about 300 yuan a month. We worked long hours, starting at 7:30 to 11:30am, 1pm to 5pm, and night shift 7pm to 10pm. For rush orders, we had to work until midnight. But this was bearable - working on the land was much tougher. In the factory, the only problem was lack of sleep. I never complained about working 11 or 13 hours as every factory in Shenzhen had the same practice, and some were worse.

The factory provided two meals a day, deducted from our wages. We still always felt hungry, but at least there was meat which we did not have at home. Many factories did not give the workers meat except on special occasions.

What disappointed me most was the rigid hierarchy. Cantonese speakers held the supervisory positions, and big kinship groups obtained the good jobs which paid better rates. I belonged to a small Hunan group,

which was only peripheral. We were discriminated against, as 'girlies from outside provinces'.

I left this job in May 1991, and went to Zhili toy factory where another cousin had worked for six months. There were over 600 workers in this factory, owned and managed by Hong Kong capital. Recruitment of most workers was through a temporary contract with the local Labour Bureau. For each worker employed, the factory sent HK\$700 to the Labour Bureau which would be changed into yuan at the official rate and 70 per cent of that sum would be returned to the factory and paid to us as wages. This meant the Labour Bureau earned 30 per cent of the amount plus the currency exchange rate.

I was quite happy working there. The wage was about the same as the garment factory, but payment was never delayed. I also had many friends and kin working there. Work was organised on an assembly line rather than piece-rate system. The same kin were organised in the same assembly line. I learned much from them in a friendly way, we assisted each other at work, and very soon, I could cope with the pace of the moving belts. The pace was set by a male technician; he would always time the fastest person on the line, never the slowest, so we all had to keep a fast pace. If I slowed down, jobs would pile up like a mountain in front of me. I would be holding up the whole line, and I feared others might think I was incompetent.

Work discipline in this factory was very strict. Lateness by three minutes would be admonished, five minutes would mean a cut in wages. We had no leave on Sundays or legal holidays. We worked 12 hours a day, seven days a week. There was a rest if the production line stopped. For one day's leave, we had to ask permission one week in advance. Talking was prohibited on the assembly line; going to the toilet was allowed once a day. More than five minutes in the toilet meant a reprimand from the line leader. The work was intense, and demanded high concentration or the risk of injury. I was exhausted every day and did not have enough sleep. But still, there were advantages: there was no serious discrimination among kinship or ethnic groups, and I had friends and we helped each other.

My great moments were every three months when I could remit 600 yuan to my family in the village. My family's financial situation improved a lot with my wages. My younger brother managed to get into senior secondary school. I planned to work for three more years so he could go on to post-secondary education: he would be the pride not only of the family but of the village if he managed it. I planned to marry at the age of 23 or 24. After this age, I would be too old to find a husband. It is difficult for girls returning from urban work to find husbands, because though they have some money, they are not as ignorant as women who stay in the village all their life and have gone no further than 200 km from home. Men might find these women too clever and too independent. The women,

having seen the outside world, would be more critical of traditional practices in the village, and would also have links with each other, sharing experiences and memories. My mother was worried that I might not get married: my happiness would be ruined and I could be a long-term burden for the family. I knew that once I married, I would have to stay in the village for my whole life, my friends and I had already planned to save some money for ourselves, and on the way home make a detour to visit Guangzhou and Beijing, and see the world.

I had so many plans. Many girls like me would want to open a small tailor shop when we return home, to use the sewing skills we had learned. I could buy a sewing machine for 300 yuan, and would not only have a rather good income, but would be able to escape the tiring farm work.

Those were my dreams, and now I have nothing. It was November 19, 1993. The factory always locked the doors at night, and the windows were barred. The management said they feared workers would steal from the factory, and so they had to take precautions. They saw us all as potential thieves and thugs. Our dormitories were inside the factory building, and one floor of the building was also used as a warehouse. I was deep in sleep when a commotion woke me up. Everyone was scrambling to escape. I ran out and saw some men workers hysterically breaking open the window bars. I turned to the stairs, and, pushed by people behind me, I fell. Very soon, I was aflame. At that moment, I thought I would die. But a friend helped me get to a window, and without a second thought, I jumped.

I am now disabled for life. I will not be able to work or to get married. What use is the compensation of a few thousand yuan? It was not even enough for my hospital expenses. What hurts me most is that now I am a burden to my family. I had hoped that with my own savings, I could live with some independence from my husband. Now, who would marry a crippled woman who cannot work on the land? My family members say nothing nasty at all, but I can feel that they do not know what to do with me. More than 100 co-workers died in this fire, among them two of my kin. Their families are very sad. My mother comforts me saying she is grateful that I have survived. I can feel her love. She is prepared to stay with me and comfort me all my life. My younger sister had once wanted to go out to work, but with my experience, she is staying in the village.

With decades ahead of me, I will have to find ways to survive. I have been doing some factory outwork at home. At first, when I returned to the village, I refused to go out, I felt so ashamed of my situation. Now, I sometimes sit in front of my house, and I am starting to look neighbours in the face again. When I was in the hospital, I felt it was better to be dead than crippled. But now, I have changed my views. It is still better to be alive.



Yu Yee — changing her collar from blue to white

*Yu Yee, 37, single, from
Hong Kong has had primary
school education.*

LAST YEAR, the electronics factory where I worked for over 12 years closed down. I and my co-workers were desperate. We got a cheque and were out of the factory and the electronics business altogether. At first it seemed I was better off being unmarried, unlike Ah Ling, for example, a single parent with three children. But I also have my family burden.

My name, Yu Yee, means 'wishes satisfied'. My parents gave me that name perhaps hoping my life would be smooth,

or perhaps that I could help them satisfy their wishes. I am now 37, still unmarried. I have two elder sisters, three younger sisters and a brother, who is the youngest. After he was born, my parents' wish was satisfied. When my parents took my two elder sisters to work in the garment factory, I had to stay at home to look after my younger sisters and brother. I was 12 and had just finished primary school. At 15, I also started work, and the next sister took over the housework.

That was the time of the fuel crisis, and Hong Kong was in economic recession. I did not join the garment industry, where all my family members worked, because we wanted to diversify the risk of unemployment. So I found a job in an electronics factory, and have been in different factories since then, from making radios to laser discs. I sometimes thought of changing to another trade, but one should not aim for too much; so long as I had a steady income and my friends, I could survive.

I have made several intimate friends among my co-workers. In my mother's time, the 1960s, there was a stronger feeling of sisterhood, and workers tried to take care of each other. It has not been so since the 1970s and with the influx of immigrants into Hong Kong in the past decade, the divisions are more serious. In the factory, we did not confide in too many people - gossip spread quickly.

There was much division and suspicion among workers, and we thought this was intentionally created by factory practice, yet no-one spoke against it. In the garment factory where my sisters worked, wages were paid by piece rate, and the situation was worse. Workers would compete for easier jobs. Before the mid-1980s, when there were not many new immigrants from mainland China, workers still had some self discipline in work. Competition was there, but not so keen. For instance, in sewing shirts, the big size was paid only 10-20 cents more than the small size, and every worker wanted to get the small size which took less and meant you could earn more. All Hong Kong workers knew that the sizes should be shared out in a roughly even way, and workers would voluntarily take up some big sizes after completing some small sizes.

However, after the mid 1980s the factory employed more immigrants,

women usually in their 20s, married to a husband in Hong Kong, and with one or two kids. Life was hard for them, and they worked fiercely to earn money. They could not take up clerical office work, and with their accents could easily be spotted as new immigrants. Working with them was tough. My sister said these new immigrants would come to the factory very early in the morning, and by 8am, would have snapped up all the small sized shirts, put all of them under their own chairs or even sat on the pile, and worked fervently, non-stop. They were also willing to work late into the night, as the factory required. It was difficult to compete with them, and the relationship between them and Hong Kong workers was very bad. It was not possible to ask them to stand up so you could take the pile of small sized shirts they were sitting on. My sister once argued with a new immigrant who got so heated she was gesturing with a pair of scissors. Hong Kong workers tend to keep a distance from the aggressive new immigrants, and factories are tending to employ more of them and fewer Hong Kong workers. In the late 1980s, most factories had moved back to South China, and the new immigrants also ended up without a job.

In the electronics factories, workers were mostly paid monthly wages. I worked in both American and Japanese-owned factories. In the American factory, we usually had two wage increases every year, once as increments according to a fixed scale, and once to catch up with inflation. When you reached the top of a certain rank, you would stay there. In the Japanese factory, there was much more competition. For each wage increase, the assembly line supervisor would grade each worker, and a ratio was set for each grade: for example, 10 per cent of the workers would get an increase of HK\$2.30, 30 per cent \$2.10, and the rest \$1.80. The actual difference was small, only about 50 cents, but grading and wage increases for each worker were kept strictly confidential, and workers would not even tell their best friends.

Workers could voluntarily join the Quality Control Circle, which was supposed to improve productivity, or the supervisors would assign someone. But workers did not take it seriously. Usually, after much discussion, it could mean saving 10 screws in an assembly line. Still, some workers went to enjoy the chat, the design of the noticeboard, and the award-giving ceremonies which the management made a big fuss about and held in the City Hall. Workers felt honoured to get an award, even though it was just a piece of paper. There were also all-Hong Kong competitions among big factories promoted by the Hong Kong government.

I preferred working in the electronics factory as the environment was cleaner than the garment factory. We had only 30 minutes' lunchbreak. To go to the toilet, you had to get a toilet pass, with only three passes for an assembly line of 40 workers. This was to ensure that not too many workers went at the same time, which could slow down work. Control in the factory was strict, we were not allowed to organise among ourselves

or distribute leaflets. If we received leaflets outside the factory gate, they would be confiscated from us inside. I had never joined a trade union: there was not one in the factory.

I am not a passive person. I had hoped to better myself and enrolled at night school, but I gave up after seven months. That was partly because my parents feared that people from the night school might be a bad influence, and partly because in the early 1980s the electronics business was booming, and we had to work overtime. It was simply too much for me to go to school as well. If I refused to work overtime, I would be warned or fired; it was as if the delay in the production schedule was because you refused to cooperate.

I had dreams of marrying, but somehow the opportunity never turned up. My elder sisters both married when they were 18 or 19. My parents disliked them marrying so young, and were very strict with me and my younger sisters about dating. I also felt responsible for helping with the family income, so I was in no hurry to find a husband. And working so much overtime left no time to feel lonely. But when I reached 27, I felt that other people looked at me with suspicion, as if there was something wrong with me remaining single. My parents also started to be anxious about my not having a boyfriend, and I got a bit nervous. Now, strangely, I am not so anxious. I no longer think I must find someone to support me, since I can still work. I believe I should not marry marriage itself. I would not want to marry, have kids, and then have my husband abuse me and leave me. It is hard to be a single parent; many fellow workers end up like that.

By the late 1980s, many factories were moving to the mainland, and my friends became apprehensive. Factories would move their assembly lines to South China, employ workers there and pay them very little, but still retain a few workers and the factory in Hong Kong. In my sister's garment factory, the clothes made in China were brought back to Hong Kong for the last stage, sewing on the 'Made in Hong Kong' labels before export. My sister had also been asked to go to China to teach the workers to sew properly and to act as quality controller.

Even while these changes were creeping in, I still had faith in my factory. I thought I had worked so hard for so many years, and the factory had been growing: its expansion on the mainland could not possibly cost me my job. I did not believe that a profitable factory would simply move out. But even if I had wanted to, I could not look for other jobs because, under Hong Kong law, however long your service is, you do not get a cent of compensation if you resign, even after years of work. So I and my fellow workers had no alternative but to wait for dismissal, to get some meagre redundancy compensation. After 12 years of service, I got less than HK\$40,000. My sister, whose factory also eventually closed down, was not paid any redundancy. She went to the government Labour Bureau, demonstrated at the Governor's House, picketed the company of a factory

partner. After three long years and a lot of anxiety and humiliation, she got the money - as if she was begging for the money she deserved.

I was out of my job, and I still had a family to look after. All my sisters are married. I live with my parents and my brother. My parents are retired, with no income or social benefits. My brother is a low-paid clerk, and he has to save to get married. I feel uncomfortable that people do not regard the 'home' I have as genuinely mine. But if I do have a new home, then what will become of my parents?

A few months ago, I found a job as office assistant in a trading company. In fact, I am all-round maid, and have to clean the office, serve tea to clients, and run errands. In the office, I help with photocopying and sending faxes. Anyone in the office can give me instructions. I do not mind if the work is boring, but it hurts that I rank lowest in the office and am the least respected. I have been honest, hard-working and committed to my work all my life. I am at the prime age of 37, I am healthy, and yet suddenly I am of no value. Nowadays, a woman aged over 30 is almost too old to qualify for any job.

I looked for jobs after being fired from the factory, but most jobs - cake salesgirl, restaurant waitress, hotel room cleaner - require women aged under 30, and junior secondary school qualification. Why should they have to have someone young with a knowledge of English to make up hotel beds? But even such work is hard. A former co-worker works in a hotel, and is paid \$5,000 a month only working overnight, 7pm to 7am. The hotel provides one meal. At 11pm, when the hotel restaurant closes, all the cleaners are asked to go to the kitchen to pick up leftover food, but they are not allowed to eat until 3am, and no re-heating of the food is allowed. She told me she felt like a pig eating left-over food. She fell sick three times, and thereafter brought her own sandwiches.

Now there are over 20,000 Filipino maids in Hong Kong, it is difficult for dismissed workers even to find jobs as domestic helpers. Part-time maids earn only \$16 per hour, and usually work for families that cannot hire a Filipino maid, either because their income is too low, or because they do not have space for a servant's bed. At the fast food shops or supermarkets, wages are even lower. At MacDonalds, younger women are paid \$12 per hour, and older women less than \$10. Also with the recession, fewer people are going out to eat, so jobs are fewer too. Many boutiques and restaurants are closing down. Also, up to about three years ago, there were many home-based workers. A van would come to the housing estate in the morning to give housewives jeans for sewing and come back in the evening to pick up the finished products. This has almost disappeared now. The gloomy prospects are much felt by workers; we all try to hang on to our current jobs and accept humiliatingly low wages. We do not know what tomorrow will be like.

The government has arranged training courses to help workers change their jobs, and there are courses in English, hotel work, Chinese word-

processing, etc. With a fund contributed by employers of imported labour, the government pays for workers to attend these courses and even the first month's wage if a firm employs workers who have attended a course, but still employers claim there are not enough workers for many job categories. This is because making the job requirements high means the employer cannot recruit Hong Kong workers and can justify importing cheap labourers from the mainland. It is strange that the training courses for Hong Kong workers are paid with the fund from imported labour.

Many people feel bitter about mainlanders seizing our jobs: for some time I almost hated them. I even joined a demonstration outside the Legislative Council where we symbolically broke a big rice-bowl to pieces, and called on the government not to import labourers. But when I read about all the fires in the factories in Shenzhen, burning workers to death, and heard how workers work 18 or even 20 hours a day and are locked up in the factory dormitories at night, I feel pity for them. Their conditions are much worse than mine were in the 1970s. Even my parents, working in such hardship in the 1950s and earning so little, still had some personal freedom. These workers are poor and need to survive, and I simply cannot accept the fact that their employers were formerly our employers. How could they, having earned so much money in Hong Kong, still be so greedy and so inhuman in treating other human beings?

For the 1997 question, my parents have more fear than I do. They were refugees from the mainland. I am more concerned with the question of whether I can feed my family. The future does not look good. I do not know what my prospects are to marry and have my 'own' home. Nowadays, cheap brides also abound in China. Many Hong Kong men now have a second wife or a mistress just across the border. Can you not see all the men going to China on Friday or Saturday night, and returning on Sunday night? The trains are so full! These men might worry more about 1997 than I do, if their mainland wives and mistresses cross the border to join them in Hong Kong! This is such a scandalous social problem for Hong Kong now. The newspapers said it was estimated that hundreds of thousands of illegitimate children are born to Hong Kong men, and will all claim the right to inherit their property. This will be one of the topics in elections campaigns in Hong Kong! What a mess life is!

C H I N A

Social Indicators

Poverty

- % of population in absolute poverty 1980-90 average 9
- % of rural population in absolute poverty 1980-90 average ^A 13
- Number of people in absolute poverty, total (millions) 1992 105
- Number of people in absolute poverty, rural (millions) ^H 105
- Income ratio of highest 20% to lowest 20% (1985-89 average) ^A 6.5:1
- % income share of poorest 40% (1980-91) ^H 17.4
- % income share of poorest 20% (Mre) S94 6

Health

- *Mortality rate: 7 per thousand (1991) ^A*
- *Life expectancy*

Average (1992) ^H	70.5
1991: Men	67
Women	71
- *Infant & Child Mortality*

Infant mortality (per thousand births) 1992 ^H	27
Under-5 (per thousand live births) 1992 Average (Mre)	34.8
Under-5 (per thousand live births) 1992:	
Female	32
Male	43
- *Most common causes of death, 1989: ^B*
 1. Cerebrovascular disease
 2. Bronchitis, emphysema & asthma
 3. Cancer
 4. Ischaemic heart disease
 5. Pneumonia
- *Most common ailments, 1993 ^{Ach}*
 1. Respiratory diseases
 2. Malignant tumour
 3. Cerebro-vascular disease
 4. Trauma and toxicosis
 5. Heart trouble

Education

- *Literacy rates, %, 1992 ^H*

Adult Literacy	80
Women	68
Men	92
15-24, female (1980-89)	82
15-19 age group (1990)	93

• *Educational enrolment ratios (%) 1987-91 estimates ^A*

Primary (gross):

Male	127
Female	118

Secondary

Male	56
Female	45

• *Female enrolment rate in tertiary education: 1.1%*

• *Women in education: ^v*

	<i>% of female teachers</i>	<i>% of female students</i>
Primary (1991)	44	46
Secondary (1991)	33	43
Tertiary:		
<i>all (1990)</i>	29	33
<i>universities (1985)</i>	31	48

• *Mean years of schooling*

Average	5
Women	3.8
Men	6.3

• *% of population aged over 20 who have completed secondary school education (latest available) ^{ADB}*

<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>F/M Ratio</i>
18.4	33.7	0.55

• *% of university graduates among population aged over 25 ^{ADB}*

<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>F/M Ratio</i>
0.5	1.3	0.37

Average household size: 4.4 (latest) ^K

• *% of potential heads of household who are women: 12.7 ^{ADB}*

Migration abroad

Tens of thousands of construction workers have been sent abroad, mainly to the Middle East, and lately also to the Russian Far East. ^Z

Reproduction

<i>Mean age of child-bearing:</i>	26 ^{ADB}
<i>Fertility rate (births per woman):</i>	2.4 (1991) ^A
<i>Contraceptive use (% of women aged 15-49%):</i>	72 (MRE) ^A

In 1980 a stringent one-child family policy was introduced, with the aim of limiting the population to 1.2 billion in the year 2000. But the policy is unpopular in the countryside, where it has been relaxed in many areas to allow families whose first child is a girl to try for a boy. Many of the non-Chinese ethnic groups are exempt from the one-child policy. ^Z

Politics

The Government

The state is constitutionally controlled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). At national level, the highest government and party organs tend to be composed of the same people.

The National People's Congress (NPC), the supreme state entity, passes laws, ratifies treaties, nominates the executive and approves the constitution. Its 3,000 members, some representing parties other than the CCP, are elected indirectly every five years from lower level People's Congresses. Between brief (two-three week) annual plenary sessions its powers are exercised by a Standing Committee of about 200 members. The party leader is the General Secretary (the chairman's post was abolished in 1980).

The body responsible for internal CCP discipline is the Central Discipline Inspection Commission, operating with a strong network of informers.

China is divided into 22 provinces, five autonomous regions (Guanxi, Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia and Ningxia) and three provincial-level municipalities (Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin). Below the provincial level in local government come the prefectures (151 rural and 187 cities). The prefectures are divided into counties, and further divided into townships or city districts.

Under Deng, there has been a measure of direct electoral democracy at township, district and county-level People's Congresses. Anyone can stand for election if nominated by 10 voters, and there must be 30-50 per cent more candidates than seats. However, in practice candidates are required to support the leading role of the CCP.

The highest administrative body is the State Council, whose members are nominated by the NPC on the recommendation of the CCP. The State Council's strong executive board includes the premier, deputy premiers, state councillors and a secretary-general. Various ministries, commissions and important state-owned industrial enterprises come directly under the State Council.

Political Forces

Since 1949, the Long March generation of senior communists has played the major role in national politics. Of these, Deng Xiaoping is perhaps the most liberal. Prime Minister Li Peng is more conservative, and massively unpopular.

The party supervises the government and legislature and has a parallel structure. The main decision-making body is the Central Committee, which meets in plenary about twice a year. In the interim, power rests with a politburo of 15-20 members including the premier, deputy premiers, other key state councillors, military representatives, and provincial or municipal-level party secretaries. The most powerful people in the country are the half dozen or so on the politburo's standing committee.

CCP membership (52 million in 1994 or about 4.3% of the population) brings material and professional benefits, and in some government bodies is a prerequisite for advancement.

Representation of the People's Liberation Army in top state and party echelons has declined, a deliberate policy of Deng Xiaoping, who has used his own military prestige to reduce the military's influence in politics. (Deng was a military commander in the revolutionary war and served as the army's chief of staff in the 1970s.) Formally, control over the army is vested in the State Military Commission and a parallel CCP commission (membership is usually identical).

The army's budget declined from about 6% of GNP in the late 1970s to less than 3% in the 1980s, and its troops were reduced by about 25%. But at 3 million soldiers, it is still the largest standing army in the world. Its role in suppressing the 1989 pro-democracy protests earned a budgetary increase, but also a drop in popular prestige. Younger officers, brought up in an era of professionalisation and depoliticisation of the military, show signs of frustration at the change to a more political role as guardians of party rule.

Smaller parties which participate in politics include the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Democratic party, the Kuomintang Revolutionary Committee and the League for the Self-Government of Democratic Taiwan.

National organisations are supposed to look after the interests of women, farmers and workers. In practice, these bodies are subservient to the will of the CCP.

Much of China's youth, having witnessed so many political reversals, are disillusioned and cynical about the political and social system.

Women in politics

- Proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by women: 21% (1992) ^H
- Women have had the vote since 1949. ^K
- Percentage of decision-makers in government who are women: (1987) ^K

<i>Executive offices; economic, political & legal affairs</i>	1.4
<i>Social affairs</i>	6.1
<i>All government offices</i>	2.5
<i>Ministerial level</i>	0

History (221BC-1981)

221 BC: Unification of China under Qin dynasty, which consolidated territory under a powerful authoritarian state and established a single writing system. The Qin rulers had a well-organised administrative system and organised huge construction projects, including the Great Wall and canals linking the Xiang and Pearl river systems.

618-907 AD: Refined urban civilisation develops under Tang dynasty

960-1279: Sung dynasty; development of market economy with increasing monetarisation and highly commercial culture in towns and cities

1279-1368: Mongol invasion led by Genghis Khan, whose descendants were assimilated by the Chinese and ruled as the Yuan dynasty

15th century: Regular contact with Europeans began with arrival of Portuguese

16th century: China allowed Europeans to use a limited number of trading ports under strict conditions. However, the Chinese had developed a disdain for 'barbarians' beyond their borders and initially dismissed the Europeans as inconsequential.

1557: Territory of Macau granted to Portuguese traders

1644-1911: The last imperial dynasty, the Qing - composed of the Manchu nobility, foreign invaders whose language and culture differed from those of the majority population. Like the Mongols, they were assimilated.

1839-42: First Opium War. Britain had developed a lucrative trade, exchanging Indian opium for Chinese silk, tea and porcelain. When China tried to ban the trade, Britain declared war. The Chinese imperial armies were defeated, and the British insisted on the opening of five ports to British products, and the territory of Hong Kong Island.

Massive imports of opium resumed, paid for in Chinese silver, impoverishing the nation and weakening it by widespread drug addiction

- 1853: Taiping rebellion against the Manchus. The rebels' empire controlled much of southern China for 11 years before being crushed with the help of western troops.
- 1856-60: Second Opium War. Another bid to end the opium trade ended in the capture of Beijing by Anglo-French forces. China was forced to accept new concessions, including the admission of missionaries.
- 1889: Boxer rebellion organised popular resistance against Christian missionaries and growing foreign influence. The western powers found this a greater threat than the weak Qing state, and the uprising was put down by a joint force of English, Russian, German, French, Japanese and US troops. The western powers divided China into zones of influence and demanded huge war reparations.
- 1900s: Foreign investment poured into Shanghai to take advantage of cheap labour in hundreds of factories located within foreign concessions. The city became China's largest, with a wealthy European community enjoying an extravagant lifestyle in the midst of mass poverty, while protected by foreign troops.
- 1911: Overthrow of Qing dynasty by nationalist movement under Sun Yatsen, with support of several imperial generals. Republic of China proclaimed.
- 1921: First national congress of Chinese Communist Party (13 people meeting in Shanghai). Priority was organising workers: within five years, it was involved with 700 trade unions representing 1.24 million members.
- 1920s: The generals who joined the nationalist uprising wanted power, not democratic reforms. China disintegrated into a patchwork of warring fiefdoms as they battled for supremacy. The Nationalist Party (Kuomintang or KMT), founded by Sun, later led by Chiang Kaishek, succeeded in uniting the country.
- 1924: Kuomintang forms united front with Communist Party
- 1927: Kuomintang turns against Communist Party and massacres 40,000 of its labour leaders. After this, Mao Zedong argued that the party should mobilise the peasantry as a revolutionary force.
- 1931: Japanese annexation of Manchuria
- 1934: Kuomintang tried to isolate Communist Party base areas in the countryside. The communists, under Mao, set off (the 'Long March') in search of an alternative site, eventually regrouping over a year later in Yenan province in the northwest.
- 1937: Japanese invasion. Kuomintang and Communist Party joined forces to resist Japanese. Chiang Kaishek was more interested in fighting communists than fighting the Japanese, and broke the pact several times. (On one occasion his own generals arrested him and forced him to negotiate with the CCP again.) The communists extended their influence among workers in KMT-controlled areas.
- 1945: Japanese surrender. Full-scale civil war between Kuomintang and Communist Party, resulting in victory for the worse-equipped communists.
- 1949: Founding of People's Republic of China by Communist Party. KMT established government-in-exile in Taiwan under US protection.

- 1949-60: Alliance between China and Soviet Union. Initially, Soviet influence on China's economic system and policies was strong.
- 1951: China occupied Tibet.
- 1950s: The communists instituted a far-reaching land reform programme, adding to that already carried out in liberated zones during the war. They nationalised all foreign-controlled property and initiated education and health programmes all over the country.
- 1957: Communist Party launched a campaign to 'let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend' - encouragement of open debate in search of solutions to problems of development. But where criticism extended to lack of democracy, the party cracked down with an 'anti-rightist' campaign.
- 1958-61: Great Leap Forward - a campaign aimed at accelerating rural collectivisation and urban industrialisation. Planners in the cities assumed that peasants were understating production by 15% and ordered vast quantities of food to be removed from rural areas. In fact, rural party officials were over-stating production by 15%. The result was widespread famine in which at least 20 million died.
- 1962: Mao forced to deliver public self-criticism of Great Leap Forward, and removed as party chairman. But he retained the support of radicals, especially in the army.
- 1963: Sino-Soviet split. Soviet technical advisers left, taking plans and blueprints with them. China, relatively isolated internationally, tried to identify itself as natural leader of developing world in resistance to US imperialism and Soviet hegemony.
- 1966: The Cultural Revolution: intensification of struggle between party leaders - for personal power and competing visions of socialism: Mao felt his influence waning, and saw the mushrooming bureaucratic elite and traditional respect for authority as obstacles to real social change. He turned to the masses, especially the youth. 'Red Guards', young soldiers and students armed with compilations of Mao's thoughts, initiated campaigns attacking officials and university professors as reactionaries. These degenerated into mob rule as opportunists settled personal scores: about 10 million people died, including Mao's chief opponent Liu Shaoqi. Attempts by the most radical factions to oust Premier Zhou Enlai failed.

Early 1970s:

Cultural Revolution moderated. Liu Shaoqi's protege Deng Xiaoping returned after period in disgrace.

- 1971: China replaces Taiwan in the UN

1972-89: De facto alliance with US against perceived Soviet expansionism

- 1976: Death of Mao and Zhou Enlai. Arrest of prominent Cultural Revolution leaders, including the 'Gang of Four'. Return to normality under Mao's designated successor, Hua Guofeng; rise to power of Deng Xiaoping, the most senior of the purged pragmatists to survive the Cultural Revolution.

Restoration of diplomatic relations with US

- 1978: Deng's supporters achieve predominance over Hua and other 'leftists' in Central Committee. Market-oriented economic reform announced (the Four

Modernisations: advances in agriculture, industry, defence, and science and technology). Deng, acknowledged as the leading authority, has never formally occupied the position of head of the CCP or government. Some popular criticism, directed against the excesses of the Cultural Revolution was accepted. But criticism of the political structure was suppressed. Wei Jingshen, who had called for a Fifth Modernisation, democracy, was sentenced to 15 years in prison.

1979: China invades Vietnam

1980: Cultural Revolution reassessed as national disaster

1981: Trial of Gang of Four

Pressure for Change (1978-95):

Deng's return to power was greeted with relief by a population tired of endless campaigns and the insecurity of the Cultural Revolution. The economic reforms spurred rapid economic growth, but were not an unqualified success.

Peasants with easy access to the large urban markets benefited from privatisation of agriculture, but those in more remote areas fell behind. Use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides increased dramatically, as did their prices.

Inflation rates rose, especially in the cities, and by the end of the 1980s workers found their buying power falling. Welfare provision deteriorated. The new employment systems gave managers more power to hire and fire workers and set production targets, but trade unions had no freedom of action.

Bureaucrats found the value of their wages falling, but they retained control over economic programmes. The result was an increase in corruption.

At the same time, contact with the outside world increased as China began to encourage foreign tourism, foreign teachers, and cultural exchanges. A record number of Chinese students were sent abroad to study.

Dissatisfaction with rising prices, insecurity of employment and bureaucratic corruption, and increased awareness of political affairs outside China led to calls for political as well as economic change.

In 1986 students demonstrated in Shanghai, calling for press freedom and political reform. The Communist Party launched a campaign against 'bourgeois liberalism' and General Secretary Hu Yaobang was forced to step down.

In 1989 Hu Yaobang died. Students gathered in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, mourning Hu as a symbol of liberal reform and calling for political pluralism and an end to corruption. Hundreds of thousands of Beijing's citizens showed their support and similar demonstrations began in other cities. Communist Party General Secretary Zhao Ziyang was ousted for showing sympathy. On 4 June troops sent to clear the Beijing demonstrators opened fire and forced armoured vehicles through barricades, killing hundreds of people and wounding thousands. Intense political repression followed, with a nationwide hunt for leaders of the student and workers' movements, thousands arrested and many executed.

1989 was also a year of demonstrations in Tibet and the far western provinces.

The international outcry over the massacre in Beijing resulted in a temporary break in relations with the US, already strained by China's growth as an exporter. International financing was paralysed for 18 months. The UK was the first western government to resume diplomatic links (September 1991). US policy has moved from sanctions to 'engagement' and China's 'Most Favoured Nation' trading status has been restored.

In November 1991, the government released some of the student leaders of the pro-democracy protests. But 50-80,000 political prisoners are still held in Xinjiang, Qinghai and other nearby provinces.

In 1992, Deng, then aged 88, re-emerged from retirement to launch a new campaign for faster and bolder economic reform.

Economy

Type of economy

China's economy has been moving away from full state control since 1978, and is now officially described as a 'socialist market economy'. It has a state sector, a collective sector (made up of township and village enterprises) and a private sector.

Since 1978, agriculture has been privatised, prices liberalised, and a manufacturing boom led by the non-state sector has been boosted by foreign investment.

Industrial output has led China's rapid economic growth. Government policy is to stimulate growth by expanding trade and harnessing market forces, including foreign investment, while maintaining the state sector as the backbone of the economy. (The state sector accounts for only 1.1% of enterprises, but 52.2% of industrial output; the private sector, with over 80% of enterprises, produces 10.8% of industrial output.)

Starting in 1980, four Special Economic Zones were established, with financial autonomy and a more liberal rules for foreign investors. All of them were in Southeast China, within reach of Hong Kong or Taiwan. In 1984, 14 more cities on the coast began offering similar incentives for foreign investment. A fifth Special Economic Zone has been established in Hainan island. In the 1990s, cut-throat competition for foreign investment has burgeoned all over the country. The policy of attracting foreign investment relies on support from overseas Chinese: at least 78.5% of foreign capital in China is of overseas Chinese origin, compared with 6.5% from the USA and 4% from Japan.

Recent economic change has exacerbated the inequalities between coastal China and the inland regions. The coast has benefited from accessibility and links with overseas Chinese, and has a more developed infrastructure. Coastal provinces have consistently shown higher rates of growth than the Western provinces of the interior. Of the total volume of contracted foreign investment up to 1993, 81.9% was committed to the coastal areas and provinces, 33.7% to Guangdong province alone. (This is not a new trend - the wheat-growing plains of the Northeast and the rice paddies of the Yangtse delta have always been the wealthiest parts of the country.)

State industries provide housing, health care and many other basic welfare services.

Net Material Product

(similar measure to GDP, but excludes services not directly related to production)
current market prices: ^A

	1980	1993
billion yuan	368.8	2450.4
million US \$	246,129.2	425,269.0

- Real GDP per capita, PPS\$: 2946 (1991) ^H

Major industries: ^Z

- *Light:* bicycles, sewing machines, TV sets, wristwatches, cotton cloth, refrigerators, washing machines.
- *Heavy:* cement, iron & steel, plastics, machine tools, locomotives, motor vehicles, tractors.

Major exports: ^F

- Textiles and clothing, petroleum & products, agricultural products, telecommunications equipment, iron & steel
- China is also an important producer and exporter of rare metals vital for high-tech industries like aerospace and electronics, eg vanadium, titanium, germanium, gallium, polycrystalline silicon. ^Z

Trade dependency: (exports + imports, as % of GDP)

1980	15 (own calculation)
1991	37 ^H

Foreign debt ^D

	1980	1993
Total foreign debt (US\$m)	4,504	83,800
Debt/GNP ratio, %	2.3	21.4
Debt service ratio (% of exports)	4.3	10.7

Inflation

- Consumer price index: ^B

(1980=100)	1985	1991
All items	123	213
Food	126	216

Annual real NMP growth, % ^A

1980	1993
6.4	13.4

Note: 1993 figure is provisional

Average annual GNP growth (1980-91), % ^H

Total	9.4
Per capita	7.8

Government spending: ^A

	1980	1991
• Social services/health/education as % of total central government expenditure	18	27
• Military spending as % of total central government expenditure	16	10

Labour

Trade Unions

The official trade union structure is the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) and attempts to organise outside it are repressed. The ACFTU does not engage in collective bargaining, and its activities are limited to the occasional representation of individual workers' grievances.

The ACFTU has national, provincial, city, town and industrial unions, and provincial, city, country and town trade union councils. The role of these unions is advocacy for workers' rights and interests, and to advise the government and the party on draft legislation. They appear not to play an independent role in factories, and to support increases in productivity if the party wants it. They do not bargain collectively, but try to discipline the labour force. The ACFTU serves as a transmission belt for implementation of government policies, but it also helps shape official policy goals and targets.

In July 1994, the Minister of Labour announced that trade unions must be set up in all foreign-owned companies by the end of the year, a task assigned to the ACFTU. An editorial in the China People's Daily said many foreign enterprises which had resisted unions had been guilty of brutality, and asserted that trade unions and tougher standards would improve the investment climate. It reported that only 12 per cent of foreign firms had trade unions.

Independent trade unions, (eg the Workers' Autonomous Federations ([WAF]), sprang up during the pro-democracy protests in 1989. The party denounced them as 'counter-revolutionary' and many of their members were imprisoned. The CCP is extremely nervous of any sign of independent worker organisation.

A large number of workers and activists remain in prison for independent trade union activities, many for forming branches of the WAF, calling for democracy, and publicising their ideas. Many are reported to have been tortured. The China Free Trade Union emerged in 1992. Its leaders were arrested the following year and charged with counter-revolution. Trade unionists have also been held in psychiatric hospitals run by the Public Security Bureau.

The Hong Kong-based Chinese magazine *Dang Dai* reports that an estimated 800 unofficial trade unions have been set up in the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in Guangdong province.

In 1993-94 a massive wave of labour unrest broke out all over the country, but mainly in the SEZs and particularly the Shenzhen SEZ adjacent to Hong Kong. Workers complaints included hours of work, wage levels, harsh discipline and low health and safety standards.

An independent labour rights group the 'League for the Protection of the Rights of Working People' was launched in March 1994 on the eve of the National People's Congress (NPC) plenary session. The group issued two documents, a proposal to the NPC urging the protection of the rights of rural and urban workers during the economic boom, including the restoration of the right to strike, and a founding charter. Both documents called for workers to be able to exercise trade union rights and clearly stated that the organisation was not challenging the authority of the ruling party. Several of its organisers were detained.

Labour legislation

The right to strike was removed from the Chinese constitution in 1982.

The 1992 Trade Union Act intensified government control over the ACFTU and provided for total control by the federation of trade unions at all levels. Unions cannot obtain legal status without ACFTU approval.

Other provisions of the law promote unions as an intermediary between workers and employers with a view to protecting employers' interests. If workers strike, unions are required to work with management to restore production as soon as possible. The act also

says that unions can only make suggestions on wages, welfare and safety in joint venture enterprises.

In 1993, a revision to the ACFTU constitution defined trade unions as 'the link and bridge between the Chinese Communist Party and the working masses, and the representative of the interests of union members and non-union members'. The revision also apparently provides an opportunity for workers at foreign-funded and privately-owned enterprises to be represented by a union in industrial disputes. The union, however, would be obliged to 'strive to ensure the interests of all - the state, the employee and the employer'.

China's first comprehensive labour law went into effect on 1 January 1995. It establishes guidelines on working hours, salaries, women workers, protection for young workers, social security, welfare and the legal responsibility between employer and employee. The law bans child labour. It does not protect the rights to organise, bargain collectively, or to strike. It was widely believed that the law was a cosmetic exercise codifying existing regulations which were routinely flouted.

Sources: Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Brussels 1994 and 1995; Organised Labour in the Asia-Pacific Region. A Comparative Study of Trade Unionism in Nine Countries, Stephen Frenkel, ed. ILR Press, Ithaca, New York 1993; Economist Intelligence Unit Country Profile 1994-95.

Economically active population, 1982 ^L

	<i>EAP (Nos.)</i>	<i>EAP (%)</i>	<i>EAP (Nos.) in Manufacturing</i>	<i>EAP (%) in Manufacturing</i>
<i>Total</i>	521,505,618		61,668,204	
<i>Male</i>	293,661,280	56	34,473,720	56
<i>Female</i>	227,844,338	44	27,194,484	44

Total Employment ^{ACH}

1980	1993
423,610,000	602,200,000

- Proportion of women in labour force (1990-92): 43% ^H

Percentage of economically active women in sectors of economy: ^A

	(1980-89)	(1990-91)
<i>agriculture</i>	78	76.1
<i>industry</i>	13.7	13.5
<i>services</i>	8.3	10.4

Labour force in state and non-state sectors, 1993 (in millions) ^Z

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
<i>Total</i>	602.2	100
<i>State-owned</i>	109.2	18
of which manufacturing	34.4	
<i>Collectives in towns</i>	33.9	6
of which manufacturing	16	
<i>Self-employed in towns</i>	11.2	2
<i>Rural collectives and self-employed</i>	442.6	73

Employment in manufacturing, (in thousands) ^{ACH}

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage of all employment</i>
1980	58,990	14
1993	92,950	22

EAP in manufacturing, 1982¹ 1987

	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Total	61,668,204	
Male	34,473,720	56
Female	27,194,484	44

'Staff and workers' 1993, (thousands) ^{ACh}

Total	148,488	
Of which women	55,423	37%
Manufacturing	54,686	
Of which women	24,182	44%

100 million workers in rural China are employed in township enterprises, and 40 million of them are women. The proportion of women is larger in food, clothing, knitwear and other woven products, toy and electronics industries, handicrafts and service trades. In these sectors, women produce about 65% of the output value. The sectors where women are the majority of employees are the ones which earn the most foreign exchange. (China Currents, Jan-Mar 1995)

Administrators & managers, % female: 11 (1980-89) ¹¹**Economically active population, as % of working age population: ^A**

	(1970-79)	(1980-89)	(1990-91)
Women	53	70.1	72.9
Men	83.7	86.2	84.9

Unemployment (Census figures) ^{ACh}

	1982	1990
Employed pop.	521,500,000	647,240,000
Unemployed pop.	145,160,000	170,260,000

Urban Unemployment ^{ACh} in thousands

	1980	1993
Number	5,415	4,201
Rate	4.9	2.6

Official estimates, unemployed young people 16-25 in urban areas: ^L 1994 & 1987

	1983	1991	1992
Male	2,714,000	1,207,000	1,298,000
Female	883,000	1,677,000	1,700,000
Total	1,337,000	3,522,000	3,603,000
Unemployment rate, men, %	2.3	0.8	
Unemployment rate, women, %	0.7	1.1	
Unemployment rate, %	1.1	2.3	2.3

In 1980, 70 per cent of all the unemployed were women. Two-thirds of China's urban unemployed are women. The women's department of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions conducted a survey of 1,175 enterprises employing 900,000 women. It found that 60 per cent of the workers dismissed by these enterprises were women. Many of them were young (under 35) had little education, few technical skills, and were in the lowest paying jobs. (China Currents, Jan-Mar 1995)

Underemployment rate: not available.

Large numbers of farm workers are underemployed for much of the year. ^z

Average annual wage, in yuan ^{Ach}

	<i>All units</i>	<i>State Owned</i>	<i>Urban Collectives</i>	<i>Other ownership</i>
1980	762	803	623	
1985	1148	1213	967	1436
1993	3371	3532	2592	4966
Manufacturing				
1993	3348	3562	2469	4874

Average annual wage, manufacturing, in yuan (staff and workers) ^{Ach}

1980	752
1993	3348

Average monthly incomes of male and female workers, in yuan, 1990
(China Currents, Jan-Mar 1995)

	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women's income as % of men's</i>
Urban	149.60	193.15	77.4
Rural	126.50	102.92	81.4

Earnings per employee average growth rate: 3.5% (1980-90) ^H

Working hours: no data available

Industrial injuries: no data available

Union membership

Official unions, number of grassroots unions: ^{Ach}

1980	376,000
1993	627,000

Union membership (among staff & workers, official unions) in thousands ^{Ach}

	<i>1980</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1993</i>
No. of employees	74,482	81,830	111,038
of which women	25,186	29,020	43,599
women employees %	34	35.5	39
No. of TU members	61,165	68,439	101,761
of which women		24,128	39,496
women members %		35	39
Unionisation rate	82%	84%	92%
Unionisation rate for women		83%	91%

There are no reliable statistics on labour disputes, though there was a wave of strikes in the 1980s.

IMBALANCES IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

China today is perhaps the most striking example of how economic liberalisation and export-led growth have reinforced and exacerbated regional inequality. The coastal provinces, with their more developed infrastructure and links to overseas Chinese, were in a better position to attract external investment. Guangdong province in particular has benefited from its proximity to Hong Kong.

The rapid economic change of the last 15 years did not create the imbalances between the coastal regions and the interior, but it has widened the gaps in growth rates, earnings and access to investment funds. Thus per capita GDP in 1992 in the province of Guizhou was 28% of that in Guangdong, and a mere 11.7% of that in the municipality of Shanghai. Average wages in Jiangxi province in 1993 were 47% of those in Guangdong, and 44% of those in Shanghai.

Population of three municipalities and provinces with high GDP/growth rate, in thousands (1993).

Beijing	11,120
Tianjin	9,280
Shanghai	13,490
Guangdong	66,070
Jiangsu	69,670
Shandong	86,420
Sichuan	111,040
Liaoning	40,420
Zhejiang	42,660
Heilongjiang	36,400
Hainan	7,010
Fujian	31,500
Total	525,080

44% of the Chinese population are in these provinces and cities.

GDP in billion yuan, 1993

Top 5: (absolute)

Guangdong	3,225.30
Jiangsu*	2,754.49
Shandong	2,702.49
Sichuan	1,958.69
Liaoning	1,808.15

*excluding Shanghai

Three municipalities:

Beijing	863.53
Tianjin	536.10
Shanghai	1,511.61

Bottom 5: (absolute)

Gansu	358.33
Hainan	225.15
Qinghai	105.74
Ningxia	98.44
Tibet	37.28

GDP per capita, 1992*3 municipalities and top 5 provinces:*

	GDP per capita (yuan)	GDP total (billion yuan)	Growth index 1991=100
Shanghai	8,652	1,114.32	114.85
Beijing	6,805	709.10	111.58
Tianjin	4,696	411.24	111.65
Guangdong	3,575	2,293.54	121.97
Liaoning	3,254	1,297.65	111.69
Jiangsu	2,858	1,971.60	126.20
Zhejiang	2,850	1,220.69	118.91
Heilongjiang	2,433	855.93	106.45

Bottom 5 provinces:

Yunnan	1,334	510.03	110.91
Guanxi	1,318	572.3	118.27
Gansu	1,314	301.64	109.73
Anhui	1,253	730.19	117.4
Guizhou	1,009	331.67	109.06

Highest GDP growth since 1991, growth index:

	1991=100
Jiangsu	126.60
Hainan	123.34
Guangdong	121.97
Fujian	120.76
Shandong	119.51

Lowest GDP growth since 1991, growth index:

	1991=100
Heilongjiang	106.45
Tibet	107.07
Qinghai	107.39
Ningxia	107.5
Shaanxi	108.68

Employment

Distribution of employment in provinces with highest proportion of employment in industry, and in three municipalities

	Total in thousands	% in agricult.	% in industry	% in services
Shanghai	7,400	9.2	55	34
Tianjin	4,780	18.6	49.1	30.2
Beijing	6,590	11.8	42.2	43.4
Liaoning	19,520	32.3	40	24.1
Heilongjiang	14,920	38.1	35	22.6
Jiangsu	37,430	44.3	33.3	21.4
Shanxi	14,140	45.4	29.7	23.4
Zhejiang	26,590	46.9	29.4	21.7

Distribution of employment, in remaining provinces with high GDP/growth rates

	Total in thousands	% in agricult.	% in industry	% in services
Guangdong	34,800	43	26.5	26.3
Shandong	44,730	58.4	23.3	17.3
Fujian	15,210	53.9	22.4	20.7
Sichuan	62,210	66.7	15.4	16.9
Hainan	3,200	65.1	10.4	18.5

Distribution of employment in provinces with lowest proportion of people employed in industry

	Total in thousands	% in agricult.	% in industry	% in services
Guanxi	22,770	70	10.9	17.3
Hainan	3,200	65.1	10.4	18.5
Yunnan	21,060	77.4	9.6	12.1
Guizhou	17,700	77.6	9.2	11.8
Tibet	1,130	77.3	4	14.8

Employment in manufacturing, provinces with highest number of people employed in manufacturing, excluding three municipalities.

	Number in thousands	Manufacturing as % of all employment
Jiangsu	9,538	25.5
Shandong	6,731	15.0
Guangdong	6,455	18.5
Zhejiang	6,414	24.1
Sichuan	6,053	9.7

Employment in manufacturing, provinces with highest proportion of people employed in manufacturing, and three municipalities.

	Number in thousands	Manufacturing as % of all employment
Shanghai	3,706	50.1
Tianjin	1,917	40.1
Beijing	1,931	29.3
Liaoning	5,404	27.7
Jiangsu	9,538	25.5
Zhejiang	6,414	24.1
Heilongjiang	2,894	19.4
Jilin	2,297	18.7

Employment in manufacturing, remaining provinces with high GDP/GDP growth rates

	Number in thousands	Manufacturing as % of all employment
Fujian	2,346	15.4
Hainan	177	5.5

Provinces with lowest number of people employed in manufacturing:

	Number in thousands	Manufacturing as % of all employment
Tibet	19	1.7
Hainan	177	5.5
Qinghai	236	10.9
Ningxia	242	10.5
Xinjiang	636	9.8

Provinces with lowest proportion of employment in manufacturing

	Number in thousands	Manufacturing as % of all employment
Tibet	19	1.7
Hainan	177	5.5
Yunnan	1,232	5.8
Guizhou	1,144	6.5
Guanxi	1,564	6.9

Provinces with highest urban unemployment rates, 1980

NB. Separate figures for Hainan not available before 1990, as it was formerly part of Guangdong.
Figures for Tibet not available for 1993.

	1980 no. thousands	1980 rate	1993 no. thousands	1993 rate
Inner Mongolia	392	13.3	113	2.6
Ningxia	135	7.5	30	3.8
Guizhou	138	7.1	87	3.4
Heilongjiang	479	7	208	2.2
Fujian	178	7	61	1.5

Provinces with highest urban unemployment rates, 1993

	1980 no. thousands	1980 rate	1993 no. thousands	1993 rate
Ningxia	135	7.5	30	3.8
Gansu	85	4.7	101	3.6
Sichuan	422	5.5	378	3.5
Guizhou	138	7.1	87	3.4
Hunan	205	4.8	231	3.4

Provinces with lowest urban unemployment rates, 1980

	1980 no. thousands	1980 rate	1993 no. thousands	1993 rate
Beijing	54	1.6	19	0.4
Yunnan	55	2.3	73	2.2
Shandong	125	2.2	236	2.5
Shanxi	91	2.9	38	0.8
Hubei	155	3	180	2.2

Provinces with lowest urban unemployment rates, 1993

	1980 no. thousands	1980 rate	1993 no. thousands	1993 rate
Beijing	54	1.6	19	0.4
Shanxi	91	2.9	38	0.8
Tianjin	138	5.4	30	1
Jilin	232	5.8	77	1.3
Fujian	178	7	61	1.5

Unemployment, provinces with high GDP/GDP growth not covered in tables above.

	1980 no. thousands	1980 rate	1993 no. thousands	1993 rate
Zhejiang	137	3.6	147	2.6
Shanghai	202	4.3	130	2.5
Liaoning	447	5.5	285	2.5
Hainan			30	2.4
Jiangsu	214	3.2	194	2
Guangdong	354	5.1	203	1.9

Wages - annual average per worker, in yuan*Provinces with highest average earnings (1993).*

	Overall	State Sector	Urban Collectives	Other
Shanghai	5,646	5,777	4,253	7,043
Guangdong	5,322	5,422	4,389	6,435
Beijing	4,510	4,648	3,561	5,505
Zhejiang	4,201	4,615	3,439	4,544
Tibet	4,067	4,156	2,720	5,566

Provinces with lowest average earnings (1993)

	Overall	State Sector	Urban Collectives	Other
Jiangxi	2,497	2,659	1,799	3,085
Henan	2,646	2,860	1,821	3,097
Heilongjiang	2,661	2,867	1,946	3,558
Jilin	2,700	2,971	1,952	3,297
Anhui	2,770	3,076	1,932	2,731

Average wages in areas with high GDP not listed in tables above (1993).

	Overall	State Sector	Urban Collectives	Other
Tianjin	4,003	4,264	3,561	5,505
Jiangsu	3,613	3,892	2,937	4,434
Fujian	3,477	3,501	2,735	4,419
Liaoning	3,248	3,590	2,437	3,915
Shandong	3,149	3,410	2,352	3,482
Hainan	3,138	2,989	2,932	6,291
Sichuan	2,960	3,143	2,242	3,861

Average annual wages in manufacturing (1993)*Provinces with highest average wages in manufacturing*

Shanghai	5,612
Guangdong	5,482
Beijing	4,621
Hainan	4,274
Tianjin	3,979

Provinces with lowest average wages in manufacturing

Heilongjiang	2,389
Jiangxi	2,393
Henan	2,542
Jilin	2,565
Inner Mongolia	2,580

Provinces with high GDP/growth rate not in two tables above.

Zhejiang	3,741
Jiangsu	3,654
Fujian	3,568
Sichuan	3,092
Liaoning	3,092
Shandong	2,909

Source of statistics: Statistical Yearbook of China, 1994.
China Statistical Publishing House, Beijing.

HONG KONG

Social Statistics

- *Income ratio of highest 20% to lowest 20% (1985-89 average) ^A* 8.7:1
- *% income share of poorest 40% of households (1980-85)* 16

Health

- *Mortality rate: 6 per 1000 (1991) ^A*
- *Life expectancy*

Average 1992 ^H	77.4
1991 ^A	
Men	75
Women	80
- *Infant & Child Mortality*

<i>Infant mortality (per thousand births) 1992 ^H</i>	6
<i>Under-5 mortality (per thousand live births) 1992 Average (MRE) ^S</i>	8.8
<i>Under-5 mortality (per thousand live births) 1992 ^{W94}</i>	
Female	7
Male	9
- *Most common causes of death: ^B (1992)*
 1. Cerebro-vascular disease
 2. Pneumonia
 3. Suicide & self-inflicted injuries
 4. Bronchitis, emphysema & asthma
 5. Chronic liver disease & cirrhosis

Education

- *Adult literacy rate, UNDP estimate, 1992:* 90% ^H
- *Illiteracy - 1970-74 ^K*

	Female	Male
15-24	4.8	2.8
25+	49.3	12.9
- *Educational enrolment ratios (%) (1987-91 estimates) ^A*

<i>Primary (gross)</i>		
Male		106
Female		105
<i>Secondary</i>		
Male		73
Female		77
- *Female enrolment rate in tertiary education: not available*

- *Women in education:*^u

	% of female teachers	% of female students
Primary (1985)	74	48
Secondary (1987)	49	49
Tertiary (1984)		
all	24	35
universities	18	35

- *Mean years of schooling, 1992*^h

Average	7.2
Women	5.5
Men	8.8

- *Length of schooling for females, as % of that for males (1992):* 63^h

- *Percentage of people aged over 20 who have completed secondary school (1980):* ^{ADB}

Male	Female	F/M Ratio
25.7	20.9	0.81

- *Percentage of university graduates among population aged over 25 (1980)* ^{ADB}

Male	Female	F/M Ratio
7.1	3.2	0.45

Housing: Massive high-rise housing projects now hold 60% of the population. But demand exceeds supply and the waiting time for accommodation can last from five to ten years. Tens of thousands of retired workers rent single bunkspaces or sleep in the streets. TWG

- *Hong Kong 1991 Population Census Main Report, Census and Statistics Dept, Hong Kong.*

% of occupied living quarters which are	1981	1991
Rooftop structures	0.7	0.2
Other temporary housing	9.3	4

% of domestic households (excluding boats) which are	1981	1993
Rooftop structures	0.8	0.2
Other temporary housing	8.5	3.9

- *Average household size:* 3.7^k
- *% of households headed by women (1980):* 26% ^{ADB}
- *% of households potentially headed by women (latest):* 16.2% ^{ADB}

Rural-urban migration

- *Estimated rural-urban migration, 1971-81,* ^{AB}

Male	Female	Total	Female %
91,000	89,000	180,000	49

Reproduction

- *Mean age of childbearing (latest):* 29.5 ^{ADB}
- *Fertility rate (births per woman):* 1.4 (1991) ^A
- *Contraceptive use (% of women aged 15-49):* 81 (MRE) ^A

Politics

Hong Kong is a British colony (dependent territory). It enjoys relative freedom of expression, association, travel and the press, and an established rule of law. But the British administration has consistently refused to introduce a democratically elected system of government. The introduction of limited representation in the 1980s weights the political system heavily in favour of business interests.

Government

The Governor of Hong Kong, appointed by the British government, wields absolute power over the running of the territory. The Governor is assisted by the Executive Council, which makes policy, and the Legislative Council which enacts legislation and authorises expenditure. Until the 1990s the members of both bodies were appointed by the Governor or indirectly elected largely by business, finance and professional groups. The Governor also appoints judges, senior officials and members of numerous advisory bodies. The senior officials who work most closely with the Governor are almost invariably British.

The first direct elections to the Legislative Council were in September 1991, and then for only 18 of its 60 members. Twenty-one members are elected by the corporations (functional constituencies composed of business people, traders and professionals) and 21 appointed by the Governor.

The Hong Kong government has been trying to devolve the civil service's powers, and the Executive Council has become the principal decision-making body.

Political Forces

Hong Kong's economic elite has enjoyed extreme comfort and undue political influence under the British colonial system.

Until the 1980s, most political activity took the form of pressure groups and lobbies campaigning on specific issues and relying heavily on the media for impact.

Of the 18 directly elected members of the Legislative Council, two-thirds belong to the United Democrats of Hong Kong (UDHK), a liberal-left coalition supported by political groups, trade unions and community groups as well as political organisations. UDHK goals include

- a fully elected legislature and an accountable executive
- protection of civil liberties and human rights
- improvement in social policies.

It is critical of the Hong Kong colonial government and of China.

A conservative Liberal Democratic Party emerged in 1990 to represent the interests of the conservative business class. A more continuous grouping of conservative interests however is the Group of 89 - 89 members of the Basic Law Consultative Committee. They strongly oppose social reform and believe China's political demands should be accepted in the interests of stability. The Chinese authorities have wooed Hong Kong's business leaders and have successfully co-opted some of them into an informal alliance against liberal demands for political reform and British colonial interests.

The Chinese Communist Party is well organised in Hong Kong. Although it does not operate officially, it is believed to have sponsored candidates in several recent elections. A few individuals representing organisations known to be linked with the Communist Party, such as the Hong Kong Federation of Trades Unions, sit on the Legislative Council, or other official committees. Despite its widespread unpopularity the Chinese Communist Party is almost certainly the largest and most organised political group in Hong Kong.

History

- 1842 Hong Kong island ceded to Britain at the end of the First Opium War. Previously, Hong Kong had been an integral part of the Chinese administrative system. The British developed Hong Kong as a trading centre, their main entry-point to China.
- 1860 British gain rights to Kowloon (mainland peninsula opposite Hong Kong island)
- 1891 First petition to the British Parliament calling for the introduction of direct elections in Hong Kong
- 1898 In wake of Boxer rebellion, British forced China to grant 99-year lease on the rural area north of Kowloon, the 'New Territories'
- 1950s When the US and Britain imposed a trade boycott on China, Hong Kong rapidly developed a light manufacturing base. It became a major exporter of textiles, garments, plastic goods and electronics.

Late 1970s

China announced a new era of openness to foreign trade and investment. Hong Kong, with its sophisticated international trade and financial systems, large modern container terminals and good natural harbour was able to take advantage.

- 1997 Reversion of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty
Re-integration with China

In the early 1980s formal talks began between the British and Chinese governments on Hong Kong's future. The people of Hong Kong were not represented in the talks. Immediately beforehand, the UK passed special immigration laws changing the status of 3.25 million Hong Kong-born residents who had received British passports and citizenship. The changes removed any right of abode in the UK, and the right to pass nationality on to descendants. It created a new British Dependent Territories Citizen passport, which does not confer the effective citizenship of any nation.

The negotiations resulted in the Sino-British Joint Declaration signed in December 1984, which set out the terms on which Britain will return Hong Kong to China in 1997. The declaration stated that Hong Kong would enjoy a 'high degree of autonomy' as a 'Special Administrative Region', retaining its current social and economic systems for at least 50 years. The Declaration included guarantees for the protection of human rights: 'Rights and freedoms, including those of the person, of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of travel, of movement, of correspondence, of strike, of choice of occupation, of academic research and of religious belief, will be ensured by law'. Hong Kong is to remain a free port and an international financial centre, not subject to central government taxation. China also agreed that Hong Kong's courts would exercise judicial power independently and would have the power of final adjudication. China would retain control of defence and foreign policy.

The British government asked the people of Hong Kong to comment on the declaration, but said there was no prospect of renegotiation. It was clear that Hong Kong had little choice but to accept. In fact, most Hong Kong people found the document more acceptable than they had expected.

The operational details of Hong Kong's relationship with China after 1997 are detailed in the Basic Law, promulgated in 1990. It is an internal Chinese document, drafted with the participation of some Hong Kong representatives selected by Beijing. Business and professional interests dominated both the drafting committee and its consultative body. During the drafting process, it became increasingly evident that the Chinese government and Hong Kong's people assigned different meanings to crucial clauses of the Joint Declaration:

- China has not interpreted 'election' to mean election by universal suffrage;
- it has not interpreted 'accountable' to mean that the executive should be answerable to the legislature and liable to sanctions;
- nor has it interpreted 'final adjudication' to mean that Hong Kong's courts will ultimately decide on the application of laws.

In almost all instances, the British government has proved unwilling or unable to defend Hong Kong's interpretation against that of China.

Hong Kong's people have been expressing the desire for a more democratic and accountable system of government for many years. But calls became louder when the Sino-British talks began, because of fears that China would impose authoritarian rule. The pro-democracy movement in China had widespread sympathy in Hong Kong, and over a fifth of the population joined solidarity demonstrations in May and June 1989. The movement and its suppression produced a wave of cultural, political and emotional identification with China. The Tienanmen massacre left people in Hong Kong angry and fearful.

It appeared that the Chinese leadership was more concerned with restricting the capacity of Hong Kong people to criticise Beijing's rule than winning back their shattered confidence. Beijing has made threats against pro-democracy groups in Hong Kong, describing the city as a base for 'subversion' and 'counter-revolutionary' activity. Two prominent liberal politicians and Legislative Councillors were expelled from the Basic Law Drafting Committee for joining the protest against the killings in Tienanmen. This has further eroded the confidence of people in Hong Kong.

The British government has tried to do a balancing act between the demands of Hong Kong people for greater political representation, and pressure from Beijing to make no changes that would disturb China's plans.

Economy

Type of economy:

Hong Kong is a major financial and communications centre and is the world's tenth largest trading centre. Hong Kong has an independent manufacturing base, but its economy is based on trade. Almost everything that Hong Kong produces is exported, and most of what Hong Kong consumes is imported.

In theory Hong Kong is a free port with a completely free market economy. There is no government interference in business or industry, either to stimulate or protect. Taxes are kept low, and the government balances its budget by selling land. In practice, the economy is subject to government steering and has a considerable social dimension. Apart from budget regulation, the government intervenes in the economy by commissioning large infrastructural projects, including a highly controversial new airport to be built before 1997. Rapid unregulated industrialisation has resulted in severe water, land and air pollution.

By the end of the 1980s, over half of Hong Kong's exports were re-exports of good produced in China. Hong Kong and China were each other's largest trading partners. Al-

most all of China's many ventures involving foreign investors have included Hong Kong participation, and its international trade has been negotiated largely through Hong Kong intermediaries. At the end of the decade, Hong Kong companies were employing two million workers in southern China - twice the number employed in manufacturing within Hong Kong itself.

Investment was not all one way. China has become one of the top three foreign investors in Hong Kong. China also supplies most of Hong Kong's drinking water, 30 per cent of its rice, 40 per cent of its fresh vegetables, 70 per cent of its meat and much of its oil.

Hong Kong also plays an important part in the UK economy. It is Britain's third largest market outside the European Union and the US. It contributes over £2 billion a year to Britain's balance of payments and offers British companies a privileged base for regional trade. Over 400 British companies operate in the territory, and 2,500 are represented by agents there. CIIR

GDP, current market prices: ^A

	1980	1992
million HK dollars	133,609	752,473
million US\$	26,850.68	97,206.17

Real GDP per capita, PPP\$: 18,520 (1991) ^H

Major industries: Clothing, metals and machinery, textiles, electrical and electronic products, plastic products ^{FEER 92}

Major exports: ^F Clothing, textiles, watches & clocks, electronic components, metal manufactures

Trade dependency: (exports + imports, as % of GDP)

1980	157	(own calculation)
1991	192	^H

Foreign debt 1989 (The Economist Book of Vital World Statistics 1990)

Total foreign debt (US\$m)	9,300
Debt/GNP ratio, %	17.5
Debt service ratio (% of exports)	1.1

Inflation

- **Consumer price index: ^B**

(1980=100)	1985	1992
All items	155	266
Food	151	263

Growth rates:

- **Annual real GDP growth, % ^A**

1980	1993
10.4	5.5

- **Average annual GNP growth (1980-91), % ^H**

Total	6.9
Per capita	5.6

• *Government spending:*^A

	1980	1993
<i>Social services/health/education spending as % of total budget</i>	27	34
<i>Military spending as % of total budget</i>	7	1

Trade Unions

There are three major union federations:

- The CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS (CTU) formed from the early days of industrialisation. Strong membership in civil service, and new transport and industry sectors.
- The HONG KONG FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS is pro-China. It discourages industrial action and is strongest in the older transport and industry sectors.
- The pro-Taiwan TRADE UNION COUNCIL (TUC) is maintained as a political counterweight to the HKFTU. In recent years it has lost membership and international recognition to the more active independent unions.

Labour legislation:

The Basic Law adopted by China which provides the constitutional framework for post-1997 does not guarantee the free exercise of trade union rights. It is thought likely that China will seek to impose a single trade union system.

Current labour legislation does not protect the right to strike: under common law practice, employers can dismiss striking workers by claiming they are in breach of their contracts. They can also claim damages from strikers. Threats of disciplinary action, pay cuts and demotions are a further deterrent to industrial action. After a major dispute at Cathay Pacific Airways in 1993, Hong Kong's Legislative Council reviewed the labour relations system and proposed a strike law requiring a seven-day notice period. Employers opposed the law and it was not followed up.

Laws designed to prevent discrimination against union members are ineffective in practice, and some unions keep membership lists secret to prevent victimisation. Exercise of collective bargaining is limited by the absence of effective enforcement mechanisms, especially in the public sector.

Collective bargaining is not widely practised, and is discouraged by the government.

Labour

Economically active population (civilian):^{L 1984 & 1991}

	1980	1980%	1993	1993%
<i>Total</i>	2,370,700		2,873,000	
<i>Male</i>	1,546,100	65	1,813,300	63
<i>Female</i>	824,600	35	1,059,700	37

• *Percentage of economically active women in sectors of the economy:*^A

	1970-9	1980-9	1990-1
<i>agriculture</i>	2.5	1.6	0.6
<i>industry</i>	61.4	47	29.5
<i>services</i>	36.1	51.4	69.9

- EAP in manufacturing* ^{L 1994 & 1981}

	1980	1993
% of total EAP in manufacturing	41.5	21
women as % of manufacturing EAP	45	37

- Unpaid family workers (included in EAP):* ^{L 1994 & 1981}

	1980	1993
unpaid family workers as % of total EAP	1.5	0.8
women as % of unpaid family workers	72	87

- Invisible workers, as % of EAP* ^T

Male: 8.2%

Female: 44.5%

(refers to people of working age but who work unpaid, unofficially or outside the cash economy, and are not counted in the EAP)

- Administrators & managers, % female:* 12% (1980-89) ^H

- Economically active population as % of working age population:* ^A

	1970-79	1980-89	1990-91
Women	43.4	37.4	49.5
Men	83.2	61.9	78.7

- Unemployment :*

(15+, based on sample surveys, excludes unpaid family workers who worked more than one hour): ^L

	1980	1992
Total	87,500	56,900
Male	59,700	36,200
Female	27,800	20,700
Total rate (%)	3.8	2
Male rate (%)	3.9	2
Female rate (%)	3.4	2

- Underemployment (in thousands):*

(Quarterly Report on General Household Survey, October-December 1994, and November 1982-January 1983, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong.)

	1982	1994
	Aug-Oct	Oct-Dec
Total	41.5	46.9
Men	28.4	37.1
Women	13.1	9.8
Average rate	1.7	1.5
Male rate	1.8	2
Female rate	1.5	0.9

- Minimum wage:* none

- Earnings per employee average growth rate:* 4.9% (1980-90) ^H

- Non-agricultural wage (daily rate, HK\$): ^{L 1983 & 1994}

	1982	1985	1993
All	73.80	100.80	256.80
Male	87.90	118.70	327.40
Female	66.70	91.20	207.30
Women's wage as % of men's	76	77	63

- Wages in manufacturing industry (daily rate, HK\$): ^{L 1983 & 1994}

	1982	1993
All	72.30	241.70
Male	85.70	313.80
Female	66.60	206.80
Women's wages as % of men's	78	66

- Women's wages as % of men's, 1983-87: 74% ^K

- Working hours (non-agricultural occupations): ^L

civilian employed 15+	Manufacturing		Non-agricul-tural	
	1982	1993	1982	1993
Total	49.1	44.9	53.1	45.7
Male		46.2		46.7
Female		42.6		44.2

- Industrial Injuries reported, ^{L 1994 & 1981}

	1980	1982
No. of pesons injured at work	70,621	75,593
of which killed	235	46

- Number of labour force organised:
Union density (%), male and female

	1976		1981		1986	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
All industries	32.7	17.5	20.4	10.6	20.1	10.4
Manufacturing	17	10.6	9.2	4.9	8.8	5.0

Source: Organised Labour in the Asia-Pacific Region. A Comparative Study of Trade Unionism in Nine Countries, Stephen Frenkel, ed. ILR Press, Ithaca, New York 1993.

- Strikes & lockouts, ^{L 1994 & 1981} (industrial disputes leading to stoppage of work)

	1980	1993
Number of disputes	37	10
No. of workers involved	5,083	1,479
No. of work days lost	21,069	16,204

A success story, written in sand?

The dramatic economic growth and the myth of the NICs has been built on fragile sand in South Korea, write Jung Ok-Lee and Dug Soo-Son.

A decade of change

SOUTH KOREAN SOCIETY has changed rapidly, both socio-economically and culturally, in the last decade (1983-1993). The government itself has changed three times - from Chun Doo-Hwan's authoritarian military regime (1980-1987) brought to power by military coup, to Roh Tae-Woo (1988-1992), of the same military root but voted into power, and now Kim Young-Sam's democratic civil administration (1993-1997). With each change of political regime came changes in industrial policies and new directions for Korea's social movements. State violence against social movements, especially the labour movement, has declined and rising wage levels have prompted the manufacturing sector to explore foreign cheap labour markets. The overwhelming increase in the service sector is comparable to other advanced countries, such as US and Japan. Civil opposition to an authoritarian government was spearheaded by the student movement but political activity has now diversified into environmental, feminist, and other civil society organisations functioning in a less confrontational framework.

The feminist movement developed actively during this decade, and has made some gains in legislation. Family law, which formerly strongly supported the traditional patriarchal system, has been amended to allow the right of equal property inheritance to daughters and wives, and equal matrilineal kinship (1989). Equal employment rights, with penalties for companies guilty of sex discrimination in recruitment, promotion and retirement conditions, have been introduced and supplemented (1987, 1989). A special law addresses sexual violence (1994). But in reality, in spite of these advances, sexual discrimination in property inheritance and employment, as well as sexual violence, have long been features of everyday life. Many loopholes remain which allow companies and individuals to violate these laws: punishment is minimal and few women dare to take a sexual discrimination case to court.

The changes in the industrial profile of South Korea could be characterised as follows:

- the manufacturing sector grew until the middle of the 1980s
- At the end of the 1980s, the service sector grew, and the manufacturing sector declined (1988 27.7 per cent, 1990 26.9 per cent)
- The proportion of clerical workers, especially, increased (20.9 per cent in 1990 compared with 11.5 per cent in 1960).
- The professional sector has remained at the same level (9.1 per cent in 1960, 9.6 per cent in 1990)
- The number of women workers in manufacturing increased until the middle of the 1970s, decreased until the middle of the 1980s, and then maintained a steady level (46.6 per cent in 1986)
- Women's economic participation increased (40.4 per cent in 1989), but women continued to be segregated into 'female jobs' characterised by low wage and skill levels (1989 - manufacturing 26.4 per cent, agriculture 21.6 per cent, sales 17.0 per cent, clerical 11.9 per cent, professional 6.8 per cent in 1989).
- Married women's economic participation increased (46.8 per cent in 1989) to the level of unmarried women (45.6 per cent in 1989)
- Women factory workers, most of whom formerly were young and unmarried, are now mainly married, raising the social problems of rearing young children (married women were 74.8 per cent of women's labour force participation in 1991).

The economic participation of women has altered with the changes in industrial patterns and in traditional Korean patriarchal culture. Until the middle of the 1970s, young unmarried women worked in labour intensive manufacturing such as textiles, and shoes, the export-oriented sector then being promoted. These women workers paved the way for South Korea to become one of the four successful NIC 'dragons' in Asia. Their obedient and diligent attitude, from the conditioning of patriarchal families, perfectly filled industry's demand for docile, sedentary but dexterous and concentrated workers. Up to now, they have been the major source of labour in manufacturing, especially in electronics factories. Yet in spite of this industrial dedication, women are rarely found either in trade unions or in managerial and professional roles, compared with other industrialised countries. The peculiar scarcity of women in the public sector or politics (0.2 per cent in parliament) can be attributed to the strong Confucian tradition still prevalent, but weakening, in upper middle class families. Few educated women entered the labour market: women with university education were supposed to seek marriage to a professional or management man who offered good prospects as a breadwinner. Today, many middle class, university-educated girls opt to pursue professional careers rather than marriage. A job market too narrow to ab-

sorb this group of women has become a pivotal social issue for the feminist movement.

The combined effect of rapid industrialisation and the Confucian patriarchal tradition emphasising patrilineal family and differential roles was to segregate Korean women into three groups: poor women who worked in factories before marriage and in the informal sector after marriage; upper-middle class women who devoted their lives to being good housewives, adhering to domesticity and the patriarchal tradition; and women who broke with the chastity 'norm' and deviated from the marriage route, becoming workers in the sex industry.

These three groups of women suffered different kinds of difficulties arising from the same roots: patriarchy and the global economy. Poor women struggled to manage their lives over-burdened with jobs and housework. Upper-middle class women were in a position to influence other women as cultural role models, yet they remained invisible in the public sector and found no other outlet. Some among them were influenced by feminist thought, and began challenging the patriarchal order and emphasising a feminist-oriented 'alternative culture'. The feminist movement has been labelled middle class, and blamed for weakening the working class movement.

However, antagonism between middle class feminists and poor women more concerned to cooperate with male workers in the labour movement has been lessening. During the past decade, the two groups of women (poor and upper-middle class) began to communicate under the umbrella of Yeo-yun, a women's confederation launched in 1987 which now includes 21 women's groups. Class divisions have also been the focus of education work in the students' movement, where a marxist approach gave middle class students a structural understanding of poverty, enriched by their exposure to workers in fields and factories and people in the urban poor settlements. Until very recently, far less attention has been paid to women in the sex industry, who remained isolated and segregated from society, even from other women's groups.

The life stories told in this chapter were selected to show three profiles of the varied lives of Korean women - from the mother and daughter in the Sandongne urban poor ghetto, to the factory worker and active trade unionist, and finally the sex worker who has become 'local wife' to an elderly Japanese businessman.

The stories show the persistence of poverty in spite of dramatic economic growth. The direct impact of the global economy is shown in the case of the poor woman, who became head of the family when her husband went abroad to earn foreign currency for South Korea, and the sex worker's new job category of local wife of Japanese managers. The indirect effect is insecurity and short-term employment. Neither are the middle classes immune: a case study of a housewife shows the family's fortunes from property speculation changing rapidly according to the ups

and downs of the global economy, forcing her into domestic service. The dramatic economic growth and the myth of successful NICs has been built on fragile sand.

We selected cases recommended by feminist groups to provide models which show these overlapping contradictions, the trap which lies in wait for any Korean woman.



L
I
F
E

S
T
O
R
I
E
S

Women in Sandongne, an urban ghetto

The main speaker here is Lee, a poor 49-year-old mother with little education, who now works for the Han River management company in Seoul.

Testimony is also given by one of the daughters she struggled to educate, and a middle class activist working in the ghetto.

I WAS BORN IN 1947 in Kyunggi province, an only daughter with two brothers. My father was a farmer and craftsman repairing agricultural tools. Until I graduated from elementary school, I was happy with my family. But in the late 1950s, my father put all his savings in a mine which many people thought to be a 'golden turkey' (money-maker) but he made nothing but bankruptcy. My family could no longer live together because of this. After leaving elementary school (1961) I found a job as a maid, which did not provide regular payment but promised to solve the problem of everyday meals and shelter. I might have got on all right, if it had not been for nightly invasion by the men in that house, husband and son. No-one understood why I ran away from that house, and I was blamed

as unreliable. I preferred to work at a restaurant for low pay (20-30,000 won, about US\$30-40). I sent the money to my mother and brothers. Even though the reputation of girls working in restaurants was worse than that of maids, I felt safe in the restaurant, free from private sexual harassment as there were always people crowded there.

I met my husband in the restaurant when I was 20 - he was 26. I decided to live with him a year after we met. I was tired of moving, and wanted to have my own home. I never expected that marriage would mean another burden. At my husband's house, I found seven people living in one tiny room (2.4m x 2.7m), his father, mother, four sisters and a brother. My husband was the eldest son in that poor and large family, which meant taking responsibility for the family's daily survival. I began to live with my husband, without any wedding ceremony, and with the other seven family members in that room.

My father-in-law worked in a small cotton recycling factory in Hawolgokdong (name of the ghetto administrative unit). The two elder

sisters-in-law worked at garment factories, having graduated from elementary school. The youngest were children, two girls and a boy, and still at elementary school. My husband worked as a chauffeur at a private house. I only saw him once a week, sometimes once a month. After two months, I tried to run away but my husband soon caught me. After a hard beating and appeals from my husband, I resigned myself to living there. I could not have lived there without my mother-in-law's concern and good care. She expressed her sorrow and apologies for loading me with the burdens of her family. After she died of womb cancer in 1970, I took on the role of mother to my young sisters-in-law and brother-in-law. Hardest to endure was the behaviour of my drunken father-in-law. He took no responsibility for his family and endlessly demanded service from his daughter-in-law. I was happy when he decided to leave after remarrying — but he soon came back and has lived with us ever since. He is now 77.

Troubles never come alone. To make ends meet I did any kind of work to bring in money, however little. Sometimes I did sewing subcontracted from nearby factories. I worked on construction sites, washed clothes and bed sheets from local inns and motels, and did babysitting, my main source of income. My small income could be used to meet the children's education expenses. My husband, frustrated with endless poverty, often spent his whole wage on gambling and drinking. Then, everything for the family had to come out of my money. Sometimes he beat me for giving money to his brother and sisters as education expenses. I begged him for money on his monthly pay day. One day I visited him hoping to come back with some money, but I failed. I came back penniless after walking for more than five hours with a baby on my back on a cold and snowy road. I wept and wept. I wanted to commit suicide that night but I could not try when I remembered my mother's words: 'If you think you are the worst, you could be allowed to kill yourself, but if you think your neighbours are in the same situation, you had better try to get over the difficulties.' When I looked around at my neighbours, they were in the same situation as me.

I gave birth to four daughters in this poverty-stricken house - in 1969, 1971, 1975, and 1979. When she was three years old, my first daughter went to hospital with an unidentified fever. She was there for a long time and was left with a disabled leg. I had to borrow money at high interest (10-25 per cent monthly) to pay the hospital expenses. My husband, who had been a tyrant with wife-beating, drinking and gambling, at last returned to his family in 1981 and decided to go to work in Saudi Arabia to help pay the debts. I tried everything possible to enable him to go to Saudi Arabia. We believed then it was the only escape from our economic difficulties. I borrowed money again to pay for his medical examination and to get information about going to Saudi Arabia. He finally went, but returned after one year when his firm went bankrupt and he had no

payment. He tried again, and went to Saudi Arabia in 1983 as an electricity worker. This time, he was back after four years, with another bankruptcy and again, no payment. I worked at a car wash shop from 1am to 6pm: I now have no fingernails because of the toxic washer. I feel embarrassed when anyone looks at my hands.

Through all this struggle, things began to get better. My husband worked as a taxi driver again. From 1991, I got a job through an acquaintance, working in Han River management corporation under Seoul city hall. I did paving, and removed stones, weeds and garbage from the road and received a regular wage of 450,000 won (US\$550) a month with medical insurance. My daughters graduated from high school and also began to work. My first daughter worked as an assistant in a Hawolgokdong study room, run by christian activists to give shelter to poor adolescents. My second daughter worked as a sales girl in the well-known Midopa department store, and the third worked at a construction firm at Apgujung Dong, an upper-middle class 'apartment town'. They gave me 500,000 won a month (US\$600). Things were getting better, but we still had to struggle to keep up with galloping prices. The worst problem was our housing expenses: in 1989 we had to sell our illegally constructed one-room house for 25,000,000 won (US\$30,000) because of our debts. We paid 150,000 a month (US\$20) with guarantee fee, 15,000,000 won (US\$20,000). The owner demanded 5,000,000 won more guarantee fee (US\$6,000) after only one year of the contract. We had to save money to meet these demands. The owner of my house is getting rent from 10 houses. My only wish is to have our own apartment, but I know that is a dream. But I feel very happy to be with my daughters: they give me the strength to live.

Recently, I have been participating in trade union organising to resist pay cuts. We were deprived of our payments for clothes and health care. I was identified as a union organiser, so was sent to another workplace far from my house. We were threatened with dismissal unless we gave up our union work: 35 of the 135 union members were dismissed. We decided not to withdraw. I felt sorry in my workplace - male breadwinners got the same wage as women workers, and they should have received more.

My sisters-in-law and brother-in-law went their own way. The eldest married a man who was raised in an orphanage and has no family. He worked as a garbage collector. She suffered from back trouble caused by the working conditions in the garment factory. Her two sons graduated from middle school: one is a boiler engineer, the other a car mechanic. They were fortunate to get a small apartment under a ghetto rehousing scheme. The second sister-in-law hates men after watching the tyranny of her father and brothers. She worked in a beer house and now owns a tearoom and small apartment, and devotes her leisure time to church. She lives with the fourth sister, whose husband ran away with another

woman, leaving her with a son and daughter. She manages as a waitress in a pizza house. My brother-in-law turned out to be 'another man': I tried my best to enable him to finish high school, but he betrayed my hopes by joining a violent adolescent organisation and running away from high school. I had to make great efforts to ensure that he was not sent to jail, which would be a family disgrace. He finally married a woman who already had two daughters and one son with other man. My irresponsible brother-in-law became the breadwinner of a five-member family. I have heard there are endless quarrels.

I felt ashamed of living like this. I should have worked harder, day or night. I never told my mother about the misbehaviour of my husband's family. I never borrowed money from my brothers or my mother.

Lee's unmarried 25-year-old daughter, Han, pays tribute to her mother.

WHEN I WAS at elementary school, my mother carried me to school on her back because of my disabled leg. We lived at the top of a hill and the school was at the bottom. I felt my mother's agony on her

back hearing her deep breathing every day. I would do anything to make my mother happy. She was eager for me to study hard and be independent. During middle school days, I felt ashamed to live in Sandongne: many of the most troublesome students were those from my ghetto. I eventually graduated from high school, thanks to my mother's determined support.

Witnessing my grandfather's and father's unjust tyranny over my mother left me with no romantic view on marriage. I could not understand my mother's perseverance: I got angry when I saw mother beaten by my grandfather and father without any reason. I decided to live with the sisters who run the study room in Sandongne, and am going to spend my whole savings, 20,000,000 won (US\$25,000) in a new project, building a day care centre for working mothers. I made that money working in a factory, and never spent any on dresses and cosmetics, like most girls my age. Sometimes I save money by walking instead of taking the bus.

33-year-old Yu, an unmarried middle class kindergarten teacher, joined her sister to work with women's groups in Sandongne.

I WAS BORN IN 1961 in Seoul, the fifth-born of three brothers and three sisters. My father, a former bank worker, tried to set up his own business, but failed and the shock led to his death. I was still at school. My mother managed to nurture and educate the large family through running a small food shop.

I graduated from vocational college and taught as a kindergarten teacher at the Sansung church in Kangnam, a so-called rich people's village. I had no money worries: my small salary was supplemented with gifts and money from mothers hoping to get special care for their children.

My sister, who graduated from theological university, became both my mother and my teacher when my mother died. She moved to Sandongne in 1984, and rented a room with 1,200,000 won (US\$1,500) as guarantee fee to open a study room for adolescents. I couldn't understand why she chose to practise her mission in that humble Sandongne where no one wanted to go. I might have understood if she had decided to go abroad, somewhere like Africa. But I used to visit her to bring necessities. Sandongne seemed to me dirty, fearful and strange on the first visit, unlike Kangnam.

As I visited more often, I got to know Sandongne better. At first, I felt contempt for the Sandongne people. I took it for granted that somehow their extreme poverty was due to their negligence and idleness. But it didn't take long for me to understand that even resorting to alcohol was an attempt to escape a hopeless life. Tired drivers and labourers who had worked till late night, were awakened in the early morning with loud songs coming from the village office. This routine was the work of the Samaul movement initiated by former president Park Chung-Hee to dispel negligence and idleness in villages. I had never heard those songs in the rich man's village, Kangnam. The village office never gave advance notice about water supply stoppages. As a stranger from a middle class village I was very struck by the inadequate services and carelessness of the administrative authorities.

I joined my sister's project, and proposed a project for a day care centre for working mothers. As I tried to persuade church women to support the project, I felt firm confidence about it and happy to be working with my needy neighbours. There were other activist groups in Sandongne. They were from marxist-oriented student movements emphasising field work and communication with Minjoong (exploited people). Their study group ran seminars on Korean capitalism and historical materialism - I only vaguely understood their academic jargon and felt uneasy with their theoretical activity which seemed useless for work in Sandongne. But I did learn how to analyse situations structurally.

In 1987, the last year of Chun's authoritarian military regime, our study room and day care centre were used as a shelter when student activists were victims of violent and oppressive action. But it was not a safe place for long. The leader of the Ban (grouping of 10-20 households) often visited our room to report what was going on to the police. Because our activity was based on church support and concentrated on non-partisan women's activity, they could not close our room, but they tried to frighten us into leaving. I often met policemen there, and one night a

strange man broke in and threatened us to make us leave the village. We could not sleep after that: we started sleeping during the day and sitting up together all night with hammer and bible. I shouted at a leader of the Ban, 'Why do you peep into our house where only two women live? I will tell your wife about your abnormal curiosity to us, unmarried young women.' He did not peep into our room openly after that. I could not understand why grand political power was lavished on controlling our small project.

Almost 10 years have passed since I moved to Hawolgokdong. They said the level of wages and GNP had risen, but I could find no improvements in the life of the people. Hawolgokdong consists of about 3,000 households. Our study room was situated at the top of a mountain, where the rent is lowest and where the poorest people live. I never heard of any household which had been able to realise the dream of moving out of Hawolgokdong and into apartments at the bottom of the hill. The price of housing soared abruptly at the end of 1988, absorbing any wage increments in advance. People still live in one- or two-roomed houses crowded with the whole family. The only apparent changes are that more homes have TV, video and audio sets, and the coal boiler has been replaced by an oil boiler.

No-one has relatives and acquaintances in Kangnam village, so far as I know. Poverty is inherited, from generation to generation. People hope to achieve through education, but here this often turns out to be a day-dream. Studying is very difficult in the conditions of this village. Many young people in Sandongne drop out from regulated and organised school systems, but they never threaten those who remain at school. Boys try to protect the girls of their village from rape and other attacks by other village men.

Most people in Sandongne, more than 80 per cent, come from Jonlado, the province in the southwestern part of Korea, the native place of Kim Dae-Jung, former leader of the Minjoo party. In contrast, the southeastern part of Korea, Kyungsangdo, is the native place of presidents Park, Chun and Roh.

The inhabitants seem exhausted, passively adjusting to socio-economic changes. But I know their anger is hidden and could be triggered off. I saw it in the 1987 election for president when their voting boxes were robbed. They had actively participated in campaigns to keep their voting boxes. The people who had come from Jonlado wanted Kim Dae-Jung to be president. They blame their poverty on their distance from core power groups.

One thing I have not been able to get used to is the people's attitude to sexual relationships. There seemed to be little shame about adultery - and people had so little privacy everyone knew each other's affairs. Women in Sandongne openly said that men are only a means of living. Their open discussions about sexual relationships were perplexing for me, with my

background of middle class sexual morality and long cherished desire for romantic love.



A labour community

Lee, 48, a factory worker and labour activist, works in a multinational electronic data corporation in Seoul. She came from the rural area of Yuisung. A high school graduate, she remains unmarried.

I was born in 1948 in Yuisung, Kyungbuk, in the southern part of South Korea, the fifth daughter of five sisters and three brothers. I grew up to witness my mother habitually beaten by my father, for no reason. I resolved myself never to marry. Marriage was no daydream for me: it was a battlefield.

Until I graduated from high school, I was a good student and tried to be what others expected - except for my negative view of marriage. I thought constantly of how to be independent, without marriage. I thought of being a nun or enrolling in the army, but these ideas did not last

long. I followed the usual course for a girl graduating from high school with a lower-middle class background. In 1969, I took a job at Control Data, a multinational corporation manufacturing mainframe computers for industrial use which employed 300 girls. The factory was established in 1967 in South Korea, attracted by the cheap and obedient female labour. I was paid 3,600 won a month (US\$50-60), a wage level about 30 per cent higher than in a domestic company. We felt proud and looked down on other factory girls. Even so, many of my friends felt ashamed to be factory girls and tried to look like university students. They imitated the student fashion style, and bought clothes far more expensive than they could afford.

I began to ask questions about why the male managers, who spent much of their time doing nothing, were paid much more than us. Why was my wage level decided from above without any notice or discussion? Why was it that, however hard we worked, they always told us it was not enough? According to them, the company's losses grew larger and larger through low productivity caused by our idleness and negligence. Yet they had expanded to employ 1,000 girls.

In December 1974, when oil prices had risen by over 70 per cent, I heard our male managers had demanded a salary increase. I felt betrayed: they had always urged us to endure the low wages as the corporation's profit was too low. They threatened that if the profits were not high enough, the company might withdraw from Korea, and we would lose our jobs and the opportunity to earn dollars to promote national economic

development. If we didn't work hard, they said, it harmed us and the country. When I heard of their salary demand, I began to doubt their arguments to us not to organise unions.

Full of questions, I visited an urban industrial missionary organisation which I had been told had called us Control Data workers stupid. I wanted to know why. On my first visit, I heard that our right to organise a union is guaranteed in the constitution. I felt this was like a biblical truth, it gave me strength and cleared my mind.

We organised a union according to their advice. I became the union's second president. In my union work, I emphasised the need to drop individualistic attitudes and become a community. Many colleagues disliked being called factory workers and tried to hide what they were from boyfriends and other friends. They overspent on clothes, and meeting in luxurious hotels. But I learned from the Christian Academy that poor people could not be blamed for their poverty which had a structural cause.

To improve the education of union members, I invited young progressive scholars as lecturers. We analysed management data which showed how much annual profit the corporation earned, graphs of the firm's productivity, profit and our productivity. We quickly saw how we were deceived by our managers and the company.

Gradually, our members became confident of themselves as factory workers. Cultural activities also contributed. I taught them the mask dance (a Korean traditional dance), which made a break from their stationary work positions. At the festival to celebrate the union's birthday, we presented an outdoor play (the Korean traditional drama form enjoyed by the poor) representing the scene of compromise between labourers and owner. With that play, everybody could know that they were cheated. Their anger and self confidence drove them to enter the workplace to tread jishin (a traditional farmer's ritual to dispel a wicked god). At that moment I felt reborn through the union: we felt we had become an intimate family.

But oppression now came from an unexpected source. President Chun Doo-Hwan's new programme was to weaken the trade unions. I lost my presidency of the union in 1980, and finally six union officials were dismissed for organising pay rise demonstrations. At the news of our dismissal, our members began demonstrating to demand our reappointment. For over five months, our struggle continued in spite of the threatening vigilance of our government. Sometimes men attacked and beat us. One pregnant member miscarried after being beaten. We demonstrated at our workplace, in Myungdong Cathedral, and in front of the US embassy. Our struggle ended in a lockout by Control Data in South Korea. Since then, my name has been on a black list.



A call-girl named 'Goldfish'

Kim, 27, left high school to help support her family after her father's death. As the main breadwinner, factory work did not pay enough. Now she is a bar girl, and 'local wife' to a Japanese businessman.

I WAS BORN IN CHUN-JU, the eldest of four children. My father died when I was a high school student. His death changed my life completely. My mother tried to make a living with the little money that was left. But business did not go well, and soon we were left with nothing but debts. My mother became sick and bed-ridden.

The only thing for me to do was to drop out of school and get a job to feed my family and pay for the education of my younger siblings. I got a job in a factory (1982), with monthly pay of only US\$100 in 1982. It was too little to feed my fam-

ily, so I found a better paid job in a coffee shop. I not only served coffee but also delivered it outside the shop. The pay was good and easy, but men treated us as gisaeng (Korean geisha).

In those years coffee shops developed into prostitution agencies where young girls like me were called from inns to deliver drinks and were supposed to serve the body as well. I didn't know that until I was called to a motel. I was so shocked by the attack of my customer as soon as I walked into his room that I ran out as fast as I could.

I looked for another job, and found an advertisement for a Japanese tourist guide, with almost US\$1,000 and lodging guaranteed. The advertised place turned out to be a little house in a very touristy area in Seoul. The couple awaiting me were very kind and gave me US\$300 on the spot, saying I should buy something pretty to wear. This 'firm' was a professional call-girl agency connected with big hotels and gisaeng houses. They took phone calls from all over Seoul and sent girls out. The men were divided into morning, evening and night customers. In high season, I had to serve 15 to 20 clients a day. For 'short-time' service, we are usually paid US\$10, half of which we give to the firm. The tip, usually US\$7, we keep. A whole night service would cost US\$30 with US\$12 tip.

We had to learn how to please men. In talking with colleagues I learned several basics about earning money from men. First, we had to remember there is no difference among men regardless of education or wealth. A customer is not only our 'king' but also our 'bread'. Second, it always pays to satisfy a man's pride and vanity. Third, rely on your female instinct. Fourth, use flatteries such as 'I fell in love with you from the first moment'.

In the mid-1980s, our firm became an agency exclusively for Japanese tourists. A Japanese language instructor was hired to teach us basic conversation in three months. We had to pay half the fees. At that time, the 'sex-market' was booming and we could get extra money if we

wanted. But living expenses also went up. We had to spend a lot on clothing, make-up and medical care. Venereal disease was always a risk: if we caught it, we could not work for a long time. I also had a sick mother at home to be cared for.

Our profession holds great risks. Once a group of Japanese tourists invited one of my friends to a drinking session. They played a game where the person who got caught was supposed to take an item of clothing off, or instead, drink a full glass of whisky. My friend got caught a lot of times, she chose to drink and drink instead of taking off her clothes. At the age of 19, she was not used to drinking, and that night she died of a heart attack. This stirred up the media and feminist groups demonstrated against sex tourism. My friend's death was a big shock to me. But I could not stop what I had been doing: I had to feed myself and my family.

At that time a 70-year-old Japanese man asked me to become his fulltime mistress, a 'local wife'. I willingly accepted. I could do as my colleagues did, work as a call-girl during his absence, 20 days a month. He visited me twice a month and rented a one-room apartment for us. He paid me US\$400 as a 'rent-love' every visit. Though US\$1,000 was far more than a factory girl's wages, I always felt short of money to support myself and my family. My body was worn out and I had to take medicine all the time. Still I had no alternative but to live as the 'local wife' of an old Japanese man, and a 'call-girl' called Gold-fish.



Finding equality

Middle class mother Kim, 49, felt the full impact of global economies when her comfortable life turned upside down. Through all the hardship, she has learned to be strong and independent - in spite of her traditional upbringing.

I AM A 49-YEAR-OLD HOUSEWIFE, who started working as a part-time counselor at the Women's Hot Line in Seoul three years ago. It took many struggles with myself and breakdowns before I joined the Women's Hot Line.

Born in a big family of seven children and raised in the time of the Korean War, my memories of childhood are full of the cold, starvation, poverty and terror of that time. My parents had to feed two sons and five daughters, so there was little left for our education. My father was strict, a Confucian conservative who believed in discrimination between man and woman.

My mother was more liberal, but could not stand up to my father's authority. I remember her nature rebelled against that oppression, expressing itself sometimes in hysterics and chronic heart disease. She had only graduated from elementary school, and always wanted us to have a good education.

A good education for us was guaranteed until my father lost his business and we were ruined. My mother worked as a street and market vendor to bring the family through. Her body ached, but her mental health improved and the hysterics and heart disease disappeared completely. In spite of my father's assaults and abusive manners, my mother managed to provide us with a high school education.

I don't think I am really intelligent, but I try hard, so I got through the first two years of college with jobs and scholarships. But then I had to drop out as I was expected to work to support my two older brothers in college. I was embarrassed rather than angry to have been born a woman. With the help of a relative I got a job at a commercial bank where I met my husband two years later. It was love at first sight, but I was also impressed by his academic education and fine family background - so different from ours where my mother was the breadwinner. He was also the first man to treat me like a human being.

His parents were against our marriage, and it was no wonder, with me being from such a different family with no money and education. But my pregnancy with our first child forced us to get married as quick as possible. It was not until I gave birth to a son that my parents-in-law acknowledged me as the wife of their son, since sons were rare in that family.

The following three or four years were the happiest of my life. My husband got a good job at a big construction company and our second child, a daughter, was born. But our peaceful family life ended when he was sent to Saudi Arabia to supervise road construction for five years. At that time there were many grass widows like me, whose husbands were sent away to earn foreign currency and make the Korean economy stronger. In the early 1980s we were called the 'Saudi widows', notorious for adultery. I was tempted several times, when I went with friends to bars and discotheques, where grass widows were picked up, mostly by younger men, and could forget their loneliness and frustrations for one night. My way of overcoming my problems was through the joy of seeing the double salary saving up at the bank and the anticipation of a happy, prosperous life when my husband came back.

But everything turned out different. My husband returned only to be busier than ever before. Our children hardly saw him, neither did we have any sexual contact. Work seemed to have made him impotent. In the end, he quit his stressful job for health reasons. For six months he rested and looked for another job. That's when he started to become interested in speculation in real estate. He got lucky. We became rich overnight. Within three years we were the owners of six apartment buildings. I had my own chauffeur and housemaids. My days were filled, like other wealthy women in Korea, going to aerobics class, sauna, swimming and learning English, decorating the house.

This was not only because I had money but also to keep me busy. The richer my husband got the less we saw him at home. With his flourishing business he spent more nights out than in. Before long I found out about his secret apartment where he was living with his secretary, cheating even on her with a bar waitress. I was outraged, felt betrayed and victimised. I could not understand what went wrong. I begged and threatened, but he said he could do nothing about it. He asked me to be patient for the sake of the business and the economy of the country. Younger women would give him energy and strength, he said, and were useful for entertaining clients. He couldn't be talked out of it. I didn't know what to do. I tried to console myself going to karaoke bars with friends and to church, but nothing could fill the emptiness inside me.

But then one mischief after another happened so quickly that I did not have the time to be jealous and unhappy. In 1989 his business started to collapse. So did his health: he developed stomach cancer. Within a short time we lost everything, the apartments, our cars, even our big house was confiscated by the bank and creditors. We moved to a small one-room apartment in a dark basement, and here he begged on his knees for my forgiveness. But now my biggest concern was not his infidelity but how to feed the children and nurse my sick husband.

With my limited education and at my age, it was impossible to get a 'normal' job. I took all the low-paid jobs I could get. I ended up being a housemaid, cooking and washing in other people's homes. Working 10 hours a day, I made around US\$750 a month, barely enough to feed my family, let alone pay my husband's medical bills or the children's school fees.

I felt the poverty of my childhood had come back to haunt me. But at the same time I was proud that I could face up to adversity. It was during those times that I got in touch with Women's Hot Line. I first heard about women's liberation when I worked in a woman professor's house where a group of women's movement members used to meet. While I worked, I listened and thought over my life in retrospect.

I know I am an extremely lucky. Those hard days came to an end when my husband's health got so much better he could find a job and go to work again. But I had learned how to be independent. Life went back to normal, but I did not want to go back to being the devoted wife. I know now that happiness does not come with a husband's pay-cheque, and there is a social life after family life. That's why I work as volunteer counsellor at the Women's Hot Line. And I learned that only when you know how to be independent can you be equal to your partner.

Social Statistics

Poverty

- % of population in absolute poverty 1980-90 average 5
- % of rural population in absolute poverty 1980-90 average ^A 4
- Number of people in absolute poverty, total (millions) 2.1
- Number of people in absolute poverty, rural (millions) ^H 0.5
- Income ratio of richest 20% to poorest 20% (1970s) ^A 7.5:1

Health

- Mortality rate: 6 per thousand (1991) ^A
- Life expectancy

Average 1992 ^H	70.4
1991 ^A	
Men	67
Women	73
- Infant & Child Mortality

Infant mortality (per thousand births) 1992 ^H	21
Under-5 mortality (per thousand live births) 1992 Average (MRE) ^S	21
Under-5 mortality (per thousand live births) 1992	
Female ^{W94}	13
Male ^{W94}	18
- Most common causes of death, 1989 ^B
 1. Cancer
 2. Cerebrovascular disease
 3. Hypertensive disease
 4. Chronic liver disease & cirrhosis
 5. Motor vehicle accidents

Education

- Literacy rates, 1992 ^H

Adult literacy	96.8
Women	95
Men	99
15-19 age group (1990)	100
- Educational Enrolment ratios (%), 1987-91 estimates ^A

Primary (gross)	
Male:	105
Female:	109
Secondary	
Male:	90
Female:	91
- Female enrolment rate in tertiary education, 1990: 24.9% ^H

- *Women in education:* ^a

	% of female teachers	% of female students
Primary (1992)	53	48
Secondary (1992)	36	48
Tertiary (1991)		
all	20	22
universities	33	29

- *Mean years of schooling, among people aged 25+:* ^a

Average	9.3
Women	71.0
Men	11.6

- *% of population aged over 20 who have completed secondary education:* ^{ADB}

Female	Male	F/M ratio
25.8	35.2	0.73

- *% of university graduates among population aged over 25* ^{ADB}

Female	Male	F/M ratio
3.9	12.2	0.32

Housing supply ratio (no. of dwellings as % of no. of households) ^z

1970	1987	1992
78.2	69.2	76

- *Average household size:* 4.5 ^x

- *% households headed by women: (1980)* ^{ADB}

Urban	15.5
Rural	13.4
Total	14.6

- *% households potentially headed by women: (latest estimate)* ^{ADB}

Urban	16.5
Rural	21.3
Total	18.3

Rural-urban migration

- *1965-75 female-male ratio:* 108:100 ^k

- *Estimated rural-urban migration, in thousands* ^{AB}

	Male	Female	Total	Female %
1975-85	2,758	2,857	5,615	51
1970-80	2,373	2,507	4,880	51

- 1960s: women were 50% of rural-urban migrants.

Migration abroad

- *Long-term emigration 1988:* 224,227 emigrants ^{AC}
- *Overseas workers despatched:*
Yearbook of Labour Statistics, 1990 & 1985, Ministry of Labour, Republic of Korea.

1980:	146,436
1989:	63,647

Reproduction

- Mean age of childbearing (latest available): 26.2 ^{ADB}
- Fertility rate (births per woman) (1991): 1.8 ^A
- Contraceptive use (% of women aged 15-49) MRE: 77 ^A

Politics

The Government

The executive authority is the President, elected for a single term of five years. The President appoints the Prime Minister and a State Council - the equivalent of a Cabinet - whose members may or may not be members of the National Assembly. The post of Prime Minister exists but has little prestige; the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of economic strategy is often more important.

Up to now, provincial governors, mayors of cities, heads of counties and municipal wards have been nominated by the national government, but will be directly elected from this year.

Parliament

The legislative body is a single-chamber National Assembly. Of its 299 members, 224 are directly elected, 38 are nominated by the party with most votes in the election, and 37 are nominated by smaller parties, in proportion to their share of the vote.

Political Forces

The military were the dominant political force in South Korea for the 40 years up to 1988, and they are still the most powerful political force, despite the existence of a civilian government. On assuming office, President Kim Young-Sam sacked several senior military officers, to demonstrate reinforcement of civilian control. However, the administration is controlled by authoritarian right-wing members of the military and security agencies.

The main political parties are the ruling Democratic Liberal Party (DLP), the Democratic Party, and the United People's Party.

The DLP emerged in 1990 as a fusion of Roh Tae-Woo's Democratic Justice Party with two out of three parliamentary opposition parties. Modelled on Japan's Liberal Democratic Party, it appeared to be a coalition of conservative factions held together by a desire to maintain themselves in power. However, its current leader, President Kim Young-Sam, shows signs of wanting to impose the supremacy of his own faction and make the party more monolithic. He is using an anti-corruption drive to subdue factions representing the military-bureaucratic-business establishment.

The Democratic Party, the successor to Kim Dae-Jung's Party for Peace and Democracy, is the leading opposition party. It is as committed to capitalism as the DLP, though somewhat more radical on social issues. It appears to have been in disarray since Kim Dae-Jung's resignation after the 1992 presidential election.

The United People's Party first appeared in the 1992 elections, when it was called the National Unification Party. It is led by Chun Ju-Yung, founder and manager of the Hyundai motor company. After a brief election campaign based on promises of clean administration

and a new economic miracle, it won 17% of the vote and 32 seats. However, it has suffered from splits and its influence is declining.

The strong popular protest movement which succeeded in ousting Chun Doo-Hwan in 1987 has lost momentum. This is partly due to the growth of a middle class with a stake in the system. The most vocal groups are the independent trade unions and the student movement. Although the frequency and size of strikes has declined in recent years, Korea's independent labour movement remains relatively powerful. However, it has never managed to maintain unity long enough to pose a serious threat to government or to business interests.

An organised environmental movement, composed mainly of non-government organisations, has emerged in response to the catastrophic pollution levels caused by rapid industrialisation.

Since the 1950s, the christian churches have had a disproportionate influence in Korea in relation to the size of their membership, which is, however, growing. During the worst years of political repression, in the 1960s and 1970s, they provided protection for labour organising that eventually resulted in a militant independent trade union movement. But with the growth of a more open political system the churches' influence is waning. There has also been an increase in more conservative fundamentalist christianity.

Sources: Third World Guide, 1993/94. Economist Intelligence Unit Country Profile 1994-95. CIIR.

Women in politics

- % of parliamentary seats held by women (excluding vacant seats) *

1975	5.5
1987	2.5
- Women have had the vote since 1948. *

History (668-1980)

668 AD Political unification of Korean peninsula under Silla tribe. Korea faced repeated invasions by the Mongols, the Manchus and the Japanese.

1392-1920 Rule of the Yi dynasty. For more than two centuries, Korea formally paid tribute to the Manchu rulers of China, but the country remained independent in practice.

19th century

Korea's rulers resisted foreign influences and the country was known to outsiders as the 'hermit kingdom'. But the dynasty had become enfeebled by factionalism, unrest and its own incapacity for change. By the end of the century, China, Russia and Japan were squabbling for control.

1905 Japanese occupation

1910 Korea formally annexed by Japan. Under Japanese rule, Korea became a source of food supplies and cheap labour. Japanese landlords and factory owners settled in Korea, imposing harsh tenancy terms in the countryside and exploitative conditions in new industries.

1930s Japan developed mining and manufacturing in northern Korea to support its expansion into China. Japanese efforts to suppress Korean cultural identity became particularly severe after 1935, with attempts to enforce Shinto religion and Japanese names, and even a ban on the use of the Korean language. The harsh-

ness of the Japanese occupation provoked great bitterness, and opposition grew from student protests to a nationwide resistance movement.

- 1945 Soviet and US troops arrived in Korea at the end of the Second World War. They found that the local resistance had already defeated the Japanese in many places, and had begun land reform in liberated zones in the countryside. The US moved quickly to disarm and disband such groups. Koreans had hoped for a unified, independent state after liberation from the Japanese. Instead they soon found themselves the subjects of a struggle between the US and the USSR. The Soviet Union and the Western allies divided Korea into occupation zones, with Soviet troops north of the 38th parallel and US troops to the south. Negotiations to form a national government soon broke down, and the boundary between occupation zones became a border between two Korean states.
- 1948 US installed Rhee Syngman as head of government in South Korea. Proclamation of People's Democratic Republic of Korea in the North, with Kim Il Sung as Premier. Soviet troops withdrew from North Korea in the same year. US troops stayed on, under the banner of the United Nations.
- 1948-60 Rhee Syngman ruled as constitutional dictator, relying heavily on US military, political and economic advisers. Opponents were charged with collaboration with North Korea. US advisers knew Rhee's regime was vicious and corrupt, but continued to support him though they pushed him to carry out a thorough land reform programme for the sake of political stability. (North Korea had carried out a rapid, uncompensated redistribution of land, and the advisers were well aware that the Chinese Communist Party had won widespread support by promising land to the tiller).
- 1950-53 Korean War. North Korean armies pushed into the south, initially forcing the US troops into the southeastern corner of the country. A US counter-attack followed, and North Korea requested Chinese help. The war raged up and down the peninsula. The southern capital, Seoul, changed hands several times, and each army took revenge on suspected sympathisers of the other.
- 1953 The eventual result was an impasse, and in 1953 the US government and the Democratic Republic of Korea signed an armistice. (There has been no peace treaty, and technically the two are still at war.) Seventeen months of fighting had resulted in four million dead, much of the country devastated, and a border more or less where it had been when the war began. The desire for reunification has remained strong. The governments of North and South have both expressed a commitment to this, but immense enmity and distrust remain in official circles, and the plans and processes put forward by each side have been routinely rejected by the other.
- 1960 Rhee forced to resign by popular protest movement. Despite a draconian National Security Law allowing him to jail virtually all his opponents, Rhee had been unable to suppress opposition.
- 1961 Political pluralism ended with a coup by army officers led by General Park. The new regime detained thousands of political activists in the name of a struggle against communism and corruption. Military rivals were forced to retire or charged with 'counter-revolutionary activities'.

- 1963** Park attempted to legitimise his rule by standing for election. Despite efforts to suppress and intimidate opposition, he won by a narrow 1.4% margin and protests ensued. Park declared martial law.
- 1960s** The military dictatorship established strong, centralised economic planning, using trade, domestic prices and access to credit as levers to control the economy. Korean villagers, impoverished by low grain prices, were pushed into cities, where they endured low wages, long working hours and unsafe conditions. Their rights to strike and organise were severely restricted. Under Park and his successors, South Korea developed a powerful manufacturing economy, initially based on exports of light consumer goods, but eventually dominated by large Korean-owned TNCs producing steel, ships, cars and electronics.
- 1979** Park assassinated by the director of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency, for reasons which have never become clear. The return to party politics lasted less than a year.
- 1980** General Chun Doo-Hwan, head of military intelligence, installed himself as President, and declared martial law on 17 May. The following day, a massive uprising erupted in the city of Kwangju in protest against the arrest of leading opposition figure, Kim Dae-Jung, and other civilian politicians. The army brutally suppressed the uprising, killing hundreds of people. Kim Dae-Jung was sentenced to life imprisonment for 'instigating' the uprising.

Recent History

Despite persecution of suspected 'subversives' Chun was unable to suppress popular opposition to his rule. At the same time, industrial workers were beginning to organise independently of the state-approved Korean Federation of Trade Unions. Street demonstrations against the regime coincided with a wave of strikes and factory occupations as workers demanded higher wages, an end to forced overtime, and the right to form democratic unions. In July 1987, Chun stepped down and designated as his successor a close ally retired general Roh Tae-Woo.

With Seoul due to host the Olympics the following year, South Korea's government was concerned about its international image. Political restrictions were eased in the lead-up to presidential elections in December 1987. However, opposition politicians failed to overcome their factional disputes, and Roh emerged as the winner on a minority of the vote.

Since then, the government has attempted to split and weaken the opposition, while presenting a more democratic image. But arrests, torture and brutal treatment of labour activists and student leaders continues.

Two former opposition parties, the New Democratic Republican Party and Kim Young-Sam's Reunification Justice Party, merged with the ruling Democratic Justice Party to form the Democratic Liberal Party (DLP). Kim Young-Sam became leader of the DLP, which won the 1992 presidential elections. Although it failed to get a majority of seats in the National Assembly elections in the same year, the DLP has since won over many independents, and controls 176 out of 300 seats.

In 1990, a new offensive was launched against the independent trade unions, with police moving to arrest labour leaders and curb strikes. In April thousands of police stormed the Hyundai shipyards and arrested over 600 union activists, ending

a 72-hour occupation. A few days later, 400 strikers were arrested at the Korean Broadcasting Systems HQ.

Sporadic negotiations with North Korea continue, complicated by the continued presence of 45,000 (or 36,000, depends on who you believe) US troops in the South, and hostility between the US and North Korea. In 1989, a few students and priests from the South made independent visits to north Korea to call attention to the issue. They were imprisoned on their return.

There has been some progress however:

- North-South trade, though small by South Korean standards, has continued since 1988
- In September 1991, President Bush ordered the withdrawal of US tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea - the first public acknowledgement that nuclear weapons had been stationed there.
- The Prime Ministers of North and South Korea signed a Reconciliation, Non-aggression, Exchange and Co-operation Agreement

In 1994, a visit to North Korea by former US President Jimmy Carter resulted in an agreement to hold a summit, but the subsequent death of Kim Il Sung put the preparations on hold.

North Korea's government recently agreed to replace its graphite nuclear reactors, which are capable of producing plutonium, with South Korean-built light-water reactors. North Korea accepted the move to light-water reactors, which produce no plutonium, in October 1994, but initially resisted US pressure to install South Korean reactors.

Sources:

Third World Guide

Economist Intelligence Unit Country Profile

Economy

Type of economy:

Industrialised economy built up through state intervention and dominated by large domestic transnationals. Initial emphasis on export-oriented light industry has now shifted to heavy industry. South Korea is still a major exporter, but trade dependency is diminishing.

Korea is the world's sixth largest steel producer, and second largest shipbuilder.

GDP, current market prices: ^A

	1980	1993
billion won	38041	265548
million US\$	62,626.1	328,607.8

- Real GDP per capita, PPP\$: 8320 (1991) ^H

Major industries:

1980: Chemicals, textiles & clothing, food beverages & tobacco, electric machinery & transport, basic metals

1993: Heavy machinery, petrochemicals, electronics, construction. ^Z

Major exports: (in order of value) ^z

1993: Machinery & transport equipment (including ships and motor vehicles), electronics (integrated circuits and consumer electronics), textiles, clothing, iron & steel.

Trade dependency: (exports + imports, as % of GDP)

1980	54 ^H
1991	64 (own calculation)

Foreign debt ^D

	1980	1993
Total foreign debt (US\$M)	9,480	47,203
Debt/GNP ratio, %	48.7	14.4
Debt service ratio (% of exports)	19.7	9.2

Inflation• *Consumer price index:* ^B

(1980=100)	1985	1992
All items	141	213
Food	139	228

Growth rates:• *Annual real GDP growth, %* ^A

1980	1993
-2.2	5.5

• *Average annual GNP growth 1980-91, %* ^H

Total	10
Per capita	8.7

Government spending: ^A

	1980	1993
• <i>Social services/ health/education spending as % of total budget</i>	21	25
• <i>Military spending as % of total budget</i>	31	19

Trade Unions and Labour Legislation

Legally, all unions must belong to the government-controlled Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU), which has a persistent reputation for intervening against workers to end industrial action, sometimes violently.

In January 1990, democratic trade unions formed by workers since 1987 announced the formation of the Korean Alliance of Genuine Trade Unions (Chonnohyop), which claims the affiliation of 600 unions with 190,000 members.

At the end of 1994, independent trade unions agreed to form a Korean Council of Trade Unions (KTUC), to be launched at the end of 1995. At present 1,670,000 Korean workers are unionised, and some 400,000 of them belong to the 100 unions expected to affiliate to the new KTUC.

Trade union activists are frequently victims of national security legislation, and the Korean security services collaborate with employers to keep trade unions under close surveillance.

The government had promised to reinstate 5,200 workers dismissed for trade union activities during the military dictatorship, but has failed to do so. At the end of 1993, it was estimated that 70 trade unionists were in prison, including 21 detained under the government of Kim Young-Sam.

Labour legislation

Independent unions are illegal and strikes are forbidden in sectors considered to be of public interest, including export processing zones. Trade unions are prohibited in public service and state enterprises, in defence and related industries, and in the public and private teaching sector. The Trade Union Act restricts industry-wide union organisations and bargaining.

While South Korea joined the ILO in 1993, it has not ratified the following articles of the International Labour Rights Convention:

- Article 87, governing freedom of association
- Article 98 covering the right to association and collective bargaining
- Article 151 governing the rights of civil servants.

In September 1993 the government announced the formation of a new unit within the Ministry of Labour to 'advise' foreign multinationals on dealing with trade unions. The unit will be empowered to intervene 'selectively' in labour disputes.

Sources:

Third World Guide 1993/94

Economist Intelligence Unit country profile 1994/95

Korea Catholic Labour Apostolate Commission, Labour News, April 1995.

ICFTU

Labour

Economically active population

(excludes resident foreigners and armed forces): L 1994 & 1981

	1980	% 1980	1993	% 1993
Total	14,454,000		19,754,000	
Male	9,020,000	62	11,867,000	60
Female	5,434,000	38	7,887,000	40

- Percentage of economically active women in sectors of economy: ^A

	1970-79	1980-89	1990-91
agriculture	51.9	27.8	18.6
industry	18.1	24.4	29.7
services	30	47.9	51.7

- EAP in manufacturing: ^L 1994 & 1981:

	1980	1993
% of total EAP in manufacturing	20.5	23.2
women as % of manufacturing EAP	39	39

- Unpaid family workers(included in EAP): calculated from ^L 1994 & 1981

	1980	1993
unpaid family workers as % of total EAP	18	10
women as % of unpaid family workers	76	88

- *Administrators and managers, % female:* 3 (1980-89) ^u
- *Economically active population as % of working age population:* ^A

	1970-79	1980-89	1990-91
Women	37.8	41.7	47.4
Men	78.8	67.4	74.7

- *Unemployment: (based on sample surveys) ^L 1994 & 1981*

	1980	1993
Total	749,000	551,000
Male	558,000	373,000
Female	191,000	178,000
Total rate, %	5.2	2.8
Male rate %	6.2	3.1
Female rate %	3.5	2.3

Labour market statistics include as employed anyone who worked for more than one hour in the survey week. There is no incentive to register as unemployed so real shifts between regular full-time employment in the formal economy and marginal part-time employment outside it are hidden. ^Z

Minimum wage: None

- *Earnings per employee average growth rate:* 7.4% (1980-90) ^u
- *Earnings per month, including family allowances & payments in kind (won)*

	1980	1993
Non-agricultural		
All	176,058	975,000
Men	223,825	1,017,000
Women	99,380	633,000
Manufacturing		
All	146,684	885,000
Men	196,231	1,056,000
Women	58,456	551,000

- *Women's earnings, as % of men's, based on ^L:*

	1980	1993
Non-agricultural	44%	62%
Manufacturing	30%	52%

- *Women's earnings, as % of men's 1983-87:* 50% ^K

Working hours:

Standard working week is 48 hours, but up to 60 hours a week is common in manufacturing and export industries. ^E

- Average hours worked in manufacturing probably over 56. ²
- Working hours per week: ^{L 1994 & 1981}

	1980	1993
Non-agricultural		
All workers	52	47.5
Men	50.9	47.7
Women	52.6	47.1
Manufacturing		
All workers	53.1	44.9
Men	52.8	46.2
Women	53.5	42.6

Industrial injuries ^L 1981 & 1994 (compensated)

	1980	1993
Persons injured at work	113,375	32,142
of whom killed	1,273	2,210

Trade union membership (thousands)

	Employees	Union members	% in unions
1979	6479	1088	16.7
1989 (peak)	10331	1932	18.7
1993	11751	1667	14.2

Source: Ministry of Labour, Monthly Labour Statistics, cited in Korean Economic Development: Miracle or Mirage? Kim Dae-Hwan (Solidarity for Participation & Human Rights). 1995. Paper for World Summit for Social Development NGO Forum '95

Strikes and lockouts (industrial disputes leading to work stoppages) ^{L 1981 & 1994}

	1980	1993
Number of disputes	206	144
No. of workers involved	48,970	108,500
No. of work days lost	61,269	1,308,300

India's poor buckle under the burden of 'new economy'

India's structural adjustment deal is having a devastating impact on most of its 870 million inhabitants, particularly the urban and rural poor, with soaring food prices and increasing unemployment. Overseas customers benefit from devaluation and a 'competitive' India, while incomes are cut for local workers and producers. Malavika Karlekar and Priya Viswanath report on efforts to provide 'safety nets', and the increasingly assertive response of Indian women.

IN 1991 the Government of India formally put into operation a set of wide-ranging economic reform policies and programmes, some of which had been proposed in the mid-1980s.

This has constituted a substantial dismantling of India's mixed economy approach, followed by India since independence from British rule in 1947, in which the government sector handled major utilities such as power, steel, mines and heavy industries, and private enterprise controlled food grain production, and the manufacture of consumer goods as well as some capital goods. Five year plans defined priorities and allocations, with an elaborate system of licensing and quality control to regulate the latter. In time, labyrinthine bureaucratic procedures developed, efficiency and productivity were affected, and corruption grew in the increasingly centralised system.

It was clear by the 1970s that new strategies were essential if the low rate of growth and spiralling inflation were to be tackled. In part, this would mean dismantling controls and allowing more freedom to the market. At the international level, a chronic balance of payments deficit prompted borrowing and indebtedness. Pressure for reform and liberalisation mounted from major donors like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Policies initiated three years ago were still in their infancy, so it is too early to assess their long-term impact. But it is possible to examine existing infrastructure and indicators, and how these affect specific categories of people, in particular, women. *Do the new programmes add to women's burdens and deny them access to opportunities? Or does the fault lie in the economic crises to which structural adjustment is a response?*¹ Interviews with poor urban women show that economic crises at the micro level have become a way of life for them, and that their scepticism about reform is abundant.

Government policies affect the lives of individual citizens in many ways. It is within the household, where family strategies are worked out, that the management of human and material resources becomes the arena of what Amartya Sen ² referred to as 'cooperative conflict'. This chapter looks at aspects of the Indian economy on the threshold of the 21st century, how women are affected or ignored by some of these policies, and how they cope and empower themselves within the family household as well as in the context of the larger polity.

India is currently in an economic transition phase. The reforms involve several inter-related measures, including short term stabilisation programmes as well as medium and longer term structural adjustment policies. 'Stabilisation' involves immediate crisis management aimed at reducing fiscal deficits, and curbing demand and inflation. Structural adjustment is a wide ranging strategy which could fundamentally change the entire direction of the country's economic programme. It involves domestic deregulation and removal of controls which affect the prices of essential commodities, cuts in subsidies, closure of inefficient industries, and improvements in the public distribution system (PDS) which supplies essential food grains and kerosene oil. Such changes will affect large sections of the population - not necessarily for the best.

A government policy document recently admitted that India's human development indicators - life expectancy, literacy, school enrolment, and medical care - lag 'far behind those of most East Asian countries' even though people, 'our most valuable resource', should be 'at the centre of our strategy of economic reform' ^{3b}. Education and health care for the privileged have skimmed off a major share of budgetary allocations in these areas, and the GOI document argues that priorities need to be redirected to achieve 'much higher shares of the budgets for education and health on primary education, basic health care and women and child welfare'. At the same time, the proportion of the budget allocated for social services such as education, medical public health and urban development, declined from 16.3 per cent in 1991-92 to 15.9 per cent in 1992-93, even though there was an increase in absolute rupee terms. Similarly, the rural development sector which caters largely to the poor was slashed from 6.7 per cent in 1990-91 to 5.6 per cent in 1992-93. (Ranadive, 1994).

Emphasis on social safety nets is an integral part of economic reform plans, intended to address the needs of vulnerable sectors, likely to be most affected in the period of transition and beyond. In India, the net has three components, a National Renewal Fund to compensate and train displaced workers, a strengthened PDS and its network of ration shops, and increased expenditure on social sectors. The last two most concerned the women we spoke to. Their responses were unequivocal: they were tired of the inadequacy, inefficiency and corruption of a system which is supposed to provide them with subsidised food grains, and they were

disillusioned with social provision such as education, health, housing and urban development services. The absence of institutionalised child care facilities was a major impediment to women's empowerment. Given that women have the primary responsibility of keeping the home going and providing essential care and nutrition to their families, such issues were of paramount importance in their minds. Work, either for a wage or within the home, or in most cases, both, was an accepted fact of life. Most did not expect any positive change in this situation in their lifetime; but there was some hope, a few admitted, for their children.

Little has been done over the last few years to strengthen the PDS despite a commitment to do so in the new policy package, but there is increasing evidence of how it functions. Often, the poor do not have the resources to purchase what is available, shortages are endemic involving frequent trips to the shop. There is overcrowding in some, under-utilisation in others, chronic shortages and 'disappearances' in many. The recently (1992) Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS), launched by the government to reach 1700 identified areas and aiming to provide grain at special rates to remote and backward parts of the country, does not hold out much promise either ⁴.

WOMEN: BEGINNING TO BE HEARD

Women, who carry a major burden in the survival of poor households, are finding ways to respond to constant economic crisis. There are many instances of questioning and resentment among those who have not yet worked out how to help themselves, or lack the family, kin and community support to do so. Two women, Meera and Jahan, took paid employment against the wishes of their husbands who felt their manhood insulted. The tension for Meera was the greater as she had to leave her youngest child in the village with her mother. Kripa, on the other hand, could not part with her little Manju. The infant constantly cried and demanded her harassed mother's attention and time after time Kripa had to give up her job as cook because of her employers' displeasure. Her unemployed husband disliked playing childminder and often hit Manju, and sometime Kripa as well. Manju is only one of the 15 million children in India whose survival is threatened by malnutrition and lack of care.

No practical childcare arrangements are offered by employers, whether government, private industry or institutions like municipalities, educational organisations or hospitals, despite sustained campaigning by women's organisations. nor does childcare feature in the economic reform programme. This neglect affects not only the health and well-being of the child but also puts working mothers under considerable stress. Both informal and official data indicate that women's health does not receive proper attention; not only do women avoid 'reporting sick' because there

is no one else to do the work, but social, psychological and other factors keep them away from doctors and the health system.

Female life expectancy is now only 59.1 years, an improvement over the 1951 figure of 31.7, but still extremely low. There is a dearth of official gender disaggregated data on access and use of health services or types of illness, but there is information on differences in causes of death and death rates. Overall age specific death rates for 1988 indicate higher rates for women up to the age of 35; a major cause relates to pregnancy and childbirth. Early marriage, malnutrition, high fertility and inadequate access to healthcare makes women more susceptible to illness and disease.

The average Indian woman becomes pregnant about six to eight times between the ages of 15 and 45. Thus about 50 to 60 per cent of a woman's reproductive life is spent in pregnancy and lactation. Not unexpectedly, many of her ailments are related to her reproductive history. Yet, facilities are woefully inadequate and do not inspire confidence among women; in most parts of the country primary health centres are supposed to cater to numbers far in excess of what they are equipped for. Again, as the government has admitted 'the lack of buildings, shortage of drugs, equipment etc. constituted major impediments to full utilisation of these units' (Note 2a). Bilaso, for example, who is expecting her third child, will not use the public hospital facilities. She consults the local dai (midwife) and has a check-up by a doctor who lives in the colony. She explained, 'I went to the hospital with another pregnant woman for her delivery and I hated the behaviour of the doctors. The way they talk, the way they handle the newborn baby, it all seems so cruel to me'. She had great faith in the dai.

Lack of faith in the public system is accentuated by shortage of medicines, distance, the need to have someone to go with and overall belief that 'we will not be treated as humans'. While women seem willing to go to the primary health centres (PHCs) and municipal dispensaries for pre-natal check-ups and tetanus inoculations, they draw the line at institutional deliveries. In addition to a fear of unsympathetic staff, many women feel that money which would have to be spent on medicines, injections, or cotton wool could be used for essentials at home. Another important factor is the requirement of an attendant at the hospital or centre: either the husband or someone else has to take time off from work to be on duty. Lack of childcare facilities means arrangements have to be made for other children.

While only one-third of the country's women is literate there is evidence that more children, both girls and boys, are getting to school: parents see education as a way out from a life of toil and labour. Yet not enough thought and planning goes into strengthening and improving education facilities, particularly at primary level. While the survival of poor families is heavily dependent on the labour of children and women, the returns on education, which normally means a few years of school-

ing, are low. Being in school means forgoing opportunities to earn or help in the home.

Even for the girls who make it to school, continued education depends on whether or not they marry after the age of 15, easy and safe access to the institution, single sex schools, women teachers and a curriculum sensitive to their needs. Scholarships, midday meals and free books may provide incentives. Facilities such as physical structures and equipment must inspire confidence. Few schools in India meet these needs.

Trends suggest that social and family perceptions are slowly changing. There is growing recognition that the idea of women as victims should be replaced by the notion of women's empowerment. This dynamic concept envisages the building of a positive self-image, self-confidence, critical awareness, and the ability to work and make decisions in a group. Despite its limitations, the women we spoke to looked to school as a future hope for their children, both boys and girls.

Shanti, Asha and Rani speak at length about the relentless pressure in their lives and the violence, hatred and animosity in their homes. Abuse in many forms is accepted as a part of a woman's lot in life: harassed at work, violated and neglected at home, she carries on nonetheless. While India's new economic policy takes little note of the growing criminalisation of Indian life, evidence suggests that in the period of transition, violence will increase: the hope of new opportunities, opening up of cheap labour markets and the resulting 'feminisation of poverty', unemployment for those in traditional occupations and an overall ambience of rapid change and instability will invariably lead to more unrest both within and outside the home.

In Delhi, both women's organisations and special police cells are overwhelmed by cases of domestic violence - wife battering, molestation and even child rape. Complainants are often women who feel compelled to speak out. 'I could not take his slaps, his kicks and his threats to douse me with kerosene anymore', said Ramvati as she breast-fed her third baby sitting on a crowded bench outside the police cell. She wanted action against her abusive husband who was in and out of a job as a house painter. Nor was Ramvati ashamed or afraid to tell her story; with Kala, her helpful neighbour, at her side, she had come miles in search of help. There are many Ramvatis in India today; but what is interesting is that more and more want their voices to be heard. While some accept, many demand action and change. Others like Shanti, find their own solutions.

Two of the three women in the stories are migrants; the culture of the diaspora, national and international, is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, it is clear that economic compulsions often keep women on the move. The Indian state needs to take note of the migratory nature of the workforce and the socio-psychological implications of migration. With liberalisation and a shrinking job market, it is estimated that around 20-25 million persons were unemployed in 1993-94: women will bear the brunt

of joblessness and consequent marginalisation. The trek of the rural poor to the already clogged urban centres in search of employment is an established survival strategy. In doing so families compromise with traditional or current networks or relationships in a number of ways. The psychological impact of migration, trading the known for the unknown and the consequent displacement, emotional as well as physical, has never really been studied. Yet the impact on individual lives is critical. For instance, in the cities, caste ties are loosened and Shanti could settle for a housemaid's job, something a Koli would not usually do. Role expectations are constantly modified: it is usual for a lower class woman to work for a wage - her husband and other family members expect and frequently squander the extra contribution. But they are not always prepared for the woman's capacity to speak up for her right to a better life or simply the right to rest.

All three women speak of tiredness, exhaustion and endless tension. While they rarely have time to go to the doctor, they are aware that things are not as they should be. As we have seen, the idea of using the public health system does not even arise. At the end of a long day many women face beatings and abuse as frustrated, unemployed or semi-employed husbands wreak an unfair vengeance. The government, in an attempt at transparency, has been surprisingly open with information on violence against women. As expected, each year the incidence of wife abuse spirals upwards. Clearly, too, consumerism and middle class 'values' percolate downwards, encouraging a vicious circle of relative deprivation and consequent violence.

With rapid changes in the market, the emergence of new 'quickie' jobs and the decline of more traditional sectors of employment such as handloom weaving, coir and tobacco, it is likely that women's lives will become even more uncertain. While the rapid circulation of money and improved styles of life for some will ensure jobs for women like Rani and Asha, it is not clear how other categories of poor women will be affected. Nor is it clear that the Indian state is committed to a strong infrastructural network or indeed the social safety net. However, women in different parts of the country are taking matters into their own hands: the traditional structure of women's associations is being used to bring about radical social and legal reform.

The experiences of the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), the Working Women's Federation (WWF) and others in mobilising for gender equity are now part of India's recent history. There are many other experiences of women's empowerment which are little known, and yet, point to the potential for change and action. In a unique move, members of a Mahila Samiti (women's association) at Ranibandh in the Bankura district of West Bengal decided that the time had come for direct intervention against the corrupt ration shop. This group has been empowered through the activities of the Centre for Women's Development Studies in

the region, focusing mainly on discussions and programmes for better employment and survival strategies. One day, after a discussion with the local self-government body (panchayat), a group of these women walked into the local ration office and demanded to run the ration shop. The authorities were at first taken aback, but were soon persuaded that the Mahila Samiti, with its proven track record, could, literally, deliver the goods. Malati, an articulate member of the Samiti, said, 'It was not easy. We decided we would keep the books ourselves, store the grain in one of our homes and decide shop hours to suit our daily routine.'

A once illiterate Bansari Das showed an exercise book in which she kept all the records; a few months ago, she barely knew how to count; now she confidently dealt with sometimes aggressive customers. Threats, snide comments in the marketplace and complaints to the ration office became common. 'But we know that our families and friends in the village can now be sure of getting the right amount at the correct price. The only point at which we need the help of the menfolk is for loading and unloading stock. We then use the official vehicle of the centre.' The women had considerable support from their peers and even the men in the family.

There is still enough flexibility in the Indian economy to allow more socially directed and progressive policies and legislation. For instance, as Maithreyi Krishnaraj argues, ⁵ why not think of legislation as enabling rather than controlling? 'Privatisation need not always be solely investment oriented, it can become producer and user oriented.' Important aspects of this approach to privatisation would be levying a child and healthcare tax on industry, insisting on school for workers children and encouraging a progressive consumer movement.

The Indian economy is unlikely to turn back on its path of liberalisation. It is also true that the state will have to be more committed to an imaginative expansion of the safety net. It remains to be seen then how women like Asha, a lonely and dispirited figure today, can use the education system to develop her children into supports. Or how Shanti's spirit and drive will sustain her in the years to come. Will she develop faith in the public health care system? Or will she continue to go to private doctors like Rani, and balk at ration shop corruption? Or will these state-run institutions become more consumer- and user-friendly, keeping in mind the requirements of the underprivileged?

While it is too early to be categorical about the prospects, the inherent strength of those once considered powerless is now clear. Whether a member of an established organisation, or a newcomer in that domain of male supremacy, the panchayat, or a street vendor fighting for her rights, the Indian woman is staking a claim to be taken seriously by those who, a decade ago, barely cast a glance in her direction.



Shanti

Shanti, 47, is a vegetable vendor and cook. She attended literacy programmes at a local temple, but has no other education.

I HAVE LITTLE OR NO MEMORY of Rajasthan. I was born and brought up in Delhi, where my parents migrated in about 1947 during the partition of the country, when Hindus and Muslims were killing each other. They came here to work in construction (the Kolis traditionally are construction workers). I seldom go back to my village. There is no money for the journey, and anyway I have nobody there. My mother is dead. My father is alive and well at the age of 90, and also lives in Delhi.

I was married to a widower almost 30 years ago. I have a good relationship with my stepdaughter, who visits us. I started working as a cook five years ago to supplement my income, but I have been selling vegetables for almost 20 years. My husband is a loafer and drunkard, which is why I started doing that work: my mother-in-law was a vegetable vendor too. Now, although I go and buy vegetables from the wholesale market and bring them to the city to sell, it is my mother-in-law who handles the money. That is the accepted custom. My earnings from my other job go directly to the bank. My household is run by me and my son jointly.

Earning my Rs 100 (rupees) a day is a struggle. I used to give money to my husband to travel to the wholesale market by bus and bring the vegetables into the city for me to sell. That became impossible when he started using my precious capital for drink. As a woman, I have to face many difficulties in the market place. I had to pay the gate watchman to keep an eye on my purchases as I went inside to fetch more vegetables. In spite of this some items would be stolen. Travelling on crowded buses for almost an hour is a great physical strain on me. My day starts at 5am and by the time I get back to sell vegetables, half the day is gone. Some days I sell nothing. Then we try to get rid of what is left in a pavement sale, in late mornings and evenings, and take home unsold vegetables. This business depends on seasonal factors and prices, so it is not really accurate to say I earn Rs 100 a day. After I got rid of my husband from the business, my older son helped me until he got married. The government is of no help; it neither regulates prices nor provides support for working women like us. I don't know of any bank loan system to help me set up a shop.

In the midst of our never-ending money troubles, my husband's drinking got totally out of hand. He became physically abusive and beat us all up, his mother included. Ten years ago, his perpetual unemployment, irresponsibility and abuse became so intolerable my older son threw him out. Dire necessity made me decide to go against Koli tradition and work in another person's house. In my small two-room tenement I live with 10 other people, or three families: my mother-in-law and her daughter, my

younger brother and his wife, my older son and daughter-in-law, and their respective children. If I did not work in addition to selling vegetables, I could not run the household. I sell vegetables because I enjoy it.

Now I do two jobs as a cook-cum-maid for about 7.5 hours a day. Then I go home, go for rations or marketing, take someone to the doctor. My daughters-in-law do only the family cooking. But I am lucky, my sons and their wives are educated beyond the primary level and both my sons are earning. The younger son is a taxi driver and has a separate household. The elder son earns Rs700 a month as a driver and oddjob man in the residential area where I work. He stays with me and contributes to the household in cash and kind.

I feel strongly about birth control and have only two children. I was shocked at my daughters-in-law who are both pregnant again before the first ones are even a year old. I will take them to the family planning centre soon to have tubectomies done. Small families are better because it is not possible these days to feed and educate more than one or, at most, two children. The nutrition I had as a child and the kind I provided for my children were very different. Similarly, I feel strongly we must give our children a sound education as this will solve at least some of the problems we poor face.

I do not see myself as a 'typical' poor, working class woman. Despite my problems, I involve myself with everything that goes on in the neighbourhood. My special 'project' is Shashi, a 30-year-old woman suffering from cerebral palsy. Shashi spends her mornings with me, helping in the vegetable selling. I am fond of her and concerned about her well-being. As a community person, I have followed the custom of finding Koli brides for my sons. Personally I have a good rapport with my mother-in-law, with whom I have stayed all my married life. I believe I provide strength for many other women like me in the locality.



Asha

Asha, 26, a school ayah/ sweeper and Delhi housemaid, had a primary school education.

MY PARENTS MIGRATED in 1947 at the time of the partition, moving from Lahore to Moradabad and then to Delhi. I was born here and have known no other place. I was married at 16 and sometimes feel I moved from my home pretty early in life. I studied only up to the fifth class. My parents died before I was married. In a sense marriage was a security blanket

that never really let me know what 'working life' was all about. My husband was a car mechanic and made about Rs1500 month. Although we never acquired a roof over our heads or land, we made ends meet. I lived with my mother-in-law at first, but we clashed and the constant quarrels

after my husband's sudden death five years ago made me move to a tenement colony. My husband's death was a great shock, and I am still trying to come to terms with my responsibilities. He sometimes used to drink and fight, but was never physically abusive. His absence has changed my life.

I never thought that I would go out to work, but after his death I had no choice. I had two sons to feed and no savings. I started work as a housemaid, in two houses, earning about Rs400 a month. The working hours are long and I worry about leaving my little sons alone for long periods. Now at least they go to school for most of the day. For the past year I have been employed on a temporary basis at a local private school, initially at Rs900 and now raised to Rs1500. But my pay is cut for any days I take off, and as I am often unwell, I lose about Rs200-300 a month. But the work in the two houses brings me an additional Rs300. I manage somehow to exist. I work about 12 hours every day outside my own home and am half dead at the end of the day.

My children are my life, my reason to exist. They are nine and 10 years old respectively, and attend a government school nearby. They mostly fend for themselves. I leave at 7am, return at 5pm from the school, and then go to clean the two houses, returning home by 7pm or later. I have little or no hope in anything. The government will do nothing: there are free medical dispensaries, but usually no medicines. I can't feed my children vegetables, eggs, or other nutritious food, and yet most of my earnings is spent on food. For lack of money I cannot get my quota in the ration shop, and anyway prices in these shops have been creeping up. What is the government doing for us? The quality of grain in the FPS is horrible; I would rather spend Rs2 more and buy it from the open market.

My major concern now is for a roof over my head. If I can get permanent employment at the school, maybe I could get a housing loan. Right now I'm little better than a pavement dweller, with no electricity, water or gas. The monsoons and winters are so difficult, we are constantly ill. The children are getting spoiled and I worry about leaving them alone with all the violence around. As far as I can see, the education system is deteriorating and I cannot see it doing much good for them.



Rani

Rani, 33, a sweeper and part-time housemaid in Madras, was educated to primary level.

I WAS BORN IN MADRAS and have always lived here, first with my parents and later my husband and parents-in-law. I am a Christian. I studied in mission schools. I started work at 13 in an export garment factory, but quit the job after my marriage two years later. I broke the conventions of my religion and family traditions when I married a Hindu boy, but I

only discovered that he was not Christian, as he claimed, days before the wedding. I had to marry the Hindu way, and our marriage was not even registered as we were both too young - or so we were told.

Within a year I had my first baby. My husband's income kept us until then, but that soon changed. At first he became irregular and a year and another baby later, he stopped going to work. I had two children and a house and husband to look after, so I resumed work. Little did I know then that I would be the sole family breadwinner for the next decade. At first, I worked as cleaner in the beauty salon of a five-star hotel, where the work was relatively easy but the hours very long. There was a lot of sexual harassment, and in the end, when people started hinting that I worked in a massage parlour and was party to other activities in the hotel, I quit my job.

Then I became a sweeper in an apartment block and made a steady income of Rs300-400, also taking on part-time work in the houses to supplement the money. Meanwhile, I had another baby, this time a girl, but she died of an unexplained cold and fever just five days after her birth. I believe she could have been saved but for the callousness of the doctors at the public hospital. A year later, I had another baby and decided this was the last. I started using birth control measures as suggested by the local government-run centre.

Life was by no means easy. I had to cook and take care of my own house, three children, clean the building and work at least three hours in the houses. Some days I worked for 16 hours. But I had no choice. My husband stayed home, playing with the children. When he was fit, he found a job as watchman, worked a couple of days and quit again - but there was no contribution to the house.

The only thing I have been sure of in my life was that I would make any sacrifice to have my children educated. With great difficulty, I put my sons through school, but when the eldest boy was in seventh class, I could not pay his fees and had to take him out of school. He started work in small tea shops, and for two years he has been employed in restaurants. It breaks my heart to see that bright boy of 16 waiting at tables and working 18 to 20 hours a day when he should be at school. As a mother, it also hurts me to see the harassment he faces, the restaurant owners beat and snap at you all the time. But he is far more responsible than his father and makes about Rs700 a month, which is a blessing, and helps put the other two children through school. I could have had free education from the mission schools which have live-in facilities for poor children, but I would be afraid the priests might not accept me because of my marriage to a Hindu.

In all this struggle for survival, my husband, slightly unsound as he is, became a kidney donor for cash. At first, I was out of my mind with worry as I did not know a man could survive with only one kidney. In a panic, I ran between the house-hospital-workplace leaving my children

alone. He got Rs27,000, an unimaginable, extraordinary sum of money as far as we were concerned. In the normal course nobody would give us even Rs500. But what did he do? Rs10,000 he used to pay debts, Rs5,000 he spent on his mother's funeral, and the remaining Rs12,000 he spent on a TV and tape recorder - all of which we have since had to pledge and sell. Then, having lost one kidney, he did not work for months and medicine costs were exorbitant. But today I feel that if my husband had not sold his kidney, I would have sold mine because the money might give me some security.

I cannot give my children a decent, nutritious meal each day despite the fact I earn about Rs800 a month. My children are fed mostly with food I bring back from the places where I do housework. With rising prices I cannot even buy basics. Ration shops are useless; the rations are inferior and most of the time there is a shortage. I do not have a card and have to depend on someone else's rations. I have worked and struggled for more than 20 years now, but do not even have a cot or bedding. I live in a slum, use public bathrooms, carry water for drinking from the outside taps. Until recently I lived in a hut on the banks of the Cooum (slushy river), with insects and worms crawling over my children, who perpetually suffered illness and infection. The annual increment of up to Rs100 from the building where I have worked for the last eight years does not keep pace with rising prices.

The government hospitals are filthy and both doctors and system are so incompetent we can't depend on free healthcare. Ward boys and other paramedics are so corrupt that what we save on free healthcare goes to them in bribes. We are so tired of it we now go only to private practitioners. I do not see any way that my burden can be alleviated or my problems solved. The Jaylalitha government does have special schemes for women, but I never have time to find out. The only help I have sought has been as credit through the saits/multanis (moneylenders). For my wedding dowry, I was given everything: cot, cupboard, steel and copper vessels, five gold sovereigns, two dozen sarees. But my husband and in-laws sold it all. Even now we borrow money to buy things, but within weeks we have to sell, never to pay back loans but to pay rent, or interest, or rations. I know I am exploited by both co-workers and strangers, but where else can I get ready money?

I see myself as sole breadwinner. Life is dismal, but I still dream of a better life for my children. I do not want to marry off my daughter as soon as she comes of age but would like her to be educated and employed. I would like to see my son become a doctor. I certainly do not want to work forever, just until my children can support me. My husband, and his violence, is with me at all times: I wish he could be supportive and help me and my children through these difficult times. But to ask him not to be a nuisance would be enough. We have a long way to go. The road seems endless.

Cutting to starvation point

INDIA'S IMF-WORLD BANK agreements from 1991 offered US\$3.5 billion to 'stabilise' the economy, cut the huge budget deficit, and attract foreign investment. The condition was that India implement a far reaching structural adjustment programme to:

- cut spending on social programmes and infrastructure
- remove state subsidies and price supports, including food and fertiliser (bringing a 50% increase in rice and wheat prices [year??])
- sell profitable public enterprises to business and foreign investors, at favourable prices
- close 'sick' public enterprises ('exit policy')
- devalue currency (making exports cheaper, raising cost of imports)
- liberalise trade, allowing free entry of foreign goods and capital
- reform banks and financial institutions, focusing on subsidised loans in rural areas
- change tax structure, including abolition of wealth tax and reduction in capital gains tax

But increasingly it appears that the IMF 'solutions' are causing India's economic collapse. They have failed to reduce the budget deficit and inflation and a small minority of people benefit from the changes which have concentrated ownership in an elite which identifies its interests with that of foreign capital. In the first three years of the programme, an estimated 4-8 million public and private sector employees (of a total 26 million labour force) would be laid off.

But the impact on urban and rural poor, who constitute of the total population, is most disturbing of all. Scrapping labour laws has produced an increase in sub-contracting, for higher profits, lower-paid casual, unorganised labour. Growing numbers (?) of small to medium scale farmers are going bankrupt; for the 70% of rural households, or 400 million people, as small or marginal farmers and landless farmworkers,

- very low per capita incomes (poorer than most LA countries) and domestic prices moving up, including sharp increase in food prices
- decrease in food consumption; large increase in export of rice
- disturbing trend shows increase in cases of starvation: in one area, an increase in cotton yarn production was passed to the weavers

Social Statistics

Poverty

• % of population in absolute poverty (1980-90 average)	40
• % of rural population in absolute poverty (1980-90 average) ^A	42
• Number of people in absolute poverty (millions) 1992	350
• Number of people in absolute poverty, rural (millions) 1992 ^H	270
• Income ratio of richest 20% to poorest 20% (1985-89 average) ^A	4.7:1
• % income share of poorest 40% (1980-91) ^H	21.3
• % income share of poorest 20% (Mre) 594	9
• Regional disparity in poverty rates, % below poverty level in 1987/88 ^Z	
Orissa	45
Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar	below 35
Haryana, Punjab	about 10

A large middle class has grown up: 41% of households have an income larger than 12,500 rupees a year, sufficient for a lifestyle that includes colour TV, scooters, and other consumer goods. ^Z

Health

- Mortality rate: 10 per thousand (1991) ^A
- Life expectancy:

Average 1992 ^H	59.7
1991	
Men	60
Women	60
- Infant & Child Mortality

Infant mortality (per thousand births 1992 ^H	89
Under-5 mortality (per thousand live births) Average (MRE) ^S	118
Under-5 mortality (per thousand live births) 1992 W94	
Female	108
Male	104
- Regional disparities in infant mortality rates, per thousand live births:

Kerala	17
Uttar Pradesh	93
- Common causes of death (1988): ^B
 1. Ischaemic heart disease
 2. TB
 3. Pneumonia
 4. Cerebrovascular disease
 5. Cancer

Education• *Literacy rates, %, 1992^H*

Adult Literacy	49.8
Women	35
Men	64
15-24, female (1980-89)	40
15-19 age group, (1990)	66

• *Educational enrolment ratios (%) (1987-91 estimates)^A*

Primary (gross)	
Male	112
Female	84
Secondary	
Male	54
Female	32

• *Enrolment of women in higher education, 1991: 9%^Z*• *Women in education:^U*

	% of female teachers	% of female students
Primary (1990)		
excludes primary classes		
attached to secondary schools	29	41
Secondary (1985)		33
Tertiary (1985)	21	30

• *Mean years of schooling, population aged 25+ (1992)^H*

Average	2.4
Women	1.2
Men	3.5

• *Length of schooling for women, as % of that for men: 34% (1992)^H*• *% of people aged over 20 who have completed secondary education (1980)^{ADB}*

Female	Male	F/M Ratio
4.2	13.2	0.32

• *% of people aged over 25 with university degree^{ADB}*

Female	Male	F/M Ratio
0.9	3.2	0.27

• *Regional disparities in education:^Z Adult literacy rate*

Kerala:	96%
Uttar Pradesh:	41%

Housing: No data• *Average household size: 5.5^K*• *Percentage of households headed by women (1970): 9.4^{ADB}*• *Percentage of households potentially headed by women:^{ADB}*

1980	15.1
1970	16.2

Urban-rural migration

- *Estimated rural-urban migration, in thousands, 1971-81, ^{AB}*

Male	Female	Total	Female %
11,789	10,388	22,177	47

- *1960s: estimated 46% of rural-urban migrants were women.*
- *Number of people residing in urban areas who had migrated from a rural area 1981 Census*

	Male	Female	Total	Female %
at any time before 1981	4,514,377	7,806,555	12,320,932	63
within the previous year	654,451	520,121	1,174,572	44

Migration abroad

- *Migration ^{AA}*

	1980	1987
Total migration abroad	236,200	125,400
% female (estimate)	10	10

Reproduction

- *Mean age of childbearing (latest)* 27.4 ^{ADB}
- *Fertility rate (births per woman):* 3.9 (1991) ^A
- *Contraceptive use (% of women aged 15-49):* 45 (MRE) ^A

Political Structures

The Government

Officially India is a constitutional democracy with 26 states and six union territories. The constitution, which came into force in January 1950, defines powers reserved for the central government, those reserved for the states, and 'concurrent' or shared powers. The states have powers to enforce law and order, levy taxes on agricultural income and control the sale of urban land.

Real political power is exercised by the Prime Minister, who commands the support of the Lok Sabha, the lower house of the bicameral parliament. The head of state is the President, elected by both houses of parliament and the state legislatures. The Lok Sabha is elected by universal adult suffrage every five years; members of the upper house the Rajya Sabha (Council of States) are chosen by state legislatures to fill state quotas.

Each state has its own governor and elected state assembly, a Chief Minister and Council of Ministers.

Political Forces

The most powerful political force is the Indian National Congress (Indira) or Congress (I), which has been the ruling party for all but five of the last 50 years. For most of this time, its fortunes were tied to those of the Nehru family. The fact that it has held power for so long gives it considerable advantages. It represents the continuity of a system which allows big business to buy favours from powerful bureaucrats, leaving both parties better off. The system has also provided subsidies for the rural rich, which they repay by using their local patronage powers to deliver votes in elections.

Most other political parties also trace their roots to the Indian National Congress. This includes the Janata Dal (formed from a merger of Janata and the Lok Dal) which held

power for 11 months in 1990 as part of the National Front Coalition. Janata Dal portrays itself as a champion of downtrodden castes.

At present, the largest opposition party is the Baharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Formed in 1979, it traces its origins to the Bharatiya Jan Sangh founded to represent Hindu traditional values in the general election of 1950-51. It gains most of its support from an appeal to Hindu nationalism, but also has some backing from business people. The BJP grew to sudden prominence in 1989, when it won 88 seats in the Lok Sabha. Its main electoral plank was the proposal to build a temple in Ayodhya on the site of the Babri mosque. The demolition of the mosque by BJP supporters in December 1992 has left them without their central campaign issue.

The Communist Party of India (CPI) split from the Indian National Congress during the Second World War, and was itself split by the creation of the CPI (Marxist). Both supported Nehru's emphasis on state-planned industrialisation and self-sufficiency, and both supported the National Front government of 1990. The CPI (Marxist) is the ruling party in the states of West Bengal and Kerala.

There are also several important regional parties, including the All-India Anna Dravida Munetva Kazhag (which has been in and out of power in Jammu and Kashmir), the Asam Gana Parishad in Assam, the Telegu Desam and the Akali Dal.

India has large and varied socio-political movements, including progressive trade unions, women's organisations, radical environmental groups and development NGOs. Political awareness among the population is relatively high, despite low literacy levels. Villagers throughout India discuss politics with enthusiasm, and display a shrewd cynicism about the promises of election candidates.

Sources: Third World Guide 1993/94. Economist Intelligence Unit Country Profile 1994-95.

Women in Politics

- *Proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by women: 7% (1992) ^H*
- *Women have had the vote since 1950. ^K*
- *Percentage of decision-makers in government who are women: (1987) ^K*

Executive offices; economic, political & legal affairs	3.7
Social affairs	5.9
All government offices	4
Ministerial level	0

History (274BC-1992)

274-232 BC Maurya Empire under Ashoka stretched from Afghanistan to Bengal and occupied almost the entire subcontinent. Indian civilisation dates from this period. Ashoka and his successors were the driving force behind cultural unification.

1st-3rd centuries AD Break-up of Ashoka's empire

3rd-6th centuries AD Gupta empire begins new process of unification.

8th century Arab invasions, followed by Turkish, Afghan and Persian incursions. The conquerors brought a system of military feudalism which eventually ousted the corporate trading empires which flourished in the coastal enclaves of the South.

15th-17th century Limited incursions into India by Portuguese and Dutch; European presence limited to coastal trading posts.

1505-1525 Babur, a descendant of Tatar invaders, founded the Moghul Empire. His descendants consolidated Islam, especially in the Northwest and Northeast.

17th-18th centuries British traded with India, buying spices, textiles and tea, and tried to secure land.

1687 British East India Company settled in Bombay

1690 British East India Company established Calcutta as trading centre

1757 British East India Company defeated provincial ruler of Bengal and was granted right to rule Bengal by Moghul emperor in Delhi. For almost 200 years, India was used to supplement Britain's balance of payments. It was a major source of cash remittances and raw materials as well as a captive market for British manufacturers.

1798-1849 Series of military campaigns by British East India Company continued until most of India taken over. Some local rulers, considered 'loyal allies', retained nominal autonomy and were allowed to keep courts, palaces and luxurious lifestyles.

19th century The British dismantled the Indian economy, destroying India's textile industry and reorganising agriculture in favour of export crops. Indian exports of high quality cloth threatened the growth of English weaving; the British levied an 80% tax on Indian textile exports, and a 2% tax on English cloth. The destruction of the cottage-based Indian textile industry created widespread poverty and unemployment.

Britain maintained its domination of India by exploiting divisions among the local people. Mercenaries recruited in one region were sent to subdue the population in others (the British recruited large numbers of Gurkhas and Sikhs). These manipulations generated uprisings throughout the colonial period.

1857 Discontent among Indian soldiers serving under the British grew into a nationwide revolt. Hindus and Muslims joined forces and proposed the restoration of the Moghul Empire.

1858 The rebellion was violently suppressed. British Crown assumed direct government - and exploitation - of India. All British spending, however remotely connected to India, was defined as expenditure of the 'Indian Empire'. Seventy per cent of the Indian Treasury was earmarked for British military expenditure, including campaigns in Afghanistan, Burma and Malaya. India also paid for the entire British consular staff in the Orient, from Persia to China, and the maintenance costs of the British Mediterranean fleet.

Late 19th-early 20th century The Indian intelligentsia, including civil servants, began to challenge British rule. The response was a continuing effort to foment internal divisions: for example, an electoral reform law stating that Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists could each vote only for candidates of their own faith.

1885 Indian National Congress founded to press for concessions from the colonial administration.

- 1906 All-India Muslim League founded.
- 1915 Mohandas K Gandhi, a lawyer educated in England and with experience of colonial methods in South Africa, returned to India. He worked with the radical wing of the Indian National Congress, which turned into a nationalist mass movement transcending religious, ethnic and class lines.
- 1919 British troops fire on demonstrators in Amritsar, leaving at least 380 dead and 1200 wounded. The Indian National Congress, urged on by Gandhi, launched a mass campaign of civilian opposition, including a boycott of colonial institutions (from elections to schools), refusal to consume English products, and non-violent response to ensuing legal sanctions. The movement spread across the country.
- 1930-34 Launch of new campaign for independence and against state salt monopoly, showing Gandhi's ability to combine the key political goal with specific demands affecting the poor. Large numbers of people, including many women, joined demonstrations and packed the jails when they did not resist arrest. The British were forced to negotiate.
- 1947 British forced to grant independence. The subcontinent was partitioned, amid bloodshed. Pakistan formed an Islamic state, while India remained secular. Jawaharlal Nehru, leader of the Indian National Congress, became Prime Minister.
- 1962 War with China over territorial claims. Its army defeated, India moved closer to Soviet Union and started drive to upgrade its military.
- 1964 Death of Nehru. Succeeded by his daughter, Indira Gandhi.
- 1965 War with Pakistan over territorial claims in Kashmir.
- 1971 India sent aid to guerillas in East Pakistan fighting for independence. War between India and Pakistan followed, in which Pakistan was defeated within 11 days. US threats drove India closer to the Soviet Union.
- 1974 India exploded atomic device. Relations with US dominated by the nuclear issue ever since.
- 1975 State of emergency declared in response to popular protests over economic conditions and opposition to mass sterilisation campaigns: civil rights were suspended, the press muzzled and critics of government imprisoned. Sterilisation and slum clearance were forced on the poor. Indira Gandhi became massively unpopular.
- 1977 Congress Party routed in elections by Janata. Prime Minister Morarji Desai's government was unable to fulfil its promises of full employment and economic improvement.
- 1980 Desai forced to resign by defections from Janata. Indira Gandhi returned to power. During her second term, concentration of power increased, and the government was accused of bureaucracy and corruption. In the Punjab, Sikh separatists began harassment of Hindus in a bid to create an absolute Sikh majority and secede from India.
- 1984 In June, army evicted Sikh separatists from Golden Temple in Amritsar. Hun-

dreds were killed, including the prominent Sikh leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. In October, Indira Gandhi was assassinated by two Sikh bodyguards. Thousands of Sikhs fell victim to indiscriminate retaliation by Hindu paramilitary groups.

Recent history

Under Indira Gandhi's son, Rajiv, Congress (I) won an unprecedented majority in the parliamentary elections. Rajiv promised rapid modernisation and started economic liberalisation: lifting restrictions on imports and purchase of foreign technology, and relaxing fiscal controls.

The dangers of modernisation based on foreign investment soon became apparent. In December 1985, a leak of toxic gases in a plant in Bhopal belonging to Union Carbide killed up to 10,000 people, and left over 150,000 with injuries and chronic health problems. The victims are still fighting for compensation.

Famine came in 1987, triggered by intense drought, caused principally by massive deforestation and land clearance for 'green revolution' agriculture.

But there was also opposition to destructive development schemes. Plans, supported by the World Bank, to build a series of huge dams on the Narmada River in northern India, met with determined resistance from tribal peoples whose lands were to be submerged. Opposition to the dams has grown into a massive protest movement.

Mounting government corruption scandals and autocratic behaviour cost Rajiv Gandhi his initial popularity. The elections of 1989 were won by the National Front coalition of Janata and Lok Dal, supported by left parties and the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

In 1990, security forces fired on a procession to Ayodhya led by the BJP, which was campaigning for the destruction of the city's Babri mosque and its replacement with a Hindu temple. The mosque is built on the alleged birthplace of the Hindu god Ram. The BJP withdrew its support from the coalition government, which then fell.

During the election campaign, Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated by a Sri Lankan Tamil group. India had intervened in the Sri Lankan conflict, pressing for cease-fire between the Sinhalese government and Tamil forces, and sending Indian troops to enforce the agreement. The Indian Peace-Keeping Force eventually withdrew in humiliation, and with huge casualties.

Congress (I) won the election, though without an overall majority. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and Finance Minister Manmohan Singh embarked on drastic economic liberalisation. Later, defections from the smaller parties and a section of the Janata Dal gave Rao a secure majority.

In 1992, Hindu devotees demolished the Babri mosque. The government arrested the BJP's senior leadership and dismissed the BJP state governments.

Sources: Third World Guide 93/94, Instituto del Tercer Mundo, Uruguay. Economist Intelligence Unit Country Profile 1994-95.

Economy

Type of economy:

Agriculture is the backbone of the economy, accounting for a third of national income, a fifth of merchandise exports, and the majority of employment. Three-quarters of the population depend on agriculture.

However, India also has high-tech industries and a large pool of highly-trained technical experts. After independence, India's government pursued a policy of self-reliance and created a heavy industrial base, with mining, petrochemicals, oil refining, metals and a supporting infrastructure of railways and power generation. The priority policy has been expansion of this core sector.

The economy has a large public sector, accounting for 70% of formal sector employment. The private sector is subject to a complex array of licence regulations, price regulations and taxes. The state planning apparatus is the Planning Commission, which prepares five-year investment plans which dictate the flow of investment to public sector industry.

In the mid 1990s, India has resorted to emergency borrowing from the IMF to deal with an acute Balance of Payments and inflation crisis. The result was the imposition of a stabilisation and structural adjustment programme (SAP) in mid-1991 which emphasised deregulation of the private sector and liberalisation of trade and investment. Pursued to its fullest extent, these policies could destroy India's heavy industry.

Despite the liberalisation measures of the SAP, India's economy retains a comparatively high degree of state planning and protection.

- *About half the population lives outside the cash economy.*²

GDP, current market prices^A

	1980	1992
billion rupees	1360.1	7055.7
million \$US	172,974.7	272,231.7

- *Real GDP per capita, PPP\$: 1150 (1991)*^H

There is considerable variation between state economies:

- *Selected net state domestic products (at current prices) 1991/92²*

	Total (billion rs)	Per head (rupees)	Per head as % of India (average)
Punjab	196.2	9,643	173
Maharashtra	621.0	8,780	147
Haryana	144.4	8,690	156
Goa	10.3	8,096	130
Gujarat	265.3	6,425	115
Andhra Pradesh	361.0	5,570	100
Karnataka	254.3	5,555	99
West Bengal	358.3	5,383	96
Tamil Nadu	288.7	5,078	91
Kerala	135.4	4,618	83
Rajasthan	195.0	4,361	78
Assam	95.6	4,230	76
Madhya Pradesh	273.6	4,077	73
Orissa	129.1	4,068	73
Jammu & Kashmir	31.7	4,051	73
Uttar Pradesh	563.8	4,012	72
Bihar	254.6	2,904	52

(Source: Central Statistical Organisation, National Accounts Statistics)

Major industries: Textiles, steel, aluminium, cement, petrochemicals, engineering, electronics, telecommunications, vehicles (mainly motorbicycles)²

Major exports:^F Gems & jewellery, textiles, engineering products,
leather goods, chemicals

Trade dependency: (exports + imports as % of GDP)

1980	14 (own calculation)
1991	17 ^H

Foreign debt:^D

	1980	1993
Total foreign debt (US\$M)	20,582	91,781
Debt/GNP ratio, %	11.9	37.3
Debt service ratio/exports %	9.3	28.4

- Debt - domestic:

In 1994 interest payments on domestic debt amounted to 30% of government spending.^Z

Inflation

- Consumer price index: B

(1980=100)	1985	1991	1992
All items	156	268	300
Food	154	272	308

Growth rates:

- Annual real GDP growth, %^A

1980	1993
6.6	3.8

- Average annual GNP growth (1980-91), %^H

Total	5.5
Per capita	3.2

Government spending:

- Military spending as % of combined education & health spending: 65 (1990-91)^H
- Military spending as % of total budget, 1992: 15%^Z

Trade Unions

There are more than ten major trade union federations, all connected in some way with political parties. Most union members are in the organised sector of the economy, which employs about ten per cent of the total working population.

The most important federations are:

- the INDIAN NATIONAL TRADE UNION CONGRESS, with over four million members, which is linked to Congress (I)
- the BHARATIYA MAZDOOR SANGH, linked to the BJP, which has two million members
- the ALL-INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS, with 1.5 million members, linked to the Communist Party of India
- the CENTRE OF INDIAN TRADE UNIONS (CITU) has about one million members, and is linked to the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

In 1993, human rights violations against trade unionists included the murder of 17 members of the CITU federation after a union meeting. Another 35 members were injured. Fifteen people were arrested in connection with the killings.

Labour legislation

There are restrictions on the right to strike, and trade unionists may be arrested for illegal picketing.

Source: ICFTU, Third World Guide 1993/94.

Labour

- Economically active population: L 1984 & 1994*

	1981	%	1991	%
Total	244,609,979		314,131,370	
Male	181,080,208	74	224,263,807	71
Female	63,529,771	26	89,767,563	29

- Number of people in employment for at least six months of the year 1991 census*

	1981	1991
Total	220,698	278,940
Men	175,892	216,018
Women	44,806	62,922
% women	20.3	22.6

Note: The 1991 Census made a particular effort to improve documentation of women's work, so the increase in women's employment may be due to better reporting.

- India has about 20 million working children, according to the government, or over 40 million according to NGOs.²*

- Percentage of economically active women in sectors of the economy^A*

	1970-79	1980-89	1990-91
agriculture	83.1	81.2	78.1
Industry	8.1	9.5	
services	8.8	9.3	

- Distribution of workforce according to category of employment, 1992*

	Rural Male %	Rural Female %	Urban Male %	Urban Female %
Self-employed	60.8	59.1	41.2	42.5
Regular employee	8.3	3.2	39.4	28.8
Casual labour	30.9	37.7	19.7	28.7

Source: The State of India's Economy, 1994-1995, Public Interest Group.

- EAP in manufacturing*

	1981	1991
% of total EAP in manufacturing	10.3	9.1
women as % of manufacturing EAP	15	16

- Women as % of labour force in EPZs and other manufacturing industry, early 1980s. ^{AB}

EPZs	80
Other	10

- Manufacturing employment: formal and informal (in thousands) 1991 Census

	1981	1991
Total no. employed in household industry	7,615	6,743
Total no. employed in other types of manufacturing	17,328	21,649
% of manufacturing employment in household industry	30.5	23.7
Men employed in household industry	5,569	4,523
Men employed in other types of manufacturing	15,715	19,210
Women employed in household industry	2,046	2,220
Women employed in other types of manufacturing	1,613	2,439
Women as % of workers in household industry	26.9	32.9
Women as % of workers in other types of manufacturing	9.3	11.3
% of women in manfg employed in household industry	55.9	47.6

- Unpaid family workers make up 4% of the labour force. 23% of them are women. ^K

- Invisible workers, as % of EAP:

Male:	8.2
Female:	63.7

(refers to people of working age but who work unpaid, unofficially or outside the cash economy, and are not counted in the EAP figures)

- Administrators & managers, % female: 2 (1980-89) ^H

- Economically active population as % of working age population: ^A

	1970-79	1980-89
Women	40.9	21.2
Men	84.4	81.7

- Unemployment (employment office statistics on applications for work): ^L

	1980	1985	1992
Total	15,317,000	24,861,000	36,758,000
Male	13,202,000	20,628,000	29,105,000
Female	2,115,000	4,233,000	7,653,000

The official unemployment statistics cover urban areas only, and give figures for job applicants, some of whom may be currently employed. A more realistic estimate for urban unemployment would be 17 million unemployed, with another six million severely underemployed. ^Z

- Underemployment: Numbers underemployed, 1991 Census

	Total	Male	Female
Total Workers	314,131,370	224,363,807	89,767,563
Main Workers	285,932,493	221,658,584	64,273,909
Marginal Workers	28,198,877	2,705,223	25,493,654

'Main workers' are those who worked for six months of the year or more. 'Marginal workers' are those who worked for less than six months of the year.

- *Employment and underemployment, as percentage of population 1991 Census*

	1981	1991
All workers, as % of population	36.7	37.5
Main workers, as % of pop.	33.48	34.18
Marginal workers, as % of pop.	3.22	3.32
Male workers, as % of all men	52.62	51.61
Male main workers, as % of all men	51.62	51
Male marginal workers, as % of all men	1.00	0.61
Women workers, as % of all women	19.67	22.27
Women main workers, as % of all women	14.07	16.03
Women marginal workers, as % of all women	5.6	6.24

- *Number of labour force organised:* Nearly 5% - but hard to estimate. ⁵
- *Number of registered trade unions and their membership (in thousands) - provisional data.*

	1974	1980	1984
No. of unions submitting returns	9,800	4,432	6,451
% of registered unions submitting returns	34.2	18.9	28.8
Men members	5,715	3,509	4,707
Women members	475	218	443
Total membership	6,190	3,727	5,150
Women as % of total membership	7.7	5.9	8.6

Source: Statistical Profile on Women Labour (third issue). Labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour, Government of India Chandigarh, 1990.

- *Minimum wage:*
Minimum wage rates varies from state to state, and do not apply to small firms. ²
- *Wages of manufacturing and service workers: earnings per month, rupees:*
1989: 886.1 ^{L94}
1980: 532.7

- *Earnings per employee annual growth rate:* 3.4% (1980-90) ¹¹

- *Hours of work per week*
1991 (employees) 46.5 ^{L94}

- *Weekly hours of work in factories:*

	1980	1980	1985	1985
number working	Men	Women	Men	Women
Up to 42 hours	59,953	8,063	456,199	43,133
42-45 hours	380,268	16,238	365,881	19,280
45-48 hours	4,088,184	458,045	3,728,391	403,754
48+ hours	117,758	9,642	87,702	8,854
Total	4,645,663	491,988	4,638,173	475,021

(Annual Returns under Factories Act) Source: Statistical Profile on Women Labour (third issue). Labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour, Government of India Chandigarh, 1990.

- Weekly hours of work in factories: % of workers with various working weeks (based on table above)

	1980 Men	1980 Women	1985 Men	1985 Women
Up to 42 hours	1.29	1.63	9.84	9.08
42-45 hours	8.19	3.30	7.89	4.06
45-48 hours	88.00	93.10	80.38	85.00
48+ hours	2.53	1.96	1.89	1.70

- Industrial injuries reported, ^L 1994 & 1984

	1980	1990
No. of persons injured at work	312,560	103,793
of which killed	642	885

- Number of labour force organised: Nearly 5% - but hard to estimate. ^E
- Number of registered trade unions and their membership (in thousands) - provisional data.

	1974	1980	1984
No. of unions submitting returns	9,800	4,432	6,451
% of registered unions submitting returns	34.2	18.9	28.8
Men members	5,715	3,509	4,707
Women members	475	218	443
Total membership	6,190	3,727	5,150
Women as % of total membership	7.7	5.9	8.6

Source: Statistical Profile on Women Labour (third issue). Labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour, Government of India Chandigarh, 1990.

- Strikes & lockouts (industrial disputes leading to stoppage of work): ^L 1994 & 1981

	1980	(provisional) 1993
Number of disputes	2,797	1,050
No. of workers involved	1,673,800	706,700
No. of work days lost	20,804,000	15,457,300

Demography

- Land area: 3,287,263 sq. km ^E
- Population: 880.1 million ^H
- Women make up 48% of the population ^H
- Age of population, 1991 estimate: ^B

	All (% of total population)	Male (% of age group)	Female (% of age group)
0-4	13	52	48
0-14	36	52	48
15-64	60	52	48
65+	4	50	50

- 47% of the population is below the age of 20.
- Urban population: 217.178 million, or 26% 1991 census ^B
of which women: 47%
- Most urbanised state is Maharashtra, with 55% of people living in towns or cities. ^Z

- *Rural population:* 627.146 million, or 74% 1991 census: ^B
of which women: 48%
- *Annual population growth rate:* 2.03% (1991) ^A
- *Annual urban population growth rate:* 2.95% (1985-90) ^A
- *Religions:* Hindu (83%) Muslim (11%) Christian (2%) Sikh (2%) Buddhist (1%) Jain (1%) ^Z

Ethnic composition:

- India has an enormous diversity of ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups. Most are descendants of the Arian peoples who developed the Vedic civilisation. Peoples of Dravidian origin predominate in southern India. ^{TWG}
- Some 1,652 languages and dialects are spoken, of which 15 are recognised as regional languages. The official language is Hindi. ^E
- Refugee population (1992): 260,000 ^H

**From war
and isolation
to a new
world
economy:
is poverty
the spectre
at the feast?**

Coming out of a war, a 20-year trade embargo, and its own internal attempt at renovating its society, Vietnam has set about liberalising its economy. State-owned enterprise is being privatised, the informal sector encouraged and strengthened, the economy opened to foreign investment and trade. The new Vietnam contains conflicting values of past and present: remnants of the Confucian tradition, post-1945 socialist/egalitarian values, and today's free market entrepreneurial thrust. For women, who gained legal equality in the revolutionary phase, Vietnam's economic renovation poses new problems. Dr Le Thi Quy comments on current trends and prospects for women.

V IETNAM HAS ONE of the highest economic growth rates of any country in the world, but it is still unable to lift itself from the ranks of the world's poorest nations. The process of 'economic renovation' which started at the peak of the country's socio-economic crisis involves a fundamental switch from centrally planned economy to market economy. The main principles of Vietnam's renovation are to diversify economic sectors, develop the local private sector and apply an open-door policy to foreign countries.

A diversified, multi-sectoral economy has now been formed. On the one hand, the government-run economic sector is being narrowed as the economy is decentralised. On the other hand, the private sector is being encouraged to develop and broaden. Development of a market economy also requires renovation of the economic managing mechanism. Instead of imposing compulsory economic plans, the state now works out indicative plans, based on the market economy operation and use of economic leverage.

In the countryside, where 80 per cent of the population lives, production management has also seen fundamental change. The development of a household-based economy has replaced the cooperative-based agricultural economy. This household economy has an important role in pro-

ducing food for home consumption and export, and the change constitutes a major turning point for agriculture in Vietnam. From a country which used to suffer chronic food shortages and still imported 450,000 tonnes of rice in 1988, Vietnam has, since 1993, produced around 25 million tonnes of food a year. Thus, it not only meets domestic demand but also produces a reserve. Now Vietnam could export between 1.5 million and 2 million tonnes of rice a year, becoming the third biggest rice exporter in the world. Industrial crops, too, are increasing both in acreage and output, and animal husbandry, particularly on a household basis, has developed vigorously.

After initial difficulties of transition to market economy, industrial production has gradually been geared to the new mechanism. Recent industrial output has chalked up an annual increase of 13 per cent, and the value of some export lines has also increased substantially.

Vietnam's policy of openness has also lifted it from economic isolation to join the world economy. Broadening economic relations with foreign countries and international economic and financial organisations, especially after the lifting of the trade embargo, has enabled Vietnam to obtain direct development assistance from abroad. At present, the country's annual economic growth rate stands at 7 per cent and more. Per capita output of food is 348.9 kg; electricity 141 kw/hr; steel 2.5 kg; and coal 69 kg. Inflation was reduced from 67 per cent in 1991 to 17.5 per cent in 1992 and to 5.2 per cent in 1993.

While economic renovation has brought some initial achievements, it has also produced some worrying trends. Vietnam is still an underdeveloped country, with backward industry, a poor material and technical base and high rate of population growth. Per capita income is low (annual GDP of US\$249 a head). Unemployment runs at about 3.7 to 4 million, with an additional 6 million people underemployed. Income gaps are widening, bringing severe polarisation between rich and poor. In some places, the income of rich families is 100 to 300 times higher than that of poor families. Inflation and instability have not been wiped out yet. Social problems such as crime, prostitution, drug abuse, violence against women, are on the increase.

The now-established market economy influences all development strategies and programmes directly affecting people's lives, especially women. It changes not only social structures and institutions, but also the value systems and standards. Today, women have more opportunities to get out of social fetters and actively take part in working and creative activities.

Women in the new economy

Women are present in all national economic sectors, accounting for more than 60 per cent of the labour force directly engaged in producing food, consumer goods, goods for export, goods circulation, healthcare, educa-

tion and other services. Many women have also been well established in political, economic and social affairs, cultural and scientific researches, and technological and other fields. Educated women engage in most professional fields and account for a considerable percentage of the staff - 46 per cent in education and training, 32 per cent in scientific research, 14 per cent in industrial production and trading, and 8 per cent in civil service.

In manufacturing and business, a significant number of female directors and director-generals head profitable state-run and private companies and enterprises. Some of these successful women built their businesses from next to nothing; one started from recycling waste.

The market economy offers some opportunity to lower class women. Formerly, both men and women worked moderately for an average salary, or paddy. The get-rich motivation encouraged by society has provided a new spur. Households are pushed to make investments and work harder for higher reward. In the market economy ferment, the self-assertive, active and creative individuals tend to rise.

However, there has also been a change in labour distribution in some areas. Women now undertake most of the hard and heavy farming work while husbands and sons go to urban centres to find work. Their incomes substantially supplement that from their small pieces of land.

Women factory workers have also been affected. As many unprofitable factories and enterprises dissolved and production elsewhere was reorganised, many female workers were replaced by educated, qualified, young workers who could operate modern machinery. These young workers receive better pay than those older workers still employed. The displaced women have mostly joined the informal sector in cities and town, in small food-vending ventures, services such as typing or baby sitting, and setting up private production groups for consumer goods.

Active participation in economic production and management of families makes women less dependent on men, and raises their social status. However, the cost of this independence is high and intense. Women have to put more time and energy in the fields, factories, and laboratories. In rural areas, women work from dawn to late at night, doing heavy work such as ploughing, loading, drawing carts, and even blacksmith work. In urban areas, female small traders leave home at 5am and return at 11pm.

There is still much confusion over the new managing mechanism, such as the relationship between economic growth and the arising social issues. Here three sets of conflicting values remain: the development of the free market, entrepreneurial economy, the still influential tradition of Confucianism which respects the stability of the social order but places women in a particular and subordinate position, and the socialist egalitarian ethos of the revolutionary phase and the dismantling of its structure. These have particular implications for the status and role of women. In recent years, however, the Vietnamese government made great efforts

to solve major social affairs, taking reasonable solutions to ensure a balance between national modernisation and the preservation of traditional values. Economic renovation offers new prospects for making and implementing social policies, including ones related to women. Issues related to women, gender and family have been studied and are being studied in theory as well as practice. A range of projects in support of women, particularly poor women, underprivileged women, widows, prostitutes, are beginning to produce results.

Today, the Vietnamese understand there is no real women's emancipation without a corresponding system of values and standards, pervading the activities of the state, governmental and non-governmental organisations and individuals. Women themselves need to be trained and educated for their own advancement.

Women in Vietnam - past gains, present prospects

There are many similarities between Vietnamese and world women in gender, concerns and responsibilities for the family and society. However, in the struggle to emancipate themselves for a better and happier life, Vietnamese women have met with particular difficulties, advantages, failures and success.

In feudal time, Vietnamese women lived in a self-sufficient agricultural economy, circumscribed by Confucian moral standards. The woman had no physical and moral conditions to liberate herself. She was totally dependent on her father, husband, brothers and sons. From birth, she was educated according to the immutable three obediences (obedience to father before marriage, to husband after marriage, and to son in widowhood), and four virtues (industriousness, beauty, good speech and good character). She was required to be good in household chores, and to work hard and be devoted to her husband, children and husband's family. A strict network in the family and society monitored the behaviour of the woman, who could be punished pitilessly if she breached the rules. It is safe to say that Vietnamese feudal society was a history of brutal torture against women. With few exceptions, women played a very slight role compared with men, and very few women were well educated.

The second stage marking a change in women's lives was from the August 1945 revolution to the period prior to national renovation process. For the first time in Vietnamese history, the national liberation revolution included women's emancipation in its goals. The 1000-year-old socio-economic foundation of Confucian feudalism was eliminated. The new society acknowledged the role and status of women and declared equality between men and women. The rights of women in their families and society were confirmed by law, particularly the Vietnamese Constitution (1945) and the Law on Marriage and Family (1959). Women had the freedom to participate in economic, social, political and cultural activities. They were as entitled to education as men. Their status in the

family was changed - they were entitled to do paid work, to have their own income, and decide their own marriage. They could speak out even when their opinions contradicted those of husband or father. They were no longer totally dependent on men.

The August 1945 revolution was a turning point not only in national history but also in the women's movement in Vietnam. In spite of a less developed economy, prolonged wars and people's low living standards, women were respected. Their lives and dignity were legally protected. Together with men, they could embark on building a healthy society and families. However, during that period, policies in general and on women in particular had many shortcomings. The centrally-run, bureaucratic economic management and the state's strict and subjective control of production plans partly discouraged dynamism of individuals and social groups in all practical activities.

In such conditions, women's activities were formalistic and lacked practical and concrete content. The movement mainly focused on mobilising women to implement state policy and paid little attention to the women themselves. At certain times, women were given priority in promotion, and were appointed to leadership positions in offices, administrative levels and the national assembly. The appointment was not always made on the basis of ability but partly as a show of equality. As a result, many women in these cases could not do a good job and their presence was regarded as tokenism. For different reasons, many capable women were not promoted. The experience of the women's movement in that period showed that real improvement in the role and position of women needed more than lofty ideas and objectives.

Socio-economic renovation opened up the third stage of change in Vietnamese women's status and activities. The development of the market economy has opened up new possibilities of improving labour efficiency and social living standards. It has not only generated favourable social opportunities for women to participate in socio-economic activities, but it has contributed to improving their status and knowledge, helping them be aware of and willing to struggle for their own interests. It is important that now many women have risen to the challenge to assert themselves.

They participate in the administration at all levels and on managerial boards of companies and enterprises through their own ability and knowledge, rather than through 'priority' treatment or being a token force. While the level of women's participation is low in relation to women in the population and labour force ratios, it is high compared to many other countries in the region and elsewhere. Women account for over 18 per cent of the National Assembly members and 20 per cent in People's Councils. Sources for women leadership are still limited because women have low qualifications. In addition, training, employment and benefits for women are limited and stagnant, while women's time for social activities is often

shorter than men's because of disruptions of child-bearing, childcare and housework.

Changes have taken place in the women's movement. Many macro and micro projects have focused on the realistic and strategic needs of women, their ability, participation and enjoyment. Similarly, a scientific subject on women studies has been placed on the same level with other scientific subjects. Gender and feminism have been taught in many universities and post-graduate courses, opening up a new direction for young researchers. Policy-makers and activists in the women's movement have started to study women and gender issues.

The renovation process in Vietnam is still too new to make general assessments. However, for the Vietnamese, renovation process has opened up new prospects of creating a socio-economic base for policy development, including those relating to women.



Hoang Hoa, 43

*a teacher-trainer at a
special education
school in Hanoi, now
designs and produces
educational toys.*

I WAS BORN IN 1952. In French colonial times, my father owned a tobacco shop, Dong An, in Cho Dua city entrance. He had two wives: the first gave birth to four sons and daughters, and the second, my mother, had five children.

In 1954, when I was two, North Vietnam was liberated from French colonialism. My father wanted the whole family to settle in the South. But my mother did not want to leave, so my family separated. My father, with his first wife and her children, left for the South.

I remember how miserable our childhood was. My mother worked at the Trade Office of Dong Da district. Her salary was very low, not enough to support six persons. But she resolutely sent us all to school, doing extra manual work selling papers, plucking poultry, cracking ground-nuts. She always told us to live an honest life: she said only by working hard to earn money could we really know its value. Following her advice we encouraged each other to study and work hard. I was the only girl, and my mother loves me very much. Once when I asked her where my father was, she cried. 'I was born into a poor family, and married off as a second wife. I didn't want to follow your father and his first wife to flee for the South.' As I grew older, I understood my mother's bitter married life. I greatly admired her.

My four brothers and I finished secondary school, and we all had jobs. I liked children and became a pre-school teacher. Then I realised the

importance of games in a child's formation. For children, toys are an indispensable and special kind of textbook. Sadly, the schools were so poor they could not provide necessary teaching equipment. Teachers had to make their own equipment, but not everybody was good at it. Many asked their pupils' parents to do it. It took time and trouble. The lack of equipment made the classes monotonous, and many pupils stopped coming to school. I thought about this over the years, but could not find a solution. Later, I was sent to teachers' training college to study literature and on graduating, I was assigned a teaching post at the Cua Bac special education school. My students were headmasters of day-care centres and shared my worries over teaching equipment.

In 1984, looking at some old plastic moulding machines stored in my backyard, an idea fastened in my mind. Why not make plastic toys for children? I was excited and told my brothers my idea - but they were not encouraging. I understood why. My family had been involved in hand-making plastic production since 1968, as sub-contractors producing industrial goods for chemical or agricultural machine factories. Those factories were in crisis, workers had no work, and sub-contractors like us faced bankruptcy. Toy production depends supplies of pure granulated plastic, which was then under strict state control and could not be sold or bought in the free market. There were many difficulties we could not overcome.

But after 1985, there were many changes in the state's managing mechanisms. Granulated plastic was allowed on the market. But still we could not restart plastic production; we could not find a suitable product. In 1988, I again proposed that we produce toys, but my brothers still hesitated as they feared we could not compete with the plastic goods flooding in from the South. But when I discussed the idea with my colleagues, they supported it warmly. I borrowed from them one-tenth of a tael of gold (equivalent to 150,000 Vietnamese dong) to buy three sets of moulds. I designed models and asked former trading partners to test produce two kinds of toys: palm trees and banana trees. These sold rapidly to kindergartens and day-care centres. Encouraged, I designed more models, bought more moulds and produced more toys. I began to receive orders one after another.

My success encouraged my brothers to establish a company to produce playthings for pre-school children. Organising a company was complicated. We had to learn about business, do market research, buy machines and technology, and hire workers. The renovation of economic managing mechanism created favourable conditions for us to expand production and meet the demand in pre-school education. Now teachers have more teaching aids, and children can learn through their toys. We make dolls based on characters of stories, poems and songs, trees and animals, shapes and colours, pieces to assemble into railways, bridges, houses aeroplanes and robots. In six years, we have had no hint of failure in our

business. My family's life becomes better and better: we are rich compared with many. Our company capital is now 4 billion Vietnamese dong (US\$400,000) and turns out 78 products sold in 35 provinces and big cities in Vietnam. We employ more than 70 workers, and sub-contract work to more than 20 families. We also let the orphans in Hanoi SOS Village do some light work to give them work experience. The average monthly salary of our workers is between 200,000 and 300,000 dong, and the best workers earn 500,000 to 600,000.

Our biggest problem now is old machines and technology which means high production costs for low-priced products. Our production meets only one per cent of demand. We also need to study new principles of management, create new products and improve our marketing. And we must prepare ourselves for fierce competition from foreign goods.

I still work as teacher at the school, as well as being the main designer and technical adviser of my family's company. My teaching work keeps me in contact with children, to understand their needs and to improve my products so our toys are not only beautiful but also educational.

I have not married, because I like an independent life. This seems strange in a Vietnamese women, but I enjoy business and creative work. I want to do something useful for society, and it is my greatest happiness to live and work for children. All my family still live with my mother. We share all our joy and sorrow, success and failure. My mother is still my greatest teacher. She taught me how to live and make my way in life from work useful to society and the people.



Tran Thi Thuy, 46

*a peasant in Quang Loi
Commune, Quang Xuong
District, Thanh Hoa Province,
lives in hope that there will
be some improvement in her
struggle against poverty.*

I WAS BORN IN A POOR rural area in Thanh Hos province, North Vietnam. My homeland has a traditional livelihood, which still passes from generation to generation. It is begging. Legend has it that the first people to settle in the area were so poor they had to beg. Thanks to begging, they established their village and cultivated their land. Since then begging has become a customary occupation. Even well-to-do families still keep the tradition: for some months each year, they dress themselves in rags, and husband,

wife and children went begging in other areas.

The people in my home village have good reason to keep the tradition going. There are few poorer areas anywhere. There is a large population,

little arable land, impoverished soil, and inconvenient access. All of us comes depend for our income on simple agriculture.

My generation grew up in poverty and got so used to it that we considered it our fate, as much as our badly-built houses, the harsh sun and wind, and terrible typhoons which could come at any time and destroy all our village. Many of us, unable to bear the miserable life in our home village any longer, left to find a better one. I became a worker, building railways, and married another worker from the same village.

Our happy days were very short in the hard life we led. Our work was to break rocks and transport cement, steel, earth and stones for repairing the railways. We lived in temporary sheds at the construction site. Our two daughters were born into such a life, full of wants and cares and always on the move. As our difficulties piled up, so the quarrels between us grew. Too fed up with a life of dull poverty, my husband left home even though he loved his children tenderly. When he went on business to the South, he tried to stay there, and finally married another woman. I did not blame him, but pitied myself.

With nowhere to go, I took my two young daughters back to my home village. I thought simply that if I die, at least my children would have some land to live on and it was better than working on the construction site. As a former worker, we were given only a small plot of land. My daughters, though young, understood the family's situation and did not ask much for themselves. They left school early to help with the farming. They did not complain, but they did not have friends like other children. During that time the cooperative was still operating properly and sometimes helped us with rice supplies when crops failed, or helped repair our house. Little though it was, it helped my spirit a lot. Everyone in my home village was poor, and there was only a small gap between rich and poor.

I decided to marry again, hoping to find a new protector for my children. In my country it is said that a woman without a husband is like a boat without steering. My second husband also came from a poor family. He is hard-working, like a machine, and would do any work to earn money. Thanks to him, our family saw some better days - but they only lasted until I gave birth to a third daughter. The innocent baby did not know she was born into an unlucky family and that her birth dashed all my hope for a better life. Like other men in rural areas, my husband dreamed only of a son, and blamed me for being able to bear only daughters. He turned sad and surly. He did not want to work, instead he drank a lot and often went out. I did not know what to do, and blamed myself and fate. Later I found out that, wanting a son so badly, my husband was having affairs with other women. It was not difficult for men in my country then, after so many years of war, in rural areas there were many women who could not get married or whose husbands had died.

While still living with me, he married another wife younger and

healthier than me. When I gave birth to my fourth child, a real son, she also gave birth to a son. I was very disappointed, knowing that my husband would leave us to stay with her. And that was true.

When my husband stopped coming home, I had to gather all my strength not to collapse. I loved my children so much that I had to continue living. I did all I could to bring them up. My eldest daughter went to the South to look for work. My second daughter is a very clever girl. I wanted her to go to school, but she had to quit after finishing the sixth grade as I could no longer afford it. The other two are very young and ill all the time. My plot of land is small; what I get from it is hardly worth mentioning. In the recent crop, I harvested 150kg of paddy, half of which paid for seeds, ploughing labour and tax. That left only 75kg of paddy, equivalent to 58kg rice. We worked for half a year for it but it was only enough for just over a month. I had to borrow from others, but nobody wants to lend to poor people like me even at a high interest, as they are afraid they will not get their money back.

My second child and I now work for hire at very low wages. I am healthy and can do hard work so I can bring home some money or rice. My daughter works all day for two meals only. Every day I wait at the shore to buy on credit some fish from the fishermen and then sell it in the market. I go home when it is dark, sleep for five or six hours, and go out again. I have not had a good sleep for a very long time. My two youngest children have grown used to a life without their mother's care. They look after each other, cook for themselves, feed the pigs and tidy up the house. I know for sure that one day I will collapse. My only hope is, that day will not come until my children are grown up.

I have heard about the government's programme to eliminate famine and alleviate poverty which grants loans at low interest to the poor and help them spiritually and materially to strive for a better life. My friends and relatives in other areas have benefited from this programme and their lives have been improved. This has built up hopes in my heart.



**Nguyen
Thi Van, 38**

*is a weaver at the Dong
Xuan knitwear factory,
Hanoi*

I WAS BORN IN HANOI IN 1957 to a very poor family. My father died young, leaving behind seven children. Every day, in winter and summer, my mother left home very early in the morning to trade in the market, returning home very late in the evening. All the household work was done by my big sister. On many occasions I went to school wearing worn-out clothes,

but never dared to ask my mother for new clothing. Every morning before going to school, my sister would give me a sweet potato or a cassava for

breakfast. After finishing seventh form, I left school and started work in a knitting and embroidery cooperative to supplement my mother's income. My salary was rather good, but I often felt sorry for myself for being young but failing to get a better job. Some of my friends studied at university, some abroad, and others at least worked in government agencies. I still do not understand why in the eyes of young people at the time, only those who worked in state-run establishments would have a future. That was why in 1976 my mother cried in happiness when she heard that I had been recruited to work in the Dong Xuan knitwear factory. She often told me that I was luckier than her: 'My dear, I spent most of my life giving birth, bringing up children, and toiling all the years to earn. I only finished second grade education, married very young, and had less opportunities than you have now.'

But working as a weaver was not easy. The factory's equipment and machines were outdated, and my work was hard and monotonous. The workshop was dusty and noisy, and the factory ventilation system was too old. The temperature in the workshop was always four degrees (C) higher than the outside; in many days it reached 40-41C. We worked three shifts, and each worker had to move around operating five to eight weaving machines at a time. Many of us suffered ear nose and throat disease, pains in the chest, breathing difficulties, deteriorating eyesight, and other conditions. Worse still, we had low quality food, enough only to keep us from hunger.

After three years working in the factory, I married a man working in the Tran Hung Dao engineering factory also in Hanoi. One year later, I gave birth to my first child. My family faced a hard life. We lived on a floor space of 12 square metres, part of a room we shared with another family on the third floor of a workers' accommodation. The room was divided into two by a curtain, inconvenient for the day-to-day activities of both families. My family had one bed, and we had to sit on it to have our meals. All the household utensils were stored under the bed. On many occasions I could not sleep after returning from night shift work at the factory. The cramped, humble room often caused quarrels with my husband.

My husband worked in office hours, and always returned home tired. Depressed by the family situation, he just lay in bed or went out with his friends. I had to manage all the housework, from shopping to cooking. Many workers did extra work at home to supplement their incomes. But I felt exhausted and had no leisure time, even though to read a newspaper or book.

In the factory, I took part in the activities of the trade union and youth organisations. I was interested in meeting friends, doing social work and helping others in need. On many occasions, I came home late. Despite my angry husband and crying child, I felt my participation in mass organisations useful, and it helped me a little to overcome my difficulties

and hardships. In addition, I regularly attended technical refresher courses for workers organised by the factory. Gradually, I gained in skills and experience. For many successive years I ranked among the best workers of the factory. The factory leadership once offered me a fulltime educational course for long-term advancement, but I refused because I felt it would not leave me enough time to look after my family. Later I regretted it, and cried several times.

By 1987, old methods of labour organisation and management had driven the factory into difficulties and great losses. Also, the crisis in Eastern Europe, my factory's only foreign outlet, began to affect the contracts my factory signed with its trade partners. The workers often had no work to do, and salaries were cut by 70 per cent. A number of workers, including skilled ones, had to quit the factory and go into small trading or do anything to earn a living.

At this point, the factory allowed a number of workers to go to work in the Soviet Union. I wanted to go abroad to work for several years, but at first my husband would not agree. He was jealous and did not want to live far apart from me. Besides we had two children and he could not take care of them by himself. But on second thoughts, we had no alternative and I had to leave.

In the Soviet Union, I worked very hard and economised, and did some trading to get as much money as possible to send home for my husband and children.

After four years of hard work abroad, I returned home with enough money to buy a flat of 24 square metres, a motorbike, a refrigerator, and some pieces of furniture. Daily life was better.

Our country's overall renovation has brought about substantial changes in my factory. It began to operate on the basis of business accounting. The government only assigned some initial capital, and the factory had to take the initiative in running production, marketing products and paying staff. It also turned to other countries, particularly those in the region, for outlets. The outcome was a 10-year agreement which the factory signed with a Japanese company, (for 1989-199), under which the Japanese provided 50 weaving machines, sewing equipment, technology and materials. The factory bought 200 sewing machines from the Japanese partner on the basis of late payment. At first, the Japanese bought only limited quantities of our products, but later when they realised the products were good and cheap, they imported more. Since 1991 we have sold them several million pieces.

At present, my monthly income is between 350,000 and 500,000 VND, and my husband's is 350,000 VND. We set aside 500,000 to 600,000 VND for food every month. However, our life is better.

The new management mechanism has been supported by the workers, but we still feel concern. Our work today totally depends on contracts with foreign partners. To fulfil contracts, we have to work very

hard, and extra hours. Sometimes there were no holidays. We were exhausted after work, although we received double payment. Other times, when there was no work to do, workers stayed at home without payment for several days or even longer.

In the change to a market economy, we have lost some welfare benefits. I have two children, and their schooling costs a lot. The government wrote off free education for students at secondary school or higher level. Now I will have to pay school fees, uniforms, books, and notebooks, and other things. However, we still believe that our country's recent socioeconomic development opens prospects for a bright future before us.

Social Statistics

Poverty

- % of population in absolute poverty (1980-90 average) 54
- % of rural population in absolute poverty (1980-90 average)^A 60
- Number of people in absolute poverty (millions) 1992 37.6
- Number of people in absolute poverty, rural (millions) 1992^H 33.4

Income ratios ^{DDD}

1976-80	3-4
1981-89	6-8
1995	
<i>urban</i>	40
<i>rural</i>	20

Social Stratification ^{DDD}

- *Rural (survey, 1991)*

Type of household	Percentage	Per-capita monthly average income equivalent (kgs of rice)
Very rich	9.7	81
Rich 12.7	40	
Middle-income	28.2	29
Low-income	34.6	18
Very poor	14.5	8

- *Urban (surveys) - percentage of population in different income groups*

Social status	4 districts of Inner Hanoi 1992	1 sub-district of Central Hanoi 1992	1 sub-district in Central Hon Gai 1992	Campha Town
Prosperous	4.9	5.5	14.3	4.6
Above average	30	31.1	29.7	15.4
Average	49.3	46.7	49.5	63.1
Below average	11.9	12.2	4.4	10.8
Poor 4.0	4.5	2.2	6.0	

Household income and expenditure survey, 1990: ^z

<i>in dong</i>	Workers (state sector)	Farmers (in south)
Family income per head	48,084	32,248
Expenditure per head	47,835	35,107
Expenditure on food as % of total	62	82
Expenditure on essentials as % of total	77	94

Note: Essentials = food, clothing, household utensils, education, and housing. Only in one province out of the seven surveyed, Tien Giang on the Mekong Delta, did income exceed expenditure for farmers.

Health

- *Mortality rate:* 7 per thousand (1990)^A
- *Life expectancy:*

Average 1992 ^H	63.4
1985-91 ^A	
Men	62
Women	72

Infant & Child Mortality

- *Infant mortality (per thousand births) 1992^H:* 37
- *Under-5 mortality (per thousand live births) Average (MRE)^S* 53
- *Under-5 mortality (per thousand live births) 1990^W*

Female	46
Male	59

Education

- *Literacy rates, %, 1992^H*

Adult Literacy	88.6
Women	84
Men	93
15-24, female (1980-89)	94
15-19 age group (1990)	93
- *Educational enrolment ratios (%) (1987-91 estimates)^A*

Primary (gross)	
Male	105
Female	99
Secondary	
Male	43
Female	40
- *Women in education:^U*

	% of female teachers	% of female students
Primary (1985)	70	48
Secondary (1976)	57	49
Tertiary (1980) includes correspondence courses		
all	22	24
universities	22	24
- *Mean years of schooling, population aged 25+: (1992)^H*

Average	4.9
Women	3.6
Men	6.2
- *Length of schooling, as % of that for men: 59% (1992)^H*

- Percentage of people aged over 20 who have completed secondary school ^{ADB}

Female	Male	F/M Ratio
4.5	6.9	0.65

- Percentage of people aged over 25 with university degree ^{ADB}

Female	Male	F/M Ratio
1.7	3.7	0.46

Housing:

- Average floor space per inhabitant: ^z

Hanoi:	3 sq. m
Ho Chi Minh City:	5 sq. m

- Average household size: 5.3 (latest available - late 70s)
- Percentage of households potentially headed by women (latest): 18.4 ^{ADB}

Rural-urban migration

Tight control on population movement and the relatively low income differential between town and country has resulted in a relatively low rate of migration to cities. ^Z But rural-to-urban migration has increased recently. ^{DDD}

Migration abroad:

About 220,000 Vietnamese went abroad to work in the 1980s, about 95% of them to the Eastern bloc (Soviet Union, East Germany, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia). The migrant workers did mainly unskilled work, and received very little training. They were required to remit up to 40% of their earnings to the government. Now there is little demand for Vietnamese labour, and the previous labour export agreements have either lapsed or been renegotiated. ^z

- Overseas migrant workers in Eastern Europe ^v

	1981	1988
Total	23,468	143,320
Male	17,601	196,025
Female	5,867	47,295
Women as % of total	25	33

An estimated 500,000 Vietnamese have left the country illegally since 1975. Most are members of the ethnic Chinese minority who tried to emigrate to Thailand, frightened by rumours of 'massacres', allegedly planned in retaliation for the 1979 Chinese invasion. The retaliation never happened.

Another incentive to illegal emigration were the programmes of collectivisation and resettlement into 'New Economic Zones' instigated after the war. These programmes were particularly unpopular with the urban population of the south, and there were many abuses.

Illegal emigration continues. Because Western countries are increasingly reluctant to receive emigrants from Vietnam, many of them have ended up in overpopulated refugee centres, especially in Hong Kong. ^{TWG}

Reproduction

- *Mean age of childbearing (latest):* 30^{ADB}
- *Fertility rate (births per woman):* 3.8 (1985-91)^A
- *Contraceptive use (% of women aged 15-49):* 53% (MRE)^A

The Vietnamese government has been implementing a nationwide family planning policy designed to bring the population growth rate down to 1.7% by the year 2000.^{DDD}

Politics

Government

The Communist Party of Vietnam is the dominant political force, with government, army and bureaucracy all subordinate to it. Government policy is set by the Politburo, the party's 13-member executive.

There has generally been a strict division between holders of the highest party and government offices, but a considerable degree of overlap remains.

The legislature is the National Assembly, which up to the late 1980s was virtually a rubber stamp. A new constitution (1992) enhanced the powers of the Assembly and stated that the Communist Party must operate within the framework of the law and the constitution. The Party would continue as overseer of the political system, but would no longer interfere in the day-to-day running of government departments. In the 1992 National Assembly elections, non-Party candidates were allowed to stand for the first time, and won 8% of seats. However, all those who won had been officially endorsed by the Vietnam Fatherland Front.

The executive power a Council of Ministers under the Prime Minister. It has 34 members, of whom 30 are members of the party's Central Committee.

The head of state is the President, who is Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces and has the power to recommend the dismissal of the Prime Minister.

Local government is vested in elected provincial, municipal and district people's councils, elected by universal suffrage. The councils elect an executive People's Committee to administer the area. Council members are often also members of the Communist Party, but tend to adapt party policies to fit local conditions and aspirations, rather than act simply as enforcers.

The economic reforms have tended to reduce the power of local party cadres who have traditionally run state enterprises and agricultural cooperatives.

Political Forces

The Communist Party has a membership of over two million. A total of only 30 people served on its Politburo between 1935 and 1991. There have been differences over domestic and foreign policy within the party, but no internal factionalism. Except for a brief period in the late 1950s, the Vietnamese Communist Party has avoided the excesses committed by other ruling communist parties.

The most influential institution after the party and the government is the People's Army of Vietnam. It has confronted and humiliated three of the world's most powerful armies (the French, the US, and the Chinese). Its success was based on a broad mobilisation of society.

There has been considerable overlap between military and civilian leadership. The army was created by the Communist Party, and had a political dimension from the start: its first unit was an Armed Propaganda Team. In the mid-1980s, about 90% of army officers were party members, and about a third of the rank-and-file. Army representation in the Central Committee and the National Assembly has been falling recently, but the army still has considerable influence in the Politburo.

The current military leadership is a conservative force in party debates. They see potential dangers to socialism in the economic reform policies, and are resisting attempts to depoliticise the army. The reduction in the military budget since the withdrawal from Cambodia in 1989 and the abrupt termination of Soviet military aid in 1991 may lead to a reduction in military influence. But territorial disputes with China over the Spratly and Paracel islands and the Tonkin Gulf provide a continuing rationale for a powerful military force.

The party's influence is entrenched in state institutions and mass organisations such as the Confederation of Trade Unions, the Women's Union and the Youth Union. The Vietnam Fatherland Front is an umbrella group for the mass organisations, which are intended to articulate their members' views as well as to mobilise support for the party's goals.

Public discussion of political reform is tolerated unless it challenges Communist Party dominance. But political pluralism is not on the agenda. In the first years of the economic reform relatively open political debate was allowed, but after 1990 the rules tightened up again. Open criticism in the press diminished and some dissidents were arrested.

Some groups have maintained independence from party-sponsored organisations. The United Buddhist Church, which opposed the governments of South Vietnam, has resisted incorporation into the officially approved Vietnamese Buddhist Church. There are also some stirrings of popular dissent: groups of farmers and students have protested publicly about their grievances, and there are signs of pressure for change from within the Party itself. However, even outspoken critics of the government accept the need to maintain a degree of stability.

Sources: Vietnam: the price of peace, Chris Brazier, Oxfam 1992. Third World Guide 93/94, Instituto del Tercer Mundo, Uruguay. Economist Intelligence Unit Country Profile 1994-95.

Women in Politics

- *Proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by women:* 19% (1992) ^H
- *Women have had the vote since 1946.* ^K
- *Percentage of decision-makers in government who are women: (1987)^K*

<i>Executive offices; economic, political and legal affairs</i>	0
<i>Social affairs</i>	0
<i>All</i>	0
<i>Ministerial level</i>	0

Note: There was one woman member of the Council of State.

History (3rd century BC-1976)

3rd century BC

Feudal society based on wet-rice agriculture, with some foreign trade

207 BC China conquered Red River Delta region, introducing centralised state and Confucian ideology

41 AD Defeat of rebellion led by Trung sisters against Chinese rule

939 Ngo Quyen established independent Vietnamese kingdom

10th-15th century

Vietnam gradually expanded southwards at the expense of the Indianised king-

dom of Champa and the Khmer empire, which included the Mekong Delta. Chinese and Mongol invasions were repulsed.

1558-1772 Vietnam fragmented between rival dynasties - the Trinh and Nguyen families - in North and South.

1802 Reunification of Vietnam under the emperor Gia Long, with French assistance.

early 19th century

French traders and missionaries had developed extensive contacts throughout the south of the country. Their growing influence worried the Vietnamese, who withdrew grants of trade concessions and toleration of Christian missionaries.

1858 France, competing with Britain for influence in Southeast Asia, launched a colonial war of conquest. A French naval squadron attacked Danang.

1861 French Navy seized Saigon.

1867 French conquered Mekong Delta and created colony of Cochinchina. They went on to subdue the rest of the country, keeping the emperors as puppet figure-heads.

1887 French Indochina formed from the colony of Cochinchina, the protectorates of Annam (central Vietnam) and Tonkin (northern Vietnam), Cambodia and Laos.

1887-1940 Vietnam was used as a huge plantation to fuel French industrialisation. Thousands of Vietnamese died labouring in appalling conditions on rubber plantations. The colony exported rice while local people starved. Vietnam's traditions of opposition to foreign occupation sustained the considerable resistance to French rule. The Can Vuong (Aid the King) movement which reached its peak in the 1880s was led by mandarins who left the court rather than collaborate with the French.

1930 Indochina Communist Party founded by Ho Chi Minh. The party later divided into three separate organisations for Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

1940-45 Japanese occupation. The French authorities in Vietnam collaborated with the Vichy regime in France and were thus left in administrative control.

1941 Ho Chi Minh returned to Vietnam to lead resistance movement against the Japanese and the French. He took the Communist Party into a strategic alliance with the Vietnam Independence League or Viet Minh.

1945 Viet Minh marched into Hanoi and declared the independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. As soon as the Second World War was over, the French, assisted by the British, attacked the Viet Minh who were forced back into the hills. A nine-year war followed.

1949 New Communist government in China started to support the Viet Minh. The US increasingly saw the Indochina war as an anti-Communist crusade, and financed the French war effort.

1954 French surrender to the Viet Minh at Dien Bien Phu, ending the war. The Geneva Conference divided Vietnam in two at the 17th parallel: the North under Ho Chi Minh and the South under the anti-Communist General Ngo Dinh Diem. The

conference specified that free elections should be held before 1956 and the country reunited. But the US never ratified the agreement, and refused to allow the elections. Instead, it reinforced Diem's control in the south and sent military advisers to train his troops. The Diem regime tortured and executed thousands of Viet Minh supporters.

- 1960 National Liberation Front formed to rally Diem's opponents in South Vietnam. The involvement of US 'advisers' grew steadily, but so did their disenchantment with the corruption and incompetence of Diem's regime.
- 1963 Diem launched violent repression of Buddhists. Disgruntled generals, backed by US, organised a coup and assassinated Diem. North Vietnam covertly sent troops to the South along the 'Ho Chi Minh trail'.
- 1964 US Congress gave the president power to authorise use of force in Vietnam
- 1965 US started Operation Rolling Thunder: sustained bombing of North Vietnam. By the end of the year 200,000 US soldiers were in Vietnam. Their numbers doubled in the following year. The US soldiers were unable to use their superior firepower to military advantage against the Vietnamese guerrillas, who had a good deal of popular support. US troops often responded by treating any Vietnamese villager as a threat to be 'liquidated'. Civilian casualties were high - at least 25,000 civilians were killed and 50,000 injured every year.
- 1968 The North launched a major attack on the eve of Tet (the Lunar New Year), occupying the city of Hue for nearly a month and attacking the American Embassy in Saigon. The momentum of the Tet Offensive could not be sustained, but its scale and the impact on American public opinion finally convinced the US it could not win.
- 1969 Peace talks began in Paris, though fighting continued and US troop strength in Vietnam reached its peak at 543,000. The US began bombing suspected Vietnamese sanctuaries in Cambodia. In September, Ho Chi Minh died.
- 1973 Peace agreement signed, shortly after destructive US bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong. US troops withdrew as planned after 60 days, but both Vietnamese armies continued fighting.
- 1975 North Vietnam launched another major offensive, and routed their demoralised opponents, capturing Saigon on 30 April.
- 1976 Socialist Republic of Vietnam declared.

Ravages of war, devastation of peace

During the war, the US had spent \$150 billion in Vietnam, destroyed 70% of North Vietnamese villages, and left 10 million hectares of formerly productive land completely barren. When the war ended, instead of receiving aid for reconstruction, and the \$3 billion worth of reparations from the US agreed under the Paris accords, Vietnam was treated with suspicion as a potentially disruptive force in the region.

In 1977-78, the Khmer Rouge launched attacks on Vietnam's southern provinces from Cambodia. Vietnamese forces retaliated by invading Cambodia. They over-

threw Pol Pot's government and a People's Republic of Cambodia established with Vietnamese support. The US imposed an embargo on trade and aid with Vietnam, while China invaded Vietnam's northern provinces.

The threat from China was repulsed. However, Vietnam faced active hostility from the Reagan administration in the US, which stopped grain shipments from a US charity and blocked an aid programme organised by the UNDP.

International isolation, including the loss of Chinese support, completely undermined the government's programme of centrally directed industrialisation. An attempt to collectivise the economy of the south resulted in serious food shortages and economic stagnation. In 1986 a major economic restructuring programme - *doi moi* - was launched at sixth Communist Party Congress. Its main components were liberalisation of the economy to allow private businesses, and active seeking of foreign investment and trade.

In 1989 the remaining Vietnamese troops withdrawn from Cambodia. Calls from within the Communist Party for political reform towards a more pluralistic political system. The 'Resistance Fighters' Group' (southern revolutionaries who had fought for independence against the French and the US) criticised government economic policies and urged the extension of political freedoms.

The Cambodian peace accord was signed in 1991 and the US announced readiness to talk about resuming relations with Vietnam. Vietnam gained observer status in Asean.

In the same year, the seventh Party Congress elected a new Politburo, including several economic reformers, but also some senior military personnel concerned that the influx of Western loans and investment could undermine Vietnamese socialism. The congress ruled out political pluralism and a crackdown on dissidents followed.

Sources: Vietnam: the price of peace, Chris Brazier, Oxfam 1992. Third World Guide 93/94, Instituto del Tercer Mundo, Uruguay. Economist Intelligence Unit Country Profile 1994-95.

Economy

Type of economy:

From 1954, North Vietnam had a centrally planned economy, and the same system was extended to the south once the country was reunified. State ownership of the means of production was virtually total, agriculture was collectivised, the state took care of allocation of capital and inputs, and set quantitative output targets. Consumer goods were rationed and sold at low, subsidised prices.

There were some differences with the Soviet model of central planning: investment was thinly spread, and manufacturing output and employment was concentrated in light rather than heavy industries; most state enterprises were run by local authorities, not integrated into the central planning system; a market economy functioned parallel to the planned economy, with its own price structures and informal credit system; various enterprises developed sideline activities outside the framework of the plan. Much of the South's economy remained outside state control.

Although the South Vietnam's economy followed a different pattern between 1954 and 1975, it had certain features in common with the north in the mid-70s: both parts of the country had been ravaged by war, and had chronic fiscal and current account deficits; both

consumed more than they produced and were heavily dependent on foreign aid.

Now officially described as a socialist market economy, Vietnam began the shift from a centrally planned economy (known as the 'bureaucratic centralised state subsidy system') in 1986. The economy is still in a transition period.

Efforts to change the system began in 1979, in response to an economic crisis brought about by the suspension of foreign aid by China, the West and Asean, coinciding with a fall in agricultural production. Procurement prices for agricultural products were increased, non-plan activities were allowed to increase in agriculture and industry, and the nationalisation and collectivisation of private firms was halted.

The inflation that followed these reforms created a backlash, and the collectivisation drive resumed.

However, faced with continuing economic crisis and rampant inflation, the 1986 Party Congress decided on a more thorough reform programme, known as *doi moi*. The reforms, which were put in place between 1986 and 1988, included:

- re-organisation of agriculture; land was leased back to peasant families who had complete freedom to cultivate their plots and sell their produce;
- more autonomy for state enterprises
- abolition of almost all subsidies and price controls
- cuts in public expenditure to reduce the budget deficit
- control of the money supply;
- liberalisation of trade and devaluation, and a drive to increase foreign trade
- restructuring of the banking system.
- measures to encourage private sector development
- a new foreign investment law, allowing up to 100% foreign ownership of joint ventures. (20 EPZ projects had been approved as of August 1994.)

Since the end of 1986, the free market has been actively encouraged, and attempts to reduce the scope of the rationing system began in 1985.

Since 1988, all goods have been off ration, or sold at or near free-market prices. Only transport, housing, electricity and petroleum products are still subsidised.

Vietnam's economy is mainly based on agriculture, which accounts for 70% of employment and one-third of exports (over half if forestry and aquatic products are included). Agriculture contributes about 35% of GDP and over 40% of PNI (Produced National Income - a measure which excludes services not directly related to production).

The 1980 constitution formally nationalised the land. The agricultural sector consists of state farms, producer co-operatives and other collectives, and private family farms.

Industry (including power generation and mining) employs 11% of the labour force, and accounts for 23% of GDP, and 28% of PNI. The state sector produces a large proportion of industrial output, and its share is rising. According to official estimates:

Share of industrial output	1980	1992
State (%)	60.2	71
Non-state (%)	39	29

The non-state industrial sector consists of co-operatives, small family businesses and private enterprises (numbers available). It employs more workers than the state sector, and its share of total employment is rising.

US-led embargoes on trade and finance which lasted into the 1990s have had a severe impact on Vietnam's economy. One consequence of the embargo has been a block on lending by multilateral institutions, only lifted by the Clinton administration in July 1993. The trade and investment embargo was lifted in February 1994. However, the US continues to deny Vietnam access to a range of trade and investment benefits. By August 1994, the US was the 15th largest investor, with 16 projects worth \$159 million in approved investments. The leading investors were Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea.

The embargo also restricted opportunities for trade outside the CMEA, which, given the economic stagnation in CMEA economies during the 1980s, offered a very limited market.

NMP, current market prices

	1980	1992
<i>billion dong</i>	2.6	71090.9
<i>million \$US</i>		6,342.3

Real GDP per capita, PPP\$: 1250 (1991 estimate)¹¹

Major industries:

Steel, cement, chemical fertiliser, timber, fabrics, paper. ^{FEER 1992}

A wide range of industries has been developed, reflecting a drive to satisfy domestic demand despite years of relative economic isolation. The leading industrial subsectors are textiles and food products.²

Major exports: mainly commodities.²

Top earners, 1993: crude oil, marine products, rice, garments and textiles. Coffee and rubber also important, tea falling off because of fall in Russian market.

% share of exports:²

	1986	1991
<i>Heavy industrial goods and minerals</i>	9.0	33.4
<i>Light industrial goods and handicrafts</i>	34.8	14.4
<i>Agricultural products</i>	38.9	30.1
<i>Forest products</i>	8.1	8.4
<i>Aquatic products</i>	8.8	13.7

Note: this includes trade with non-convertible area (ie CMEA) for 1986. Official data on the value of Vietnam's trade with CMEA countries is difficult to use for comparative purposes, because trade took many different forms, such as barter, goods produced by joint ventures etc.

Growth of exports:

- 1989: exports to convertible currency area increased by 154%.
- 1991: exports to convertible currency area increased by 46% Z

Trade dependence:

- Total foreign trade as % of GNP, 1981 9 (FEER Yearbook 1982)
- Total foreign trade as % of NMP, 1992 79 (Own calculation)

Foreign debt:¹²

	1990	1993
<i>Total foreign debt (\$US\$m)</i>	22,111	24,224
<i>Debt/GNP ratio, %</i>		188.7
<i>Debt service ratio, debt service/exports %</i>		13.6

Until 1989, Vietnam was in a position of de facto default on foreign debts. At the end of 1993, the external debt was made up of 11 billion roubles, plus 4.6 billion dollars, with two-thirds of the latter component being in arrears. Vietnam began making payments to the IMF in 1989.²

Inflation

- *Consumer price index: ^A*

1985	1993
100	69000.2

1985 was the peak year for inflation: it reached an annual rate of 487%.^z

- *Annual inflation rates: % change on previous year ^z*

	1987	1992	1993
Overall	301.3	17.5	5.2
Food	314.6	-13.5*	
Other consumer goods	289.3	21.5*	

* EIU estimates. Remaining figures are from official sources.

Growth rates:

- *Annual real GDP growth, %^A*

1980	(preliminary) 1993
-1.3	8.0

- *Average annual GNP growth 1970-1980: 3% (FEER Yearbook 1982)*
- *Average annual GDP growth 1986-1990: 4.8% (FEER Yearbook 1992)*

Government Spending

- *Military spending as % of total budget:* 47% (FEER Yearbook 1982)
- *Military expenditure as % of GDP, 1990-91:* 4.8%^H
- *Public expenditure on health as % of GDP, 1990:* 1.1%^H

No data available on education or social services spending.

Trade Unions

There is one legal trade union centre, the VIETNAMESE FEDERATION OF LABOUR. All workers in state-owned enterprises are obliged to join unions linked to the federation.

At the beginning of September 1993, fewer than 20 per cent of the 252 enterprises established with foreign capital in Ho Chi Minh City had signed labour contracts with their 16,000 employees, and only 39 enterprises had allowed the formation of workers' organisations.

Spontaneous strikes were reported in 1993, mainly in foreign-owned or joint-venture enterprises in Ho Chi Minh City, as well as in Vietnamese-owned companies particularly in the north and central provinces.

In 1994, labour unrest in foreign-backed ventures was reported to be on the increase, especially in the south. This was believed to be mainly because of the absence of labour laws (a new labour code went into effect in January 1995, see below). Workers went on strike as the first method of solving their grievances, in the absence of clear-cut procedures for settling labour disputes.

Labour legislation

In 1994 the National Assembly passed a law which for the first time gives workers restricted rights to strike. The law, in effect from January 1995, allows workers to strike after completing several stages of dispute-solving procedures. Strikes are prohibited in enter-

prises serving the public and important to the national economy, or to security and defence. A strike considered detrimental to the national economy or public safety can be suspended by the Prime Minister, and strikes extending beyond the scope of the single enterprise are illegal.

Strikes had previously been forbidden, although the growth of the private sector in recent years had led to tolerance of peaceful strikes at foreign-owned factories.

Workers are to be represented by trade union organisations set up by the Federation of Labour, which is obliged to establish unions in all new private enterprises. If workers form unions in enterprises, approval of the federation's local branch is required. Independent unions remain illegal.

The 1994 Labour Code also specifies that:

- normal working hours shall not exceed eight hours a day or 48 hours per week.
- The employer shall give preference to women who meet the recruitment criteria for vacant positions that are suitable to both men and women and need to be filled in the enterprise.' *Chapter X, Section 111 (2)*.
- Compulsory social insurance applies to enterprises employing ten or more workers. Workers are entitled to social security benefits in the event of sickness, occupational accidents and diseases, maternity, retirement and death. For workers in enterprises employing fewer than ten workers, and those engaged in tasks with a duration of less than three months, in seasonal or other occasional jobs, social insurance expenses shall be included in the wage paid by the employer to enable workers to participate on a voluntary basis in social insurance or to make their own arrangements for insurance.

Labour

Note: Employment data are unreliable because of the extensive and largely unregulated free market, and widespread quasi-legal moonlighting by state and collective sector employees.^z

Labour Force:^y

	1980	1988
Total	22,068,000	32,113,700
Male	9,844,000	14,693,300
Female	12,224,000	17,420,400
Women as % of total	55	54

- % of economically active women in sectors of the economy^A

	1970-9	1980-9
agriculture	73.3	72.6
industry	12.9	10.9
services	13.8	16.4

- Employment by sector, (in millions):^z

	1986	1991
Total	30.97	27.40
State sector	3.96	3.25
Co-operative sector	19.79	18.01
Private sector	3.65	9.66

• *Total employment by sector, percentage shares, 1991:*²

	State	Co-operative	Private
All employment	10.5	58.3	31.2
Industry	21.7	31.3	46.9

• *Female employment by sector, 1985:*

	No.	Women as % of total
State sector	1,818,000	46.10
Co-operative sector	8,862,000	56.14
Private sector	2,467,000	56

Source: Vietnamese Women in the Eighties. Vietnam Women's Union and Centre for Women Studies (eds). 1989. Foreign Languages Publishing House, Hanoi

• *EAP in Manufacturing and utilities*³

	1980	1988
Total	1,867,300	2,957,700
Male	746,200	1,304,300
Female	1,121,10	1,653,400
Women as % of total	60	56

In 1987, women accounted for 65% of the labour force in the small industry and handicraft sector, and in some areas, such as carpet-making, embroidery, reed mat-making and rattan weaving, up to 80 or 90 per cent. In rural areas, women employed in agriculture also do produce handicrafts, and a significant number of state employees in the cities supplement their income with handicrafts.

In larger-scale light manufacturing, women are 68% of the labour force. They account for 62% of workers in textile mills, and 83% in garments factories.

Women account for 40% of engineers, and 39% of road repair workers.

(Source: Vietnamese Women in the Eighties. Vietnam Women's Union and Centre for Women Studies (eds). 1989. Foreign Languages Publishing House, Hanoi)

• *Industrial employment by sector, in millions:*

	1980	1985	1989
State sector	0.64	0.77	0.78
Co-operative sector	1.1	1.2	0.86
Private sector	0.5	0.59	0.96
1 private enterprises	n/a	0.01	0.02
2 households and individual enterprises	n/a	0.58	0.94
Non-state sector employment as % of total industrial employment	71	69.9	69.1
Private sector as % of total industrial employment	22.3	23	37.8

Source: Effects of government policies on the incentive to invest, enterprise behaviour and employment: the case study of Vietnam. David H D Truong & Carolyn L Gates, ILO, Geneva, 1992.

Informal sector:

- *Participation in illicit economic activities, in thousands^v*

	1980	1988
<i>Unlicensed petty traders</i>	320	237.3
Of which women	240	166
Women as % of total	75	70
<i>Illegal brewers of alcohol</i>	26.9	35
Of which women	8.1	12
Women as % of total	30	34
<i>Prostitutes</i>	31.5	43.1
<i>Others</i>	693	994
Of which women	277.2	398
Women as % of total	40	40
<i>Total</i>	1071.4	1309.4
Of which women	556.8	619.1
Women as % of total	52	47

Note: Figures presumably based on numbers of people caught practising these activities, and includes assumption that prostitutes are all women.

- *Women in management and administration:^v*

	1980	1988
<i>Total</i>	265,000	246,790
<i>Male</i>	190,700	165,800
<i>Female</i>	74,300	81,100
Women as % of total	28	33

- *Economically active population as % of working age population:^A*

	1970-79	1980-89
<i>Women</i>	61.3	62.3
<i>Men</i>	87.1	81.5

Unemployed:^v

	1979	1989
<i>Total</i>	835,900	1,040,000
Urban	681,700	766,500
Rural	154,200	273,500
<i>Female Total</i>	474,000	616,700
Urban	386,000	417,700
Rural	88,000	199,00
<i>Male Total</i>	361,900	423,300
Urban	295,700	348,800
Rural	66,200	74,500

- *Unemployment rates, % of economically active population, 1992-3*

Overall unemployment rate	7.37
Rural unemployment	6.87
Urban unemployment	9.44
Male unemployment	6.46
Female unemployment	8.21

Source: Vietnam Living Standards Survey 1992-1993, State Planning Committee, General Statistical Office.

• *City unemployment rates (1992):* ^z

Unemployment rate, Ho Chi Minh City:	17%
Unemployment rate, Hanoi:	25%

There is general consensus that, in 1994, about 20% of the total labour force were either unemployed or underemployed. In 1991 the estimate was that the rural areas alone account for 7.5 million of the unemployed. ^{DDD}

In 1988-91, 820,000 employees of state enterprises, and 320,000 public servants, were laid off. Plans for a 20% cut in the civil service were announced in 1992. About 1.2 million new entrants join the labour force each year. Only half of these were reported to have secured jobs in 1992. ^z

At the end of the 1980s, in big cities such as Hanoi, Hai Phong and Ho Chi Minh City, 60% of the young people looking for jobs were young women. (Vietnamese Women in the Eighties. Vietnam Women's Union and Centre for Women Studies (eds). 1989. Foreign Languages Publishing House, Hanoi)

Underemployment (visible & invisible): ^v

	1980	1988
Total	2,962,100	4,827,100
Female	1,490,500	2,347,700
Male	1,473,600	2,479,400

Number of labour force organised: ^v

Trade union membership (?) There are two other sets of data on this, one of which comes from the same source, which give completely different figures.

	Members 1980	Officials 1980	Members 1988	Officials 1988
Total	2,428,800	357,100	3,202,500	370,800
Men	1,325,000	189,700	1,727,800	195,900
Women - Nos.	1,103,200	167,400	1,474,800	174,900
Women as % of total	45	47	46	47

Only a few of the women working in the small-scale industry and handicraft sector are trade unions members. (Vietnamese Women in the Eighties. Vietnam Women's Union and Centre for Women Studies (eds). 1989. Foreign Languages Publishing House, Hanoi)

Minimum wage (1991): 120,000 dong a month

In 1992, a decree reduced the minimum wage in foreign-invested projects.^z

- *Average monthly wages for full-time work in major sectors, in US\$ (1989)^v*

	<i>Average</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
Agriculture, hunting, fishing and forestry	10.1	10	10.2
Mining & quarrying	11	10.8	11.2
Manufacturing	11.5	11.3	11.7
Electric, gas, water	8.8	8.6	9.0
Construction	11.2	11	11.4
Trade, catering	10.3	10.3	10.3
Transport, storage & communications	11.9	11.8	12
Finance, insurance, real estate & business services	10.2	10	10.4
Community, social and personal services	10	9.8	10.2
Others	11.3	11.2	11.4

Based on the above table, women's average wage in manufacturing was 97% of men's.

- *Average monthly earnings of workers in the state sector (in dong)^z*

	<i>1985</i>	<i>1991</i>
Civil servants		64,860
Cash salary	392	
Total earnings	425	
State enterprise workers		76,920
Cash salary	415	
Total earnings	448	

Note: 1985 total earnings include payments in kind and bonuses. 1991 figures exclude payments in kind and bonuses.

Up to 1989, state employees received rationed goods at subsidised prices and social welfare benefits. In January 1989, the wages of state employees were restructured, but a number of subsidies continued. These were estimated to be equivalent to 50% of the average wage.^z

A further round of wage restructuring was announced in 1991. As well as a new minimum wage level, the differential between the highest and lowest paid was due to increase from 3.5:1 to 13:1.^z

Demography

- Land area: 332,561 sq. km.[®]
- Population: 69.5 million (1992)[¶]
- Women make up 51% of the population
- Age of population: 1990 census[®]

	<i>All (% of total population)</i>	<i>Males (% of age group)</i>	<i>Females (% of age group)</i>
0-4	14	51	49
0-14	39	51	49
15-64	56	47	53
65+	5	40	60

- 50% of the population is under 20.
- Urban population: 12.261 million or 19% 1989 census:^B
of which women: 52%
- Rural population: 52.115 million, or 81%
of which women: 51%

Vietnam is the least urbanised country in Southeast Asia. The population is concentrated in the two major granary regions: the Red River Delta in the north and the Mekong Delta in the south.^{DD}

- Annual population growth rate: 2.19% (1991)^A
- Annual urban population growth rate: 2.47% (1985-90)^A

Between 1.5 and 2 million Vietnamese died as a result of military action between 1960 and 1980. In the aftermath of the US defeat, and the 1978-9 conflicts with China, 750,000 refugees left the country. Z

Religions: Mahayana Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism,
Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, Roman Catholic.^E

Ethnic composition: Kinh (lowland Vietnamese) 87%, Tay 1.8%, Thai 1.6%,
Hoa (ethnic Chinese) 1.4%, Khmer 1.4%, 49 other groups 6.8% (Oxfam)

The official policy towards indigenous upland peoples is assimilation, resettlement into permanent villages and discouragement of slash-and-burn agriculture. Kinh Vietnamese migrants from the crowded deltas are increasingly occupying upland areas. Their land use practices, which are based on lowland farming methods, add to the environmental degradation caused by wholesale logging.

The Chinese community, once sizeable, is concentrated in the south. It is now depleted through emigration. The community has partly recouped its position in the economy since the late 1980s, largely on the strength of links with Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Refugee population: 16,000 (1992)^H

Counting the cost of economic growth

In Thailand, economic restructuring has brought high overall growth rates but it has increased the gap between rich and poor, devastated the environment and undermined self-sufficient agricultural communities. Teeranat Karnjanauksorn comments.

THAILAND is one of the most rapidly changing countries in the world. Industrialisation based on exports and foreign investment has accompanied increased state and corporate control of land, wholesale forest clearance, and expansion of cash crops.

Those who have done well out of the changes are business people, investors, managers, high-ranking officials and well-paid professionals. There are relatively few women among them.

The share of agricultural production in GDP dropped from 26.6 per cent in 1976 to 11.9 per cent in 1992. In the same period, the share of manufacturing in GDP rose from 19.6 per cent to 28.3 per cent. Although three-quarters of the population still live in the countryside, there has been a steady trickle of migrants to the cities, and particularly Bangkok.

Rural migrants usually end up in the informal economy, working as taxi drivers, street vendors or prostitutes. The children among them are often employed in small factories, making garments, shoes, ornaments and other consumer goods. It is illegal to employ children younger than 13, and the businesses which break this law generally breach legislation on pay and conditions as well. Usually, the child's parents are paid in advance, with the first three to five months regarded as a training period and therefore unpaid. A government survey in 1990 found 100,000 children below the age of 13 were at work.

Prostitution became a major industry with the arrival of large numbers of US troops during the Vietnam war. Thailand still earns a large amount of foreign exchange from sex tourism. Rural girls may be signed up by prostitution brokers and taken to Bangkok or to a tourist resort, to work in bars or brothels to pay off their families' debts. The prostitution brokers are often also moneylenders, who will demand a daughter to pay off debt and land mortgages. Some prostitutes are as young as 10 years.

At least 80 per cent of employees in export manufacturing are women, but their jobs are far from secure, particularly in the textile industry.

Growing numbers of textile workers in and around Bangkok have been laid off since 1993. Employers blame increasing protectionism in export markets, or the need to introduce labour-saving technology in order to stay competitive.

Thailand's trade unions are relatively weak, and much restricted by legislation, but women workers have made some notable gains in recent years, including a successful campaign for 90 days' maternity leave. However, shortly after this campaign one of its leaders, Arunee Sritoh, lost her job at Thai Durable Textile, the country's largest textile manufacturer.

The effort to provide for their families has taken some women abroad to work, but as the story of Mui-Kae in this chapter shows, this can be a precarious source of income. Most states put heavy restrictions on migrant workers, leaving them vulnerable to abuse by employers.

The two stories, and the case of Mayuree (see box), show key elements in the changing economy of Thailand. None of the women have power or wealth, all face intense hardship, yet all are experiencing a degree of empowerment. Sa-ing has an acknowledged leadership role in her community through the long struggle over land rights and redistribution to local communities of power over resources, two burning issues for the Thai government and elites. She is part of a long history of conflict between the centre of economic and political power in Bangkok, and the poor but hard working and well organised Isaan peasants. Mui-Kae is part of a process of globalisation benefiting the rich and powerful in a way similar to colonisation and industrialisation in the past. In all three cases we see signs of solidarity among women and support groups from different classes and backgrounds.

Much improvement is needed for minority migrant workers. Globalisation has allowed them to be mobile and to seek better opportunities (as do investors), but the states and their legal systems treat them completely differently to investors, down to the most basic rights. Migrants lose some security by being away from their country of origin. But Mui-Kae's is by no means the worst case - she at least holds Thai citizenship. Some minority women have been taken abroad, across boundaries, and ended up in jails in Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong with no identity papers, no citizenship, no status. If not in jail, they are working and living illegally. They have no 'right' to be on earth.

Mayuree's test case

Mayuree, who contracted alumina poisoning working in a factory, is trying to win compensation in the courts. Thirteen of her colleagues have died from the disease. A victory could bring better working conditions for other women workers who are risking their health and their lives in export production.

Leading a struggle for land:

an interview with
Sa-ing Tawaisilpa

Comments by the author
are in italics.

Sa-ing is a landless peasant from Roi-Ed province in Isaan, the northeastern region of Thailand, where the average income is only one-sixth of that in Bangkok.

Sa-ing was 21 when she married. She completed compulsory education at a local school without learning to read or write.

MY TEACHER went gambling all day long, students were left with lesson on the board. I was stupid not to continue my studies after that, but I didn't know what for and to do so I would have had to go to another school far away. It was danger-

ous, I could be raped on the way through bushes and forest, my mother told me.

Illiteracy is not the reason which stops Sa-ing from considering becoming the head of the village.

To be head of village means becoming a civil servant, hired by government. I would have to be a follower of the officials and obedient to them. I cannot take that. I want to be able to speak freely and to argue with them when it is necessary to protect our rights. [C]If the district council became independent, Sa-ing would be interested in taking part as a village head in the council.

When I was young my mother told me to stay with the land because I am a woman. Women need property to survive in case they are deserted by the husbands. My mother kept telling me how difficult it is to be born as a woman but I did not feel the difference then. I am the eldest and the only daughter among four children. My mother was a tough and smart woman. My father is weak, irresponsible and untrustworthy. He loves gambling and has never kept his word. My mother was the opposite, a very reliable person who acted as head of the family both for her own and the relatives. She was also very good at school even though she did study further than compulsory education. She married my father who is a fun-loving womaniser; he never leaves a party before it ends, no matter how many days. But with the belief that every woman needs a husband to protect her even by name, my mother never thought of breaking the marriage. 'Woman divorcees and broken families are not acceptable in the society,' she said.

My mother was concerned about social values and gossip, but also for the well being of people around her. I remember my mother carrying rice grain on her shoulder to give to the poor and lonely elderly in the village. She also gave me strong support in the protest against the land resettlement scheme, saying, 'I would have joined you if I was not this old.'

This awareness seems to have passed on to the latest generation. My eldest son loves asking me about the environment and the country's economic situation. He says I have been to many meetings, seminars and democratic forums, so I should be able to explain things to him. When I am tired I tell him to listen to the radio and watch television to find out by himself, but he says he cannot argue or ask questions of the radio and television, and he needs that so he can grasp the issues. He asked me about the meaning of globalisation and said if the world consists of the very rich and the very poor, which side would we belong to? The poor? I agreed and he asked what we should do. We always discuss with each other.

One day he told me that if he decides to continue studying he will enter the monkhood so what I do not have to pay the fees and expenses, as he feels that I do not have enough money. We tend to think children cannot be serious but they can be. Many children I meet are interested in current events like the resettlement project, the changes taking place around them, and they want to know the reasons. Other children also come to talk to me and ask questions. One who comes most often is an orphan and the poorest.

Sa-ing's mother taught all her children to be self reliant and independent, breaking with traditional gender roles. The sons were taught to wash their own clothes, cook and do housework as much as the daughter. She advised Sa-ing to marry a gentle, older man who would probably be kinder, demand less domestic work, and take better care of a wife. She thought a hard-headed woman like Sa-ing would do better with an experienced man.

I believed everything my mother told me — including her prediction shortly before she died that her husband would marry again within a month. He did. My mother died at only 40, because of hard work. Before her funeral was done my father had already got a new wife. After that the land we worked on was divided into two parts. I have taken 12 rai (five acres), let the remaining 15 rai (six acres) to my father and a brother. The other two brothers have not taken any because one has become a monk and the other is married and works on his wife's land. All these pieces of land have no land deeds and are part of the Dong Mae Ped National Park.

Dong Mae Ped is one of the national forest reserves in 17 northeastern provinces of Thailand which were included in the controversial Khor Jor Kor military-led forced resettlement programme. It covers four districts in two provinces, one of which is Sa-ing's birth place and home town. Over 400 families who live and farm there were considered illegal encroachers and were blamed for forest exhaustion. They are some of the rural poor whose future is always insecure.

Any villager who shows leadership or signs of protest is liable to face charges of living illegally and felling trees on a national reserve forest.

The northeast

Source: Behind the Smile. Voices of Thailand, Sanitsuda Ekachal, Thai Development Support Committee, 1990

ISAAN, with about 18 million inhabitants, is the most populous region in the country, and the one with the highest rate of child malnutrition. Most of the people are subsistence farmers. Many of them live in reserved forest areas (most of them now deforested) where they have no legal rights.

Isaan has always been drier and less fertile than other regions. Less than half the region receives sufficient rain for agriculture. Much of its tropical forest has been cleared in the past two or three decades to make way for cash crops such as maize and tapioca which are sold to Europe for animal feed. Loss of the forest has eroded the soil and aggravated the rain shortage.

Cash crops have largely replaced the mixture of traditional subsistence crops. But the prices for cash crops have fallen steadily, exacerbating rural poverty. Most farmers are locked into a cycle of debt, borrowing money for machinery and chemical fertilisers and pesticides, food, housing, clothing and consumer goods. Poor yields and low crop prices make it difficult to pay off even the interest on debts, so many farmers take further loans, or try to increase the area they cultivate. An average of two million people leave the region each year to seek work elsewhere. Isaan is the major source of labour for Bangkok factories.

All arable land in Isaan is now under cultivation, although many villagers do not have legal rights to it. Pressure for land has been exacerbated by the demands of Thai and foreign businesses for eucalyptus plantations for the expanding paper pulp market in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. The government has encouraged these plantations as part of its reforestation policy, but they cause problems for rural communities, taking over their land or damaging soil and crops.

Isaan people have asked the government to grant villagers living in forest reserves rights to use the land, as long they do not encroach further on the natural forest; to revoke concessions to private companies to plant eucalyptus in degraded forest areas where local people live; and to allow local people to control reafforestation projects, as long as the trees are not eucalyptus. They have asked the government to distinguish between commercial forestry and replanting the natural forest.

We have gone through many troubles which seemed to come from nowhere. First it was the logging concession. We were not aware what this would mean until the second round of cutting came. This time villagers felt the loss strongly. As they had no way to stop it, they decided to join in. During the day, the company did the work, during the night villagers took their part. By 1975 the forest reserve was empty.

Then came the eucalyptus plantation. We were cheated all along. The officials came around, promised us money and better incomes, but we received nothing. When they introduced a new project they always do this. The stories are all the same, from the cashew nuts to the plastic cows and then the Khor Jor Kor (*military-led forced resettlement*).

We fell deeper and deeper into debt without seeing any calves or fruit. If we had the money we would have bought normal local cows and grown something else but we had to take those foreign cows on loan from the bank, we had no choice. I heard they were given by the Canadian or Australian government. There was also the JICA (Japan International Co-operation Agency) plantation, another foreign programme. I really would like to meet these JICA and other foreign people, I would tell them not to come here, or to do something else.

Worst of all was the Khor Jor Kor. I first heard of it on the radio, that there would be a programme to allocate arable land for poor people in Isaan. We were very glad when the authority came to investigate the area: we rushed to put our names on the list. But soon soldiers took control of the area and announced that we could not go to our farmland any more. I was at home cooking when I heard the announcement and was so shocked that I could not eat or sleep. Villagers gathered together and discussed this with each other until the next day.

We were so afraid of the soldiers, but I felt the men were more afraid than the women. Our male leaders were slow to take action. At that time around 20-25 of us had been arrested and charged with intruding into the reserve forest and other offences. I was moved by this, and the fact that our male leaders were getting along rather well with the authorities by being their drinking companions. I gathered a group of villagers, mainly women, and went to submit a letter of complaint to the governor. The soldiers came to my house and spoke dirty sentences to frighten me, but I chased them away with the help of my husband. In fact I was very afraid of them, but I needed to fight and other women felt the same. It was the fight of people who had nowhere to go. Some of us cried together when we thought of our problems, the debts, the expenses, the farming which cannot be done, the land they took away.

The places they wanted to move us to have been occupied by other farmers - they needed to fight against eviction too. Women played important roles here. The authorities might have thought it would be easier to deal with women. They called meetings and seminars for land occupants and came around when the men were away, but the women were waiting,

guarding their places, armed with knives and sticks, and they announced to the authorities that they were willing to die for their land. Even though no eviction could take place at Dong Mae Ped, we could not do our work at all that year (1992) and lost all the greens we had grown.

When we heard of the march to the Parliament House I and about 10 other women went to observe, and finally joined the protest with other people from Isaan. At first we knew no-one, and did not know the way; it was our first experience. But after finding out what was going on, I asked fellow passengers on the bus who were on their way home from Bangkok to tell villagers from my area and the area where we were to be relocated to join the march.

After the fall of the military regime and the long protest, the Khor Jor Kor resettlement programme was scrapped but in the villages the authorities were still active. To take the initiative, we set up the 'Dong Mae Ped Villagers' Water and Forest Protection Programme' and offered to take care of the forest, on condition that villagers were informed and consulted before any government programme for Dong Mae Ped forest takes place. Among ourselves we set up rules: there will be a 500 baht fine for felling a tree. But the authorities still wanted full control over the forest and offered to give land deeds with a new relocation plan. Another logging concession came through the provincial office and the district council, but we resisted and threaten to burn down the trucks of the Forest Industry Authority if they started work. Women were on guard during the day when the men were away on the farmland. They threatened to shoot us but we did not give in. We made it clear that anyone who shot us would not get away alive, even though we had no guns. The policemen told me to be careful, I may disappear like Thanong Phodhiarn, the leader of the Labour Congress of Thailand. 'Do you know Thanong?' they asked. I reported this to the governor and spread the news that these men were wanted by the villagers. They never came around again.

Now the villagers always come to me when they have problems. But I have to be very careful because I have a lot more enemies. My husband has also become concerned about my safety.

Sa-ing's husband is 12 years older than her. She had followed her mother's advice and married a man in whom she could confide. She was not madly in love, but found herself living with an understanding, supportive and responsible man. He looks after the family's wellbeing, and takes care of the children and domestic work when Sa-ing is busy or away on protests, meetings or seminar trips.

My children are very close to their father, with him they can be playful and sweet. But I think we women do a lot more for our children and families. We bear them, labour and breastfeed them, risk our lives for them. I think it is wrong that our religion gives more weight to the father's contribution. It is unfair. Women are taken for granted. We always

have to think of others and be careful of what they think about us. If we are talked about badly, even without proof, it is difficult to restore our image. But we have only ourselves to speak for us, no one else. I envy the men, they can go anywhere freely, they can travel any time without worrying about being raped.

Between husband and wife, the rules are unfair. If a wife suspected of adultery cannot prove her innocence she can be chased out of the house without a cent in her pocket. Even her own property can be taken by the husband. Such cases are quite frequent in Isaan. I often think it is so easy to be a man: just enjoy life, eat and sleep without having to worry for others, just please yourself.

Many family problems which come to me are caused by the husbands, but society still blames women if the family is broken. Whatever goes wrong, society accuses women first. In a meeting organised by provincial authorities about women and health, the head of the district said in his opening speech that women are ashamed and never dare to speak out when their personal health goes wrong, but try to conceal it, especially sex-transmitted disease which makes them much more smelly than men. I stood up and asked him to change his words. Since then I have been well known to the whole office.

When I was young I did not want to marry, but my mother taught me it is not good for a woman to live on her own, without a man responsible for her. And as I am dark, not attractive, and outspoken, if I do not get married people would look down on me and think that I could not find a husband.

Sa-ing had always wished she had been born a man rather than a woman, even though she is happy with herself. But recently she has realised that changing gender would not solve any problems. It is social values and practices that need to be changed.

The struggle of Isaan people goes on and Sa-ing will continue to be busy with her double struggle for a long time to come. She and other villagers have yet to receive any land deeds and problems of people in the north-east, the poorest part of Thailand, have not been solved. When this was written, Sa-ing was joining her fellow villagers for another march to parliament in demanding that the government respond to the problems and implement the agreement made last year between Isaan villagers and the Minister of Agriculture, including restructuring of agricultural production.



Far from home: a lonely worker in Hong Kong

Mui-Kae, 23, is a migrant domestic worker in Hong Kong. Good looking, in good health, earning HK\$4,500 (US\$582) a month, she could be considered happy, but not so.

LIFE IS SO MISERABLE. I don't think I will ever know what it is like to be happy! I have even thought of suicide. I have no savings, no security, and no idea what the future will bring.

Mui-Kae works at a restaurant in Hong Kong and comes from a far-away village on a hill in Payao, a new province next to Chiang Rai, the northernmost province of Thailand. She was born into a family of Yao (Mien), a tribal minority living in the hills along the border between Thailand, Burma and Laos, some of them in China.

She met her husband at only 15. He courted her for three years and they married with both families disapproving. Her happiness lasted for a week, and then the routine fights began and went on for two years. If the husband and wife did not fight each other, their parents would do the job.

Soon after we married my husband started gambling which later became his main activity. When I was six months pregnant, he was spending the whole day gambling. I did all the work at our farm alone. Whenever he went to work he became sick and lay on the bed, but after I left for work he got up and went gambling again. I had to tell him to leave, because we were staying at my place. Our marriage was done without registration so it was not difficult. It also was partly because of work. We left home to seek jobs in Bangkok separately, and never got together again. I have taken care of my two children alone since they were born, now they are five and three years old, staying with my parents. I send them money every month. Not being able to be with them is one of the difficulties I am facing.

In Bangkok I worked in restaurants as a dishwasher for 80 bahts a day (a little more than US\$3). I worked at night. During the day I studied Chinese to prepare myself to come to Hong Kong. Quite a few migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong among the Thais are Yao (Mien), from the same village as me. Almost all adult women who are not too old have come here. There are hardly any of us at home, only the kids and elderly are. If they don't come here they go to work in Bangkok.

Mui Kae's sister works in Bangkok, one of the army of low wage seamstresses in one of the shop-house factories working against the clock, making garments for export at 3,500 baht a month. As the eldest, Mui-Kae decided to take the risk of going abroad to find a better-paid job to support the family.

It is estimated that over 40,000 Thais work legally overseas. Over 100,000 more leave annually to find work abroad, mostly in the Middle East, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Japan. Almost all are women, except in the Middle East where the majority are men. Jobs available tend to be domestic work, and construction work in the Middle East. The type of job is relevant to work conditions. Construction work, designated a man's work, is straightforward and less demanding in terms of personal life and time. Domestic work, almost exclusively done by women, gives little space for any personal life, and requires enormous patience. The recruitment process has become a high profit business for agents and an added exploitation of workers, some of whom have never reached a place of work, even after spending a lot of money, often borrowed at high interest.

I thought I was lucky to get a place to work and reach Hong Kong safely after spending a year waiting without paying in advance. I was told I owed the agent 58,000 baht for expenses, which included staying in a small room above the agent's office with 50-60 other women, passport and visa fees, Chinese lessons, and a one-way ticket to Hong Kong. I decided to work hard and spend two years paying my debt.

The work, however, turned out to be harder than any normal person could expect. I arrived at Hong Kong airport at 5pm. The Hong Kong agent picked me up, took me to my workplace and I had to start working right away until 1 o'clock next morning, without changing clothes or having a meal. At 4am I had to go to another workplace and worked there until 11am then another until 5pm.

My boss has two small restaurants, one open from 4-11am, another from 11.30am to 1.30pm, and 5pm to 1am. Between 1.30pm and 5pm I also had to work at the other one. I had hardly any sleep or rest for months. My work was washing dishes, serving, cleaning tables, preparing ingredients for cooking, and cleaning pig intestines.

I tried my best to do the job but my body could not take it. I fell asleep during work, broke dishes and my hands were swollen and cracked all over from being wet. I pleaded with my boss for a long time before he took me to a doctor, and then I was told the medical expense would be deducted from my next month's salary.

About three months later I heard of the union (International Domestic Workers Union in Hong Kong) through a relative who also works here, and I was advised to leave the job. The union worker went to take photos of the restaurants and wrote a letter to the boss for me. He tore it up when I gave it to him, and took out a huge knife to threaten me. A neighbour called the police, but by the time they came my boss had put away the knife, but still refused to let me go. I finally left that boss with a lot of help from the union, but I have lost all my three months' salary. I took me a few months to find a new job.

Meanwhile the agent disturbed me every day to get the money they said I owed them. My relative who is a unionist took my case to the Asian Migrant Workers Centre, which gave me legal advice to fight back. The agent also went to disturb my mother at home which made her very frightened.

My second boss was better but he was not satisfied with my Chinese and because I often broke his rule of not having any other food except packet noodles. I was dismissed after nine months.

Now Mui-Kae works in a better restaurant on a two-year contract for HK\$4,500 a month, from which she sends HK\$4,000 home and keeps HK\$500 for her own expenses. Mui-Kae's family had been heavily in debt, mainly for her father's medical expenses. The debt has been loaded on Mui-Kae. Her mother writes and rings sometimes to ask for more money. Mui-Kae helps support all her brothers' and sisters' education. Her sister earns so little from sewing in Bangkok she can hardly support herself and the child from her broken marriage. Both Mui-Kae and her sister married the same type of man, irresponsible gamblers and drinkers who burdened their wives with their debts.

With little education, broken Thai and Chinese, Mui-Kae bears all her responsibilities with few complaints about the long working hours, being away from home, no day off, welfare or holidays. But she finds it hard to work and spend everyday life among people who dislike and mistreat her because she belongs to an ethnic minority.

It is very difficult for me to remember the menu because I am not used to Thai food. They always scold me and speak about me badly both at work and at the hostel. Sometimes I feel like bursting out.

Social Statistics

Poverty

• % of population in absolute poverty (1980-90 average)	30
• % of rural population in absolute poverty (1980-90 average) ^A	34
• Number of people in absolute poverty (millions) 1992	16.8
• Number of people in absolute poverty, rural (millions) 1992 ^H	14.7
• % income share of poorest 40% (1980-91) ^H	15.5
• % income share of poorest 20% (Mre) ⁵⁹⁴	6

Health

• Mortality rate:	6 per thousand (1991) ^A	
• Life expectancy:		
1992 average ^H	68.7	
1991		
Men	66	
Women	72	
• Infant & Child Mortality		
Infant mortality (per thousand births) 1992 ^H	26	
Under-5 mortality (per thousand live births) Average (MRE) ^S	32.8	
Under-5 mortality (per thousand live births) 1992 ^{W94}		
Female	26	
Male	36	
• Common causes of death: ^B (1990)		
1. Cancer		
2. Motor vehicle traffic accidents		
3. Cerebro-vascular disease		
4. Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis		
5. Nephritis, nephrotic syndrome & nephrosis		
• Common ailments (work-related?)		
Malaria, intestinal infections, dengue fever. Thailand has one of the highest rates of AIDS infection in Asia. ^Z		

Education

• Literacy rates, %, 1992 ^H	
Adult Literacy	93.8
Women	92
Men ⁹⁴	
15-24, female (1980-89)	96
15-19 age group (1990)	99

- *Educational enrolment ratios (%) (1987-91 estimates)^A*

Primary (gross)	
Male	93.8
Female	92
Secondary	
Male	34
Female	32

- *Women in education:^U*

	% of female teachers	% of female students
Primary (1980)	49	48
1990		49
Secondary (1990)		48
Tertiary (1975)		
all	56	40
universities	56	43

- *Mean years of schooling, population aged 25+ (1992)^H*

Average	3.9
Women	3.4
Men	4.4

- *Length of schooling for women, as % of that for men: 77% (1992)^H*

- *Percentage of population aged over 20 who have completed secondary school education (1980) ADB*

Female	Male	F/M Ratio
4.9	6.8	0.72

- *Percentage of population aged over 25 with university degree (1980)^{ADB}*

Female	Male	F/M Ratio
2.2	2.7	0.8

Housing:

- About 1 million people in Bangkok live in slums and squatter settlements.²
- Average size of household: 5.2 (latest)^K
- Percentage of households headed by women: 16.5^{ADB}
- Percentage of households potentially headed by women: 16.5^{ADB}

Rural-urban migration

- *Estimated rural-urban migration, 1970-80,^{AB}*

Male	Female	Total	Female %
852,000	967,000	1,819,000	53

- *Migration to Bangkok,^{AB}*

	Female %
Nov 73-Oct 75	53
Sept 86-Aug 88	62

Migration abroad

- Migration for work abroad (people leaving) AA

	1980	1988
Total	21,500	118,600
% female	n/a	12.7

- No. of Thai workers abroad:

1980	1992
21,484	65,241

Source: Quarterly Bulletin of Statistics, National Statistical Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Vol. 31 No. 4, Dec. 1983 and Vol. 41 No. 3, Sept. 1993

In 1989, 115,300 workers left Thailand for jobs abroad, particularly in the Middle East. But less than half this number departed in 1990, and the flow of migrants workers to the Middle East has never returned to pre-Gulf war levels. Z

Reproduction

- Mean age of childbearing (latest): 27.1% ^{ADB}
- Fertility rate (births per woman): 2.3 (1991) ^A
- Contraceptive use (% of women aged 15-49) 66 (MRE) ^A

A vigorous family planning programme has been conducted since 1971.

Politics

The Government

Thailand has been ruled by a succession of military regimes, with strong leaders acting as autocrats, and deriving legitimacy from the monarchy. The brief periods of civilian government have been characterised by factional rivalry, provoking new army takeovers to 'restore stability'. Governments have fallen in coups d'état more often than in elections.

The civilian bureaucracy provides an element of continuity.

Since 1932 the monarchy has not played a direct role in government. However, the present King, Bhumibol Adulyadej, commands considerable respect and his support has at times been crucial to governments attempting to fend off coup attempts.

The current constitution is an amended version of the National Peace-keeping Council constitution of 1991. There are two houses of parliament, an elected House of Representatives of 360 members and a Senate of 270 appointees. The pro-democracy demonstrations of May 1992 forced an amendment stating that the Prime Minister must be an elected Member of Parliament. Further constitutional amendments intended to strengthen democracy were introduced in January 1995. They included:

- lowering the voting age from 20 to 18
- determining the number of MPs in the House of Representatives in proportion to the population
- reducing the number of senators to two-thirds of the number of MPs in the House of Representatives
- creating an independent electoral commission
- a rule that Cabinet ministers may not hold state concessions conferring monopolies.

Administrative power is centralised, and the cities and municipalities are the only effective tier of local government. With the exception of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, local governments have an inadequate tax base and depend on central government grants. Representatives of central government ministries effectively control provincial administration, despite the existence of elected provincial councils.

Provincial administrators, accountable only to superiors in Bangkok, are slow to respond to local needs. Their failure strengthens the patronage power of wealthy local politicians, who fill gaps in services in exchange for votes in national elections.

Political Forces

Thailand has a large number of political parties, none of which has ever come near a majority. The parties are centred on a few leading individuals representing particular interest groups in business and commerce. They spend considerable sums of money seeking election of their followers, in order to get sufficient parliamentary representatives to earn a place in government. Winning a share in the government is more important than ideology.

The dominant political parties draw support from rural areas, where the majority of votes are cast. Their hold is based on patronage networks and the ability to solve local problems, with cash handouts if necessary. For voters in remote villages, cash on election day may be the only thing they get from the electoral system. The urban-based parties are smaller but their supporters are more vocal, and can bring down a government, even if they cannot form one.

Given the fragmentation of political parties and the relative unimportance of ideological differences, shifting coalition governments are the norm. Personality clashes between party leaders or within a single party can change the composition of a ruling government.

Among the more important political parties are:

- CHART THAI is the single largest party in parliament and is expected to head the new ruling coalition. Its leader is traditional politician Banharn Silpa-archa and its support comes from northern provinces and the central plains. It was accused of massive vote-buying in the July 1995 elections.
- the DEMOCRAT PARTY which led the government until May 1995. This is the oldest established party, whose support comes from the middle class, particularly in the rural south;
- the NEW ASPIRATION PARTY, a vehicle for former army commander General Chaovalit Yongchaiyuth. Its main local power base is in the northeast.
- PALANG DHARMA, led by telecommunications tycoon and former police lieutenant-colonel Thaksin Shinawatra. Its main platform is cleaning up government and politics and its main base is Bangkok.
- CHART PATTANA led by former Prime Minister and retired general Chatichai Choonhavan.

The influence of the armed forces has consistently been out of all proportion to their numerical strength. The military continue to play a major role, reflected in their domination of the Senate; the Prime Minister still needs military approval to stay in office. Some officers would like to exercise their influence more overtly, and claim that they should have a 'dual function' combining national security with modernisation of society.

The extra-parliamentary opposition is relatively weak. The Communist Party of Thailand, which expanded rapidly in the wake of the 1976 coup, is no longer a significant political force. Civil unrest and insurgency continue in the Muslim areas of the south.

Sources: Economist Intelligence Unit Country Profile 1994-95. Third World Guide 1993/94, Instituto del Tercer Mundo, Uruguay. Far Eastern Economic Review 13 and 29 July, 1995.

Women in Politics

- *Proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by women: 4% (1992)^H*
- *Women have had the vote since 1932.*
- *Percentage of decision-makers in government who are women: (1987)^K*

Executive offices; economic, political & legal affairs	3.8
Social affairs	0
All	3.3
Ministerial level	0

History 6th century-mid 1980s)

6th century Thais migrate south from central Asia

650-1250 Thais established state of Nan Chao in present-day Yunnan and Sichuan. Thai migration to the south continued throughout this period.

8th-13th centuries Southern Thailand part of Srivijaya empire, based in Sumatra.

13th century Founding of the first unified Thai kingdom, Sukothai. For 400 years, the Thai fought against the neighbouring Khmers and Burmese. At time, their control extended south to Malaya and east into lands which had been part of the Khmer empire.

1782 Rama I founded Chakri dynasty (current ruling dynasty).

19th century Rivalry between France and Britain for control of Thailand (then known as Siam). The country retained its political independence, though its boundaries were reduced by French encroachment in Laos and Cambodia, and the British in the Malay states. However, Thailand's economy was dominated by the colonial powers, especially the British, who controlled the trade in the four major commodities: rice, rubber, tin and teak.

1851-1910 Reforming monarchies of Mongkut (Rama IV) and Chulalongkorn (Rama V).

1896 France and Britain agreed to leave Siam formally independent but continued to compete for control over its agricultural resources.

1914-18 First World War. Siam fought on the same side as France and Britain, and joined the League of Nations after the war.

1932 Coup d'etat imposed limits on the power of the monarchy and created a parliament elected by universal suffrage

1941 The government in Bangkok allowed Japan to use its territory during the Second World War; Siam became a virtual satellite of Japan, and occupied part of Malaya.

1946 Assassination of King Ananda Mahidol. The US manoeuvred to install his US-born, pro-American brother, Rama IX, as King. Thailand remained under US tutelage throughout the cold war: a succession of military regimes received over \$2 billion from the US between 1950 and 1975.

- 1948 Official name of Siam changed to Thailand
- 1954 Headquarters of Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) established in Bangkok. SEATO was a military pact designed to counterbalance the growing power of revolutionary forces in the region.
- 1961 Large numbers of US troops entered Thailand in reaction to insurrection in Laos. They remained for 14 years, and strong ties developed between the Thai and US armed forces. The involvement of the Thai military in suppressing communists brought them greater political influence, impunity from corruption charges, and control of the opium trade in the 'Golden Triangle' in the north.
- 1973 Popular uprising led by students brought down the government.
- 1975 Inauguration of first civilian government in 20 years, under Prince Seni Pramoj. The government demanded immediate withdrawal of US troops and dismantling of military bases, and attempted to improve relations with neighbouring revolutionary governments.
- 1976 Pramoj overthrown in violent military coup led by right-wing naval officers who disagreed with his policies. Thousands of students and intellectuals went underground and joined the guerrilla movement led by the Communist Party in the rural areas.
- 1977 Another coup brought a more moderate military government, with some liberal policies and eager to attract foreign investment.
- 1979 Thai government granted asylum to Cambodian refugees. Camps along the border with Cambodia became a rearguard for Khmer Rouge guerrillas.
- 1981 Coup attempt supported by young middle-ranking officers, demanding institutional democracy and social change. The King and the Prime Minister, General Prem Tinsulanonda, were nominated to head the coup, but ultimately opposed it, and the attempt was put down. Unusually for a military initiative, the coup attempt was supported by trade unions and student groups.
- Early 1980s* Communist Party severely weakened by split into pro-Vietnam and pro-China factions.
- Mid 1980s* Partial democracy, but political instability continued, with another failed coup attempt, cabinet changes, demands for early elections

Recent history

The 1988 general election was the first since 1976. Retired General Chatichai Choonhavan, a successful businessman, formed a new government. He broke with the traditional focus of government on international affairs and security. His main goal was conversion of Indochina from a battlefield to a regional market. He encouraged Thai investment in Laos and Cambodia, which helped fuel Thailand's economic growth. His government also challenged West European and North American trade policies.

In 1989, heavy floods caused by rapid deforestation highlighted serious environmental degradation. The government prohibited tree-felling and with World Bank

support started to promote the extensive planting of eucalyptus trees. This was met with resistance from peasants who found their natural forests transformed into private commercial plantations of trees earmarked for urban industrial use.

A coup brought down Chatichai's government in 1991, and established a military junta (Council for the Maintenance of National Peace) to rule until new elections. The junta justified the coup on the grounds of widespread corruption in the civilian government. It drew up a new constitution, reserving for itself the right to designate 270 out of 360 senators. This would have given it total control of the new government.

Following elections in March 1992, General Suchinda Kraprayoon, Commander-in-Chief of the Army, was appointed Prime Minister, backed by a coalition of five pro-military parties. The Cabinet of 49 included 11 former ministers who had been accused of embezzlement. The pro-military parties had won a small majority of parliamentary seats, but the middle classes in Bangkok felt strongly that the Prime Minister should be elected.

Opposition parties calling for Suchinda's resignation organised demonstrations and a hunger strike. At the end of May, soldiers opened fire at a demonstration in Bangkok, killing scores of protesters and injuring hundreds. Mass protests continued, while the King appeared on television to appeal for national reconciliation. Suchinda agreed to step down and an interim government was appointed. New elections in September 1992 produced a coalition government led by Chuan Leekpai of the Democratic Party.

Chuan's government was brought down by a land reform scandal in May 1995. In the subsequent elections, the Chart Thai party under Banharn Silpa-archa won the largest number of votes and began negotiating with prospective coalition partners. The coalition is expected to include the New Aspiration Party, Palang Dharma, and four other parties. Banharn and some of his associates are regarded with considerable suspicion by the military, because of alleged corruption and involvement in drug trafficking.

Sources: Economist Intelligence Unit Country Profile 1994-95. Third World Guide 1993/94, Instituto del Tercer Mundo, Uruguay. Far Eastern Economic Review 13 and 29 July, 1995.

Economy

Type of economy:

In the last 25 years Thailand has moved from an agricultural and extractive economy based on a few export commodities (rice, rubber, tin and teak) into one that is increasingly defined as a NIC. Manufacturing industry contributed 28.3% of GDP in 1992, compared with 11.9% for agriculture. However agriculture, based on smallholder cultivation, continues to employ the majority of the labour force, and the country is one of Asia's main agricultural exporters. There is also an important commercial fisheries sector.

The government has sought to promote maximum private sector investment since the 1960s. Its own investments were concentrated on infrastructure development, initially designed to open up access to new agricultural lands for cash crops. The industrial sector was at first based on import substitution, but exports of manufactured goods, especially textiles and garments, began in the 1970s. Infrastructure development and investment incentives for domestic and foreign investors encouraged industrial growth, and massive

investment from Japan and Taiwan in the late 1980s took expanded to the range of manufacturing to electronics, footwear and toys. State planning continues to be a feature of the economy. In the 1980s, the government drew the private sector into investment in infrastructure development and commercial agriculture.

Growth rates have been relatively steady. GDP growth averaged about 8 per cent a year in the 1960s and 8.9% in 1975-79. Relatively slow growth in the 1980s was followed by a boom once world trade had recovered from recession. From 1988 to 1990, Thailand's was the fastest-growing economy in the world with average annual GDP growth at 11.7 per cent. This has since dropped to around 7.8 per cent during the 1990s.

But Thailand does have economic problems:

- an ever-increasing development gap has emerged between Bangkok and the regions. Income per head in the Northeast is a quarter of the national average, and one-eighth that of metropolitan Bangkok;
- the foreign debt tripled during the 1980s;
- environmental degradation, due mainly to deforestation, is undermining the agricultural sector.^z

GDP, current market prices^A

	1980	1992
million baht	662,482	2,804,935
million \$US	32,354.1	110,430.5

Major industries:

Cement, integrated circuits, tin metal, vehicle assembly, sugar, liquor, synthetic fibre, cotton textiles, petroleum products FEER 92

Major exports:^F

Textiles & clothing, rice, prawns, rubber, integrated circuits.

Trade dependency: (exports + imports as % of GDP)

1980	49 (own calculation)
1991	70 ^H

Foreign debt:

	1980	1993
Total foreign debt (US\$m)	8,297	45,819
Debt/GNP ratio, %	25.9	37.6
Debt service ratio, debt service/exports %	18.9	18.6

Inflation

- Consumer price index:^B

(1980=100)	1985	1992
All items	128	172
Food	117	166

Growth rates:

- Annual real GDP growth: %^A

1980	1993 (preliminary)
4.8	7.8

• *Average annual GNP growth (1980-91)¹¹*

<i>Total</i>	7.8
<i>Per capita</i>	5.9

Government spending^A

	1980	1992
<i>Social security and welfare spending as % of total budget</i>	29	32
<i>Military spending as % of total budget</i>	20	19

Trade Unions

During the 1980s the state sector was in the forefront of labour struggles and assisted private sector trade unions in campaigns to force employers to abide by the law and protest against unfair labour practices. This alarmed the military, and public sector unions were banned in 1991. Private sector trade union organising continues, though heavily restricted by legislation.

Labour legislation:

The military regime which seized power in February 1991 passed a State Employee Relations Act which abolished all unions in the public sector and established State Enterprise Employee Associations in their place, on the basis of one association per enterprise. The associations cannot engage in collective bargaining or go on strike. They have a limited advisory role and are prohibited from forming national federations or from joining existing trade union centres. The act decreased Thailand's trade union membership by 55%, or 200,000 workers.

New legislation is going through parliament which will allow state employees to join trade unions, but maintains the ban on strikes. Trade unions were not consulted about the new law, which they regard as little better than cosmetic. Threats of suspension from access to trade preferences under the US Generalised System of Preferences had prompted the changes.

Civil servants were already denied the right to organise under the 1975 Labour Relations Act.

Legislation gives a broad definition of 'essential services' in which strikes are prohibited.

In private enterprises, employers can take on new workers to replace those who go on strike, and the Minister of Labour may issue an order to prevent a strike, or order strikers to return to work. Under the 1975 act, every union official is required to be a full-time employee at the factory where he or she has been elected to represent the union.

Manufacturers find it relatively easy to circumvent minimum wage legislation, especially in the informal sector, and the rates actually paid are substantially below the minimum wage. Even salaries for the lowest paid government employees are below the legal minimum.

Labour

• *EAP: L 1993 & 1982*

	1980 No.	1980 %	1990 No.	1990 %
<i>Total</i>	22,728,100		31,749,600	
<i>Male</i>	11,988,000	53	16,863,100	53
<i>Female</i>	10,740,100	47	14,886,400	47

- *EAP in 1994: 33.8 million, of whom 32.7 million employed. 19 million employed in agriculture.²*

- *% of economically active women in sectors of the economy^A*

	1970-9	1980-9	1990-1
agriculture	75.7	64.1	65
industry	7.4	10.7	12.3
services	16.9	25.2	22.7

- *EAP in manufacturing^{L 1993 & 1982}*

	1980	1990
% of total EAP in manufacturing	7.9	9.9
women as % of manufacturing EAP	42	49.9

- *Unpaid family workers (included in EAP)^{L 1993 & 1982}*

	1980	1990
unpaid family workers as % of total EAP	46	39
women as % of unpaid family workers	66	65

- *Invisible workers, as % of EAP:*

Male:	13.5
Female:	22.9

(refers to people of working age but who work unpaid, unofficially or outside the cash economy, and are not counted in the EAP figures)

- *Administrators & managers, % female: 21 (1980-89)^H*
- *Economically active population as % of working age population:^A*

	1970-79	1980-89	1990-91
Women	71.5	76.3	76.3
Men	85.3	87.8	87.7

- *Unemployment (13+):^{L 1994 & 1982}*

	1980	1985	1991
Total	204,200	994,600	869,300
Male	121,600	456,200	350,100
Female	82,500	538,400	519,100
Total rate, %	0.8	3.7	2.7
Male rate, %	1	6.9	2
Female, %	0.7	4.4	3.5

- *Minimum wage (daily):* Varies between regions.
Since April 1994: 135 baht in Bangkok, the surrounding provinces and Phuket.²

Average wage:

- *Non-agricultural wages (earnings in baht per month):^L*

	1985	1989	1992
Total	3,358	3,580	4,964
Male		4,260	
Female		2,907	

- Earnings, baht per month, employees, manufacturing^{L 1994}

	1989	1992
Total	2,995	4,016
Male	3,726	
Female	2,453	

- Women's earnings as % of men's, based on tables above, 1989,

all non-agricultural:	68%.
manufacturing:	66%

- There is a big difference between private and public sector wages Average earnings, baht per month (1992):

Government employees	7,365.6
Private employees	2,831.5

Source: Thailand Statistical Yearbook 1994. National Statistics Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Bangkok

- Earnings per employee average growth rate: 5.9% (1980-90)^H

- Working hours per week: 48.32 (1992)^L

- Working hours per month, non-agricultural occupations:^L

	1985	1986	1989
All Non-agricultural			
Total	220.46	212.73	225.78
Male		208.52	225.73
Female		226.88	225.81
Manufacturing			
Total			219.41
Male			223.58
Female			214.87

- Industrial injuries compensated^{L 1994 & 1987}

	1982	1993
No. of persons	29,989	156,550
of whom killed	411	980

- Number of labour force organised: About 10% of the non-agricultural labour force.^E
- Less than five per cent of the labour force is organised.

Source: Organised Labour in the Asia-Pacific Region. A Comparative Study of Trade Unionism in Nine Countries, Stephen Frenkel, ed. Cornell International Industrial and Labour Relations Report, No. 24. ILR Press, Ithaca, New York 1993.

- Strikes & lockouts: ^{L 1994 & 1982} (industrial disputes leading to stoppage of work)

	1980	1993
No. of disputes	18	14
No. of workers involved	3,230	4,817
No. of work days lost	5,357	214,029

Demography

- **Land area:** 514,000 sq. km.^E
- **Population (1992):** 56.1 million^H
- *Women make up 49.7% of the population*
- *Age of population: 1992 estimate^B*

	All (% of total population)	Males (% of age group)	Females (% of age group)
0-4	10	51	49
0-14	31	51	49
15-64	65	50	50
65+	4	45	55

- *52% of the population is under 25.*
- **Urban population:** 10.207 million, or 19% 1990 census:^B
of which women: 52%

The bulk of the urban population lives in Bangkok, whose population grew from 5.9 million in 1985 to 10 million in 1994. Z

- **Rural population:** 44.325 million, or 81% 1990 census:^B
of which women: 50%
- **Annual population growth rate:** 1.5 % a year (1991)^A
- **Annual urban population growth rate:** 3.96% (1985-90)^A

Religions: The overwhelming majority (about 95%) are Buddhist. About 4% of the population are Muslim. There is also a Christian minority.^{TWC}

Ethnic diversity: Over 75% of the population are Thai, 14% are Chinese (33% in Bangkok). The Chinese population has largely been assimilated. About 600,000 hill people belonging to the Hmong, Meo and other peoples live in the north of the country, and about one million Muslim Malays in the south. The latter have a historical association with the Malay states across the border, and there is a small armed secessionist movement. Some of the hill peoples have not secured Thai citizenship. Since 1975, over 500,000 refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia have entered Thailand, of whom many have been resettled in other countries. Refugees from Burma.

Refugee population, 1992: 64,000^H

Surviving globalisation: the struggle of Filipino women

Filipino women are struggling on three fronts; at the national level for changes in the economic and political structures; at the community level, for adequate social services; and within their homes, democratizing relationships between men and women, and between young and old, reports Maureen Pagaduan, Dazzle Rivera, and Ana Dizon

The persistence of poverty in the Philippines

For many Filipinos, and especially women, life has never been harder than in the last 10 years.

Since the 1970s the disparity between rich and poor Filipinos has grown ever wider. In 1979, 42 per cent of the country's total earnings were concentrated in the hands of the wealthiest 10 per cent of the population. The share of national income of the poorest 60 per cent of households declined from 25 per cent in 1971 to 22.5 per cent in 1979¹. These households were held together mostly by women.

More recent statistics show that 8.98 million Filipino families live below the poverty threshold². The Philippine National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) considers that in 1990, more than half of the urban population and half of the rural population were poor. According to NEDA (1994) 'The existence and persistence of poverty in the Philippines through the years have caused the emergence of two faces of deprivation, which is clearly manifested in the lives of the rural and urban poor.'³

The years from Marcos to Ramos: global integration of women and women's work

The early 1980s were marked by the twilight of a dictatorship where economic and political forces meshed to push President Ferdinand Marcos out of power. Martial law provided the structure and logistics for political repression and economic plunder by the Marcos family and their cronies. Their profligacy in the face of a mounting foreign debt (which in 1983 stood at \$24.6 billion, a 12-fold increase since 1970) and the increase in oil prices put extreme pressure on the country's dollar reserves. Unable to meet the soaring costs of debt servicing and oil imports, the regime had to submit to International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditionalities in order to qualify for further foreign loans.

In 1984 the Philippines entered into its 18th stand-by agreement with the International Monetary Fund. The country had to comply with stringent performance criteria including fiscal and monetary changes, new investment and trade policies, reform of public sector enterprises and the financial sector, and price deregulation. One significant aspect of these reforms which had an enormous impact on women was export promotion. The government promoted the manufacture for export of electronics, garments, toys, leatherware, furniture and other labour intensive goods. In many cases, the nature of these goods allowed multinational manufacturers to subcontract jobs to the informal sector, including home-based women workers. This employment pattern has facilitated the integration of women and their households into the export economy. The informal sector is by definition unregulated, so the expansion of subcontracting resulted in very low returns for long hours of work by both women and children.

The formal sector employed many women workers in the free trade zones or export processing zones. These zones were intended to attract foreign investors through tax incentives, government financing schemes and relaxation of restrictions on foreign ownership. They also assured a supply of cheap labour. By 1980, one of the first zones, the Bataan Export Processing Zone, employed approximately 28,000 workers, mostly women, in about 57 enterprises⁴. The feminisation of labour, more pronounced in the mid-80s, increased women's burden of productive work without easing or supporting their reproductive responsibilities. Moreover, inadequate labour laws and lax enforcement made women workers vulnerable to discrimination and sexual harassment.

In addition to the export of agricultural products and raw materials, the government promoted the export of human resources and skills. At first, in the early 1970s, thousands of Filipino men migrated to the Middle East, mainly for construction or similar work. But the demand for male workers decreased as roads and buildings were completed. It was replaced by an increased demand for Filipina nurses and domestic helpers for the Middle East and the United States, entertainers for Japan, and mail order brides for some European countries and Australia. Like their counterparts in the export processing zones, women migrant workers have suffered various forms of discrimination, exploitation, and physical and sexual abuse. Their experience has been documented by Philippine women's institutions, such as the Kanlungan Foundation and the Batis Centre for Women.

The social consequences of the long separation from their families of women working overseas is incalculable. Even when the separation is temporary, husbands and children left behind suffer emotional and psychological stress, as do the women migrants.

The export drive was accompanied by a push to earn dollars at home by developing the tourist industry. Marcos and the landowning class did

not want to address the poverty of the majority by redistributing wealth so as to boost the domestic market. They preferred to generate income from abroad, from the tourist market⁵. The industry's marketing strategy presented Filipinas as prime tourist attractions, either subtly or overtly. By 1984, the number of women working as prostitutes had grown to at least 15,000; the number of prostituted children was estimated at around 5,000. The main customers were Japanese businessmen and from them alone the government was earning at least \$344 million every year⁶.

The Marcos dictatorship disintegrated under the weight of economic collapse and political opposition. But behind the drama and euphoria of the 1986 revolution are the largely undocumented courage and endurance of Filipino women resisting abuses and struggling to survive the consequences of structural adjustment and government profligacy. These women's lives were scarred by the Marcos regime in ways that were never reflected in the country's census books, nor in economic and political studies.

When the administration of Corazon Aquino assumed power its efforts at economic and political stabilisation pushed the well-being of women back into the shadows behind macro-economic rhetoric.

Aquino pursued a development model that was in tune with World Bank and IMF views. The government's Letter of Intent to the IMF (1989) contained a memorandum on economic policy prescribing targets for 1989-1992. At that time, there were eight million unemployed with another eight million working less than 40 hours a week⁷. Poverty incidence remained high with 5.2 million families living below the poverty line.

Price deregulation and reform of pricing systems for public utilities under structural adjustment brought phased increases in electricity and water charges, among others. Rice prices went up. With 67 per cent of the total expenditure of low income households going on food (49 per cent on cereals) the poorest households were the most vulnerable. The lowest income households generally bear the brunt of adjustment costs, especially when these affect basic goods and services.

Increasing vulnerability of urban poor women and their families

In the years of the debt crisis and structural adjustment there was an exodus from the countryside to the cities. A decade of militarisation of the countryside, neglect of agricultural development, natural disasters (eg the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo) and natural population increase produced an annual population growth rate in Metro Manila squatter colonies of 3.3 per cent.

For the large numbers of urban poor (4.5 million in Metro Manila alone) jobs are scarce and access to services is inadequate. Thirty-five per cent of young people from squatter areas drop out of school, compared with 20 per cent from non-squatter areas. They probably sense that edu-

cation does not guarantee employment. A 1994 NEDA study shows that unemployment rates are higher for those with educational attainments than those with no schooling at all. Birth rates, infant mortality rates and the incidence of tuberculosis are also higher in squatter colonies⁸. The problems confronting impoverished women merely seem more entrenched with every change of government leadership.

The threat of eviction, lack of housing and insecure land tenure are the primary problems for the urban poor. Nearly 100,000 evictions take place in Metro Manila every year often carried out so violently that they cause injuries and even deaths. Eviction can also break up families: wives and children go to relocation sites while the men stay to continue work, and form new families. Many women have suffered miscarriages or have lost their lives while trying to defend their homes against the demolition teams. It is certainly no overstatement to say that women who put their lives on the line in this way are fighting for their families.⁹

The challenge ahead: battling national, class and gender oppression

The Aquino government accomplished little more than its own survival in the face of several coup attempts. The current administration of Fidel Ramos clings to an economic strategy of export-led industrialisation which critics say opens the economy to relentless market forces¹⁰.

Popularly called 'Philippines 2000', the plan aims to promote exports, stabilise the balance of payments, maintain good credit standing (40 per cent of the budget appropriated for debt payments) expand the trade in overseas contract workers and offer incentives to foreign investors.

Women are struggling on three fronts: at the national level, for change in economic and political structures; at the community level, for adequate social services; and within their homes, democratising relationships between men and women, and between the young and the old.

Women's organisations are acting to expose the flaws of Philippine 2000 and advocating more humane alternatives. They organise other women, especially in grassroots communities, and work to raise awareness of the continued oppression of women, the degradation of the environment, the vanishing of indigenous cultures, and other problems. Organisations such as the Group of Ten: Lakas ng Kababaihan (a national alliance) and the Women's Committee of the Freedom from Debt Coalition try to influence development assistance, structural adjustment and debt management policies so as to ensure the welfare and development of Filipinos.



The stories below are of three women who all now live in Metropolitan (or Metro) Manila, a vast urban sprawl covering 13 municipalities and four cities, including Navotas, Makati, Quezon City, Pasig, Malabon and Mandaluyong. Two of the women have migrated to Manila - one from the island of Leyte in the central Philippines, and the other from the Cagayan Valley in the northeast.

Julie

*41, urban poor and married,
works as a counsellor for
abused women and
breastfeeding mothers*

I AM AN ONLY CHILD of my parents who separated when I was six. My father, a mechanic, has six children with his second family. My mother did not get on with my father who was a womaniser. When I was in high school, I had to live with him and his second family. I could not bear the tension of living with my stepmother so I left. My father was so angry he re-

fused to support my studies any further. An intense rift between me and my father dragged on for many years and I still harbour much bitterness. My mother, a laundry woman with very little income, was angry and tried to force me to go back to my father and continue my studies. But I refused to live in hell: the ill feeling I have for my father has never died. He even supported his second wife's three other children by another man, who all finished school and went to college, while I never had the chance.

Life with my mother was harsh because the income from doing laundry for other families was too small to feed even only two mouths. In 1970, when I was 15, my mother got a job as a labourer in a fishnet factory owned by a Chinese family in Navotas. I usually 'accompanied' her to the factory. I was not officially employed but I helped her make the fishnets since pay was given pakyaw, or by the number of pieces you finished each day. Most of the factory workers also had their children and family working with them.

It was in Navotas I realised how hard it was to earn money. I witnessed my mother continuously working for more than eight hours, six or seven days a week. Work was hard, conditions harsh, and pay meagre. The work area was damp, dark and over-crowded. There were no fans to circulate the air and many women became dizzy. The toilets were filthy.

It was in this factory I first witnessed a labour strike. At first it was not clear to me what they were fighting for. I went with my mother, who was very active in the strike area. They were shouting at the picketline. The strike lingered, with no concrete results. My mother was forced to take a job at another factory in Las Pinas.

My mother was determined to put me through school. I finished high school and a year at Makati Polytechnic College. After that it was impossible to continue on our very limited income. By this time, I was earning

a separate wage of P300 (300 pesos) a week at the factory with my mother.

I married in 1972. I was not ready, but I felt pressured by our neighbour-relatives. I pitied my mother; she wept because she did not want me to get married. They kept blaming her that I eloped and I was pregnant and she was an irresponsible mother.

My husband worked in a furniture factory. His income was very small and we lived with my mother in an urban poor community in Makati. I continued to work with my mother in the factory but our income was still not enough. I became pregnant and had to stop work at the factory. I took on home-based work tending pigs. Every day before dawn, I was at the market 15 minutes from our house in San Isidro, asking for wilted vegetables. I would also go from house to house in our community, asking for kanin-baboy, or leftovers for the pigs. At home I cooked it all for the five pigs in our care. After feeding, I cleaned the pigpens so the stink would not cause more offence to our neighbours. Then I would prepare my children's breakfast: in the afternoon, it was the same routine - feeding and cleaning the pigs, feeding and cleaning my children, and cleaning the house. This work helped, because the income from the pigs was feeding my family. I did this for four years up to 1984. Later, my mother and I sold cooked food or lutong ulam, in front of our house, since she was then out of job and the pigs had been sold by the owner. I cooked *pinakbet*, *ginataang monggo*, *chop suey*, *adobong pusit* and other dishes which our neighbours bought since they were too tired to cook after a hard day at the factory.

Most of the families in our community in San Isidro earn their incomes through buying and selling foods like corn, peanuts, homemade icecream, fishballs, *taho* and *chichiría* near the schools or in the market place, or as street vendors of cigarettes, rags, candies and newspapers. Others are factory workers and government employees. We lived in one- or two-roomed wood houses with roofs of used sheets of iron. Some of the structures are semi-permanent with hollow cement blocks as walls. Houses are close together. The floors of most of them are bare ground. The main street is a dirt road with many alleys. Pathways leading to the alleys in front of the houses are always pools of mud during rainy season. The little feet of children in slippers walking home from the nearby school were always soaked with mud. Very few families can afford to use the garbage collection services of enterprising individuals who charge P5 - P10. The public garbage disposal was so irregular: in the rainy season there is not only mud, but often piles of uncollected garbage.

My husband was an organiser in the factory and very active in the movement to change the policies of the company he worked for. He was the one who opened my mind and helped me understand the reasons we were poor. Sometimes he would bring his friends from the labour group home for meetings. These people were teaching factory workers and the urban poor in our community about the roots of our poverty, and why the

government was unable to provide the necessary services and basic needs for the majority of Filipinos.

My mother and I attended many of the education sessions where leaders discussed the situation of factory workers, which was like that of workers in many other factories in Navotas and Metro Manila. Many of those at the meetings were residents of urban poor communities like myself and my mother. We were all interested in the discussions, especially on land. I could relate this to my family's situation.

The area where we lived in Makati was abandoned land. We had been there since 1972 and we were the ones who developed it. In 1983, someone came and claimed the land. Our homes were demolished four times in 1984 and we were thrown into the streets with our belongings. My children had to sleep in the streets because our home was destroyed by men who swept down on us without even telling us who they were and what right they had to drive us away. Our house was in shambles, the few things we had were wrecked. The demolition team hacked at the homes, throwing the galvanised roofs on their truck amidst the screams of women clutching their children. I did not know what I felt. Was it anger, was it pity for my children? I did not know who was to blame then. In all my pain, I was fortunate to feel the comfort of my husband near me to ease the heavy pain in my chest. My mother, my husband and I: we helped each other through those hard times.

The community organisation gave us moral support while we were homeless. They explained to us that we had to keep on fighting for our rights as a people who want to live like human beings.

But problems arose as I became more involved in the community organisation. I had been attending seminars where we discussed problems in Philippine society and ways in which ordinary people could work together to resolve personal and everyday problems. We came in for more family pressure from my uncles and other relatives: they were angry, accusing my husband of being an activist and a member of the underground New People's Army. There were always people coming to our house. I did not know how to make our neighbours understand that they came to help. It was difficult to explain about community organisations to people who were not exposed.

I wanted to understand more about the poverty around us. I wanted to know why my neighbour who had lived here for so long, and my relatives who had raised their children here, had no right to live on their land. After so long, your house is destroyed at one flick of your finger because somebody claims it is their land. This is what pushed me to fight and to ask for help from people who could help us.

We have been violated, physically, mentally and emotionally, four times at San Isidro. The people whose homes were destroyed resisted, and set up their homes again after the demolition team went away. We never left. We stayed in the wreckage of our homes and openly resisted. The con-

frontation was dangerous: the city hall men were like goons, poking weapons at us, threatening that we must leave or be 'salvaged' (killed). They were going to build a shopping centre on the land: that was why it was imperative that we leave. At one point, I was exhausted.

In 1986, I became a community volunteer with Panganay, a women's NGO, which held seminars on health and women's rights. My experience in caring for my children was very limited. I couldn't even breastfeed my own child. I thought of myself as ignorant even of the right way to care for my children. The time my child was in hospital with diarrhoea was a terrible experience. I knew how to breastfeed but I did not know the ill effects of bottlefeeding for sick children. I believed what the doctor told me: to stop breastfeeding because my child's diarrhoea would get worse. In Panganay, I learned how wrong the doctors were, what misconceptions people have about breastfeeding, and what myths were perpetuated through advertising.

I also joined the mass organisation of urban poor women, Halikana, in Makati. We have been conducting education sessions among urban poor women in communities like San Isidro. My area coverage was four communities.

Our most painful experience in the battle for our land was when we filed our case at the Regional Trial Court. Our opponents had money, and were even able to buy our barangay captain to testify against us. Even the councillors were pushing to get us off the land. While our homes were being demolished, the police pointed their guns threateningly at us, planting fear in us that if we do not leave, they would shoot and we would be wiped out. Most of the families now understood how business interests oiled the machinery for demolishing our homes. But after some weeks, only 20 families still openly resisted the demolition team; at the end only 10 of us were left. I even went to Malacanang (the presidential palace) to ask for help to stop the destruction of our homes and our lives. I was crying. The mobile patrol of the radio station was there to hear us but they, too, were helpless. Nothing happened. I approached many radio stations and reporters but they could do nothing. The demolition went on. All our efforts to resist felt useless.

The height of my frustration and pain was that the organisations where I poured out my life did not help. At the point when I needed them, they were not there. Maybe I should not blame them because the situation was very dangerous. The worst experience I cannot forget: it was when all of us, the last 10 families who continued to fight, were 'jailed' on the land which we guarded with our lives. The barangay officials set up a fence with guards to watch us. The demolition team threatened to throw a bomb in the fenced area. None of us could go to work, nor could our children go to school.

I approached the lawyers of the people who claimed the land. They told me that we should accept the cash offer of P10,000 and leave our

land. P10,000? Was that equivalent to more than 15 years of life on this land? Was this the only way? The people had no choice but to accept. The men had not been able to go to work, their children had nothing to eat, their wives were exhausted. No one could sleep for many days because of the threats.

My family and I finally gave in and left. My children were a pitiful sight. The trauma of policemen with their guns pointing at us has never left them. I started a new life and concentrated instead on my work with Panganay. You want to change your life but it is so hard. You wonder if there is hope.

When elections come, we no longer vote. Whoever you place there, if the system of government remains the same, there will be no change. There are many promises, but once politicians get into power, they forget the people who elected them. Many people in the community feel exactly how I feel. They themselves know how it feels to be abandoned when one needs help the most.

You cannot sleep. You might wake up one day to find you are already in the streets without a home. When you wake up, you do not know if tomorrow you will still be alive.



Cion

*a 50-year-old widow,
works as a vendor and
laundrywoman*

I COME FROM the province of Leyte, like Imelda Marcos. In 1973, my husband and I and our first son moved to San Francisco del Monte (Frisco). My husband worked as a carpenter, while I earned money doing laundry. We transferred to Commonwealth in Quezon City in 1975 to live with my husband's aunt.

Life in Leyte was harder than here. You do not own land, but work on someone else's. Wages were meagre. We worked in the fields and were paid by the day, 30 pesos, too little even to buy rice. Sometimes there was no work: How were we to eat? At least here in the city, as long as you are hardworking, you can survive, like I have. My husband died in 1986, and now it feels very heavy to carry the burden alone. When I wake in the morning, I have to make myself get up. I am not lazy. But sometimes I feel so hard up having to face the day alone.

Rice is the most important. As long as we have rice, we have food. We consume one kilo of rice a day. When I have no income, none of us eat. I need at least 100 pesos regularly for our food, and to pay our debts in the sari-sari store: we pay our neighbourhood store 'gives' (instalment payments) for items we have already had from the store. I go to market in the afternoon or early evening when vegetables are cheaper, I do not eat fruit any more because it is so expensive. Mangoes, which we picked off the

trees in Leyte, cost more than 50 pesos a kilo.

My three other boys were born here in Commonwealth. Romeo in 1975, Renato in 1977 and Conrad in 1980. My third son, Renato, died of broncho-pneumonia in 1980, when he was only three years old. I was working every day, washing clothes for other families, could not care for him properly. The children had to look after themselves while I was at work, and I did not realise his measles had developed into complications.

My relatives brought him to Fatima Hospital in Bulacan, where the poor do not have to pay. They have nothing to pay with anyway. But he needed many expensive medicines. My brother helped us to buy some, but we couldn't afford them all. Renato did not make it. He was quiet. Nobody told me he was deteriorating.

The people in this part of Commonwealth are from different provinces. People in our community help each other, especially in harsh times. Even though we hail from different areas, there is unity. You see this in the chapel: the line of people coming to comfort and condole never ends. This sense of community helps me through my hard days. I can borrow from the store when I am broke. My neighbour shares the little food that has to go around their family with my family. I like to think that in the future, I can repay their kindness and concern for me and my family. For now, there is little to share.

If I have the money, I want to cement my dirt floor. Most of all, I want my children to finish their schooling. I wish they could know how to work.



Vivian S.

*42, a seamstress and
single parent, has
become a leader in her
squatter community.*

I WAS BORN IN ECHAGUE, Isabela, Cagayan Province to my parents, a carpenter and a seamstress. I was second eldest of six. As children, we were taught early to take care of our younger siblings, something which I still do today.

I can still remember how helping our mother turn fabrics into beautiful dresses was a family affair, with us children sewing buttons and other easier tasks. My father regularly helped my mother when he is not too busy, and the boys helped our father make furniture.

I was the only one to follow our parents footsteps. I became a seamstress by accident; what I had dreamed of was to become a lawyer, but we were so poor.

We were able to attend school free when my father was offered a permanent job at the Lyceum of Echague. However, this did not last long as when the administration changed, our matriculation fees were deducted

from my father's meagre salary. Much later, when Tatay (father) got sick and could no longer work, all of us had to stop school. Only my kuya (brother) got to finish college and I, with just one semester to go, had to stop as our limited resources could only support him. That was when I thought of going to Manila.

In 1971, with a neighbour, I went to Manila to apply for a job abroad. But this failed, and with money running out I looked for a job. With help from a relative working at Camp Aguinaldo, I landed a civilian job as statistical clerk in Armed Forces of the Philippines Logistics. I earned P8 a day for the first three years, rising to P850 when I left in 1974.

While at Camp Aguinaldo, I took housing in the compound to save money. But when my kuya came to join me, I had to move out and we went to live with cousins in Pasig. I found how difficult it was to live with relatives. After a hard day's work in the office, we were still obliged every day to clean the house. Unable to bear the load of work, my brother decided to go back to the province while I transferred to a boarding house in Sampaloc, a long distance from Camp Aguinaldo. However, when Tatay visited and saw the conditions in the boarding house, he took me to his relatives in Malabon. There my brother joined me again.

If life in Pasig was hard, it was doubly so in Malabon. Aside from the higher transport cost, my older brother and I were made to shoulder the entire family's food expenses, and also required to do chores in the house. Worst of all was when my cousin's husband attempted to molest me sexually. We left and rented a place in Dimasalang.

By this time our younger sister came to live with us. It was becoming difficult for me to take care of all the expenses as Kuya had not found a new job since leaving Pasig. As a casual employee, I did not receive any government benefits. In spite of all this, most of my worries dissolved whenever my longtime sweetheart came all the way from CLSU (Central Luzon State University) to visit.

Our place in Dimasalang was prone to flooding so we moved to Murphy, a good decision as it was in walking distance of my workplace. The good news was that our brother had found a job which allowed him to pay part of our expenses and send money to our parents in the province.

I became pregnant while my boyfriend was still studying, and gave birth to a baby girl. On the day of her baptism her father and I married. After that, I resigned from my job, went back to Isabela and stayed there for a year. In 1975 I returned to Manila leaving my baby under my parents' care. I got a job as secretary-liaison officer of an exporting firm in Mandaluyong with a salary of P300 a month and no benefits except free meals. My employers (it was a family business) treated me well, and always remembered to buy me something from their trips abroad.

From Murphy, we moved to West Crame after we found that our rent had been going to a sub-lessor not the real owner who had received nothing and wanted us all out. In West Crame, I conceived my second child by

my husband, who paid infrequent visits. My second pregnancy was more difficult. I became very sickly and decided to quit my job and stay in the province for a time. I never saw my husband again, even after I delivered our baby boy. Much later I found out that he had another woman, and children with her.

In 1983 our Kuya died. With two children and siblings to support, my younger sister and I went back to Manila. This time finding work was difficult. We ended up as housemaids with a salary of P150 a month for myself and P100 a month for her. My work was not solely household chores; I also had to tutor our employer's younger children. And for all this, they maltreated us. They kept watch to ensure we did not eat much, so we always ended up starving. When we had enough of this treatment, we left.

Fortunately, my sister found a job in Quezon City while I got a job sewing in a shop owned by the former Mayor Raymundo of Pasig. Here, I had to learn how to sew, because although our mother was a seamstress she had never taught us her craft, hoping we would not follow her occupation. Pay was on a piece-rate basis. For a blouse and skirt pair, you would get P10. At first, as a beginner, my take-home pay only amounted to P150 a week. Sometimes, I could only finish one pair a day because the designs were so elaborate. But I persevered. Little by little I remembered how my mother worked. I learned to sew, make patterns, cut and put together the parts to make a whole dress. I practised and practised after. My output slowly increased till I could produce 20 pairs for a total pay of P200 a week. I also learned embroidery, which became my sideline.

During this time, the mid 1980s, my sister and I moved from one rented place to the other, from Quezon City, to Mandaluyong, to Makati. One day, without warning, the owner of the house we rented ordered his workers to tear it down in order to build a new, expensive apartment building to be rented to people with more money. Shocked, we did not know where to go until one of our uncles helped us find a place. He led us to the side of the Pasig River in Sta. Rosa and, with wood gathered from our old place, my sisters and I built a new refuge and officially became 'squatters'. We constructed it recalling carpentry lessons from Tatay, and this house is still our shelter today. Our shanty looked lowly to most people but we found here some peace and, ironically, stability.

I left Raymundo's shop in 1988 to work in the Middle East as an embroiderer. I was not yet an expert, but my work met the standard required and soon I was in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. All my expenses were deducted from my salary, except for the paper work which I paid for and handled myself. Since I had the highest educational attainment among my co-workers, I was appointed supervisor at a salary of \$200 a month. I also tried to learn Arabic, first by listening to my employer and his colleagues and, later, by speaking their language. I

thought if I could understand and communicate, they would not be able to fool me.

I was contented with the way things were going for me, plus the fact that our employer was kind enough to his workers. But his lack of entrepreneurial skill led him to huge deficits. The business closed down, and we workers had no option but to go home.

In 1990 I again applied for work in Saudi Arabia, this time as a seamstress. I was placed in Riyadh, and then experienced being passed from one employer to another. Working conditions were different. One employer only allowed his workers to eat once a day, and to keep myself from hunger I drank lots of water. But when I had too much of his maltreatment, I fought back. I was sent back to our recruiter who brought me to the shop of my former employer's mother. In this shop, I saw how my fellow Filipinos fought each other to remain in favour with our employer and to keep their jobs. Once, I was involved in a skirmish when I tried to defend an old woman from the other women in the shop. I was sent to the other son's shop: this son, whom I had thought was better than the rest of his family, paid our salary on time, but then borrowed it back and refused to refund us. I left.

Despite the difficulties with these short-term employers, they did not attempt to physically harm me. Looking back, I can see I made the right decision. I landed a better job as seamstress for a royal couple and better pay in the household of a Saudi prince. My good fortune was just beginning when I received news from the Philippines that my eldest daughter, now a teenager, had run away from home.

My children did not grow up with me as my parents took care of them until they died. I wanted them to finish schooling in the province, but because they could not relate well with my brother's wife, we decided they should join me in Manila.

I returned to the Philippines to look for my daughter, using every centavo I earned abroad. I put up a small variety store in our house while trying to figure out what to do. But after spending all the money I had, I was not able to find her. She resurfaced three years later, with a small child in tow calling me Lola (granny).

With no money and no job, I decided to study fashion design as I was beginning to get occasional sewing jobs. I decided if I went abroad again, I would not work as a seamstress, but as a designer. In between school and sewing, I was subcontracted by an exporter to do macrame planters and pompons for children's bonnets. Many women and men were without jobs in our community, so soon I got most of my neighbours to do the same. Later, we stopped because of long delays in payment, and the very low per-piece rate.

My return to the Philippines opened new avenues for me. I became more involved in issues affecting the community which adopted me and my family when we had nowhere to go. But this time, it is not just my

family affected. The entire community of Sta. Rosa Riverside is threatened by the government river clean-up project in which many riverside settlements, including ours, will be cleared and demolished. Only us - not the many industries and factories that dump hazardous chemical and other wastes into the river.

Working for our community at this difficult time has been a time of self discovery for me. I found that in spite of my status - a woman, not a graduate, urban poor - I can debate and argue with government officials on behalf of the families in Sta. Rosa Riverside. I also realised that I have the ability to deal, negotiate and strategise with other community leaders as we all try to protect our communities.

My family has always been my source of strength, and yet they have also been the major stumbling block to my development. They have given me their support, but they have also given me some of my greatest burdens. If my brother's schooling had not been prioritised over mine, if I had not married and had children, if my daughter had not run away. So many ifs...

I still dream that someday I will go back to school, attend law school and, who knows, someday be a good lawyer. I also hope our community will not be demolished and that the government will hear our plea, and hear the alternatives we offer for what we think is best for us, the squatters along the Pasig river.

Social Indicators

Poverty

• % of population in absolute poverty 1980-90 average	54
• % of rural population in absolute poverty 1980-90 average ^A	64
• Number of people in absolute poverty, total (millions) 1992	35.2
• Number of people in absolute poverty, rural (millions) 1992 ^H	23.4
• Income ratio of richest 20% to poorest 20% (1985-89 average) ^A	7.4:1
• % Income share of poorest 40% (1980-91) ^H	16.6
• Income share of poorest 20% (Mre) S94	7

Health

• Mortality rate: 7 per thousand (1991) ^A	
• Life expectancy	
Average 1992 ^H	64.6
1991 ^A	
Men	63
Women	66
• Infant & Child Mortality	
Infant mortality (per thousand births) 1992 ^H	40
Under-5 (per thousand live births) 1992 Average (MRE) ^S	51.4
Under-5 (per thousand live births) 1992	
Female	44
Male	56
• Most common causes of death 1990 ^C	
1. Heart disease	
2. Pneumonias	
3. Vascular disease	
4. TB	
5. Cancer	
• Common ailments	
1. Bronchitis	
2. Diarrhea	
3. Influenza	
4. Pneumonia	
5. TB	

Education

• Literacy rates, %, 1992 ^H	
Adult Literacy	90.4
Women	90
Men	90
15-24, female (1990)	92
15-19 age group (1990)	96

- *Educational enrolment ratios (%) 1987-91 estimates^A*

- Primary (gross)*

- Male 111

- Female 110

- Secondary*

- Male 71

- Female 77

- *Female enrolment rate in tertiary education: n/a*

- *Women in education:^U*

	<i>% of women teachers</i>	<i>% of female students</i>
<i>Primary (1985)</i>		49
<i>Secondary</i>		50
<i>Tertiary</i>		
all	53	53
universities		54

- *Mean years of schooling^H*

- Average* 7.6

- Women* 7.2

- Men* 8

- *% of population aged over 20 who have completed secondary education: (1980)^{ADB}*

<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
16.5	19.8	0.83

- *% of university graduates among population aged over 25 (1980)^{ADB}*

<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
10.5	9.2	1.14

Housing

- *Percentage of occupied housing units with:*

- strong roof materials 55.6

- strong outer wall materials 60.9

Source: 1990 Census Facts & Figures National Statistics Office, Manila, 1993

- *Rent Price Index 1988-1993^C*

	<i>National</i>	<i>Metro Manila</i>	<i>Outside Manila</i>
1988	100	100	100
1993	212.9	252	183.1

- *Manila has 223,947 squatter families (Ibon Facts & Figures Vol. 18 No. 6 31 March 95)*

- *Average household size: 5.6 (latest)^K*

- *% of households headed by women, 1980: 11^{ADB}*

- *% of households potentially headed by women, 1980: 11.1*

Rural-urban migration

- *Estimated rural-urban migration, all ages, in thousands, 1970-80, ^{AB}*

Male	Female	Total	Female %
1,144	1,416	2,560	55

- *Rural-urban migration, 15-24 age group, 1983-1988 ^{NCRFW}*

Male	Female	Total	Female %
218,000	406,000	624,000	65

Note: Most rural-to-urban migrants have completed high school prior to migration. Some of them may have moved to pursue higher education in colleges or universities, which are usually located in urban areas.

Migration abroad

Note: figures do not include people working abroad illegally.

- *Long-term emigration*

(Registered Filipino Emigrants) ^c

	Total	Male	Female	Female %
1981	48,867	20,350	28,517	58
1985	45,269	18,409	26,860	59
1992	64,172	25,137	39,035	61

1981-1992: over 642,000 long-term emigrants left the Philippines. 379,000 (59%) were women. ^c

Migration ^{AA}

	1980	1988
Total	214,600	496,900
% female	18	36

- *Deployed contract workers, 1987:* 382,229
- *Of whom women were:* 47.21%

Source: POEA

- *Filipino overseas workers, 1991:* 752,700
- *Of whom women were:* 40.6%

Source: Statistics on the Filipino Women. National Statistics Office & National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, Manila.

- *Overseas Contract Workers deployed: ^{POEA}*

1984	350,982
1994	719,602

Reproduction

- Mean age of childbearing (latest): 29.4 ^{ADB}
- Fertility rate (births per woman) 1991: 3.6 ^A
- Contraceptive use (% of women aged 15-49) (MRE): 44 ^A

Politics

The Government

The system of government is based on the US model, with separation of powers between the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. The executive power is the President, elected for single term of six years, who appoints the Cabinet.

Political power is concentrated in the national government although the Local Government Code (1991) introduced a measure of decentralisation. The country is divided into 73 provinces, each with an elected Provincial Governor and Provincial Council. The big cities do not come under provincial governments, and are run by a Mayor and a City Council.

The Parliament is composed of a Senate, with 24 members elected on a national basis, and a House of Representatives of 206 members, of whom 198 are elected in constituencies. The remainder are appointed sectoral representatives.

Political Forces

The formal political system is dominated by a wealthy land-owning and business elite. Political parties tend to be coalitions of convenience, alliances of wealthy clans who pool resources in order to combat their rivals more effectively. Politicians shift their allegiance frequently between the various blocs.

The major parties in Congress include:

- Lakas ng EDSA-National Union of Christian Democrats (Lakas-NUCD) formed shortly before the 1992 elections to support Ramos's bid for the presidency. In June 1992 it had 50 seats in the House of Representatives, but its ranks doubled within a year as politicians elected under other parties flocked to the President's side.
- The Nationalist People's Coalition, formed to support the presidential campaign of Eduardo Cojuangco, the wealthiest of the Marcos cronies. The NPC has reached a deal with Lakas-NUCD to support the President.
- Other parties include the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP), a merger of two pro-Aquino parties; the remnants of the two pre-martial law parties, the Nacionalista Party and the Liberal party; and the Marcos family's Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (New Society Movement).

Outside Congress, the largest political groups are the National Democratic Front (NDF), led by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its military wing, the New People's Army (NPA). The NPA is the inheritor of a long tradition of rural rebellion, essentially a reaction to gross inequalities in income and land distribution. The NPA seems to be decreasing in size at present, but retains the support of a significant number of the rural poor. In the last few years, the CPP leadership has moved towards a more dogmatic Maoist line, asserting its domination of the NDF, but also losing many former supporters. Some of the latter are working in coalition with other groups on the left.

In the south, Moro rebel groups are still active. More heavily armed than the NPA, the largest organisations are the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

The military became a major force in Philippine politics after the declaration of martial law in 1972. They played a key role in bringing President Aquino to power in 1986, and this success led many officers to believe they would be justified in demanding a larger political role. Some of them tried to topple the government. The current president is a retired general: he ran the Philippine Constabulary under Marcos, and served the Aquino government, first as chief of the armed forces and later as defence secretary.

Large sections of the population are marginalised by the formal political system, especially in rural areas. Hundreds of people's organisations (POs) and non-government organisations (NGOs) have emerged from among the middle class, students, peasants and workers. Some of these are linked to new political groups which try to make the political system more responsive to their concerns. National networks of POs and NGOs are highly developed and include several national federations organised on the basis of issues or sectoral interests. Although weakened in recent years by ideological feuding reflecting the debates in the NDF, social movements remain dynamic, and are a force the government cannot ignore.

The Catholic church, like the military, is not supposed to be politically partisan. But, as with the military, its role during the Marcos years and in the 1986 uprising reinforced the conviction that it has a legitimate place in politics. Priests and religious have encouraged and participated in community and labour organising and the human rights movement. However, because of its size and the range of its contacts, the church is also linked to dominant political and economic interests at all levels and is very influential.

Women in politics

- *Proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by women: 11% (1992) ^h*
- *Women have had the vote since 1939 ^k*
- *Percentage of decision-makers in government who are women: (1987) ^k*

<i>Executive offices: economic, political & legal affairs</i>	7.5
<i>Social affairs</i>	30.8
<i>All government offices</i>	11.1
<i>Ministerial level</i>	10

History

Up to 16th century

People lived in small communities led by elders or chieftains. Diverse cultures emerged; there was contact with Chinese, Indian and Muslim traders; written literature, a legal tradition and, in some areas, a highly sophisticated irrigated agriculture, developed.

- 1521 Spanish expedition led by Ferdinand Magellan landed at Cebu and claimed the region for Spain. Local chieftain Lapu Lapu killed Magellan and drove the expedition away.
- 1565 Philip II of Spain (after whom the archipelago is named) commissioned Miguel Lopez de Legaspi to colonise the Philippines. Catholic missionaries arrived with the colonisers.

16th-18th centuries

For Spain, the Philippines was important as a trading post with China. Spaniards held large tracts of land, extracting taxation and forced labour from the local population. Spanish religious orders also controlled land, and the catholic church became a dominant cultural and political influence in the lowlands. Fiercest resistance came in the Muslim areas of the south and the Cordillera region of Luzon, which were never conquered.

- 1834 Spain opened Manila to foreign investment and trade, turning it into a thriving port. A new native elite demanded political reform and equality with the Spanish; a sense of national identity emerged.
- 1896 Rebellion against Spanish rule led by Andres Bonifacio and Emilio Aguinaldo
- 1898 Filipino rebels defeated the Spanish forces, surrounding remnants in Manila, and declared the Philippines an independent republic (12 June). Meanwhile, a US battleship was blown up in Cuba, and the Spanish-American war broke out. The US Navy sank the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay. Collusion between US armed forces and Spanish colonial authorities resulted in surrender of Manila to the US and subsequent treaty gave control of the Philippines to the US.
- 1899 Philippine-American War broke out. US Senate voted to annexe the Philippines.
- 1901 Aguinaldo surrendered to US forces. Scattered resistance continued, and the US did not subdue the Moro people until the end of the decade. Free trade was established between the US and the Philippines, and hundreds of US teachers were shipped in. The landed elite allied itself with the American occupation; other Filipinos continued to resist.
- 1934 Philippines became an internally self-governing commonwealth, still under US rule.
- December 1941 Japanese invasion and occupation
- 1942 Creation of Hukbalahap (Huks, or Anti-Japanese People's Army), commanded by a member of the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP)
- 1944 US forces re-entered the Philippines
- 1945 US forces captured Manila; fighting devastated the city
- 1946 US granted independence, after making aid for post-war reconstruction conditional on:
- continued use by USA of rent-free naval and air bases
 - US citizens to enjoy same rights as Filipinos to exploit natural resources in the Philippines
 - a trade relations act allowing free entry of US goods to the Philippines, and vice versa.
- PKP members evicted from Congress. The Huks resumed their rebellion, targeting the local elite and US domination.
- 1948 Huk movement outlawed. Fighting escalated: US advisers and aid flowed in to fight the 'communist menace'.
- 1950s The Huks were eventually subdued
- 1960s Benefits of economic growth had not reached the poor. Attempts at land reform, to redistribute wealth, were stifled by a landlord-dominated Congress. Resentment grew over US domination of the economy, and use of military bases to pursue the war in Vietnam. A nationalist student movement emerged to challenge the political and economic system.

- 1968** After decades of discrimination, brutality and plunder in the southern Philippines, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) launched a war for independence.
- President Ferdinand Marcos re-elected to a second term, breaking convention in which rival factions of the elite held power in turn.
- 1968-9** Jose Maria Sison combined with Huk leader, Dante Buscayno to form the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its military arm, the New People's Army (NPA).
- 1972** A year before he was constitutionally required to retire, Marcos declared martial law. US aid was stepped up and commercial loans flowed in - much of it redirected to finance the lifestyle of the President, his wife Imelda, and their cronies.
- 1976** The Philippine government and the MNLF signed the Tripoli Agreement, which provided for a ceasefire and autonomy for the Moros. Fighting resumed within a year.
- Mid-1970s** Gross excesses and economic failures of the Marcos regime had provoked strong resistance. Mass actions from students and urban poor drew increasing support from the church. In the countryside, the ranks of the NPA swelled. The Communist Party and other opposition groups formed the National Democratic Front (NDF).
- 1981** Marcos lifted martial law and declared himself re-elected in another rigged ballot.

A Would-be Dragon

In 1983 opposition leader Benigno Aquino (Marcos's chief rival for the presidency before martial law) decided to return to the Philippines. He was shot dead as he stepped of the plane at Manila airport. This precipitated an unprecedented clamour for political change, and was the beginning of the end for Marcos. Huge anti-Marcos rallies became weekly affairs, while the NPA became, according to the US State Department, the world's fastest-growing guerrilla movement.

Compounding Marcos's problems was an economic crisis which hit both the middle classes and poor and fuelled unrest.

The millions who mourned Aquino had little experience of mass protest; attempts at unified action failed. But pressure was building up on all sides - from far left to traditional political elite marginalised by Marcos.

The showdown came in February 1986. Marcos had called a snap presidential election to show he was still in control. His opponent was Aquino's widow, Corazon. Marcos rigged a victory, but the people took to the streets to defy him, and a group of disgruntled military officers, led by Defence Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and armed forces chief General Fidel Ramos, rebelled. The US withdrew its support; Marcos and Imelda fled to Hawaii.

Euphoria followed. But Corazon Aquino herself came from a large landowning family, and her government did little about the old problems of poverty and injustice. A temporary ceasefire was agreed with the NDF, but negotiations broke down.

The NPA returned underground and Aquino declared 'total war' on them and their impoverished rural supporters. The military intensified attacks on rural communities, and anti-communist vigilante groups were set up in many areas.

The war against rebel forces pursued by Marcos and his successors led to grave violations of human rights, especially against women and children. Military action in the rural areas caused the death of hundreds of children, of disease or malnutrition while hiding in the mountains or sheltering in hastily-erected evacuation centres.

The military who rebelled against Marcos also plotted against Aquino - there were seven coup attempts during her term in office, some suppressed with great difficulty. Rather than risk reforming the armed forces, Aquino relied on alternative military factions for protection, and their influence on her government grew. In particular, she relied on Fidel Ramos, who became Minister of Defence.

The Aquino government restored the system of elite democracy which the Marcos dictatorship had removed. But she could not unite the competing factions of the elite: in 1992, in the first presidential elections since the removal of Marcos, seven major candidates ran for the presidency. The election was won by Ramos, with 25% of the vote.

Unlike Corazon Aquino, Ramos has a coherent programme of government around which he has tried to rally the elite and the more vocal sections of the middle class. The programme, 'Philippines 2000', has a stated aim of turning the Philippines into a Newly-Industrialised Country (NIC) on the model of the East Asian dragon economies by the year 2000. In addition to economic policies, it has a package of social reforms and measures aimed at achieving political stability: peace talks with armed opponents (NDF and MNLF) and former military rebels; control of private armies; and a sterner approach to law and order, including restoration of the death penalty.

The goal of rapid industrialisation also has its critics. Infrastructure development projects designed to meet the requirements of foreign investors face strong opposition from local communities concerned about economic, social and environmental impact. The strongest protests are coming from the country's indigenous peoples. The government's response to local resistance includes bribery and various forms of coercion, including full-scale military operations in some cases.

Economy

Type of economy:

The economy is based on agriculture and extraction of natural resources (mining, fishing, forestry). Although its contribution to GDP is now slightly smaller than that of manufacturing, the agricultural sector employs many more people. Nearly a third of the population depends, directly or indirectly, on the coconut industry, and the country produces almost half the world's coconuts.

Manufacturing industry is concentrated in the Manila area and a few regional enclaves. From the 1970s, successive governments have tried to shift to export-oriented industrialisation based on light manufactures. Despite the rise of garments and electronics as major exports, the policy has failed to deliver either technology transfer or permanent employment on any significant scale. The economy is highly indebted and import-dependent.

Because of its dependence on foreign loans, the Philippines is subject to demands for 'structural adjustment' from its major creditors, who include the IMF, the World Bank and foreign governments. The country has undergone a series of structural adjustment programmes since the late 1970s - longer than most other indebted countries.

The present government aims to turn the Philippines into a Newly-industrialised Country by the year 2000, with rapid industrialisation through the creation of more industrial enclaves - known as Regional Industrial Centres. Economic targets include an annual growth rate of at least seven per cent. This will require enormous amounts of external financing in the form of loans or investments, while the measures included in the structural adjustment programme directly contradict the stated aim of rapid, sustained economic growth.

GDP, current market prices:^A

	1980	1993
<i>billion pesos</i>	243.7	1,466.3
<i>million US \$</i>	32,445.7	54,067.1

- *Real GDP per capita, PPP\$:* 2440 (1991)^H

Major industries:

Food processing; electronics; chemicals, fertilisers, sugar (FEER Asia Yearbook 92)
Also textiles and garments^Z

Major exports:^F

Garments, electrical & electronic equipment, copper, fish & marine products, coconut products.

Trade dependency: (exports + imports, as % of GDP)

1980	43 (own calculation)
1991	47 ^H

Foreign debt^D

	1980	1993
<i>Total foreign debt (US\$M)</i>	17,417	35,269
<i>Debt/GNP ratio, %</i>	53.8	63.7
<i>Debt service ratio (% of exports)</i>	26.6	24.9

Inflation

- *Consumer price index:*^B

(1980=100)	1985	1991
<i>All items</i>	254	423
<i>Food</i>	250	406
- *Annual real GDP growth, %^A*

1980	1993
5.1	2
- *Average annual GNP growth (1980-91), %^H*

<i>Total</i>	1.2
<i>per capita</i>	-1.2

• *Government spending:*^A

	1980	1993
<i>Social services/health/education as % of total budget</i>	18	17
<i>Military spending as % of total budget</i>	13	9

Trade Unions

The trade union movement is highly politicised and vocal, but also fragmented. Major national trade union centres include:

- Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP), established under the auspices of the Marcos regime in the 1970s and generally regarded as conservative
- Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU - May First Movement), the most radical and once the most influential group. In the 1990s it was severely affected by ideological in-fighting, and lost significant numbers of activists and members.
- National Confederation of Labour in the Philippines and the Bukluran ng Manggagawa Para sa Pagbabago (BMP) - both composed of unions which broke away from KMU
- Federation of Free Workers

Several smaller federations exist.

The non-government Centre for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR) reports that 922 workers suffered arrest or some form of physical assault in 1994. Most took place during strikes or on picket lines. One worker was killed, nine were tortured, 740 were assaulted and 77 arrested or detained.

Labour legislation:

The Philippine Labour Code gives broad powers to the Labour Secretary to stop planned or current strikes in 'strategic' industries on the grounds of 'national interest'. The power to define which industries are vital to the national interest is left to the discretion of the President or the Labour Secretary (in 1992, these powers were used to intervene in a strike at a hot dog factory). Public servants cannot bargain collectively or strike.

The Department of Labour has powers to issue Assumption of Jurisdiction orders, Return-to-Work orders, Temporary Restraining Orders and injunctions which effectively criminalise industrial action. Trade union officers can be dismissed for participating in illegal strikes.

In theory, labour legislation also applies to Export Processing Zones, but in practice a 'no union, no strike' policy operates. Local government officials, zone administrators and employers act to prevent unionisation. The government does not enforce its labour laws in the zones. Employers intimidate workers with threats of dismissal and closure. Firms close down and then start up again to prevent unionisation. Trade unions have been organised in the oldest EPZ in Bataan, but they are under increasing attack. In the Mactan EPZ, where 58 companies employ around 21,000 workers, there are no trade unions. Local government officials and the zone administration prevent group meetings within the zone and workers are monitored. Union organisers are not allowed into the zone.

Labour

Economically active population:

(includes members of the armed forces living in private households) ^{L 1994 & 1983}

	1980	1980 %	1993	1993 %
Total	20,521,000	100	26,822,000	100
Male	12,427,000	61	16,852,000	63
Female	8,094,000	39	9,970,000	37

- Percentage of economically active women in sectors of economy: ^A

	1970-9	1980-9	1990-1
agriculture	26.1	35	30.1
industry	18.3	12.8	13.9
services	55.6	52.2	56.1

- EAP in manufacturing: ^{L 1994 & 1983}

	1980	1993
% of total EAP in manufacturing	8.7	9.2
women as % of manufacturing EAP	n/a	46

- Women made up 45% of the manufacturing labour force in 1977. ^{NCRFW}
- Women as % of workforce in EPZs and other manufacturing industry, early 1980s, ^{AB}

EPZs	74
Other	48

- Unpaid family workers (included in EAP): ^{L 1983 & 1993}

	1980	1993
unpaid family workers as % of total EAP	22	14
women as % of unpaid family workers	n/a	55

- Administrators & managers, % female: 25 (1980-89) ^H
- Invisible workers, as % of EAP: ^T

Male:	17.8
Female:	61.4

(refers to people of working age but who work unpaid, unofficially or outside the cash economy, and are not counted in the EAP figures)

- Economically active population, as % of working age population: ^A

	1970-79	1980-89	1990-91
Women	40.3	48	47.8
Men	83.7	80.3	82.6

• *Unemployment: (based on sample surveys)* ^{L 1994 & 1983}

	1981	1993
Total	989,000	2,379,000
Male	414,000	1,384,000
Female	575,000	995,000
Total rate, %	5.3	8.9
Male rate, %	3.5	8.2
Female rate, %	8.4	10

• *Underemployment rate:* ^c

1983	1992
29.8	19.9

• *Minimum wage: Pesos per day* ^{KA}

	Non-agricultural Manila	Non-agricultural outside Manila	Agricultural Plantation	Agricultural Non-plantation
1980	28.46 - 29.85	27.37 - 28.76	23.31 - 24.70	17.28 - 18.67

Minimum wages are no longer set on a national basis.

• *Regional minimum wage rates, pesos per day, range 1992:* ^c

	Non- Agricultural	Agricultural (plantation)	Agricultural (non-plant'n)
Highest (Nat'l Capital Region)	118	108	97.50
Lowest (Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao)	89	79	58.50
Average (mean Reg'l rate)	101.98	92	71

Note: Throughout the 1980s nominal increases in the minimum wage fell far behind the rate of inflation. By mid-1989 the rate for non-agricultural work in metropolitan Manila was 25% below its 1980 level in real terms. The government granted a substantial increase (21% in real terms for Manila) in the minimum wage in July 1989, though this was offset by subsequent rises in energy prices. ^z

• *Average earnings:* ^{L 1994 & 1981}

	daily rate Manila, 1980	pesos per month, 1990
Non-agricultural	22.58	4,523
Manufacturing (establishments with 10 or more employees)	n/a	4,087

Note: establishments with 5 employees or less account for up to two-thirds of employment in manufacturing.

In 1990, average earnings of male workers were about double those of women. However, women earned an average income higher than that of men in professional and clerical occupations, and earnings for sales workers were roughly equal. Female manual workers' earnings were about 16% those of male manual workers. ^{NCRFW}

- *Earnings per employee annual growth rate:* 5.6% (1980-90) ^a
- *Working hours (non-agricultural):* ^{L 1994}

Note: Establishments with 10 or more employees, 1985. 20 or more employees, 1992

	1985	1992
<i>All Non-agricultural</i>	47	44.1
<i>Manufacturing</i>		45.2

- *Industrial injuries reported:* ^{L 1994 & 1981}

	1980	1992
<i>No. of persons injured</i>	6,639	68,240
<i>Of whom killed</i>	55	620

- *Union membership:* ^c (from Bureau of Labour Relations)

Local, independent and public sector unions

	1982	1991	1992
<i>No. of unions</i>	1693	5081	6127
<i>Total Membership</i>	466,985	864,733	3,173,714

(Public sector unions not counted until 1992?)

About 12% of the labour force is unionised, compared with 8% in 1984.

- *Strikes & lockouts: (industrial disputes leading to stoppage of work)* ^{L 1994 & 1981}

	1980	1985	1993
<i>No. of disputes</i>	39	371	122
<i>No. of workers involved</i>	14,660	111,265	35,119
<i>No. of work days lost</i>	55,048	2,457,720	709,580

SECTION 3

APPENDICES



Notes & Bibliography

Section 1: Regional Reflections

Women, the Economy and the State in Asia

NOTES

1. See Elson (1987).
2. For this discussion, see Eviota (1992).
3. On some of the advantages of the informal sector for women, see for example Roldan (1985).
4. Elson (1987).
5. Elson (1987).
6. Sen (1994).
7. Sen (1994).
8. See Bello and Rosenfeld (1990), Nolan (1990) and Tan (1993).
9. Sen and Grown (1985), Bello (1992). On export-directed industrialization see also, among others, Bello and Rosenfeld (1990), and Ward (1990).
10. Sen (1994).
11. Sen and Grown (1987).
12. See Joekes (1987).
13. Snow (1977).
14. Johnson (1983).
15. See Eviota (1993).
16. Arrigo (1980).
17. Kabeer (1987).
18. Grossman (1978).
19. Eviota (1992).
20. On labour control, see JAng Jip (1983); on sexual services, see kagan (1982).
21. See Vasquez (1984) for the Philippines; Jeong-Taik (1988) for Korea; see also Enloe (1983).
22. Eviota (1992).
23. Sen and Grown (1985).
24. See Joekes (1987).
25. On economic crisis in the 1980s, see for example Bello (1994), Joekes (1987), Sen and Grown (1985), and Vickers (1991).
26. On structural adjustment and its effects, see Bienefeld (1994), Bello (1994), Cornia and others (1989), Elson (1987), Joekes (1987), Ould-Mey (1994), Sen and Grown (1987), Vickers (1991).
27. Joekes (1987).
28. Bello (1994), Cornia and others (1989), Joekes (1987).
29. Bello (1994).
30. Heyzer (1994).
31. On the effects of economic crisis and structural adjustment on women, see

- Appleton (1991), Cornia and others (1989), Elson (1987), Haddad (1991), Sen and grown (1985), Sollis and Moser (1991), Vickers (1991).
32. Vickers (1991).
 33. Eviota (1992).
 34. Eviota (1992), Enloe (1989).
 35. Bello (1994).
 36. Bienefeld (1994), Ould-Mey (1994).
 37. The phrase is attributed to then US President George Bush.
 38. Ould-Mey (1994).
 39. Bienefeld (1994).
 40. Bienefeld (1994).
 41. See Bello (1994), Bienefeld (1994).
 42. See Panchamukhi (1990).
 43. See Elson (1994) for these trends.
 44. Bello (1994).
 45. See Sen (1994) for this discussion on market growth in socialist economies.
 46. Sen (1994).
 47. See Joeke (1987).
 48. Heyzer (1994).
 49. Vickers (1991).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPLETON, SIMON (1991) 'Gender Dimensions of Structural Adjustments: The Role of Economic Theory and Quantitative Analysis.' *IDS Bulletin* 22:1.

ARRIGO, LINDA GAIL (1980) 'The Industrial Work Force of Young Women in Taiwan.' *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 12:2 (April-June).

BELLO, WALDEN (1994) 'Dark Victory: The United States, Structural Adjustment and Global Poverty.' Quezon City, Philippines, Freedom from Debt Coalition and Institute for Food and Development Policy.

BELLO, W. (1992) 'People and Power in the Pacific: the Struggle for the Post-Cold War Order.' Quezon City, Foundation for Nationalist Studies.

BELLO, W. AND S. ROSENFELD (1990) 'Dragons in Distress.' California, Institute for Food and Development Policy.

BIENEFELD, MANFRED (1994). 'The New World Order: Echoes of a New Imperialism.' *Third World Quarterly* 15:1.

CORNIA, G.A., R. JOLLY AND F. STEWART (1987) 'Adjustment with a Human Face.' UNICEF, Oxford, Clarendon Press.

ELSON, DIANE (1994) 'Uneven Development and the Textiles and Clothing Industry.' In Leslie Sklair, ed. *Capitalism and Development*. London, Routledge.

ELSON, DIANE (1987) 'The Impact of Structural Adjustment on Women: Concepts and Issues.' Paper presented to the Development Studies Association Annual Conference, Manchester.

ENLOE, CYNTHIA (1989) 'Bananas, Beaches and Bases. Making Feminist Sense of International Politics.' Berkeley, University of California Press.

- ENLOE, C. (1983) 'Women Textile Workers in the Militarization of Southeast Asia.' In June Nash and M.P. Fernández-Kelly, eds. *Women, Men and the International Division of Labour*. Albany, State University of New York Press.
- EVIOA, ELIZABETH UY (1992) 'The Political Economy of Gender: Women and the Sexual Division of Labour in the Philippines.' London, Zed Books.
- GROSSMAN, RACHEL (1978) 'Women's Place in the Integrated Circuit.' *Southeast Asia Chronicle* 66 and *Pacific Research* 9 (5-6), Joint issue.
- HADDAD, LAWRENCE (1991) 'Gender and Poverty in Ghana: A Descriptive Analysis of Selected Outcomes and Processes.' *IDS Bulletin* 22:1.
- HEYZER, NOELEEN (1994) 'Introduction: Market, State and Gender Equity.' In Heyzer, Noeleen and Gita, eds. *Gender, Economic Growth and Poverty. Market Growth and State Planning in Asia and the Pacific*. Kali for Women, International Books, Asia and Pacific Development Centre, 1994.
- JANG-JIP, CHOI (1983) 'Interest Control and Political Control in South Korea: A Study of Labour Unions in Manufacturing Industries, 1961-1980.' PhD dissertation, University of Chicago. As cited in Bello (1992).
- JEONG-TAIK, LEE (1988) 'Dynamics of Labour Control and Labour Protest in the Process of Export-Oriented Industrialization in South Korea. *Asian Perspective (Korea)* 12:1. As cited in Bello (1992).
- JOEKES, SUSAN (1987) 'Women in the World Economy.' An INSTRAW Study. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- JOHNSON, DALE L. (1983) 'Class Analysis and Dependency.' In R.H. Chilcote and D.L. Johnson, eds. *Theories of Development: Mode of Production or Dependency?* California, Sage Publications.
- KABEER, NAILA (1987) 'Women's Employment in Newly Industrializing Countries: A Case Study of India and the Philippines.' Report prepared for IDRC. Brighton, Institute of Development Studies.
- KAGAN, RICHARD (1982) 'The 'Miracle' of Taiwan.' Unpublished manuscript. California, Institute of Food and Development Policy. As cited in Bello and Rosenfeld (1990).
- NOLAN, PETER (1990) 'Assessing Economic Growth in the Asian NICs.' *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 20:1.
- OULD-MEY, MOHAMEOEN (1994) 'Global Adjustment: Implications for Peripheral States.' *Third World Quarterly* 15:2.
- PANCHAMUKHI, V.R. (1990) 'UNCTAD in Asia: Issues in the 1990s.' *IDS Bulletin* 21:1.
- ROLOAN, MARTA (1985) 'Industrial Outworking, Struggles for Reproduction of Working-Class Families and Gender Subordination.' In *Beyond Employment: Household, Gender and Subsistence*. N. Redclift and E. Mingione., eds. Oxford, Basil Blackwell.

SEN, GITA (1994) 'Poverty, Economic Growth and Gender Equity: The Asian and Pacific Experience.' In Heyzer, Noeleen and Gita Sen, eds. *Gender, Economic Growth and Poverty. Market Growth and State Planning in Asia and the Pacific*. Kali for Women, International Books, Asian and Pacific Development Centre, 1994.

SEN, GITA AND C. GROWN (1985) *Development, Crisis and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspective*. New Delhi, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN).

SNOW, ROBERT (1977) 'Dependent Development and the New Industrial Worker: The Case of the Export Processing Zone in the Philippines.' PhD dissertation, Harvard University.

SOLLIS, P. AND C.N. MOSER (1991) 'A Methodological Framework for Analysing the Social Costs of Adjustments at the Micro-Level. The Case of Guayaquil, Ecuador.' *IDS Bulletin* 22:1.

STEVEN, ROB (1994) 'A New World Order: A New Imperialism.' *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 24:3.

TAN, GERALD (1993) 'The Next NICs of Asia.' *Third World Quarterly* 14:1. Vazquez, Noel (1984) 'The Impact of the New International Division of Labour on ASEAN Labour: The Philippine Case. DPhil dissertation. Brighton, Institute of Development Studies.

VICKERS, JEANNE (1991) 'Women and the World Economic Crisis.' *Women and World Development Series*. London, Zed Books.

WARD, KATHRYN, ed. (1990) *Women Workers and Global Restructuring*. New York, Cornell University.

Strategies and Options for Women

NOTES

1. See Adamson, Briskin and McPhail (1988).
2. This statement is from the Asian and Pacific Centre for Women and Development, 1979 document, as cited in Heyzer (1994).
3. See Adamson, Briskin and McPhail (1988).
4. See Heyzer (1994).
5. This section draws from Adamson, Briskin and McPhail (1988). The Asian example is from the case studies.
6. See Sen (1994).
7. See Heyzer (1994).
8. Heyzer (1994).
9. Heyzer (1994).
10. Vickers (1991).
11. Vickers (1991). Vickers cites the 'crushing burden' of this debt in many countries and how it has created much lower living standards as a result of the state's cut back on expenditures in basic health care and education.
12. Vickers (1991).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ADAMSON, NANCY, LINDA BRISKIN AND MARGARET MCPHAIL (1988) 'Feminist Organizing for Change.' *The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada*. Toronto, Oxford University Press.

HEYZER, NOELEEN (1994) 'Introduction: market, State and Gender Equity.' In N. Heyzer and G. Sen, eds. *Gender, Economic Growth and Poverty*. New Delhi, Kali for Women and the Netherlands, International Books.

SEN, GITA (1994) 'Poverty, Economic Growth and Gender Equity: The Asian and Pacific Experience.' In N. Heyzer and G. Sen, eds. *Gender, Economic Growth and Poverty*. New Delhi, Kali for Women and the Netherlands, International Books.

VICKERS, JEANNE (1991) 'Women and the World Economic Crisis.' *Women and World Development Series*. London, Zed Books.

Section 2: Country Profiles

INDIA: Notes

1. Elson, D, 1994 'Structural Adjustment with Gender Awareness?' *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol 1, no 11, pp 149-67
2. Sen, A, 1983 'Economics and the Family', *Asian Development Review*, Vol 1, no 2
3. Government of India
1993(a) *Economic Survey 1992-93*, New Delhi, Ministry of Finance
1993 (b) *Economic Reforms: Two Years after and the Task Ahead*, New Delhi, Ministry of Finance
4. Ranadive, J, 1994 'Gender Implications of Adjustment Programme in India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, October
5. Krishnaraj, M. 1993 *The New Economic Policy and Women*, Tata Institute of Social Sciences and Indian Association of Women's Studies, Bombay

PHILIPPINES: Notes

1. (Arce and Abad, 1986)
2. (Bautista-de los Angeles, nd)
3. (NEDA, 1994)
4. (Bello, 1982).
5. (Montes, nd).
6. (Neumann, 1984)
7. (The Adjustment Program - Impact on the Filipino Household, nd)
8. (Murphy, 1993).
9. (Murphy, 1993).
10. (Bello, 1994)

PHILIPPINES : Bibliographies

ARCE, WILFREDO AND AHAD, RICARDO 'The Social Situation', in *The Philippines: An Analysis of the Marcos Era and Beyond*. John Bressnan, editor. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986.

An Analysis of the Philippine Economic Crisis: A Workshop Report. University of the Philippines, School of Economics, 1984.

BAUTISTA-DE LOS ANGELES, FENY. *The Filipina Girl: From Vulnerability to Resilience and Power*. typescript, n.d.

BELLO, WALDEN, KINLEY DAVID AND ELINSON, ELAINE. *Development Debacle: The World Bank in the Philippines*. California: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1982.

LIN NEUMANN, A 'Tourism Promotion and Prostitution', in *the Philippine Reader: A History of Colonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance*. Daniel Schirmer and Stephen R. Shalom, editors. Quezon City: Ken Incorporated, 1984.

MONTES, MANUEL. *The Filipino Nation is in Crisis*. University of the Philippines, School of Economics, n.d.

MURPHY, DENIS. *The Urban Poor - Land and Housing*. Bangkok: Asian Coalition for Housing Rights, Habitat International Coalition, 1993.

NATIONAL ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (NEDA). *Draft Country Paper for the World Summit on Social Development*. Manila, 1994.

Asia Statistics Sources

- A Key indicators of Developing Asian and Pacific Countries 1994. Volume XXV. Asian Development Bank. Oxford University Press.
- AA International Migration Policies and the Status of Female Immigrants. Proceedings of the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on International Migration Policies, San Miniato, Italy, 28-31 March 1990. United Nations Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis, Population Division. New York 1995.
- AB Internal Migration of Women in Developing Countries. Proceedings of the UN Experts' Meeting on the Feminization of Internal Migration, Aqualcalientes, Mexico 22-25 October 1991. United Nations. UN Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis. New York 1993.
- ACh Statistical Yearbook of China, 1994. China Statistical Publishing House, Beijing.
- ADB Gender Indicators of Developing of Asian and Pacific Countries. Asian Development Bank. Manila 1993.
- B Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific, 1993. United Nations and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. Bangkok, Thailand.
- C Philippine Statistical Yearbook 1993. National Statistical Co-ordination Board. Manila, Philippines.
- D World Debt Tables, 1994-95. World Bank. Oxford University Press.
- DDD The Social Impact of Economic Reconstruction in Vietnam: A Selected Review by Do Duc Dinh. Discussion paper. International Institute for Labour Studies. Geneva. 1995.
- E Encyclopedia of the Third World. George Thomas Kurian (ed). facts on File. 1992. New York and Oxford.
- F Pocket World in Figures. The Economist. 1994. London.
- FEER Asia 1992 Yearbook. Far Eastern Economic Review Publishing Company. Hong Kong. 1992.
- H Human Development Report 1994. UNDP. Oxford University Press.
- I Human Development Report 1991. UNDP. Oxford University Press.

- ICFTU Annual Violation of Trade Union Rights. 1995. International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. Brussels, Belgium.
- J Philippine Development Report, 1987-1992. National Economic Development Authority, 1993. Manila, Philippines.
- K The World's Women (Trend and Statistics) 1970-1990. Social Statistics and Indicators Series K No.8. United Nations. New York. 1991.
- L Yearbook of Labour Statistics. ILO. Geneva, Switzerland.
- M Women in a Changing Global Economy. 1994 world survey on the role of women in development. United Nations. department for Policy Co-ordination and Sustainable Development. New York. 1995.
- S Social Indicators of Development 1991-92. World Bank. Oxford University Press.
- U United Nations Statistical Yearbook, 39th edition. New York. 1994.
- V Selected Indicators on Women's Status in Vietnam, 1975-89. National Centre for social Sciences of Vietnam, Centre for Women Studies. Statistical Publishing House. Vietnam.
- W World Development Report 1992. World Bank. Oxford University Press.
- Z Economist Intelligence Unit Country Profiles.

Definition of Terms

Debt service ratio

Debt service as percentage of total value of exports of goods and services.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Total production of goods and services within the national territory.

Gross National Product (GNP)

GDP plus income received from abroad (for example from investments, or migrant workers' remittances).

Earnings

Gross earnings including remuneration in cash or in kind, including holiday pay, bonuses, etc.

Economically active population (EAP)

All persons who furnish the supply of labour for production of goods and services.

Invisible workers

People who are of working age by work unpaid or unofficially, or outside the cash economy. They are not normally included in figures for EAP.

Potential household head

A statistical concept intended to correct the tendency for households to report only a man as head. Male potential household heads are all ever-married men (currently married or in consensual union, widowed, divorced or separated). Female potential household heads are all widowed, separated and divorced women (and single mothers, where information about them is available).

Trade dependency

Exports + imports as percentage of GDP.

Underemployment rate

Percentage ratio of number of employed persons working less than 40 hours a week, over the total employed.

Wage rates

Includes basic wage and cost-of-living allowance. Does not usually include overtime, bonuses, family allowances, etc - but practice varies between different countries.

Common problems with statistics:

Economic data

Local data that make up national growth figures may be inaccurate. For example, in China local officials have been accused of inflating production figures to improve their own image. It is not always clear if value figures have been adjusted to take account of inflation in a rational or consistent way.

Military spending

Expenditure on police, the arms industry and civilian personnel linked to defence tasks is not normally included.

Urban population

The definition of urban zones differs in each country.

Women's work

Employment and census data underestimate the level of women's participation in the labour force, especially in developing countries where many women work in the informal sector or subsistence production. Areas of activity which are usually uncounted or underestimated include:

- subsistence production
- informal sector
- domestic labour and related subsistence tasks
- volunteer work

Women predominate in all four areas.

WRITERS WORKSHOP

Holy Carpenters Guest House, Hong Kong

1-2 November 1994

The two-day workshop was attended by the ARENA board members and secretariat, the paper writers, representatives from the Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR) and the Documentation and Action Group for Asia (DAGA). The workshop was seen as a process in the book creation. It was held mid-way of the project and it aimed to: 1) provide a venue for the writers to share their country reports for comments and critiquing, and 2) identify common threads, issues and differences towards drawing the concluding chapter. The writers came together to share and to draw insights and strengths from each others' findings and experiences. A broader public discussion attended by around forty academics, journalists and activists based in Hong Kong was also held.

The following is an abridged transcript of the workshop proceedings and the public discussion.

Consistent with what we call feminist processes, the discussions were relevant in clarifying issues, coming to a consensus and re-envisioning the book project. Significant conceptual and methodological issues were surfaced which served as guideposts for the second re-writes. The first part will cover the conceptual issues i.e. globalization and economic restructuring; state, patriarchy and power relations; culture, traditions and the changing ideology; and, empowerment and feminist movements. The second part will tackle methodological concerns i.e. feminist epistemology and processes; and, approach and structure of the book.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

1. Globalization and Economic Restructuring

1.1. The Introduction mainly focused on the economic side of the impact of globalization on women. I think that if we focus on Asian women, we should also consider the Asian tradition and patriarchal system so we can see how the interaction between the Asian tradition and the global economy correlate. Changes in family systems, sex industry and prostitution, labour migration are somehow related to this phenomenon of globalization. For instance, with the opening of the economy, along with tourism and emigration, prostitution increased in areas where there are a lot of unaccompanied men. While it cannot be easily correlated, there should have some ways to see the relationship of this incidence to global economic restructuring.

1.2. I understand that when we discuss structural adjustment and globalization, the analysis will be very economic. Though I suppose all of the writers have their implied framework on analyzing the impact. I agree that the family should be a major indicator such as in understanding structural conditions in the family, how families have been structured and re-structured, areas of consciousness, values and lifestyles. Maybe not all has an effect but it has not been very easy to connect these. I don't know how these other dimensions can be woven together.

1.3. We should look into the workfield of the economy. The source of the problem is in the workfield of women. When women change their workfield and join the workforce, they change their social conditions. For instance, when we talk about women getting less than men in

the workfield, then there is a contradiction. The problem is not in the market but in the pre-market condition which is patriarchy. I heard that in some cases, paternity leave is being exploited by men. They take the paternity leave but goes elsewhere to work and end exploiting the women to do the work at home. Again, it is a question of the workfield.

The introduction showed how gender subordination interact with the economy. The focus is mainly on gender subordination. Patriarchal capitalism is discussed as two separate systems with an intersection. The political-economy of patriarchy may be further discussed in this section.

1.4. It is also possible to add that economic development should be a means for human development. And gender issue should be the first objective of economic growth and development. But what happens is that the gap is getting broader with economic growth. In the ideology of economic growth, there is a very easy going craze towards consumerism. The more your GNP increase, the more you can consume. And the consumerist tendency is a male chauvinistic consumerism. Prostitution is also a part of consumerism where women are treated as commodities and men as consumers.

1.5. It should be highlighted that Vietnam is now in the process of assimilating itself to the world economy and the direct consequence of this is the increase of foreign investments and the low cost of labour. It would be interesting to present the accommodation of the increasing informal sector brought about by the renovation in Vietnam. Ultimately, the women in the informal sector will carry the brunt of Vietnam's shift to market economy.

1.6. Is it possible to theorize that as economic restructuring is going on, the effects on women will be more immediate and visible within a few years. In most cases, it's the women who jump into the "bandwagon" of getting into jobs which pays lower and does not provide security. Will there be difference on the effect to men? The effects on men may be on the longer term since they may still be earning and gaining more from the situation. I am also thinking if we can present a periodization of countries which underwent structural adjustment and the effects on women in the different periods. For instance, South Korea has been into this restructuring for a long time as compared to India. There might be similarities and differences in the effects on women.

We should be careful in jumping into conclusion or in presenting generalizations. We cannot say that whatever happens in one society may happen in another. While women may be more vulnerable in these conditions, there may be other reasons for their changing and not only because of structural adjustment. The women are different in different contexts. For example, we cannot compare South Asia with Southeast Asia or even Thailand with Laos. If we're serious with the periodization, we really have to look into the historical and cultural background of the different countries as well.

1.8. The free-market is of course mediated by the state. The free market system is very much related to authoritarianism. These conditions are specific in Asia. On the one hand, we have the state organization and on the other hand, the lumping of the proletariat or the working class. When we discuss globalization, we just don't talk about globalization per se but also all the negative consequences of all these models of collectivism such as socialism in China and Vietnam. We have to look for innovative models to counter globalization which also has ideological underpinnings like anti-socialism or anti-collectivism. We have to look at globalization in the context of the collapse of Soviet Union. Thus, empowerment now is in the context of free-market conditions and neo-collectivism is based on individual empowerment. We have to see the new kind of collectivism which will counter authoritarianism.

2. State, Patriarchy and Power Relationships

2.1. Another way to look at globalization is to look at very patriarchal, authoritarian and strong states in Asia and the particular character of economies in Asia. The patriarchal values and systems are replicated in the societies where there are strong states such as in South Korea and the Philippines. Even if the growth rate is relatively higher, there may be an emerging phenomenon wherein patriarchal relationship is associated with strong states. Whatever gains the women's movement has achieved were limited or even reversed because of these authoritarian state structures. In various ways, the families may take the expression of undemocratic relationships.

I don't agree with a one-to-one correspondence of dictatorship being equal to the subordination of women. There have been gains by women and even some being mandated by such conditions. At best, it is a contradictory thing. I am bothered by the statement that dictatorship is equal to patriarchy.

2.2. With regard patriarchal capitalism, the Japanese seem to have adapted this concept based on a sub-contracting kind of hierarchy. There is a patriarchal relationship in the contracting, sub-contracting system where there is a "father" company and a "son" company affiliation. Thus, when there is a "rich man" in the multinational company there seem to be a "feminization" of poverty. And this is a part of the socio-cultural, ideological dimension underlying the myth of economic growth.

2.3. How can we show the more specific aspect of the continuation of the global economic relationship? How can we include the geo-historical, political, economic and socio-cultural relationship between Korea and Japan? There may be some significance in the Japanese intrusion of Korea with its expansionist goals in the past and the global restructuring currently happening. It is important to highlight that this globalization intensify pre-existing problems. This needs further analysis instead of just putting as a kind of introduction.

During our colonial times and even in the 1960's and 1970's, the same kind of power structure was experienced by Korea. Although, there was a shift from authoritarian to democratic state, we still see that there is a new form of intrusion. Globalization is a new kind of imperialism. Because of the history of our nation-state, where the state has been very divisive, they can maintain a very authoritarian and patriarchal state which in many ways influenced the culture and tradition of the people.

2.4. I would like to put emphasis on two categories of problems. I remember when Marx discussed the problem of law, the first question is how the law which provides equal opportunities to people become unjust. The answer here is because there is no equal power especially between the worker and those with capital. So the conclusion is to give them equal power by giving them equal capital.

The same thing happens with women. We talk about equal opportunity but not about equal power. What has been discussed is on how globalization gives women equal opportunities and not on how it strengthen the women. We have to stress that globalization had decreased the power of women and victimized them in the process such as women being laid off first. Some organizations such as the World Bank had compensated the women which in a sense equalized the opportunities but it does not mean strengthening them. Still, we also have to stress how globalization strengthened and equalized the women in other ways as what was earlier discussed. The country papers should not only show the consequence of globalization but also show how the women have strengthened the position of women vis-a-vis the men in the light of globalization.

I wonder what is the role of the men. They seem to be very silent in all these changes. It would be interesting to see what the men are doing in these conditions. Probably we could include their stories and reactions as well to have a broader view.

2.5. Another important area of discourse is how the power relationship has been affected and transformed. For instance, the kinship system is now being affected by the movement of people and there are new forms of kinship being developed. The two systems may come together and complement each other to produce a new situation. But this is also not fixed. The women themselves have to see how they have changed such as going to work, experiencing the very inhuman treatment, changing relationships, having alternative contracts vis-a-vis the old way of life. We've come across women who are now very critical of the hierarchical village structure, the credibility of men, how women manage themselves especially with regard marriage.

2.6. Can you elaborate more on the Vietnam country situation with the shift from a socialist to a free-market society and how it effects the women. It seems that women are more miserable because there are no government policies and no interventions. Of course if a country is poor, the people at the bottom level will be the most miserable. A comparison of government policies from socialist to market economy can provide the context. We were thinking that socialism might be a solution. But with the shift, what are the sources of women's difficulties? Are there differences in government policies? Which one of the systems are better? Are there more public policies in the socialist state such as health care, child care etc.? In the free-market state, people might earn more but they are left on their own for their needs and welfare.

It is true that there are basic shifts on how the state is managing the country. For instance, education was free in the socialist state. But now, parents have to pay starting secondary school. And since poor families cannot really afford to send all their children for further studies, they have to prioritize who shall be educated more. In many instances, the son will be sent to school and the daughter will be left behind. There are also massive migration of people from the rural areas to the cities to look for jobs. With the opening of tourism, many women are also getting into prostitution.

2.7. I heard and read about the difficulties of women in Vietnam now especially with the three dimensions which are the old Confucian tradition, the socialist orientation and the new market system. The attitude of women during this transition period should be captured in the lifestories.

It is interesting to see why the critical analysis of previous socialist states turned capitalist are very positive. One, we have to have more open debates and criticisms about the introduction of market economy and the role of women in this new formula of market capitalism. Second, we can compare the experience of China and Vietnam with the market reform.

2.8. In our book, if we say that globalization is expressed as a state policy, we can add a critique on the process. Was there a way where representation was taken in? How was the women and the women's movement integrated in the process? If the women were not involved in the process, then we can link the micro experiences of women vis-a-vis the macro state policies and processes.

3. Culture, Tradition and the Changing Ideology

3.1. The main comment is to expand the psychological and socio-cultural dimension of the economic global restructuring on women. Women's oppression is not simply on the issue of lower wages but also in terms of access to resources and environment. It is very important

especially to the agricultural sector and the actions of the state. The damage to the environment will ultimately affect the women who are very much concerned with the well-being of the family.

3.2. The young women migrant workers who move from the villages to the cities experience a lot of changes in their views and perceptions. For instance, in the rural villages, women marry at a young age of sixteen. But if a woman seek work in the cities, they usually pass the marrying age or they don't want to get married at all thereby having some kind of shifts in traditions and culture. Another point is that women who move to the cities live with other people or work in restaurants and karaoke bars which are far different from what they have been brought up with. Thus, they develop another kind of group and sometimes look for their own kind of adventure. Here, kinship system does not work anymore. And kinship is a very important part in carrying over tradition.

3.3. It would also be interesting to see the perceptions of these problems of other women. We understand that the perceptions and opinions of other people are also very important. For example, for the Chinese Women's Association, do they think that there should be something done about it. What is the consciousness of the women regarding these problems they are confronting?

I interviewed women at the Special Economic Zone and looked at the changing context of women such as the worker's conditions, how they come from the village to the cities and back to the village. I just put them in these context. If there are direct or indirect impact, then the reader should see through the story. The Women Federation and the labour unions are forced to come out with their positions about these especially after a case of a woman worker who was punished by being put in a doghouse. But generally, they don't talk about these problems. Sometimes they have to defend the overall economy.

3.4. Looking at the more conceptual viewpoint, I am struck with the relationship between the old and the new. This brings us back to the old discourse on how economic changes is supposed to affect socio-cultural consciousness or in Marxist terms, the base and the superstructure. What is shown here is that the discourse is alive. It can still penetrate this whole process of global economic restructuring and effects on Asian women. One thing which we can expect perhaps is that the old does not necessarily give way to the new. Part of the discourse is to say that what is going on is a transition between the old socio-cultural consciousness to something that is totally new so that there will be a sort of total transformation. But the question here is whether this is a transition or a final step where the old and the new are combined. I am thinking that this is not a transition but a final step where both the old and the new are together and dialectically interlinked. Perhaps this can be a permanent situation where the old never disappears and will still be around even if the new consciousness is engrained and transformed in the process.

3.5. All of the stories in the India chapter are about poor women. I realized now that it would also be interesting to have stories from other sectors as well to see the different experiences given the same context. Now I am thinking of going back and talk to people who have regular jobs such as bank employees.

When we are talking about social-psycho, I am also thinking about the same thing. I was also uprooted from my family and now working in Delhi. What are the effects on me? Why do we really come to the cities? As far as I am concerned, Delhi is a much bigger metropolitan. Surely, there will also be some effects on the other women who move to the cities.

3.6. There is the changing role of Indian women. More women are now able to study and get high-power, high-paying jobs. Women are studying far from before. So we see more inde-

pendent women. It is interesting to see the social impacts of these independent women now. Whether they are actually being alienated in their societies. One is achieving something but what is the price one pays? In a very traditional society like India, it would be interesting to see that. For me, people are saying that I am a single woman living and working in Delhi. And at a certain point, you will be different from your other friends, being able to study far more than them. Living alone in the city even make things worse not only to my own family but also to my peers.

3.7. Women now belong to a different kind of generation from our mothers and grandmothers. Probably our grandparents sent our parents to go to school just to learn but still hoped that their children will get married. They have limited ambitions for them. Now we see our parents distinctly different, wanting their children to go to school and be far different from what they are. The parents are more wanting but the children are also facing different kinds of problems. What we see now is that the government is not creating jobs to absorb these people. There are a lot of educated people who have to take service jobs such as restaurant cooks and waiters.

3.8. While the economy in Vietnam is still not very developed, we try to respond to the various social problems we are now experiencing. Basically, the bigger part of the population are under the poverty line. One big problem now is prostitution and the women are of course, the first victims. It is very difficult to prevent with the compounding need to earn and the increasing push for tourism and foreign investments.

A result of some people earning more is the increase of buying power and consumption. Men are now going out for drinking sprees and coming home drunk which oftentimes result to domestic violence. It is very bad now because these are seen as private and domestic concern. Whereas before, the neighbor or the local government can intervene to stop or prevent the incidence.

3.9. There are two important issues being raised in the Thailand chapter. One is the issue of race and ethnicity. There are cases of Thai minorities who are being trafficked across the borders. Money and investments can be moved around. But for these minorities without proper documentations, they can become stateless. And if they are put in jail, nobody cares and they can be forgotten forever. The second is the legal support system especially to women workers such as maternity leaves and other benefits which can be drawn upon. There are strong women's groups in Thailand which are already doing some mobilizations around these issues.

3.10. As what was earlier raised, it is also relevant to look into the human cost of liberalization. When we talk about liberalization, we seldom talk about health and safety etc. We have to put emphasis on these human cost as direct impact of globalization.

We always talk about the effects of globalization on women. While we are not denying that both women and men experience changes in this situation, still we should present these changes. What we are saying is that the changes will be differential. And gender is a differentiating indicator.

3.11. We have to expand the discussion on the internationalization of the labour market which will cover issues on migrant labour as well as home-based workers. These are emerging phenomena brought about by globalization. It also shows shifts in kinship relations and changes in women's experiences and perceptions. As well, we see the resilience of patriarchy in these changing conditions.

3.12. I want to share some insights about the lives of women migrant workers. There is a

distinct change in the values of women like women have this conception that they have a lot of responsibilities at home. But at the same time, the longer they stay in the receiving countries, they tend to assimilate the local culture and acquire the values. For example, The Filipino women migrant workers in Hong Kong will become very consumeristic acquiring the local consumer pattern. And for migrants who've stayed here for ten to fifteen years, they don't see themselves going back permanently in the near future. They are satisfied with short family visits in a year. They can't imagine themselves being assimilated back to the old village life.

3.13. We have to also see the gender differentiation on the effects of labour migration to men and women. There have been studies that men also send as much money or tend to be as consumeristic when they earn more overseas. But probably there will be some difference if it is the women who goes overseas particularly on the social expectation of women being responsible on the nurturing of family life.

On the shift in consumer pattern, it is not entirely due to the movement of people but also the globalization of media which creates the needs. There may be some difference in the consumption pattern of women migrant workers. In some ways, sending things to the family especially the children compensates the absence of the mother. Women becomes more vulnerable to consumerist tendencies.

3.14. We have to see the socio-cultural effects of migration to both the migrant women as well as their families. When we talk about effects of migration, we just don't talk about the changes in women but also the changes in the family relationships. For example, whether it is the man or the woman who goes overseas, there are a lot of changes in their relationship by the mere fact of separation and distance. For women, who are absentee mothers, they have to find ways to maintain ties such as calling overseas or writing letters. These ways lighten the trauma or guilt of being away from the family and not being able to fulfill the role expected of them.

Families with migrant workers relatives also change their values and lifestyles. They usually write to the migrant workers asking for money or for consumer goods. And the migrants are not appreciated but more so taken for granted. In some cases, there is even the pressure to respond to all requests otherwise they are not good wives or mothers.

3.15. When we talk about globalization, we don't only talk about the economic and political reality, but also the ideological aspect. We can see the attempt of the Western media to discredit anything that has so-called socialist framework.

4. Empowerment and Feminist Movements

4.1. To some extent, globalization has intensified the existing mentality. They don't expect to produce a new way but rather this intensification has opened more areas of exploitation. Broadly, economic growth is achieved at the cost of social equity and social welfare. The cost will reflect in areas where inequities already exist. Thus, gender inequity would be greatly intensified. But still, we can see little women's empowerment in this situation. In the labour market, we see more and more women being brought in. There are small gains such as economic independence, late marriages etc. which may be seen as empowerment. Yet, such empowerment is also a token empowerment because there is no total empowerment in a condition where there is still no substitute for previous relationships.

4.2. I am not sure how much has been mentioned and how much more we can put in terms of the political side of women's participation. Will it be possible to show the changes in the political power of women brought about by all these economic changes?

4.3. The psychological impact on women and the path the women have chosen should be clearly presented. We have to elaborate on the path taken by women in the context of the broader path of economic change. Also, the change in the position of women, the protection of women, the changes and conditions of the society among other possible indicators may be included in the concluding chapter.

The conclusion will highlight feminist advocacy particularly the coincidence of feminists movements with authoritarian regimes and also with the environmental movements. The Philippines have parallel experiences on these movements. In other countries, there may also be similar incidence which we can show. If so, then the Philippines is not an isolated experience but rather we can raise all these experiences to the regional level and present a broader perspective.

4.4. Korea's experience in organizing was mainly initiated by the Marxist movement. It was strong in the labour sector but was not able to develop towards a feminist orientation. Eventhough the social movement was so strong, it didn't really responded to gender issues and problems. The feminist movement developed in other sectors such as the middle class women who were not directly involved in the labour movement but had their exposure from the Western feminists. So the feminist orientation developed in the different sectors. The working class women realized that middle class women also has something to complain about. Women started to know each other and to cooperate among themselves.

There should be some kind of parameter of women's suffering, how they did advocacy with emphasis on how women overcome their problems, how and why they succeeded or failed. These should be clear otherwise people will just be moving from one point to the other. The conclusion should come out with common problems and common solutions in the context of globalization.

4.5. We have to put the context and importance of empowerment and impoverishment of women in global restructuring. Empowerment should be defined as a process of "self" empowerment and not something given from the outside. Empowerment usually means political power and may not be the same thing as feminist would have envisioned it. It should be understood as power in different degrees. If a woman is convinced that empowerment may be personal and may not necessarily mean going into group empowerment, then we can say that we seek for individual and collective empowerment. However, personal empowerment which stays on the individual does not change anything. It should take a political shape. Personal empowerment should also be linked to the broader empowerment to have substantial affirmative actions. Then, we can say that there is the so-called transformation.

4.6. Empowerment can be thought of as having the capacity to think of others and of themselves. The support and concern of women amongst themselves and the ability to identify themselves with others in various forms is something political. It does not necessarily take an organizational formation or it is not limited by the concept of political power to be considered as something political. For example, I may not join a political group but I may vote for them or convince my sister to do so or withdraw support. I may not necessarily be organized but I am expressing myself as empowered. It's the same thing when I can say to my husband or son that you cannot do or accept these things anymore. It's the ability to go from very personal conditions to identify with others through various forms. That is empowerment and we don't have to go to the very limiting concept of seizing political power. And the women's movement is now redefining empowerment.

4.7. Empowerment is a process of transformation. For example, if empowerment leads to actions, there can be political and non-political actions. We talk about joining parties in

political actions. If it is a process of political transformation, politics is not only in the parties but also in the families. There is an individual dimension in the process of transformation. The fact that there are a different rapport in the family means that it is a starting point of democratization in the society. However, if actions are isolated, then it is not really empowering. But there are also individual actions which becomes a part of a larger process, either at the state or global level.

The unifying category of all these information is what is it doing in the empowerment processes. Globalization is free market which means competition. Any processes of collectivization, in political terms, which is against the process of free market, will have its own adversaries from this system. Thus, political empowerment of deprived groups such as women will have much more hostility from a free-market system, unless there are some kind of things protecting or supporting it. What we want to see in this book are the daily strains on women from country to country or across each country as well as any kind of solidarity coming out of the experiences.

However, we cannot see much of the collectivization of women in the lifestories. In many cases, the experience is more on subjugation. We may present the different directions women are going but we cannot be very definitive about collectivization. In this way, we can show the contrast of difficulties of globalization underlying the common difficulties of patriarchy.

4.8. If each writer can highlight the resilience of women in these situations and add a little bit of what you think can link to the feminist movements, then the logical thing is to find the book more directive. It will be more precisely challenging to the kind of people we wish to reach. We can also add a list of women's organizations in each country to facilitate exchange.

METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS

1. Feminist Epistemology

1.1. The writers are working on different assumptions, contexts and appropriation of the topic. We can see these differences on how the chapters were written. We have to write our chapters with our own underlying assumptions. One way to bring the chapters together is to agree on an outline which will also help the person writing the conclusion. We can also come up with a list of common threads such as migration etc. Otherwise we will always go back to assumptions like how poverty connects to patriarchy, how culture connects with economics, why globalization connects to economy while being blind on the cultural dimension. Having the lifestories first and the country situationer with analysis later would be better. It will also be consistent with the "feminist" processes.

1.2. We are working with a number of constraints, not the least of them is time. And of course, we are communicating with different countries. But given these constraints and the fact that we didn't have any discussions before this workshop, I am quite optimistic about this project. Really, we are having a kind of process here and we are now in the middle point. In an ideal situation, this workshop should be the starting point. But that is not possible because of time and other restraints. We should also see the book as a result of an experimental process. We shall have a preface to explain the process and the constraints of which it was done.

1.3. We have to also say who are writing the stories. For the Philippines, I am an academic and the two others are non-governmental organization workers and union activists. This means that they may take on a very different perspective coming from a more development activist orientation. They are also very much into the debate of the "personal is political"

and the "hierarchies of knowledge". A contextualization of who the writers are may be necessary because it would say a lot on how the stories were gathered and written.

1.4. One issue on the feminist processes is accountability. If we are doing lifestories, what are we giving them back? I am not sure about this especially when the women being interviewed are not members of organizations thus have no orientation of the women's movements and the possible gains from such initiatives.

2. Approach and Structure

2.1. There were very good conceptual discussions on the framework on gender and economic restructuring but the introduction chapter cannot include all issues and areas. I understand the difficulty of doing the introduction. While we would like to have a broad overview, we also like to give the specificity of the country studies. One mechanism that we've agreed before is to provide a brief situationer either before or after the lifestories of each country. We have to find some coherence on the presentation. We should identify trends on the impact of global economic restructuring which may be presented on the concluding chapter.

2.2. I think having the country situationer before the lifestories will also help build up the stories by providing the context. In terms of structure, we can present the small "sandwiches" where there will be a situationer, the lifestories and the analytical remark for the country chapters and the big "sandwich" where we have the book introduction, the country chapters and the conclusion as initially planned. But on second thought, we realized that the country chapters will just be a few pages and with the three parts it may look very choppy. Probably we might be able to see better ways to improve the structure and treatment of the book.

I was just reminded by the coordination work we did for this project. We were initially confronted by the dilemma of how to structure the book. There was a methodological concern on how to flow into and from the lifestories. The first suggestion was to put the overview and the analytical remarks together before the lifestories. But then, that will pre-empt the voices of the lifestories. The second dilemma is that if we don't give the analytical conclusions for each chapter, then we lose on the specificity of each country which may not all be included in the concluding chapter. We were trying to get a mid-point wherein we can present the specificity of each country as well as a collectivity of the experiences of women around the region in the conclusion.

2.3. On the structure of the chapter, we would prefer that the treatment be more experiential which means presenting the lifestories first with the overview (or we may call afterview) and analysis coming later. This is being consistent with the feminist processes of raising issues and analysis from the individual lives and experiences of the women.

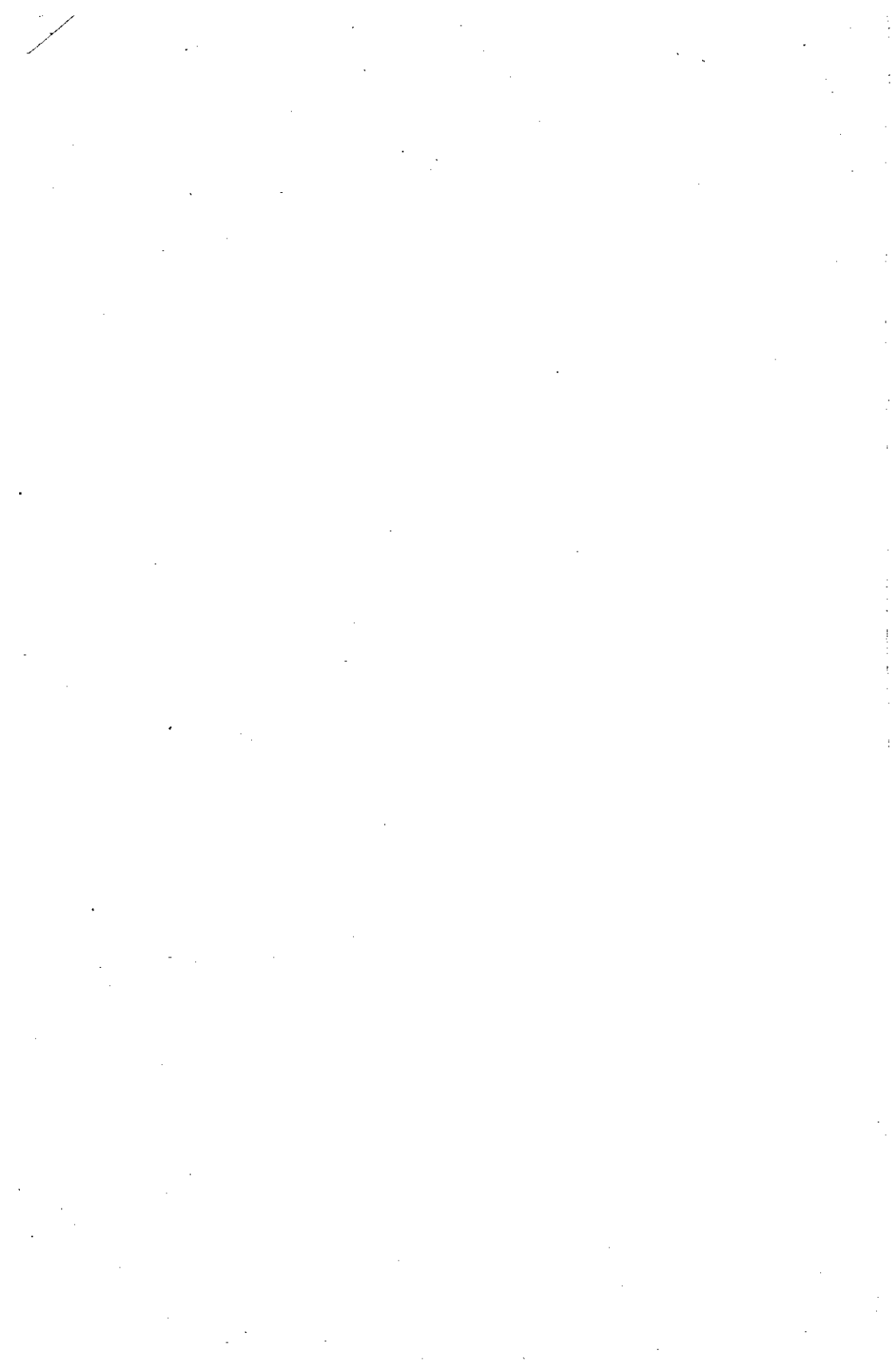
2.4. We should clearly state the connections of the lifestories to globalization. This is just to remind ourselves not to simply focus on our own little chapters but to see the broader output we are hoping to do. We should treat the book as one project and should have a sense of connectedness amongst the different country reports towards building the conclusion. Analytical comments may be raised in every country report which will lead towards the conclusion.

2.5. We should also put emphasis on the approach of the book. The lifestories speaks for itself. It is a women's book and the discourse should be handled differently. It should come out that this is not another book on structural adjustment. At this point, there is big dysfunction between the overview and the lifestories. The lifestories are the voices of the

women and it does not really flow from the overview. It really shows that the women who write the overview are coming from the "learned" and the lifestories are coming from women of another class. The style and the process has a great dysfunction. It would be better to be more brief with the overview and add more substance on the lifestories.

2.6. As an editor, I think its not a good idea to have different styles and approaches in one book. I want to go back to the previous idea of having a three-part chapter. It can come out quite well with the kind of material we now have. However, this is a collaborative effort. We should have an agreement with our partners on how to work things out with the given constraints. We can do it in two ways, either we have the overview and the analytical remarks together or to have it separately with the lifestories in-between. But you have to give us the editorial prerogative to restructure the chapters later. We can explain in the preface the process we went through to get around with methodological issues.

One other thing is the style. If everybody can use the same style to introduce the lifestories. It would mean stating the name of the woman, age, occupation, status. The editor will handle it accordingly.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Urvashi Butalia teaches journalism and publishing and is also a co-founder of *Kali for Women*, a women's publishing house in New Delhi, India. Urvashi is also a member of the board of ARENA and the current coordinator of the Gender Issues and Concerns programme.

Elizabeth Uy Eviota teaches sociology and anthropology at the Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines.

Malavika Karleker and **Priya Viswanath** are with the Educational Resources Centre in New Delhi, India. Both are also active in the women's movement.

Teeranat Karnjanaukson teaches economics at the Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand and is an active member of the Thailand-based Friends of Women Foundation.

Lee Jung Ok teaches sociology and **Son Dug Soo** teaches social welfare at the Hyosung Women's University. They are also involved with the People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy in Korea.

Lau Kin Chi teaches comparative literature at the Department of translation of Lingnan College. She is currently the Board Chairperson of ARENA and also a member of the China Social Services and research Development Centre in Hong Kong.

Maureen Pagaduan teaches community development and women's studies at the University of the Philippines. Maureen, **Dazzle Rivera** and **Ana Dizon** are members of *Kalayaan*, a women's organization in the Philippines.

Le Thi Quy is with the Centre for Family and Women Studies in Hanoi, Vietnam.



Catholic
Institute for
International
Relations



Asian
Regional
Exchange for
New
Alternatives