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**A GENDER-BASED APPROACH TO
THE URBAN INFORMAL SECTOR.
THE CASE OF MEXICO**

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ABSTRACT

Latin America and the Caribbean have experienced profound social, political and economic transformations over recent decades. The poverty of the region has intensified, while at the same time there has been a massive influx of women into the labour market, which has led to feminization of the informal sector. Social policies have been unsuccessful in reducing poverty, one of the reasons for this being the inability of these policies to reach important groups in the population, of which women are one. If people are to have a better quality of life, it is vital for the situation of women to be improved. An important aspect of this is fuller participation in the labour market, and this will require thorough diagnoses that deal with their specific characteristics and with the obstacles they face when trying to gain access to employment that can enable them to escape from their situation of poverty.

This study on the case of Mexico is a pilot project whose purpose is to lay down a methodology that can be applied to other countries in the region. A diagnosis has been carried out on the situation of women in the Mexican informal sector, comparing it with that of men, with the objective of proposing a strategy to reduce the gap between the genders.

The first part contains an analysis of the macroeconomic environment in recent decades, as this determines the character of the labour market to a great extent. There follows an examination of the way women participate in the labour market, especially in the informal sector, using a traditional definition of what is known as the urban informal sector. Before any measurements are attempted, the history of this concept and of alternative approaches is briefly dealt with. This is followed by measurements of the sector carried out on the basis of information from national surveys on urban employment conducted in 1988, 1991 and 1993, the purpose being to show the position of male and female workers in this sector in 1993.

The results of the study reveal that the profile of Mexican women in the 1990s is different from what it was in previous decades. The women who participate most in economic activity are in the 35 to 39 age group, a time when most women have family responsibilities. Factors such as age, educational level and number of children have become less important in determining rates of female participation. 41% of women who were active in 1993, and 38% of active men, were working in the urban informal sector. They are characterized by a low level of education, and most of them are younger or older than the norm. Women work most commonly as traders, domestic workers, artisans and manual workers.

Average earnings in the sector are lower than in the formal sector. In both sectors the average income of women is lower than that of men, and this discrepancy is greater in the informal sector. 23% of women receive an income lower than the minimum wage, and 20% work unpaid, these percentages being only 11% and 8% respectively in the case of men.

Existing programmes directed at the informal sector are reviewed, and the conclusion is reached that most of these have been unsuccessful, for two main reasons.

Firstly, the institutions chosen to implement projects have not been appropriate, as those selected have lacked experience in running production projects; secondly, the choice of activities has been based not on criteria of economic profitability, but on welfare criteria.

One of the main conclusions of the study is that in Mexico a great deal remains to be done in terms of policies to improve the situation of male and female workers in the sector. Programmes designed specifically for women are mostly of a welfare type and do not match the profile of working women in the 1990s.

The study ends with a proposal regarding policies and programmes to improve the way women participate in the labour market, with the aim of reducing the differences between the sexes. This section includes a table summarizing the initiatives proposed and specifying the institutions that should implement them. The ultimate objective is for the study to serve as an input for the use of those responsible for devising policies and programmes to alleviate poverty by enabling women to participate more fully in the labour market.

INTRODUCTION

The size of the informal sector in Latin America and the Caribbean has grown in recent years, and this has been due to a number of factors, among them being successive economic crises, the adjustment policies applied, changes in the way production is organized and the inability of the formal sector to generate sufficient employment in the more dynamic sectors of production.

The region has undergone profound economic and social transformations that have affected the labour market, and this shift has been accompanied by increasing poverty among the population at large. Again, the workings and structure of the labour market have changed substantially, the massive influx of women having produced a whole new scenario. These changes include greater job flexibility, a fall in the quality of jobs in the formal sector as benefits have been reduced, lower wages, greater insecurity and longer working days. The growth of the informal sector is giving rise to concerns that it may not be feasible to expect improvements in people's quality of life to come about solely through job creation, if working conditions and the quality of these jobs are not taken into account.

The growing number of working women, and the inability of the modern sector to create sufficient jobs, have led to what has been called the feminization of the informal sector in the region. It is now generally agreed that the position of women needs to be improved if the population as a whole is to have a higher quality of life. Economic development in itself does not automatically benefit women, and social policies do not provide an adequate solution unless they are effective in reaching out to women.

Although there is a consensus regarding the objective of improving people's quality of life through schemes designed to benefit women, there are still limitations in the design and implementation of the policies, programmes and initiatives whose purpose it is to achieve these goals. One problem that arises when such policies are being designed is the gap between reality and the assumptions acted upon by those responsible for devising projects. Both the new role being played by women in the 1990s and the greater responsibilities and workload they face need to be taken into account in all policies, and not just in those that are specific to women. For this to happen, it is vital for research to be done to bring to light the actual situation of women in the labour market of the region and the problems and limitations that prevent them from participating in economic activity on the same terms as men.

This study deals with issues that are of priority for ECLAC. Its objective is to improve the situation of women working in the informal sector under conditions of poverty in the Latin America and Caribbean region. The case of Mexico was examined as a pilot study for the regional work of ECLAC on women in the informal sector, one of the objectives being therefore to lay down a methodology that can be applied subsequently to other countries in the region.

This study analyses the informal sector from the point of view of gender, and consists of six sections. In the first of these, the economic and labour market situation of Mexico is examined, the aim being to place developments in the informal sector

against the background of the changing macroeconomic policies applied over recent decades. Changes in the role of women in the labour market are also looked at in this section in a general way. The second section focuses on the question of what the informal sector is, in order to produce a synthesis of the different definitions used in the region. The third section consists of a detailed analysis of the way women participate in the Mexican labour market. The fourth section contains measurements and a gender-oriented description of the informal sector in Mexico, using data from the 1993 National Employment Survey and employing alternative definitions as bases for measurement. The fifth section contains a summary of existing policies and programmes to improve the situation of working women, and includes a proposal for future policies, programmes and initiatives to improve the way in which women participate in the Mexican labour market. The sixth section, finally, sets out conclusions which should help to facilitate implementation of the proposals.

I. THE ECONOMIC BACKGROUND AND THE LABOUR MARKET

A. THE MACROECONOMIC CONTEXT

A large number of studies have analysed the Mexican economy and the labour market in terms both of macroeconomic trends and of the structural changes these have undergone. The aim of this section is to briefly explain the background against which work is carried out in the informal sector, paying particular attention to the way women's participation in that sector is related to this background.

Three stages can be identified in the development of the Mexican economy. The first stage, which was one of what is called stabilizing development, lasted from 1950 to 1970. During this period, a development model based on import substitution became firmly established in Mexico. This model began to show signs of strain at the beginning of the 1970s (de Oliveira and García, 1993a; Solís, 1981), and in the second stage, which was to last from 1970 until 1981, a degree of stagnation set in together with inflation, and the strain on the model began to manifest itself clearly (de Oliveira and García, 1993a; Rendón and Salas, 1987). This phase ended with oil-driven growth that lasted from 1979 to 1981. This was regarded as a stage of transition from the import substitution model to the one that followed, which entailed a 180 degree turn-about. The third stage, which has lasted up to the present day, began in the middle of 1982. During this period Mexico experienced one of the biggest economic crises in its history, and this led the authorities to apply adjustment policies, which had the further objective of restructuring the economy. The crisis began in 1982 and lasted for many years. The main features of policy in this period were: a new openness to foreign trade, a process which accelerated in 1987 and led to the 1993 signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA); a reduction in state involvement in the economy with privatization of state enterprises and reductions in spending and public investment; an economic policy that centred on the fight against inflation, social consensus being sought to exercise control over prices, wages and the exchange rate; and action to sustain the recovery in inflows of foreign direct investment (de Oliveira and García, 1993a; Sánchez Daza, 1992).

These transformations in the development model had beneficial effects on the macroeconomic variables during the period 1989 to 1991. The rate of output growth partially recovered, only to drop again from 1993 onwards; inflation and the budget deficit came down (see table 1). Certain problems persisted, among them a continuing trade deficit which resulted from a fall in the rate of growth in manufacturing exports and a rise in imports, the drop in international petrol prices, the recession in the United States and weaker growth in world trade. These problems combined with the way the balance of payments deficit was financed to produce a new crisis at the end of 1994.

Table 1
MEXICO: MAIN ECONOMIC INDICATORS

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Population (millions of inhabitants)	89.0	82.7	84.5	86.3	88.2	90.1
GNP (% change)	1.2	3.3	4.4	3.6	2.8	0.4
GNP per head	-1.0	1.1	2.2	1.4	0.7	-1.6
Unemployment rate	3.5	2.9	2.7	2.7	2.8	3.4
Consumer prices (December to December)	51.7	19.7	29.9	18.8	11.9	8.0
Trade balance (millions of dollars)	4 108	1 764	-2 865	-9 104	-18 318	-1 644
Current account balance	-2 613	-4 111	-8 413	-13 890	-22 924	-2 237
Change in international reserves	-6 788	120	2 019	7 619	1 934	6 083

Source: ECLAC, on the basis of official figures.

B. THE LABOUR MARKET

One of the ways in which the crisis and the policies implemented to deal with it significantly affected the labour market was in the form of a large drop in wages, which halved in real terms during the decade (see table 2). To this must be added the fact that, at the beginning of 1993, approximately 60% of the working population received no income or earned twice the minimum wage or less. Rendón and Salas (1993) estimated that the number of workers per family increased from 1.49 to 1.59 between 1977 and 1984, and again to 1.63 in 1989, but despite this family incomes by and large fell between 1977 and 1984, after which there was an improvement up until 1989 among lower income families, although they did not manage to recover what had been lost. Income distribution did not worsen during the first period, but this did happen between 1984 and 1989, due to an increase in incomes at the higher levels.

During the 1980s the labour market underwent significant changes, the most important of them being a reduction in the relative ability of the manufacturing sector to create new jobs, a slowdown in the rate at which the workforce was incorporated into wage-earning occupations, growth in small-scale economic activities, a continuing movement of the labour force into tertiary activities, a massive influx of women into the workforce (Rendón and Salas, 1993) and a reduction in the quality of jobs in the formal sector.

Table 2

MEXICO: CHANGES IN WAGE LEVELS

Year	Indices (1980 = 100)				Rate of change			
	Nominal wages		Real wages		Nominal wages		Real wages	
	Mini- mum ^a	Manu- facturing ^b	Mini- mum ^a	Manu- facturing ^b	Mini- mum ^a	Manu- facturing ^b	Mini- mum ^a	Manu- facturing ^b
1981	130.1	132.8	101.3	103.3	30.1	32.8	1.3	3.3
1982 ^c	208.4	212.5	104.7	105.1	60.2	60.0	3.4	1.7
1983	306.9	331.2	84.8	82.5	47.3	55.9	-19.0	-21.5
1984	473.3	509.4	71.8	76.2	54.2	53.8	-15.3	-7.6
1985	736.8	781.3	70.9	74.1	55.7	53.4	-1.3	-2.8
1986	1 257.7	1 368.7	63.2	69.2	70.7	75.2	-10.9	-6.6
1987	2 736.9	3 112.5	60.3	68.1	117.6	127.4	-4.6	-1.6
1988	5 134.4	6 578.9	53.6	67.4	87.6	111.4	-11.1	-1.0
1989	5 786.5	8 605.5	49.4	73.6	12.7	30.8	-7.8	9.2
1990	6 648.7	11 214.1	43.1	75.1	14.9	30.3	-12.8	2.0
1991	7 812.2	14 641.4	40.7	80.1	17.5	30.6	-5.6	6.7
1992	8 608.3	18 410.2	39.3	87.8	10.2	25.7	-3.4	9.6
1993 ^d	9 303.8	21 646.9	38.9	94.6	8.1	17.6	-1.0	7.7

Source: ECLAC, *Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1993* (LC/G.1833-P), Santiago, Chile, 1994. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.II.G.2.

- ^a Annual average of general minimum wages, without benefits. Includes the different wage zones, weighted for the number of wage earners in each of them, on the basis of census figures. The figures for real minimum wages were obtained by deflating nominal wages by the national consumer price index corresponding to a minimum wage.
- ^b Includes average wage and benefits. Real manufacturing wages were obtained by deflating nominal wages by the national consumer price index corresponding to 1 and 3 times the minimum wage.
- ^c It was assumed that the recommendation by the president (which was not binding) that minimum wages be increased by 30% from 18 February was applied by only 40% of companies, and that it was gradually applied more widely, until it became law on 1 November 1982.
- ^d Provisional figures.

Adjustment and restructuring programmes gathered pace towards the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the emphasis being on reorienting the economy towards the outside world. This in turn affected the labour market, and had different implications for men and women in different groups of workers.

During the years of economic recession, own-account activities increased as a result of rising household poverty. The number of female street sellers doubled in relative terms between 1982 and 1987. In the latter half of the 1980s, own-account activities carried out by both men and women grew in importance once again (de Oliveira and García, 1993b). Between 1979 and 1988, the three metropolitan areas of the country saw a drop in male activity rates in the central age groups, accompanied by increases in the activity rates of young men and of women in general (Rendón and Salas, 1993).

The economic recovery that took place in the country towards the end of the decade did not translate into a resurgence of industrial employment. Rather, there arose a tendency towards increasing tertiary activity in the economy. Trade liberalization had repercussions on Mexican industry, with the sole exception of the assembly industry. Female labour by and large experienced this movement towards tertiary employment most strongly, and this is particularly true of the female workforce in metropolitan areas such as Guadalajara, border towns such as Ciudad Juárez and Tijuana, and regional centres such as Mérida, where there was a large expansion in own-account activities (de Oliveira and García, 1993b).

To sum up, two labour market phenomena occurred in Mexico in the 1980s: a shift in the labour force towards tertiary activities, combined with expansion of unwaged or own-account and small-scale activities and a massive influx of women into economic activity. The two previous decades, by contrast, had seen the creation of wage-paying jobs filled mainly by men. The increase in the number of own-account workers can be explained not only by the slowdown in the creation of wage-paying jobs, but also by the drop in real wages.

We may conclude that the crisis that occurred in the 1980s, along with the policies adopted to deal with it, had negative effects on the Mexican labour market. The macroeconomic recovery that was seen between 1989 and 1992 was not reflected in improving labour market conditions. Job creation by the industrial sector continued to be weak, and most new employment arose in the tertiary sectors, especially in trading and own-account activities. Although wage-paying employment did increase in the 1980s, own-account activities in the tertiary sector grew more quickly. This increase in own-account working was especially significant for women, and a great deal of research has been done on the subject in Mexico, especially in relation to its repercussions on the workings of families (de Oliveira and García, 1993b; Rendón, 1992; Lustig, 1992).

This increase in unwaged work was not unique to Mexico. According to surveys carried out under the Regional Employment Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean (PREALC), the urban informal sector, which is where a lot of this kind of work takes place in Latin America, increased from 24% of the economically active urban population in 1980 to 30% in 1989 (PREALC, 1991).

According to earlier studies, there are three main causes behind the increase in unwaged work. Firstly, increasing participation in activities of this kind as a result of falling household incomes, accounted for chiefly by higher participation by women and by what is called the "secondary labour force". Secondly, the proliferation of small-scale artisanal production and selling activities. Thirdly, the emergence of new systems that introduced greater flexibility into the labour market, examples being the subcontracting by larger firms of labour working in small workshops or at home (de Oliveira and García, 1993b; Portes and Benton, 1984; Benería and Roldán, 1987).

C. THE FEMALE LABOUR MARKET

In the 1980s there was a massive influx of women into the labour market. Data from the National Employment Survey show that the rate of participation by women in economic activity increased from 21.5% in 1979 to 33.0% in 1993, with the highest figures being recorded in large metropolitan areas such as Mexico City and in those towns where the assembly industry is of particular importance.

The reasons for this increase in female participation are many and various. Nonetheless, a distinction needs to be drawn between long-term causes that contribute towards an upward trend, and short-term causes arising from the economic situation of the moment. In the case of Mexico, as in most of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (López and Pollack, 1989), we can discern a long-term trend, which is related to the processes of urbanization, improving education and lower fertility rates, towards increasing female participation in economic activity. These factors have meant that women have continued to enter the labour market regardless of what the short-term situation may be. Again, the economic crisis and adjustment and economic restructuring policies have led in Mexico to a drop in household income levels, and this has driven women, especially those in poorer households, to seek some kind of economic activity to help the members of their families survive.

The diminishing role of the manufacturing sector in job creation, furthermore, has had different effects on men and women. Men have lost ground in the sector, while women have increased their representation in the form of jobs in assembly plants (de Oliveira and García, 1993b). The contraction in the rate of employment growth in manufacturing industry has been accompanied by an increase in female participation, particularly in the manual workers category. The growth of assembly plants, together with the expansion of tertiary activities in the economy, has meant greater participation for women in wage-paying employment (Rendón and Salas, 1993).

Between 1980 and 1991, employment in assembly firms grew by a factor of 2.7, so that by 1991 more than 460 thousand workers, or 20% of all manufacturing employees, were employed in them. The men and women employed by these companies are very young. Nonetheless, in the last few years there has been a change in the type of products made and in the structure of employment at assembly plants, as the proportion of clerical employees and production technicians has grown, and the percentage of women employed at these plants has fallen as a result. In 1981, 77 out of every 100 assembly plant workers were women, whereas in 1992 only 59 out of every 100 workers were women, and the proportion of manual workers fell from 85% to 80% (Rendón and Salas, 1993).

II. DEFINING AND MEASURING THE URBAN INFORMAL SECTOR

The concept of the informal or unstructured sector began to be used at the turn of the century, when it was realized that a large proportion of people engaged in economic activities were not recorded or accounted for in the official statistics. The work these people were doing did not constitute what were regarded as formal activities, and at the same time many of these workers did not acquire their knowledge in institutions of formal education (Goodale, 1989). Subsequently, as concern grew about the failure of the formal or modern sector to absorb the labour force in developing countries, a search began for strategies and policies focusing on the reasons for labour market deficiencies in countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America (Jusidman, 1993). This led to the conclusion that employment conditions were one of the main causes of poverty. The concept of the informal sector is a necessary one if the relationship between poverty and the labour market is to be understood.

It was in the 1970s that the informal sector began to be dealt with explicitly and systematically in labour market analyses, and it was brought into greater prominence by the work conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and PREALC. From that time onwards, a variety of definitions and concepts have been used, and the measurements applied have led to enormous confusion about what the sector really is (Heyzer, 1981). There is still no agreement as to how the sector should be defined and measured. In this study, the main definitions are set out systematically, the aim being then to measure and describe informal employment in Mexico, differentiating workers by sex.

One of the most widely used definitions was devised by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and, in particular, by PREALC. According to this definition, the sector is comprised of activities characterized by a production logic of their own which is different from that applying in the visible part of the economy (PREALC, 1981; Tokman, 1987). This approach centres on the characteristics of the labour market and includes a heterogeneous range of production activities whose main feature in common is that they employ a number of people who have been unable to find employment in the modern sector and are forced into underemployment, with relatively little access to factors of production that complement labour (Mezzera, 1988). According to this approach, most people working in the sector do so because there are not enough employment opportunities available in the formal sector. As a result, they have to accept employment in the informal sector or create their own employment in that sector.

Since, according to this definition, the informal sector is a consequence of the inability of the formal sector to generate sufficient jobs for the active population, this has often been termed the production rationality approach. In this case, the informal sector exists as a result of causes linked to the characteristics of the labour market and the distribution of income. The informal sector comes into being when there is an excess of labour in relation to the opportunities generated in the formal sector. The sector is characterized by undercapitalization of production units, a low level of

technology, lack of access to formal systems of financing and very low barriers to entry into the activity. These characteristics would explain why informal enterprises establish unregulated and unprotected relationships with labour, as it would be unprofitable for them to absorb the costs of putting these relationships on an official footing (Klein and Tokman, 1988).

The informal sector is regarded as heterogeneous, even though it is possible to identify general characteristics such as those mentioned in respect of access to capital, technology and ease of entry. It includes small enterprises whose activities are governed by the logic of subsistence, this being true both of contract workers and people operating micro-enterprises. It does not necessarily refer to illegal or criminal activities, and it only includes activities in urban areas. Domestic workers are dealt with separately, although in some cases they are treated as part of the sector.

A second approach used to define the informal sector lays emphasis on institutional legal conditions, and is thus known as the "legality" approach. The informal sector is defined in this case as being comprised of all activities that do not comply with regulations applying to the economy, be they labour, tax or other types of regulations (de Soto, 1987; Centre for Private Sector Economic Studies, 1987). According to this approach, what really sets the informal sector apart is its illegality. Formal and informal enterprises work to the same logic, and are distinguished solely by the fact that the first are legal and the second illegal. This difference, in turn, implies differences in access to productive resources and markets (Jusidman, 1993; Guerguil, 1988).

The emergence of informal or illegal production units is put down, then, to imperfections in regulations and the tax system. It has been suggested that the way to reduce the size of the sector is to deregulate markets and do away with most state intervention (de Soto, 1987). This way of viewing the informal sector is related to the idea of the underground economy used in developed countries. Some of the economic activities that do not appear in national accounts are regarded as forming part of the hidden, undeclared or illegal economy. Activities that are categorized as informal using this approach overlap to some extent with those treated as informal by the production rationality approach, but include a wider range of illegal activities.

In Latin America there are two tendencies related to this approach. One is to argue for the removal of barriers to enterprise by individuals operating illegally. The other is to call for improvements to the regulatory framework and strict application of the law, using systems of coercion. The latter is defended by economic agents in the formal sector (Jusidman, 1993).

A third approach combines elements of the first two, and is known as market rationality (Portes, Benton and Castells, 1989). This approach maintains that the activities of the urban informal sector are typical of capitalism, with workers who, overtly or covertly, are wage earners; that these activities form part of the modern economy; and that they are not an exclusive characteristic of developing countries. Decentralization of production, flexible work contracts and subcontracting form part of a set of circumstances that are mutually reinforcing and are found in countries at different stages of development. The formal and informal economies are linked through subcontracting (Jusidman, 1993; Rendón and Salas, 1990). According to this point of view, the continuing existence of the urban informal sector in less developed countries is beneficial to capital, since it makes use of available labour by maintaining traditional operating methods and relationships with work. Those authors attribute the growth of the sector to an excess of labour legislation and an abundance of labour (Jusidman, 1993).

Briefly, since the time the urban informal sector first began to be discussed up until the present day, the labour market has undergone substantial changes. On the one hand, countries and their economies have changed, and on the other the relationships and workings of the labour market have also experienced significant transformations. Economic crises, adjustment policies, modernization and globalization are factors that have affected economies and helped to resolve certain problems and to solve or reduce others. Regarding the informal sector as it is today, it can be said that some of the causes that initially gave rise to it still exist, but that others have arisen since. The result is an even more heterogeneous sector, which makes it impossible to generalize and difficult to suggest policies to improve the quality of life of those working in it.

On the one hand, the survival strategy employed by households as a way of alleviating poverty is self-perpetuating, and means that workers entering the informal sector have low qualifications and productivity. On the other hand, restructuring of the production process and technological changes have led to production units changing the way they operate, with certain of the activities of the formal sector being decentralized and devolved to small establishments.

Whichever definition of the informal sector is used, unwaged workers form a large group. The definition of the informal sector used by PREALC includes mainly unwaged workers (not professionals) plus paid domestic service. Some authors consider that, in addition to unwaged workers, the informal sector should include wage earners in micro-enterprises or paid services where productivity is low (Portes and Benton, 1984; Klein and Tokman, 1988; Jusidman, 1993). According to other definitions, the informal sector includes workers who are not protected by labour laws; and there are others again that use this term to refer to poor or backward groups in general. To sum up, some authors emphasize the characteristics of companies, others the characteristics of workers, and others still base their definition on government regulations as they apply to labour relations (Raczynski, 1977; García, 1988; Rendón and Salas, 1990; de Oliveira and Roberts, 1993; Jusidman, 1993).

Informal activities may be autonomous, or they may have a function in the workings of the formal sector. Activities in the autonomous informal sector are of an enduring kind, having always existed independently of whatever activities have arisen in the formal sector, and generally serving local markets. Informal activities that are linked to the formal sector, on the other hand, develop along the same lines as the latter, which enables them to bring down their operating costs. Examples of these activities in the case of Mexico are those carried out in small workshops by people who specialize in repairing vehicles, machinery and household electrical equipment. Many of the workers in this segment of the informal sector received their training in specialized workshops or factories in the formal sector, and serve companies in the formal sector.

The informal sector includes various types of activities that differ by country and by economic environment. In the case of Mexico, one type of informal activity is assembly work at home, and this is to be seen mainly in the production of footwear and in the garment industry. Those working in the latter activity are mainly women who face obstacles in finding work in the formal sector. Activities of this type enable formal production units to avoid wage-paying labour relationships and, in many cases, to get round the minimum standards required by labour legislation.

One result of the worsening economic crisis in Mexico was the emergence of a new approach to small-scale assembly activities. This consists in agreements being entered into between companies and workers in the formal sector, by virtue of which

the latter consent to terminate their formal working relationship and receive compensation in kind (tools, machinery, equipment, etc.), which enables them to carry out in their homes the activity that they formerly carried out in an industrial company. The company is released from its obligations as an employer, and undertakes to buy the pieces, parts or components that the small unit produces so that these can be incorporated into its production process. This method was employed to a very noticeable extent in 1982 and 1983 in the motor industry and other branches of the metallurgical industry (Escobar, 1989).

In respect of this group of production units, there is a theory that people who work in them move into the employment positions that open up in the formal sector during periods of economic recovery, while at times of crisis they return to informal activities with low barriers to entry which provide them with an income that alleviates their situation of poverty. Research has been done, however, that suggests that the urban informal sector does not always behave in this way over the economic cycle. There is no consensus as to whether informal employment is procyclical or acyclical in nature. A review of the publications dealing with the issue suggests the conclusion that whether the urban informal sector is procyclical or acyclical is something that depends on its structure, the point reached in the economic cycle and the intensity of that cycle, and the characteristics of the active population (Pollack, 1993). In some cases, unwaged employment in the sector is acyclical, and wage-paying employment is procyclical. Consequently, what happens to informal employment will depend on the composition of that sector.

Given the experience of Mexico during the boom period from 1978 to 1982, it may be said that the validity of the theory referred to above is not readily apparent. Not everybody working in informal activities wishes or is able to transfer to formal units, nor are all the jobs available in these units sought-after or desirable occupations, nor is entry to and exit from informal activities so flexible (Jusidman, 1993). In many cases, the informal sector is the only one that can be entered due to the restrictions faced by the family group. In the case of women, for example, the need to reconcile their domestic tasks with work outside the home is an obstacle that prevents them from agreeing to fixed working hours and accepting work in places distant from home. In these instances, ease of entry, flexibility of working hours and, in many cases, the ability to work in their own home, are decisive factors in bringing these women workers into the informal sector.

The official statistics do not provide sufficient information to enable the urban informal sector to be measured exhaustively using existing definitions. Nonetheless, approximate measurements do exist for almost all the countries of the region, Mexico being no exception.

A previous study dealing with the informal sector in Mexico took stock of all the measurements that have been carried out in the country using the different definitions, and the results are shown in the appendix (Jusidman, 1993). Estimates have been made of the size and characteristics of the sector since 1976.

The difficulties involved in measuring the sector arise in the first instance as a consequence of the definition used. Once the sector has been defined, the statistics available make it difficult to measure, as employment figures are not given in the form required for this. Once the form of measurement has been decided on, there is the problem of comparability. Very often, definitions and questionnaires differ in different periods, which makes it difficult to compare figures for the sector over time.

A concrete example that may be cited in the case of Mexico is the difficulty of comparing the population censuses of 1970 and 1980. Cruz Piñeiro and Zenteno

Quintero (1987) conclude that there are problems which make it difficult to compare the data from these two censuses: the use of different reference periods when measuring the EAP; the different dates on which they were obtained; the differences in the criteria used for classifying branches of activity; the discrepancies in the way unpaid family workers were recorded and the high proportion of active people in the specified *[sic]* category. There are also difficulties involved in comparing the results relating to people's economic activity between the 1980 and 1990 censuses.

Another obstacle to effective measurement of the sector lies in the difficulty of recording what forms a substantial part of the activities of the sector, namely work carried out at home. Systematic surveys and studies have been carried out on the labour force employed in manufacturing. There is however a category of workers that it is difficult to include in these surveys, and this category consists of those working in the home and in small-scale workshops. Most of these activities are not recorded by the relevant chambers of industry. If we add to this the fact that some of these activities are carried out covertly, the difficulty of recording them increases.

A first attempt at direct quantification was carried out in 1976, using a supplementary questionnaire to complement the Encuesta Continua sobre Ocupación [Standing Occupational Survey] of what was then the Coordinación General [Coordinating Office] of the Sistema Nacional de Información [National Information System]. The results showed that in that year the urban informal sector accounted for 38.2% of the working population in the metropolitan areas of Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey, and in 42 municipalities of 100,000 inhabitants and over.

The characteristics of workers in the urban informal sector in that year were as follows: most of them were very young (70% of those aged under 20) or older (40% of those aged over 50); they had a lower level of education than workers in the formal sector (17% of those in the urban informal sector had no education, as against 6% of those in the formal sector); they included a high proportion of women workers (46% of women workers as against 35% of male workers).

One of the most recent estimates of the size of the informal sector in Mexico for the entire working population was carried out in 1988, on the basis of the National Employment Survey. This showed that the sector accounted for between 26.1% and 38.5% of the working population, depending on which form of measurement was used (Jusidman, 1993).

Mexico has better statistics for studying the labour market and the informal sector than other countries in the region. The international recommendations issued periodically by the International Labour Organization have been incorporated into urban labour force surveys. The National Urban Employment Survey forms part of a system of ongoing employment surveys that is operated in Mexico, covering 37 urban areas. Furthermore, the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, carried out three national employment surveys in 1988, 1991 and 1993, basically using the sample obtained by the National Urban Employment Survey to produce estimates for the whole country, and employing a special questionnaire in less urbanized areas with under 100,000 inhabitants.

The next section contains a summary of the characteristics and trends found in the urban informal sector in Mexico during the period 1988-1993, based on official figures supplemented by specific surveys that illustrate the situation of certain groups. The data used come from the national employment surveys of the years concerned. The estimates include only cities of 100,000 inhabitants and over, as there are problems with the reliability of information on cities of less than 100,000 inhabitants.

The following conclusions can be reached by comparing the figures from the national employment surveys for the years 1988-1991 and 1993:

(a) in the more urbanized areas, the working population grew between 1988 and 1993 by 2,366,100 people, 43% of whom were women;

(b) total employment grew at a rate of 3.4% a year, the figure for men being 3.0% and for women 4.4%;

(c) the composition of the population working in the formal and informal sectors did not change substantially: in 1988 59.8% belonged to the formal sector, with the rate of informal employment thus standing at 37.6%. In 1993 the rate of participation in informal [*sic*] employment was 60.5%, and the figure for informal employment was 38.2% due to a drop in the agricultural sector;

(d) as regards the annual rate of growth, formal employment grew by 3.7% and informal employment by 3.8% in the period under analysis;

(e) of the total growth in the number of people working in the formal sector (1,520,800), industry accounted for 18.9%, trade 22.7% and services 62.9%, while mining dropped by 6.3%;

(f) of the increase in the number of people employed in the informal sector during the period under analysis (993,000), 33.3% went into industry, 26.1% into trade and 41.1% into services;

(g) in industry (excluding mining), 287,400 jobs were created in the formal sector as against 330,900 in the informal sector. The corresponding figures for the trade sector were 344,700 as against 258,900, and for the services sector 956,600 against 408,000 in the informal sector;

(h) in industry, more than half of all the jobs created during the period were in the informal sector, and of these around half were generated in the construction industry, with virtually equal shares being created in the food, textile and chemical and rubber industries (15% of the total apiece);

(i) in the trade sector, the majority of the jobs created during the period 1988 to 1993 in larger cities were in the formal sector;

(j) the most striking result was in the services sector, where twice as many jobs were generated in formal services as in informal services, most of them (709,400 out of 956,600) being created in "other services" (530,000 were created in the community services group, finance and others);

(k) the informal jobs created in the services sector were mainly in the areas of passenger transport and repair and cleaning services, with the numbers employed in domestic service falling;

(l) in the period under analysis, the rate of informal employment in industry rose from 23.8% to 28.1%, while the rate in trade dropped from 61.9% to 58.3% and in services from 38.4% to 36.9%;

(m) in the formal sector, industry absorbed 33.6% of the working population in 1993, whereas in the informal sector it accounted for only 20.7%. The equivalent figures for trade are 14.4% in the formal sector and 31.8% in the informal sector, while the corresponding percentages for services were 51.2% and 47.3%.

It can be concluded that between 1988 and 1993 the rate of informal employment in more urbanized areas increased in the industrial sector, primarily in construction and to a lesser extent in other branches. On the other hand, it fell in trade and services. In the latter sector, this was due to the extent of formal employment growth in finance and community services (health, education, etc.).

In larger cities, retail trade accounted for 31.8% of informal employment in 1993, followed by repair services with 13.4%, domestic services with 8.8%, transport with

7.4%, construction with 7.2% and lodging services and sale of prepared food with 6.8%.

In the composition of this employment, a reduction can be noted in the share of domestic, educational, medical and financial services, retail trade, and lodging services and sale of prepared food. On the other hand, there was an increase in the share of cleaning, repair, transport and construction services in informal employment, and the share of various manufacturing activities also grew to a much lesser degree.

III. PARTICIPATION BY WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET

A. CHARACTERISTICS OF WORKING WOMEN

When analysing the way women participate in the labour market, it is useful to follow an approach that takes into account the aspect of the family or home (Pollack and Uthoff, 1989). The way women participate in economic activity is influenced by factors that are related to the characteristics of families, including demographic characteristics (stage in the life cycle, kinship, composition of the family by the age and sex of its members, proportion of adults and minors), and others such as their level of education and of earnings, the number bringing in an income, the size of the household, etc.

The profile of Mexican women is different in the 1990s from what it was in previous decades. At present, the women who participate most in economic activity are those in the 35 to 39 age group —an age when most women have acquired family responsibilities— with the participation rate of this group being almost 43% in 1991. Figures for economic activity by civil status show that women in a conjugal relationship have increased their rate of participation in economic activity the most, the rise being from 10% in 1970 to 25.6% in 1991 (data from the 1970 Population Census and the 1991 National Employment Survey). This appears to show that Mexican women are not leaving the labour market once they get married and have children. The same is true of other countries in the region (Arriagada, 1994).

Estimates based on the same sources enable us to conclude that the participation rates of women with children increased from 12% to 29% in the same period. This kind of information supports the idea that a substantial part of the work that women have done outside the home in recent years has been carried out primarily because of the need to supplement the falling family incomes of the country's households (Selva, 1985; González de la Rocha, 1989).

The factors that influence the way women participate in the economy are different in this decade from what they were in previous ones. Women's level of education, age and number of children have become less important in determining rates of labour force participation. Employment has shifted towards the tertiary sector and towards unwaged occupations, even if the type of activities that they carry out has not necessarily changed. On the other hand, women are also participating more as wage earners in industry due to the growth of the assembly companies. The earnings generated by women are no longer just to supplement the family income, but now form a substantial part of it.

There are four factors that still influence the way women participate in the labour force. The first of these is employment segmentation, with the inequality of opportunity and wage discrimination that this entails; secondly, there is the double working day, or the need to combine household work with work done outside the home, to which must be added community activities to obtain public services; thirdly, the inadequacy, or

total absence, of social services to support women in a way that enables them to carry out this work on the same terms as men; and fourthly, the continuing existence of cultural norms that cause domestic work to be regarded as the responsibility of women.

Significant groups of women in the labour force work in activities that require few qualifications, and are poorly paid. Three of these groups can be identified as the most important in terms of the proportion of all working women that they represent. The first group is that of domestic employees, who in 1993 accounted for 12% of the employed female population. A significant proportion of these belong to indigenous groups, and suffer from racial discrimination.

A second group of women workers consists of manual workers and machinists in assembly plants, most of them situated on the country's northern frontier. A great many studies have been carried out on this group, and most of them (Jiménez, 1989; Carrillo, 1993) concur that the sector is a highly heterogeneous one in respect both of what it produces and of the working conditions that obtain. One of the aspects on which they agree is that use is made of selection and recruitment policies that do not respect the rights of female workers.

A third group of women is composed of wage earners whose common feature is job insecurity. Generally speaking, there is no contractual relationship; for some types of activity there is, but it is a verbal one, as in the case of subcontracting or assembly work at home (Benería and Roldán, 1992). Their working days and wages vary, but in general the former are long and the latter low. There is no form of social security, even though in many cases work done outside the home may entail very considerable health risks. One of the activities carried out most frequently by unwaged women working under insecure conditions is street selling or trading, or a combination of both.

The cultural norms that prevail in the Latin America region require women to take responsibility for childcare and housework, but they are obliged to seek paid employment because the income of the head of the household is inadequate. This situation has led Mexican women to find work that can be carried out at home (assembly), so that they can combine their two functions (reproductive and productive). Own-account activities, such as family trading whether itinerant or carried out on a fixed site, have their advantages, as they enable women to fix their own working hours.

B. WOMEN IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the character of the informal sector has become increasingly feminized over recent decades (Pollack, 1993). In the case of Mexico, this process has not been studied with the same attention as has been given to the informal sector as a whole. Women, due to their dual responsibility for household work and for productive tasks, and to the greater restrictions they face when seeking to pursue activities in the formal sector, find that informal work provides a solution to their needs and those of their families.

In the labour market, there are obstacles that prevent people from choosing their working activity freely, and differentiation by gender is one of the most notable. Women go into activities with low barriers to entry, modest requirements in terms of investment and technical capabilities, and flexible working hours. They

carry out retail trading on their own account using mobile stalls in markets, squares or streets, or sell pre-prepared foodstuffs, again from semi-fixed units.

There are four types of female worker in the informal sector, and their behaviour and relationship with their work differ: (a) own-account home workers (making up clothes at home for example), (b) own-account workers who carry out their activities away from home (retail trading, street trading, preparation and sale of foodstuffs from semi-fixed premises or stalls), (c) unpaid workers in family businesses (these may or may not be situated in their home) and (d) waged workers.

Workers in categories (a) and (c) (when the family business is in the home) are able to attend more easily, albeit not with less time and effort, to their family responsibilities. Workers in category (b) can take their children to wherever it is they are working and keep them with them so that they can be looked after. Women in category (d) have to attend to their families outside of working hours.

The way in which working women participate in the labour market determines not just their income, but also their power of decision-making, degree of independence and self-esteem. Some research shows that most women working in family businesses do not receive any remuneration for their labour, and that, furthermore, there is no increase in their independence or power of decision-making as a result of this work, and they end up depending on their husbands or partners. Their work in the family enterprise is generally regarded as a family obligation. Since the activity they carry out takes place in the family home itself, or very close to it, they regard their work as an extension of their domestic and family responsibilities rather than as something supplementary to reproductive and domestic activities. When wage-earning women workers are compared with their home working and unwaged counterparts, it is found that wage earners regard their activity as a job and not as part of their domestic duties, and this gives them greater independence and greater powers to decide how their income is to be used.

The causes that lead women to prefer to work at home rather than in a factory were investigated by Benería and Roldán (1987). They concluded that the fundamental reason for women preferring to work at home was that this enabled them to fulfil their reproductive role, as work of this kind enabled them to look after their children and run the home.

This reveals an important difference between the motivations of men and women, given the culture and traditions that prevail in Mexican homes. There is a difference in this respect not only between men and women, but between wage-earning women and women working on their own account. Women working in a family business without payment reconcile their two roles more easily due to the proximity of the home and workplace. Wage-earning women, on the other hand, have to reconcile these roles by extending their working day, thus sacrificing their leisure time.

The study by Benería and Roldán also found that, in general, women working on their own account experienced feelings of guilt because they felt they were not looking after their children and home as they would have wished. Most wage-earning women derived satisfaction from carrying out an activity outside the home and receiving a wage for it. Furthermore, female own-account workers regard their income as being of little importance in maintaining the household, whereas wage-earning women regard their income as important to the well-being of the family.

C. SPECIAL CASES IN THE MEXICAN ECONOMY

By contrast to the relatively abundant literature dealing with theoretical and general aspects of informal work, publications that analyse specific cases or clearly defined groups are rather few and far between.

The groups that have been written about most are seamstresses who make up clothing in their own homes; people who work rubbish tips; the shoemakers of Tepito; female domestic workers; street traders; food sellers; organ-grinders and workers in cardboard.

This section contains a brief account of the work done by certain groups of women in the urban informal sector in Mexico, the information being taken from case studies.

Women have a high level of participation in assembly activities, particularly the making up of garments. This work is carried out in three different ways, at least in Mexico:

(a) by large companies employing women workers who are paid low legal minimum wages and receive company benefits, located mainly on the northern border;

(b) by small and medium-sized workshops employing female workers on a wage basis under temporary contracts. Wages are low, and there are no company benefits. These workshops are located in the centre of Mexico City (severely affected by the 1985 earthquake), in Guadalajara and in small towns or cities (producing denim trousers, traditional dress, etc.). This includes some family workshops operating out of private homes;

(c) independent workers who make up garments at home, using their own equipment and paying for their own electricity; they form part of the garment cutting, sewing and ironing process, and deliver what they produce to a person or workshop that provides them with the raw material or parts they are going to work on. They do not receive company benefits, they are contracted on a piecework basis, and they combine domestic work with their garment activities.

1. Women garment workers

This research looked at two different ways in which garments are made up in Yucatán, analysing the working conditions obtaining in each case: small workshops, and women working at home on behalf of third parties.

The workforce employed in making up garments at home has a working relationship that is not governed by legal contracts, wages and benefits, but depends on the dynamics of garment manufacture and trading in the market throughout the year.

Industrial work at home is defined as work for which the house of the worker becomes a de facto part of the "extended factory". The most usual situation in the region in 1985-1986 as regards industrial work carried out at home was that the worker used her own tools to carry out a part of the garment production process, not to make a complete garment.

Labour flexibility has been possible because of the vulnerability of women in this region, and it is this that explains the conclusions of the survey carried out among women in the garment industry in Yucatán.

Industrial garment work at home is considered to be an informal sector activity because of its particular characteristics, which can be summed up as follows. Firstly, it

is an activity forming part of an industrial process which is not governed by contractual relationships but which, through subcontracting, does form part of the work of formal enterprises. It is generally carried out by women from the poorest parts of cities, who act as disguised employees; it has low barriers to entry, requires little capital investment or skill and is a clandestine and illegal activity.

A survey carried out in Yucatán revealed that 87% of the women interviewed worked using their own tools (one used her own machine in combination with one the factory had provided her with), 5% used machines lent to them by relatives and 3% did not use machinery in their work.

Although many of the seamstresses working at home bought their own needles and thread, paid for the electricity they consumed and met the costs of repairs to their machinery, the main raw material used belonged in all cases to the owner of the factory or workshop.

The women were paid piecework for their labour, which means that they were in effect wage-earning employees, but "disguised" as self-employed. This provided a basis for cutting down their fringe benefits, which had repercussions for their identity, as they did not regard themselves as part-time or full-time workers, with specific labour rights, but as housewives "helping out" with the domestic economy in their spare time.

The study on small manufacturing workshops revealed that all of them, with one exception, were "illegal", but none of them were "clandestine", although almost all of them had passed through one or more stages of genuinely clandestine existence before being detected by some government inspector.

Adjusted wages were \$ 21,734.25 for women working at home and \$ 24,715.43 for those working in factories. Although the women working at home were paid considerably less than those working in factories, both groups received on average incomes that were lower than the general minimum wage. As regards service benefits, 96.7% of women working at home did not receive any legal benefit, 2% had some benefits such as loans and holidays and 1.3% had access to medical services from the Mexican Social Security Institute. Of the factory workers, almost half (49%) stated that they received all the benefits required by law; 16.5% said that they were registered with the Institute, but did not enjoy any other type of benefit, 2.3% declared that they had certain facilities such as occasional loans, leave of absence, etc., and almost a third of the women factory workers interviewed (32.4%) did not receive any benefit.

The research reveals the relationship between the position of women within the home and their employment options in the market for work in the garment industry. Daughters and sisters living together worked mainly in workshops; married women without daughters did not do paid work in either of the ways examined; wives and mothers mainly made up clothes at home to "reconcile" their domestic duties with paid work, and women heads of families tended to work in garment workshops.

2. Studies on seamstresses

A great number of studies have been carried out on seamstresses in different regions of Mexico, and their conclusions are of interest.

The following are the results of an analysis carried out on seamstresses employed in making up garments in their homes, all of them inhabitants of the city of Nezahualcóyotl. The information is from studies conducted by Alonso (1977 and 1983).

Other studies of this type have involved painstaking analyses of the life and working and production conditions of sweater producers in the town of Santiago Tangamandapio in the state of Michoacán (Wilson, 1990).

In 1985 and 1986 a very empirical study was carried out on the work done by women in the garment industry in Mérida, Yucatán. It was based on direct interviews carried out in 150 households where women factory workers lived and another 150 where women home workers lived. The inclusion of workers from the formal and informal sectors in the same study enabled interesting comparisons to be made and, of course, very worthwhile conclusions to be drawn (Peña Saint Martin and Gamboa Zetina, 1986).

In another study the analysis centred on the living conditions of low-income families in general in the city of Guadalajara, and useful information was obtained on informal occupations in those population sectors. The aim of the work in the field was to observe how the internal structure and organization of families are affected by the type of relationship these have with the labour market (González de la Rocha, 1989).

Below, the main characteristics of occupations of this type are summarized on the basis of the above-mentioned studies.

During the 1960s, the dominance of large, monopolistic companies obliged many manufacturers to move out of Mexico City to find cheaper labour. Their choice fell on the city of Nezahualcóyotl (Neza). In this city, sewing machines were installed in workshops in the homes of seamstresses, and most of the women employed in these workshops were family members. They were known as "talleres de maquila", or making-up shops, because out of all the stages that the process of producing a garment normally includes (design, cutting, embroidery, assembly, sewing, finishing and packing) these workshops carried out only assembly and sewing of material that was pre-designed and cut, generally sent from factories in Mexico City. These family making-up shops have been the focus of the analyses carried out by those who have studied the social phenomenon of seamstresses as informal workers.

This phenomenon is also to be found in outlying urban areas of Guadalajara, Guanajuato, Aguascalientes and cities in Michoacán, and in other cases within actual urban centres such as Mérida, in Yucatán. Small-scale industries can also be found in small but strategically placed towns, as in the case of Santiago Tangamandapio, situated in the area bordering Michoacán and Guanajuato, close to Moroleón, where between 1960 and 1980 there was a prolific output of sweaters for urban markets in Mexico and the United States. In this small city of 50,000 inhabitants, there was an almost startling outbreak of textile activity, with the number of workshops increasing from 30 in the mid-1970s to 40 in 1982 and more than 50 in 1986 (Wilson, 1990).

It is on the case of Neza that most attention has been focused, as this is a large and under-developed city whose main industrial activity, however, is garment manufacturing. This is the case in terms of both the number of factories (home workshops) and the numbers working in the industry. This was true at least in 1976 and 1977, when a study was carried out and 200 home working seamstresses were interviewed, out of a total put at 3,000 (Alonso, 1977).

In general, these workshops may be classified as:

- Single person workshops;
- Multi-person workshops (in addition to the "head seamstress", other members of the family, generally her daughters, work there);
- Multi-person workshops employing people from outside the family; and
- Multi-person workshops where the "head seamstress" has become an administrator.

The bigger the workshop, in terms of the number of machines and people employed, the more sophisticated the equipment, although generally speaking the tasks that are assigned to home garment workers can be carried out using a simple straight sewing machine, which may even be unmotorized. This is true in the case of Yucatán (Peña Saint Martin and Gamboa, 1986).

The socio-demographic profile of these seamstresses may differ slightly from one place to the next, but not in the essentials. In the study carried out on Yucatán (Peña Saint Martin and Gamboa, 1986), their level of education is summarized as follows:

illiterate or in the process of becoming literate	07.30%
primary not completed	54.64%
primary completed	24.65%
secondary not completed	04.66%
secondary completed	03.97%
post-secondary	04.64%

The above is true for Mérida, in Yucatán. As regards Mexico City and Nezahualcóyotl, Alonso Herrera noted that, in general, and regardless of the educational level reached (obviously the younger women had studied up to secondary level), all the seamstresses knew how to read and write. In general, they also come from an urban background. The explanation for this, in the case of Neza, is that their families had settled first of all in the Federal District, even if they were from other regions. The study revealed that the seamstresses of Yucatán had worked previously, some of them in the textile industry. As regards the seamstresses of Tangamandapio in Michoacán, both the owner of the workshop and those working there had been born in the same town. They stopped working when they got married, but started again as their families grew, economic pressures increased and the income of their husbands proved insufficient¹. The best option open to them was to work at home as seamstresses, as this enabled them to take care of the house and children while receiving an income.

This was ascertained by observing that, in Yucatán, seamstresses working in factories were young unmarried women and home workers were married women who had already begun the cycle of procreation.

A particularly noteworthy socioeconomic characteristic is that all the women operating micro-enterprises in Neza lived on plots that they owned (although only half held the actual title deeds); while only 75% of own-account seamstresses were owners, and a mere 50% of female manual workers (Alonso, 1977).

The ways in which women enter the activity are very varied. Contracting normally takes place in the form of an agreement between the wives running the businesses and the mothers of the young unmarried girls who are going to work there. These girls continue working until they get married (Wilson, 1990). In Santiago Tangamandapio, it is common to find a number of men employed in the workshops. This is not viewed askance, even though the owners know that many of these workers will set up their own workshops in time.

A study carried out on seamstresses in Mérida, in Yucatán, shows that half of all female home workers (51.98%) learnt the trade from relatives and friends, 17.32% did so by watching how other members of the family carried out their work, and 7.53% took lessons with people they knew. Likewise, 17.33% declared that they had begun to exercise the trade between the ages of 10 and 14; 67% knew how to sew by the time they were 19 and 74% by the time they were 25. It can be concluded from all this that

¹ Nonetheless, Florencia Peña notes that 54.66% of seamstresses working at home are from the interior of Yucatán, although not necessarily from the countryside.

they certainly learnt the trade in small clandestine workshops (Peña Saint Martin and Gamboa, 1986).

Contracting itself happens when an employer or intermediary asks workers to find people who have the same characteristics as themselves. Only 29.33% said they had obtained employment through a classified advertisement in some newspaper.

The reasons for entering this activity are primarily economic, and this is true both for young unmarried women and for married women with children, as can be verified by reference to the wages received.

The way people in this group employ their time is determined by the fact of their being workers who are also housewives. This was the case with 84% of those interviewed in Mérida. Thus, 44.60% stated that they spent four to five hours sewing, 12.64% declared that they spent eight hours on this, and only 5% said they worked longer days. This probably reflects the situation nationwide (Peña Saint Martin and Gamboa, 1986).

As regards business organization, the workshops in Neza were put into two categories: (a) independent and (b) seamstress-employer workshops.

(a) Independent workshops are ones where women work alone or with a small amount of unpaid family help; they have two sewing machines at most, and often these are not even industrial machines. By and large, two or three basic operations are carried out in these workshops, and their production capacity is very limited. Often they work for an intermediary who operates in the same neighbourhood.

(b) Seamstress-employers also operate their workshops in their homes, but they act as small-scale employers, as they rely on waged workers. These workshops are larger, sometimes containing ten or more machines. As they have a higher production capacity, they work directly for businesses in the Federal District and often act as intermediaries for these, distributing the cut material among their neighbours and collecting the garments once they have been made up so that they can be ironed and packaged by the dozen for return to the Federal District (Alonso, 1977).

In the case of the micro-workshops studied in Michoacán, the situation is slightly different. The married couple owns the business jointly; some relatives supervise the looms while others distribute the output. As these workshops grow, they take on local labour (Wilson, 1990).

As regards wages, it is very difficult to establish with certainty how much they actually earn, and in particular to what extent they contribute to the family income. What does seem to happen is that almost all the seamstresses use the money received each week to finance household spending. Most of them work strictly for reasons of economic survival.

The question of whom they buy from and sell to is not very difficult to resolve. These women are makers-up who receive the material from businesses and make their deliveries back to them, in exchange for payment by the piece.

Businesses in the Federal District that "invest" in Neza via the domestic making-up industry retain total control over the raw material — which they always supply pre-cut — and over the process of marketing the finished clothing (Alonso, 1977).

The way waged labour is used and the working conditions of these employees are issues that can be dealt with together. If the conditions under which seamstress-employers work are insecure, it can be imagined what life is like for their employees. Worker-employee relations are never governed by a written contract; seamstresses would not have any kind of document to back up their claims, in the remote eventuality that it occurred to them to make any (Alonso, 1977).

No employer contracting home workers is registered in the Registro de Patronos de Trabajo a Domicilio [Register of Home Worker Employers], according to the records of the Yucatán Labour Inspectorate. Women working at home are not even aware that there should be a registration certificate. This explains why all the legal provisions relating to home work are flouted (Peña Saint Martin and Gamboa, 1986).

Not only is payment always made on a piecework basis, but delays and irregularity in making payment are customary in most of the businesses that contract labour in Neza. This situation affects both independent seamstresses and seamstress-employers, as well, of course, as workers.

There was no difficulty in analysing the technology used. A few workshops in Santiago Tangamandapio had imported electric looms, as well as reasonably sophisticated sewing machines, but in the rest of the cases studied very simple machinery was used.

Women operating micro-enterprises in Neza had an average of three straight machines for every one overlock machine, these being supplemented by family machines and, in a single case, one zig-zag sewing machine. It is common for own-account seamstresses whose machines are not even motorized to fall rapidly into poverty.

In 1974 it was still possible for some seamstresses to set up eventually as micro-enterprises. With the prices of machines rising rapidly, this is becoming less and less common, and in fact is now almost impossible.

This situation is reflected in the fact that in 1987 only 84% of own-account seamstresses carried out the basic operation, and a rising percentage of them are "seamstresses who do not sew", as all they do is de-thread, iron and fold the clothes (Alonso, 1977).

IV. SIZE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE URBAN INFORMAL SECTOR VIEWED IN GENDER TERMS

This section contains a measurement of non-agricultural employment in the urban informal sector in Mexico in 1993, covering cities of 100,000 inhabitants and over, on the basis of data from the National Employment Survey of January 1993. This is followed by a description of the sector from the point of view of gender, the aim being to produce proposals for action for programmes and policies to improve the situation of male and female workers in the sector.

A. MEASUREMENT

When measuring the size of the urban informal sector, different operational definitions can be applied, and these will produce different results. In this section four alternative definitions are used to measure it, each of them being based on a different criterion.

(a) ***Wages:***

One definition includes working people who receive less than the legal minimum wage, or are unpaid, or receive an income that is not adequately specified.

(b) ***The size of the establishment:***

A second definition goes by the size of the establishment in which people work. It includes people employed in establishments with five or less workers.

(c) ***Occupational status:***

A third definition includes people who are employed in domestic service, own-account workers and workers who do not receive payment, excluding professionals and those working in high-technology and publicly owned activities.

(d) ***Special characteristics:***

This final definition includes four types of working people:

- (i) those working in domestic service (without taking account of their category of employment);

- (ii) employers, waged employees and pieceworkers in establishments where five or less people work, except in industries that are defined as formal, and excluding domestic work;
- (iii) own-account workers, excluding professionals;
- (iv) unpaid workers.

In table 3 it can be seen that the size of the informal sector varies between 17% and 42% of non-agricultural employment, depending on which definition is used. The lower figure is obtained if the definition based on wages is used, i.e. if all those earning less than the minimum wage are considered to be informal workers. This is due to the erosion of minimum wages that has taken place over the last 20 years, as already mentioned. The highest figure for the sector is obtained if the definition based on the size of establishments is taken, and a very similar figure is obtained using the definition based on special characteristics, according to which the sector accounts for 39% of non-agricultural employment.

Table 3
SHARE OF THE URBAN INFORMAL SECTOR IN NON-AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT, 1993
(Towns of 100,000 inhabitants and over)

	Special definition	Occupational status	Size of the establishment	Wages
Formal sector	61	76	58	83
Informal sector	39	24	42	17
Total	100	100	100	100
Men				
Formal sector	62	81	58	87
Informal sector	38	19	42	13
Total	100	100	100	100
Women				
Formal sector	59	68	57	76
Informal sector	41	32	43	24
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: ECLAC, on the basis of the National Employment Survey, Mexico City, January 1993.

1. Measuring the informal sector for men and women

Male and female participation in the urban informal sector also differs depending on which definition is used, due to the different ways in which men and women participate in the labour market.

Using the definition based on special characteristics, 41% of active women and 38% of active men work in the urban informal sector. If the definition based on wages is employed, these proportions drop to 24% and 13% respectively. The proportion of men in the informal sector falls by 65% when the salary-based definition is used, while the proportion of women in that sector drops by only 25%. This is explained by the lower wages that female workers receive by comparison with male ones. In other words, regardless of whether their activity is formal or informal, women are paid less

than men. Furthermore, within the urban informal sector, women receive lower earnings than men (see tables 4 and 5).

In table 4 it can be seen that if the size of the urban informal sector is taken to be 100 using the special definition as the basis, the size of the female informal sector falls to 59% using the wages-based definition, and that of the male informal sector to 34%.

Table 5 shows the distribution of the non-agricultural working labour force between the formal and informal sectors by sex in towns of 100,000 inhabitants or more. Of the total number of people employed in these places in 1993, 39% were informal workers, of whom 24% were men and 15% women.

In the remainder of the analysis of the urban informal sector, the definition used for informal workers is the one based on special characteristics.

Table 4
VARIABILITY OF THE URBAN INFORMAL SECTOR DEPENDING ON THE
DEFINITION USED, 1993

	Special definition	Occupational status	Size of the establishment	Wages
Total	100	61.5	107.7	43.6
Men	100	50.0	110.5	34.2
Women	100	78.1	104.9	58.5

Source: ECLAC, on the basis of the National Employment Survey, Mexico City, January 1993.

Table 5
SIZE OF THE URBAN INFORMAL SECTOR WHEN ALTERNATIVE DEFINITIONS ARE USED, 1993
(Towns of 100,000 inhabitants and over)

	Special definition	Working status	Size of the establishment	Wages
Formal sector				
- Men	6 020 610	7 937 678	5 740 444	8 531 645
- Women	3 121 271	3 578 196	3 011 375	4 014 755
- Total	9 141 881	11 505 907	8 751 819	12 576 407
Informal sector				
- Men	3 654 236	1 913 693	4 083 146	1 320 726
- Women	2 126 868	1 690 489	2 244 998	1 252 930
- Total	5 781 104	3 604 182	6 328 144	2 573 656
Total UIS ^a + FS ^b	14 923 007	15 110 107	15 080 007	15 150 107
	Percentages			
Formal sector				
- Men	40	52	38	57
- Women	21	24	20	26
- Total	61	76	58	83
Informal sector				
- Men	24	13	27	9
- Women	15	11	15	8
- Total	39	24	42	17
Total UIS ^a + FS ^b	100	100	100	100

Source: ECLAC, on the basis of the National Employment Survey, Mexico City, January 1993.

^a Urban informal sector.

^b Formal sector.

2. Workers in the urban informal sector by family relationship

One difference found between women and men working in the urban informal sector is their relationship within the family. There is found to be a higher proportion of women heads of household in the informal sector than in the formal one. Thus, whereas 13.8% of women working in the formal sector are heads of households, this percentage rises to 16.8% in the case of the informal sector. Something similar occurs with married women. The contrary is true of daughters and other members of the household. In the case of men, the situation is exactly the opposite. There is found to be a higher proportion of male heads of households in the formal than in the informal sector (see table 6).

Table 7 shows the distribution of heads of households in the formal and informal sectors by gender. Once again, the higher proportion of women in the urban informal sector comes into prominence when it is observed that, whereas in the formal sector only 10% of households are headed by women and the other 90% by men, in the informal sector these percentages change to 14% and 86% respectively.

Table 6
DISTRIBUTION OF PEOPLE WORKING IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR, BY DEGREE OF KINSHIP, 1993
(Towns of 100,000 inhabitants and over)

Kinship	Formal sector		Informal sector	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
1993				
- Head	65.81	13.82	60.94	16.84
- Spouse	0.44	33.26	0.62	43.55
- Son or daughter	25.71	42.64	31.27	23.99
- Relative	7.10	9.41	6.75	8.61
- Other	0.94	0.88	0.43	7.01
- Total	100.00	100.00	100.0	100.00

Source: ECLAC, on the basis of the National Employment Survey, Mexico City, January 1993.

In table 8 it will be seen that of all women heads of household working in the labour market, 55% work in the urban informal sector, this being the case with only 36% of male heads of household. From these figures it can be concluded that most of the women heads of household working in Mexico do so in the informal sector, whereas a majority of male heads of household work in the formal sector (64%). This situation recurs for men and women in all other cases as well, i.e. for spouses, sons and daughters and other relatives. In the case of women, the situation is more marked for heads of households.

Table 7
HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD WORKING IN THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL SECTORS, 1993
(Towns of 100,000 inhabitants and over)

	Percentages
Total	100
Men	89
Women	11
Formal sector	100
Men	90
Women	10
Informal sector	100
Men	86
Women	14

Source: ECLAC, on the basis of the National Employment Survey, Mexico City, January 1993.

Table 8
DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS BETWEEN THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL SECTORS, 1993
(Towns of 100,000 inhabitants and over)
(Percentages)

	Formal sector		Informal sector		Total	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Head	64	45	36	55	100	100
Spouse	54	53	46	47	100	100
Son or daughter	58	72	42	28	100	100
Relative	63	62	37	38	100	100
Other	78	16	22	84	100	100
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: ECLAC, on the basis of the National Employment Survey, Mexico City, January 1993.

3. Profile of workers in the formal and informal sectors

This section contains an analysis of the profile of workers in the formal and informal sectors in terms of three aspects pertaining to them. The first aspect is that of their individual characteristics, such as age, education and hours worked (see tables 9 and 10). The second is their occupational category (see tables 11 to 13). Finally, table 14 shows people's income levels. Tables 15 and 16 complement this information by classifying workplaces. The purpose of this is to provide a picture of male and female informal workers, with the aim of discerning what obstacles prevent them from participating in working activity in the most productive way, and what is required of them if they are to do this.

Table 9
PROFILE OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL WORKERS, 1993
(Towns of 100,000 inhabitants and over)

	Formal sector		Informal sector	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Age				
- 12 to 19	9.34	10.52	17.13	15.63
- 20 to 29	33.13	39.79	25.84	23.47
- 30 to 39	27.83	29.44	21.48	24.55
- 40 to 49	17.66	14.50	16.86	18.56
- 50 and over	12.04	5.74	18.69	17.81
- Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Level of education				
- No schooling	2.04	1.01	5.94	10.61
- 1 to 3 years	5.43	2.45	11.16	12.95
- 4 to 5 years	3.30	2.05	6.67	7.67
- 6 years	18.79	15.50	25.77	29.40
- 7 to 9 years	31.50	44.83	32.05	29.69
- 10 and over	38.94	34.18	18.41	9.69
- Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Hours worked				
- 1 to 14	1.15	2.72	6.19	13.64
- 15 to 24	4.01	8.28	8.92	15.40
- 25 to 34	6.18	13.40	7.35	10.42
- 35 to 48	59.36	60.46	37.74	34.73
- 49 and over	25.13	10.03	33.95	21.11
- Did not work in the week concerned	3.97	5.06	5.75	4.67
- Did not specify	0.21	0.04	0.09	0.04
- Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: ECLAC, on the basis of the National Employment Survey, Mexico City, January 1993.

Table 10
**EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF EMPLOYERS, OWN-ACCOUNT WORKERS AND
WAGE EARNERS, 1993**
(Towns of 100,000 inhabitants and over)

	Formal sector		Informal sector	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Employers				
No schooling	0.72	-	4.89	8.39
1 to 3 years	1.45	4.09	14.34	3.78
4 to 5 years	1.16	1.98	3.82	3.45
6 years	6.90	11.81	25.26	21.82
7 to 9 years	11.66	21.37	22.68	37.41
10 and over	78.11	60.76	29.00	25.15
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Own-account				
No schooling	1.22	0.24	7.67	16.18
1 to 3 years	1.16	-	13.22	14.98
4 to 5 years	2.31	-	7.86	8.58
6 years	4.50	5.81	29.17	29.55
7 to 9 years	8.88	15.60	24.92	23.31
10 and over	81.92	78.34	17.16	7.40
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Wage earners				
No schooling	2.11	0.86	5.49	8.24
1 to 3 years	5.38	2.20	9.37	13.32
4 to 5 years	3.13	1.76	6.60	8.67
6 years	19.07	14.83	23.76	31.53
7 to 9 years	39.97	46.07	40.31	29.08
10 and over	37.34	34.28	14.46	9.17
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Pieceworkers				
No schooling	2.17	3.62	4.39	8.83
1 to 3 years	9.01	6.47	7.80	10.73
4 to 5 years	6.38	7.17	5.47	2.75
6 years	25.20	27.42	24.29	24.17
7 to 9 years	30.23	35.82	39.77	45.99
10 and over	27.02	19.50	18.28	7.53
Unpaid				
No schooling	-	-	2.26	4.84
1 to 3 years	1.50	5.26	6.82	9.90
4 to 5 years	2.35	0.49	6.72	5.20
6 years	8.41	26.60	18.41	26.75
7 to 9 years	27.28	37.35	42.01	40.22
10 and over	60.46	30.29	23.77	13.09

Source: ECLAC, on the basis of the National Employment Survey, Mexico City, January 1993.

Table 11
**DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY AND SPECIAL
 DEFINITION, 1993**

(Towns of 100,000 inhabitants and over)

	Percentages			
	Formal sector		Informal sector	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Professionals	7.49	6.20	-	0.01
Technical workers	6.40	9.42	2.03	0.93
Master craftsmen	3.11	11.78	0.26	0.86
Skilled workers	1.19	0.73	0.93	0.32
Private managers	5.25	2.44	1.79	0.93
Agricultural administrators	0.02	-	0.01	-
Clerical workers	14.54	33.45	1.54	4.48
Employed traders and sales staff	9.73	9.60	18.89	31.74
Street sellers	0.21	0.31	7.69	9.43
Services employees	7.66	9.24	7.40	10.36
Domestic workers	0.18	0.06	1.89	28.14
Transport operators	6.50	0.02	11.10	0.06
Protection and security	5.29	0.47	0.27	-
Farmers	0.07	0.01	0.04	-
Supervisors and overseers	4.68	1.58	0.62	0.05
Artisans and workmen	20.82	10.86	33.10	10.61
Workman's assistant	6.77	3.84	12.45	2.08
Not specified	0.09	-	-	-

Source: ECLAC, on the basis of the National Employment Survey, Mexico City, January 1993.

(a) Individual characteristics

Workers in the informal sector tend to be older or younger than workers in the formal sector, to have a lower level of education than those in the formal sector and to work less hours than them. As the figures in table 9 show, these characteristics differ between men and women.

As regards age, it can be seen that the figures for younger and older people in the informal sector are higher than they are for the formal sector, and this is true of both sexes. Where this characteristic is concerned, the difference is rather between workers in the formal and informal sectors than between the sexes. Nonetheless, the proportion of women aged 50 and over is substantially higher in the informal sector.

The situation as regards people's level of education is different. Although both men and women in the informal sector have a lower level of education than those who work in the formal sector, women in the informal sector have a lower level of schooling than men in that sector. Some 23% of women working in the urban informal sector

have less than three years of education, as compared with 17% in the case of their male counterparts. One aspect that emerges clearly from this table is that women working in the formal sector have a higher level of education than men. Thus, 45% of women in the formal sector have had between 7 and 9 years of education, a figure which falls to only 31% in the case of men. This situation appears to suggest that it is not sufficient just to improve the educational level of women if they are to be assured of access to employment in the formal sector.

When workers in the urban informal sector are broken down by occupational status, it is found that this situation of women in that sector having a lower level of education is reversed in the case of employers. Table 10 shows the educational level of employers, own-account workers, wage earners, pieceworkers and unpaid workers. In the case of employers, only 12% of women have had less than three years of education, whereas this percentage is almost 19% in the case of male employers.

As regards the number of hours worked by men and women, in both sectors women have a shorter working week. In the urban informal sector, 29% of women and 15% of men work less than 24 hours a week, these percentages being only 11% and 5% respectively in the case of the formal sector. Only 21% of women in the informal sector work more than 48 hours, while the proportion of men doing so is 34%.

(b) Occupational position

To discern what the position of women and men is in the urban informal sector, it is necessary to break down the figures for employed workers by occupational category and by the sector of economic activity in which they work (see tables 11 and 12).

The occupational categories in which workers of the formal and informal sectors are concentrated vary for both men and women. Women in the informal sector can be categorized mainly as traders and sellers (32%) and domestic workers (28%), followed by artisans and manual workers (11%), employees of services firms (10%) and street sellers (9%). Men in the urban informal sector are concentrated, first and foremost, in the categories of artisans and manual workers (33%) and traders and sellers (19%), followed by workmen's assistants (12%) and transport operators (11%). Women in the formal sector are mainly clerical workers (33%), master craftswomen (12%) and manual workers (11%); whereas men are manual workers (21%), clerical workers (15%) and traders and sellers (10%).

The sectors of economic activity in which women in the urban informal sector tend to work are retail trading and services, and the same is true of men (see table 12). Nonetheless, one important difference is that a higher proportion of women, almost 80%, work in retail trade and services, the figure being only 45% for men. In other words, even in the informal sector men have more choices of occupation than women. Table 12 shows that if the other definitions of the urban informal sector are used, the sectoral distribution of working men and women remains the same in percentage terms.

The extent to which women work in industry is seen to change when the minimum wage definition is used. In this case, the proportion of women working in industry in the urban informal sector increases. This is due to the low wages they receive in this sector, even when the companies concerned qualify as formal under the other definitions.

Table 12
**SHARE OF INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT IN CERTAIN SECTORS OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY,
 USING ALTERNATIVE DEFINITIONS OF THE URBAN INFORMAL SECTOR, 1993**
(Towns of 100,000 inhabitants and over)
(Percentages)

Sectors of economic activity	Special definition		Position at work		Size of the establishment		Wages	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Industry	15.31	10.51	11.10	9.64	13.40	9.50	14.87	13.99
Retail trade	26.71	40.57	31.94	39.28	23.78	38.22	21.61	37.90
Hotels and restaurants	4.76	10.31	4.53	7.67	4.24	9.65	5.55	8.80
Professional services	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.79	3.61	3.38	2.44
Other services	30.10	37.97	32.15	42.13	28.24	36.97	27.32	30.37

Source: ECLAC, on the basis of the National Employment Survey, Mexico City, January 1993.

Table 13 once again gives figures for employment by sector of economic activity, the breakdown being more detailed. This corroborates the conclusions drawn from table 12 and provides a more detailed insight into the way people work in the informal sector. It is found that women in the informal sector work in the lodging and food preparation and sale category, and men in construction. Women in the formal sector work mainly in industry, professional activities, other services and public administration.

Table 13
**DISTRIBUTION OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL NON-AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT
 BY SECTOR OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY, 1993**
(Towns of 100,000 inhabitants and over)
(Percentages)

	Formal sector		Informal sector	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Mining	0.41	0.04	0.03	-
Industry	29.95	22.46	15.31	10.51
Construction	7.32	1.56	11.28	0.12
Wholesale trade	6.52	4.98	-	-
Retail trade	8.13	8.91	26.71	40.57
Hotels and restaurants	3.30	4.03	4.76	10.31
Electricity	1.02	0.40	-	-
Transport	6.65	2.79	11.39	0.12
Professional services	9.23	11.77	-	-
Other services ^a	16.23	32.51	28.52	16.73
Domestic service	-	-	1.58	21.24
Public administration	10.51	10.16	-	-
Other	0.72	0.41	0.20	0.21
Total	100.00	100.00	100.0	100.00

Source: ECLAC, on the basis of the National Employment Survey, Mexico City, January 1993.

^a Includes recreation, repair, cleaning, financial, educational, medical and other services.

(c) Earnings in the formal and informal sectors

As might be expected, average earnings in the informal sector are lower than they are in the formal sector for both men and women, but within each of the two sectors there is a sharp difference between the sexes, to the advantage of male earnings. These differences are more pronounced in the informal sector.

Twenty-three per cent of women in the urban informal sector earn less than the minimum wage, as compared to only 11% of men. Furthermore, 20% of women work for no pay, as compared to only 8% of men. This situation is found to hold for each of the occupational positions in the sector: employers, own-account workers and wage earners. The differences are greatest in the case of own-account workers, as 36% of women receive an income that is equal to or less than the minimum wage, compared to just 12% of men, and only 13% earn more than 3 times the minimum wage, as against 29% of men (see table 14).

(d) Type of premises

People in the informal sector mainly work in private homes, which may be their own or that of the contractor (45% of women and 35% of men), while people in the formal sector work in medium-sized and large establishments (75% of women and 70% of men). Women in the informal sector also work in grocery stores (29%) and men in workshops (21%) and grocery stores (17%); 7% of women in informal activities use improvised facilities and a further 7% use fixed stands, i.e. makeshift premises, a higher proportion than in the case of men in the urban informal sector (see table 15).

As regards the size of the establishments in which people work, 68% of women in the urban informal sector work alone or with one other person, while the equivalent figure for men in this sector is 57%. A very high percentage of women and men in this sector work in very small establishments. In the formal sector, on the other hand, most workers of both sexes are concentrated in premises where more than 50 people are employed (72% of women and 65% of men) (see table 16).

Table 14
**INCOME OF THOSE WORKING IN THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL SECTORS,
 BY OCCUPATIONAL STATUS, 1993**
(Towns of 100,000 inhabitants and over)
(Percentages)

	Formal sector		Informal sector	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Total working population				
Up to 50% ^a	0.57	1.35	2.33	6.29
50% to 1	2.55	3.70	8.25	16.50
1 to 2	31.02	36.16	34.33	36.99
2 to 3	24.33	24.59	21.08	10.70
Over 3	36.97	30.03	23.01	7.61
Not specified	4.37	3.53	3.31	2.20
Unpaid	0.19	0.65	7.69	19.71
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Employer	(3%)	(0.6)	(12)	(3)
Up to 50% ^a	-	-	0.20	2.76
50% to 1	0.44	-	1.97	2.48
1 to 2	2.29	13.91	13.69	21.80
2 to 3	6.73	5.34	23.75	16.13
Over 3	78.29	72.03	54.81	49.32
Not specified	12.25	8.72	5.58	7.51
Unpaid	-	-	-	-
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Own-account	(2.3)	(1.4)	(40.5)	(38.0)
Up to 50% ^a	0.69	0.29	3.17	11.97
50% to 1	2.13	1.36	9.21	23.84
1 to 2	9.37	15.90	31.48	34.14
2 to 3	14.80	19.92	22.37	13.60
Over 3	54.19	50.10	29.01	12.58
Not specified	18.84	12.41	4.75	3.87
Unpaid	-	-	-	-
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Wage earners	(86.6)	(91.5)	(29.3)	(37.2)
Up to 50% ^a	0.53	0.43	2.55	3.74
50% to 1	2.24	3.00	11.06	18.53
1 to 2	33.35	37.31	54.00	59.89
2 to 3	25.60	25.56	22.09	13.15
Over 3	34.78	30.39	8.72	3.54
Not specified	3.50	3.32	1.57	1.15
Unpaid	-	-	-	-
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: ECLAC, on the basis of the National Employment Survey, Mexico City, January 1993.
^a Of the minimum wage.

Table 15
**DISTRIBUTION OF NON-AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT BY TYPE OF
 WORKING PREMISES**
(Towns of 100,000 inhabitants and over)
(Percentages)

Type of premises	Formal sector		Informal sector	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Home	4.18	1.14	34.56	44.60
Office	3.46	4.25	0.25	1.25
Medium-sized and large	70.05	75.16	1.61	1.48
Improvised	0.04	0.01	5.79	7.34
Taxi	0.11	0.01	9.06	0.07
Snack counter	0.13	0.46	1.66	3.56
Workshop	6.45	3.64	20.77	4.42
Government office	10.51	10.16	0.00	0.00
Grocery store	3.41	3.67	16.51	28.61
Fixed stand	0.05	0.10	5.36	6.85
Motorcycle	0.03	0.00	1.06	0.51
Vehicle	0.20	0.00	2.57	0.18
Bar	0.69	0.97	0.61	0.93
Unspecified	0.71	0.41	0.20	0.21
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: ECLAC, on the basis of the National Employment Survey, Mexico City, January 1993.

Table 16
**SIZE OF ESTABLISHMENTS WHERE WORKERS IN THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL
 SECTORS ARE EMPLOYED, 1993**
(Towns of 100,000 inhabitants and over)
(Percentages)

	Formal sector		Informal sector	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
No workers	2.19	1.42	32.60	31.84
1 worker	0.74	0.46	24.18	35.86
2 to 5 workers	2.24	2.13	42.55	31.16
6 to 50 workers	29.27	23.78	0.59	0.98
51 workers and over	65.11	71.84	0.04	0.16
Unspecified	0.45	0.36	0.04	0.00
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: ECLAC, on the basis of the National Employment Survey, Mexico City, January 1993.

V. POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES DIRECTED AT THE INFORMAL SECTOR

The situation of the Mexican labour market, with the informal sector of the economy growing and undergoing increasing feminization, calls for programmes and initiatives to be organized with a view to improving the situation of those who work there. This section contains a summary of some of the programmes directed at women in Mexico that have an influence on their working activities, the objective being to formulate a proposal for policies and programmes that can help to relieve the poverty that afflicts women in the sector.

A. EXISTING PROGRAMMES

1. Programmes for women in the countryside and poor urban areas

The government has initiated programmes to support women in the countryside and in poor urban areas, though these cover only a small section of the population. These are short-term programmes, aimed at small groups of beneficiaries, and none of them is supposed to solve the problem of informal employment in Mexico.

These are what are known as income generation programmes, and their objective is to improve the quality of life of women, their families and the communities they live in. Some of the main programmes of this type are briefly described in this section.

(a) The Programa de Desarrollo Comunitario con Participación de la Mujer [Community Development Programme with Participation by Women] was set up in 1984 as part of the Regional Employment Programmes of the then Ministry of Programming and the Budget. It was subsequently run by the Mexican Social Security Institute. The aim of the programme was to provide women with temporary work and earnings, training them to operate projects in their communities. Its main objectives included training women in poor areas for work and implementing various campaigns, including campaigns for better housing, the environment, literacy and health. This programme came to cover 19 states in the country, and is the forerunner of the Women in Solidarity programme.

(b) A variety of institutions have helped women at different times to set up small establishments, particularly mixtamal mills and tortilla bakeries, as well as garment workshops and units for rearing small animals. Participants have included the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, the Department of Agrarian Reform, the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs and the Mexican Social Security Institute. The National Institute of Indigenous Affairs and the Fondo Nacional para las Artesanías [National Craft Fund] support women artisans with programmes to train them and market their products.

(c) For several years the National Basic Commodity Corporation supported the establishment of shops to supply communities in rural areas and poor parts of cities. The Corporation also set up an important dairy programme to distribute subsidized milk. A number of the shops and dairies are operated by women, and they have traditionally been places where a range of activities has been carried out to support women in the countryside and poor urban areas, while at the same time they have been very instrumental in improving the supply and reducing the prices of staple products.

(d) The Nacional Financiera [national commercial credit company] is another government institution that supports women in micro-enterprises and small businesses. However, these programmes account for no more than 1% of the projects supported by the Nacional Financiera.

(e) Other state bodies that have provided some support to women, in terms of employment, are the Instituto Nacional para la Educación de Adultos [National Adult Education Institute] and the Fondo Nacional de Fomento Cooperativo [National Fund for Cooperative Development], which have organized garment workshops, and the Ministry of Health with its programme of practical midwifery.

2. Women in Solidarity

The National Solidarity Programme, which was set up in 1989, includes a number of subprogrammes, one of which is Women in Solidarity. This includes social and services projects and production projects. A participatory planning method is used so that women themselves diagnose their problems, put forward a variety of solutions and decide on the projects they wish to carry forward. The group uses its experience of organization to analyse the viability of the project, giving consideration as well to the working techniques they plan to use and the resources that are available. Finally, a community fund is set up, and into this are paid resources that they have generated themselves in various ways (raffles, collections), contributions from state and municipal governments, and donations of various kinds. The intention at all times is to recover all or some of the resources put into projects supported by the Programme, but in the case of the National Solidarity Programme this support takes the form of a non-repayable grant.

Women in Solidarity has met demand from women in every state in the country, with around 750 municipalities and 3,000 towns and villages being covered between 1989 and 1993. A large part of the programme (65%) has concentrated on the rural sector, 20% on the indigenous sector and 10% on urban areas. 5,590 initiatives have been implemented, 2,404 of them production projects and 3,186 social projects. The production activities that have been most in demand are: workshops (sewing, embroidering, weaving), accounting for 19%; tortilla bakeries, 17.8%; community farms, 15.6%; production centres, 15%; grocery stores, 10%; bakeries, 8%; kitchens, 6.6%; kitchen and market gardens, 6.3%; others, 1.1%.

3. Programmes of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare

In 1978, the Servicio Nacional de Empleo [National Employment Service] was set up across the whole country with the task of bringing greater transparency to local labour markets and carrying out studies on them. It now has 99 offices located in the 83 main cities of the country. Over a period of 15 years it has provided guidance and support to just over 2.5 million people.

From October 1989 to October 1994, the Service dealt with more than 1,860 job seekers, recorded almost 1,650 vacancies and guided almost 1,430 people, or 77% of those seeking employment, into these jobs. Around 40% of the people put into the jobs were women.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare also implements Programas de Becas de Capacitación para Desempleados (PROBECAT) [Programmes of Training Grants for the Unemployed] and the Programa de Calidad Integral y Modernización (CIMO) [Total Quality and Modernization Programme].

PROBECAT provides a rapid training course or gives supplementary training to people wishing to re-enter the labour market. It awards grants lasting for an average of three months. Between 1988 and 1994 the Programme gave out a total of 458,362 grants, of which 30% went to women.

The CIMO programme has the objective of setting up and running systems to provide training and to improve quality and productivity in both micro-enterprises and small and medium-sized businesses. The participants are active workers, and it is run inside businesses. Between 1988 and 1994 the programme provided training to 439.5 thousand workers from 151 thousand companies.

According to officials at the National Employment Service, there is high demand from women for the support activities they offer. Although women have benefited from these programmes, however, this has not helped them to improve their levels of pay (Ibarra, 1993).

B. EVALUATION OF PROGRAMMES

Throughout the Latin America region, programmes aimed at improving the situation of women in the labour market have given priority to generating earnings, but they have not been very successful in attaining their goals. A great deal of work has been done on evaluating these programmes in all the countries of the region, and experts agree that they are incapable of improving the situation of women. Under these projects, women are organized into small groups that carry out activities aimed at generating income, they are trained in something specific, which is generally connected to their domestic activities such as sewing or cooking, and they are provided with the resources necessary for the group to make use of this training and produce goods and services for the market. Despite their good intentions, most of these projects in the Latin America region have failed.

The reasons for these failures have been thoroughly researched, and are essentially twofold. Firstly, the institutions chosen to implement these projects are inappropriate, as they are generally non-governmental organizations that have experience in social and welfare issues, but not in production projects. The second reason stems from the fact that activities are selected injudiciously, as no account is taken of the market, and in general there is a failure of marketing once the production work is done. No feasibility studies are carried out on projects; rather, they are implicitly treated as welfare projects.

In the case of Mexico, the study by García, Pacheco and Blanco (1994) recapitulates the findings of previous evaluations², which were collected by Rendón (1992): (a) the programmes are underfunded, and such funds as are provided are

² Recapitulation of evaluations carried out by Barbieri (1982), ECLAC (1989) and Bethke (1989).

available for very short periods; (b) income generation strategies promote activities traditionally regarded as female ones, such as making up garments or producing processed foodstuffs; (c) virtually no feasibility studies are carried out before the projects are implemented; (d) training and technical assistance are inadequate; (e) wives and mothers are not given the help they need in their domestic tasks, and thus are unable to put the necessary amount of time into the programmes. In general, the institutions involved, whether they be federal, state or municipal institutions, tend to take a welfare approach and are not easily convinced of the need for programmes to be oriented specifically towards women (García, Pacheco and Blanco, 1994; SEDESOL, 1993).

To sum up, in Mexico there is still a great deal of work to be done on policies to improve the situation of male and female workers in the urban informal sector. The programmes used hitherto do not appear to have provided the solution, even when they have given some degree of help to certain groups in relieving their situation of poverty in the short term. One problem appears to lie in the matter of programmes specifically aimed at women. Specific programmes are mostly welfare type programmes and do not meet the needs of working women in the 1990s. Rather, they seem to be designed for previous decades when the earnings of women were a supplement to the income of the head of the household. Although programmes and policies need to take gender factors into account, they should not be aimed specifically at women. Rather, they need to be all-embracing and implemented on a massive scale, while taking the gender aspect into account. An example that may be mentioned is that of programmes aimed at micro-enterprises, which should not consider the sex of those operating them, but should take into account the specific needs of the two sexes, so that both men and women are given the opportunity to take advantage of support programmes.

C. PROPOSALS FOR POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES OF ACTION

1. Statistical information

If policies and programmes to improve the situation of women in the labour market are to be designed successfully, prompt and ongoing diagnoses of the situation of women are a vital requirement. Although studies do exist, a continuous series of widely distributed statistical data is needed to facilitate this kind of research and form the basis for policies and programmes. Existing statistics need to be broken down by sex all the time, and not just exceptionally for use in particular studies.

Under-recording of the economic activity of women, and in particular of activity in the informal sector, is one of the limitations that affect diagnoses and prevent the situation of women in the labour market from being generally understood. An effort is needed to improve the way this kind of information is collected, and this is particularly true of own-account work and unpaid family work, which are done mainly by female labour in the case of non-agricultural activities.

It is important for information obtained on the informal sector to remain comparable over time, so that trends and structural changes can be observed. For this purpose, an agreed operational definition should be worked out and used in the systems employed to produce the relevant information.

2. Research

Although Mexico is one of the countries in the region where the most research has been carried out on the labour market and the urban informal sector, there is still a need for studies on working women that focus on the new issues deriving from the new economic circumstances of the country. Some issues that should be addressed in the near future are: the effects of trade liberalization (and the Free Trade Agreement) on the labour market, the urban informal sector and working women, the impact of the process of technological innovation and the conversion of production facilities on the labour market, with emphasis on women, and the effects of flexible labour markets on working women. In general, studies should concentrate on the repercussions that the new economic policies are having on women in the 1990s.

Research should be carried out on the microeconomic environment so that this can be better understood, and for this purpose studies need to be done on many of the activities that women work in within the informal sector. There are only a few occupations for which surveys of actual production units exist to show how these operate and what strategies women adopt to combine their activities inside and outside the home.

3. Legal framework³

Although Mexico has ratified most of the international agreements on workers' and women's rights, the country has the same problem as all the others in the region, which is that many of these laws are not complied with. For the situation of women in the urban informal sector and in the formal sector to be improved, an authority would have to be set up to monitor compliance with labour legislation. Again, some problems will be resolved only once effective mechanisms have been put into operation to ensure that the penalties provided for are actually applied when the law is flouted, and once changes have been made to the law to bring about:

- (a) The establishment of legal authorities with a mandate to resolve problems that might arise from any form of labour discrimination.
- (b) The creation of legal instruments that are binding on firms, institutions and unions, giving women real access to all types of occupations and every level of seniority.
- (c) The implementation of mechanisms to coordinate school hours, particularly for primary schools, with working hours, ensuring that this type of flexibility is not used as a basis for discrimination affecting the job position or wages of working women.
- (d) Even-handedness in giving leave to mothers and fathers to care for children; this presupposes the establishment of mechanisms to ensure that tasks are shared out equitably.
- (e) Review and modernization of legislation covering women workers in domestic service.
- (f) Extension of insurance to protect the health of women workers in informal units and domestic service.

³ Some of these proposals are based on García, Pacheco and Blanco (1994).

4. Training

It has been seen in this study that workers in the urban informal sector have a lower level of education than those in the formal sector, and that women in that sector in turn have a lower level of schooling than their male counterparts. Therefore, a policy to improve the general level of education and of formal and informal training, with emphasis on the gender aspect, is a recommendation that arises directly from the study. Another proposal, which is complementary to the above, is that a review of study programmes should be carried out so that they can be reoriented to exclude the sexist stereotypes that lead women and men to choose careers determined by cultural patterns that assign roles on the basis of gender. An effort is also needed to get men and women involved with new technologies, so that it is easier for them to enter sectors that are at the forefront of economic growth.

In particular, there is a need to develop the content of training schemes aimed at people working in the informal sector in order to raise productivity and improve the quality of the products and services they offer. The great task that still remains undone is to produce relevant large-scale programmes for people operating micro-enterprises.

5. Sexual stereotypes

One of the factors that prevent women from entering the labour market on the same terms as men is the discrimination resulting from the sexual stereotypes that exist in the culture of the country. One way of helping to change this situation is to support all kinds of initiatives to make the different actors in society aware of the gender aspect.

To achieve this objective, it is recommended that certain concrete measures be taken:

- (a) Carry out studies to reveal what the current situation of discrimination is and what contribution women make to economic and social development. In particular, efforts should be made to secure recognition for the contribution made by unpaid women family workers.
- (b) Organize seminars, workshops and projects to raise people's awareness of these problems.
- (c) Implement publicity programmes in the mass communications media to make people aware of situations of discrimination, the costs entailed in leaving these unaddressed, and the benefits of change. At the same time, there is a need for programmes to promote an image of women that corresponds to today's realities and not to the notion of women simply as housewives.

6. Employment opportunities

There are a number of measures that can be adopted to increase employment opportunities for women, as the list below shows:

- (a) To provide women with equal access to the labour market, it must be made easier for them to obtain information and guidance in relation to their opportunities in the labour market.
- (b) Positive discrimination mechanisms need to be created for the benefit of women in training programmes, ensuring that these programmes are reasonably well matched to the requirements of the market.

- (c) The State must meet the cost of reproduction, so that it makes no difference for employers whether they use men or women as a factor of production.
- (d) Support must be given for the creation of child-care centres and for any type of support programme that can help make it easier for women to enter the labour market on the same terms as men.
- (e) Mechanisms need to be set up to police working conditions, and there must be procedures whereby discrimination in respect of work opportunities, remuneration, etc., can be reported and punished.
- (f) Efforts must be made to set up systems of financing to support micro-enterprises, operating from a gender standpoint.
- (g) A social infrastructure needs to be created to support women who work on their own account. This should provide care for people dependent upon them such as their children, old people and invalids on the one hand and, on the other, should make it easier for them to carry out their work (sanitary facilities in work centres, places to keep their mobile equipment, semi-wholesale supply centres, etc.).
- (h) Women workers who are subject to unfair subcontracting schemes should be helped to organize.
- (i) Women operating micro-enterprises need to be encouraged to organize among themselves so that they can buy raw materials and sell products in bulk.
- (j) Encouragement needs to be given for economic links to be established between companies in the formal and informal sectors on an equitable and mutually advantageous basis. This is particularly important for women who carry out assembly work at home.

7. Measures to improve working conditions for women in the urban informal sector

Measure proposed	Institutions ^a
Information	
Prompt, ongoing diagnoses of the situation of women	PUEG, PIEM, National Women's Programme
Breakdown of population statistics by sex	INEGI, SSA, SEP, CONAPO, ANUIES, other information-producing bodies
Improve the collection of statistical information on own-account work and unpaid family members	INEGI
Apply an agreed definition of the informal sector so that changes in its structure can be monitored	INEGI
Research	
The effect of trade liberalization on the labour market, the urban informal sector and working women	Various research centres: The Colleges, CIESSAS, CRIMs and the UAM (the STPS can sponsor them)
The impact of the process of technological innovation and conversion of production facilities on the labour market, the gender aspect being considered	Various research centres: The Colleges, CIESSAS, CRIMs, the UAM, the STPS and the National Women's Programme can sponsor them
The effect of flexible labour markets on women	Various research centres: The Colleges, CIESSAS, CRIMs, the UAM, the STPS and the National Women's Programme can sponsor them
Studies on the behaviour of microeconomic units in the economic activities of women	Various research centres: The Colleges, CIESSAS, CRIMs, the UAM, the STPS and the National Women's Programme can sponsor them, and the Ford Foundation has the Pemsá Programme

Legal aspects	
Legal authorities to resolve labour discrimination problems	Assign powers to the Procuraduría General de Trabajo [state legal office for labour issues]
Create binding legal instruments to give women real access to all types of occupations and levels of seniority	Introduce quotas into legislation, Chamber of Deputies and Senators through the relevant committees
Introduce maternity and paternity leave for childcare	Changes to labour legislation and collective work contracts, Congress and the STPS
Revise the legislation applying to women workers in domestic service	Relevant committees of the Chambers. Drawing up of draft amendments by the National Women's Programme
Protection of the health of women workers in the informal sector and domestic service	IMSS

Training and education	
Improve the educational level of women	SEP
Formal and informal training for women	STPS and SEP
Incorporate the issue of gender into education and training	SEP
Revise study programmes to remove gender stereotypes	SEP
Vocational guidance for women in professional disciplines that enable them to enter dynamic sectors	SEP and Universities
Training programmes for operators of micro-enterprises in the informal sector	SS, SECOFI, STPS, SCT and ST

Raising awareness of sexual stereotypes in order to change them	
Studies to bring discrimination to light	PRONAM
Studies to reveal the contribution made by women to economic and social development	PRONAM
Recognition of the contribution made by unpaid women family workers	PRONAM
Organization of seminars, workshops and other measures to raise awareness among the population at large	PRONAM
Programmes of publicity in the mass communications media to raise awareness among the general population	PRONAM/SEGOB
Employment opportunities	
Information and guidance for women on the opportunities available in the labour market	National Employment Service/STPS and state Governments
Apply positive discrimination in training projects, ensuring that these are relevant to the needs of the market	STPS/SEP
The cost of reproduction must be borne by the State	SS/SEP/SEDESO
Support services for working women	SEDESO/STPS/COMPANIES/COMMUNITY/State Governments
Policing of working conditions	Work Inspectorate (STPS) and state Governments
Mechanisms for reporting and penalizing discrimination	Procuraduria Federal del Trabajo [federal labour office]
Mechanisms to finance micro-enterprises run by women	SEDESO, NAFIN, state Funds
Infrastructure to support women who work on their own account	Municipal governments in the main cities (Mexico City, urban municipalities of the AMCM, Monterrey, Guadalajara)

Organization of women workers who are subject to unfair subcontracting arrangements	NGOs
Information on suppliers and markets for women operating micro-enterprises	SEDESO/SECOFI
Development of equitable subcontracting schemes	SECOFI/SEDESO/STPS

^a The list below gives the meaning of the acronyms used in this table:

ANUIES	National Association of Universities and Institutes of Further Education
CIESSAS	Centre for Research and Advanced Studies in Social Anthropology
CONAPO	National Population Council
CRIM	Regional Centre for Multidisciplinary Research, UNAM
IMSS	Mexican Social Security Institute
INEGI	National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics
The Colleges	System of state and regional colleges of the Colegio de México [College of Mexico] (Frontera, Sonora, Michoacán)
NAFIN	Nacional Financiera [national commercial credit corporation]
PEMSA	Programme of Applied Microeconomic and Social Studies, Ford Foundation
PRONAM	National Women's Programme
PIEM	Interdisciplinary Programme for Studies on Women, the Colegio de México
<i>Translator's note: text gives:</i>	
<i>PIEM</i>	<i>Interdisciplinary Gender Studies Programme, El Colegio de México</i>
PUEG	University Gender Studies Programme
SCT	Ministry of Communications and Transport
SECOFI	Ministry of Commerce and Industrial Development
SEDESO	Ministry of Social Development
SEGOB	Ministry of the Interior
SEP	Ministry of Public Education
SS	Ministry of Health
SSA	Ministry of Health and Welfare
ST	Ministry of Tourism
STPS	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
UAM	Autonomous Metropolitan University

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Annex
SOME MEASUREMENTS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INFORMAL SECTOR FOR EMPLOYMENT
(Definitions, criteria and size)

Author and work	Operational definition of the informal sector (IS)	Geographical area studied	Size of the IS as a proportion of	Years	Proportion (%)	Source of data
STPS ^a : "Bases para una política de empleo para el sector informal o marginal urbano". General Management of the Public Employment Service, Mexico City, 1975	The urban informal sector was measured on the basis of two different criteria: (a) Regarding the sector as being comprised of all people working in non-agricultural activities whose monthly income is less than the legal minimum; and (b) Taking only the occupational categories of non-wage earners with the same level of income, for all branches of activity except those that were insufficiently specified and domestic service, where all positions in the occupation are considered, regardless of their income	Urban national	The total working population	1970 (maximum criterion)	25.1	The calculations were carried out on the bases of figures from the 1970 Population Census, from which a number of special tabulations were carried out by level of income, branch of activity and federative body
PREALC/ILO: "Dinámica del subempleo en América Latina", Santiago, Chile, 1981 (Studies and reports of ECLAC, No. 10)	Deals with the informal sector in general and measures it in terms of the rate or coverage of underemployment. The general criterion used was to accept that underemployment is found entirely and exclusively among those working in informal urban and traditional agricultural activities with little training, a lack of integration with the productive system, little access to resources, a low level of accumulation and low-level or very backward technologies Thus, the rate or coverage of underemployment is the sum of the share of urban informal and traditional agricultural activities in the total EAP	Urban national	The total working population	1970 (minimum criterion)	56.9 43.1 40.4	The calculations for 1950 and 1970 were based on information taken from Population Censuses. The 1980 figure is based on information from the nearest surveys, incorporated into a method of calculation that also takes account of the revised projections for the EAP, 1970-1980
		National	The urban informal and traditional agricultural sectors in relation to the total EAP ^d	1950 1970 1980		
		Urban	The urban informal sector in relation to the total EAP	1950 1970 1980	12.9 18.2 22.0	
		Rural	The traditional agriculture sector in relation to the total EAP	1950 1970 1980	44.0 24.9 18.4	

Author and work	Operational definition of the informal sector (IS)	Geographical area studied	Size of the IS as a proportion of	Years	Proportion (%)	Source of data
PREALC ^b /ILO ^c : "El mercado de trabajo en cifras 1950-1980". PREALC, Santiago, Chile, 1982	Informal sector: Occupational status (own-account workers, unpaid workers and employers)	National	Total EAP ^d	1950 1960 1970 1980	9.7 10.0 14.5 18.3	The calculations for 1950-1970 were based on information taken from Population Censuses. The 1980 figure is based on information from the nearest surveys, incorporated into a method of calculation that also takes account of the revised projections for the EAP, 1970-1980
SPP ^e /STPS ^a : "La ocupación informal en áreas urbanas 1976". Survey to Supplement the Standing Survey of Employment, Mexico City, 1979	The following are regarded as forming part of the urban informal sector: (a) Manual and clerical workers with incomes equal to or lower than the minimum wage who have at least two of the following informal sector attributes: no work contract and/or work carried out on a casual, temporary or occasional basis; no economic and social benefits (paid holidays, inclusion in retirement or pension schemes, granting of home loans, etc.) and no affiliation to labour organizations. (b) Own-account workers and employers who are not affiliated to labour organizations, have no right to leave and no access to bank credit. (c) Unpaid family workers	Urban (Metropolitan Areas of Mexico City, Guadalajara, Monterrey and self-representing primary units)	Total working urban population Occupational status: - Own-account workers and employers - Manual and clerical workers - Unpaid family workers By sex: - men - women By branch of activity: - Agriculture - Industry - Services	1976	38.2 24.4 9.9 3.9 24.3 13.9 3.8 11.8 22.6	Calculated on the basis of the Survey to Supplement the Standing Survey of Employment. The size of the sample was approximately 8,400 households in the metropolitan area of Mexico City, 5,500 in the Federal District, 1,200 in the Metropolitan Area of the City of Guadalajara, 900 in the Metropolitan Area of Monterrey, and 8,195 in the self-representing primary units. These last are municipalities with a population of 100,000 or more according to the 1970 census

Annex (cont. 2)

Author and work	Operational definition of the informal sector (IS)	Geographical area studied	Size of the IS as a proportion of	Years	Proportion (%)	Source of data
STPS ^a : "Oferta y necesidades de capacitación para el período 1985-1988", Mexico City, 1986	Defined as a marginalized sector with incomes equal to or lower than the minimum wage and with few or no social benefits	National	Total working population (thousands of people)	1984	35.3	Calculations based on the X Population Census of 1980, figures supplied by the Comisión Consultiva de Empleo y Producto Interno Bruto [Consultative Committee for Employment and Gross Domestic Product] by branch of activity; informal activity was estimated for 1984, and projected to 1988 using an array method
Brígida García: "Desarrollo económico y absorción de fuerza de trabajo en México: 1950-1980", Mexico City, 1987, El Colegio de México	Distinguishes between waged and unwaged workers. Regards the latter as being "a rough empirical approximation that enables us to establish the extent and, to a certain degree, the meaning of activities in our economies that are not typically capitalistic". The question of whether the IS is in some way identified with these "not typically capitalistic" sectors is examined.	National	Total EAPC Occupational status: - own-account workers - family helpers - employers Branch of activity - agriculture	1970 1979 1980 1970 1979 1980 1970 1979 1980 1970 1979 1980	37.8 37.1 45.8 25.1 25.4 31.3 6.5 8.3 8.7 6.2 3.4 5.7 21.1 19.9 25.8	Calculations based on the IX General Population Census for 1970; for 1979 the first quarter Standing Survey of Employment was used; for 1980 the 1980 Population Census was used, and it was assumed that the distribution of those whose work was insufficiently specified was similar to that of people whose activity was known The agricultural sector is included in accordance with the way the information is presented by the author (pp. 78-79)

Author and work	Operational definition of the informal sector (IS)	Geographical area studied	Size of the IS as a proportion of	Years	Proportion (%)	Source of data
Carlos Márquez Padilla: "La ocupación informal urbana en México: Un enfoque regional", Fundación Friedrich Ebert, Mexico City, 1988	Informal sector: working population earning less than the minimum wage (simple arithmetical average of state legal minimum wages corresponding to the different economic zones compared)	National	Non-agricultural EAP	1980	40.6	Own calculations based on the 1980 Population Census. N.B.: Neither the agricultural EAP nor the "unspecified" category were included. Use was made only of information that met the specifications required in accordance with the operational definition
INEGI "Encuesta nacional de Economía Informal 1989" Mexico City, 1980	As there is no clearly identifiable definition of what the informal sector is, for the sole purposes of the survey people who met the following characteristics were included: - occupational status: employers and own-account workers - size of the business: with a maximum of five wage-earning employees - branch of activity: activities related to manufacturing, trade and services were included	Urban Metro-politan Areas of Mexico City, Guadalajara, Monterrey, Puebla and León Border towns: Ciudad Juárez and Tijuana	- Employers - Own-account workers - Workers in businesses: -- partners -- waged employees -- unpaid workers -- unspecified	1980	100.0 9.6 56.6 33.8 0.7 15.0 17.9 0.2	The data are from the responses given to the survey questionnaire by a sample of 3,459 individuals, taken from the information in the National Urban Employment Survey

Annex (cont. 4)

Author and work	Operational definition of the informal sector (IS)	Geographical area studied	Size of the IS as a proportion of	Years	Proportion (%)	Source of data
<p>CIEMEX-WEFA: "Perspectivas económicas de México". Macroeconomic Service, Mexico City, 1988. (For the years 1979-1982)</p> <p>CIEMEX-WEFA: "Perspectivas económicas de México". Macroeconomic Service, Mexico City, 1991. (For the years 1983-1990)</p>	<p>The definition is not explained</p>	<p>National</p>	<p>Total EAP Total EAP (millions of people)</p>	<p>1979 1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985 1986 1987 1988 1989 1990</p>	<p>1.2 1.3 1.7 1.1 5.1 6.5 7.7 9.0 11.8 13.2 16.6 19.4</p>	<p>The source of the data is not explained</p>

Author and work	Operational definition of the informal sector (IS)	Geographical area studied	Size of the IS as a proportion of	Years	Proportion (%)	Source of data
Teresa Rendón and Carlos Salas: "Características y dimensión del sector informal urbano y sus necesidades de capacitación". Document produced by the STPS, Mexico City, 1991	Occupational status: (a) Includes employers, own-account workers and unpaid workers (b) Includes own-account workers and unpaid workers	National	Total working population	1979	17.0	Standing Survey of Employment, third quarter, 1979
		Metropolitan Area Mexico City	Working population in Metropolitan Area Mexico City, Total working population		18.5	
	(a) Includes employers, own-account workers and unpaid workers (b) Includes own-account workers and unpaid workers	National	Total working population	1983	14.8	
		Metropolitan Area Mexico City	Working population in Metropolitan Area Mexico City, Total working population		15.7	National Income and Expenditure Survey, fourth quarter, 1983
	(a) Includes employers, own-account workers and unpaid workers (b) Includes own-account workers and unpaid workers	National	Total working population		17.9	National Employment Survey, second quarter, 1988
		Urban	Urban working population		-24.3	
	(a) Includes employers, own-account workers and unpaid workers (b) Includes own-account workers and unpaid workers	National	Total working population	1988	24.1	National Urban Employment Survey, second quarter, 1988
		Metropolitan Area Mexico City	Working population in Metropolitan Area Mexico City		21.4	
	(a) Includes employers, own-account workers and unpaid workers (b) Includes own-account workers and unpaid workers	Metropolitan Area Mexico City	Working population in Metropolitan Area Mexico City		19.8	
		Metropolitan Area Mexico City	Working population in Metropolitan Area Mexico City		22.9	
		Metropolitan Area Mexico City	Working population in Metropolitan Area Mexico City		18.8	

Annex (cont. 6)

Author and work	Operational definition of the informal sector (IS)	Geographical area studied	Size of the IS as a proportion of	Years	Proportion (%)	Source of data
Teresa Rendón and Carlos Salas: "Características y dimensión del sector informal urbano y sus necesidades de capacitación". Document produced by the STPS ^a , Mexico City, 1991	Level of workers' earnings (equal to the legal minimum wage)	National	Total working population	1983	31.3	National Income and Expenditure Survey, fourth quarter, 1983
	Working people earning the minimum wage or less were included	Urban	Total working population	1988	27.7	National Employment Survey, second quarter, 1988. (In this survey, urban areas were defined as places with 100,000 inhabitants and over)
	Working people earning the minimum wage or less were included	Metropolitan Area Mexico City	Working population Metropolitan Area Mexico City	1988	22.1	National Employment Survey, second quarter, 1988

Annex (concl.)

Author and work	Operational definition of the informal sector (IS)	Geographical area studied	Size of the IS as a proportion of	Years	Proportion (%)	Source of data
Teresa Rendón and Carlos Salas: "Características y dimensión del sector informal urbano y sus necesidades de capacitación". Document produced by the STPS ^a , Mexico City, 1991	People working in establishments employing up to 5 people	Metropolitan Area Mexico City	Working population Metropolitan Area Mexico City	1988	31.8	National Urban Employment Survey, second quarter, 1988
		Urban	Total urban working population	1988	34.3	National Employment Survey, second quarter, 1988
		Industry	Total population working in the industrial sector	1989	10.3	Economic Census 1989
	Includes public administration and defence	Trade	Total population working in the trading sector	1989	60.0	Economic Census 1989
		Services	Total population working in the services sector	1989	21.9	Economic Census 1989

Source: C. Jusidman, "El sector informal en México", Cuadernos del trabajo, Mexico City, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.

- a Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.
- b Regional Employment Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean.
- c International Labour Organization.
- d Economically active population.
- e Ministry of Programming and the Budget.
- f National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics.

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