

FOR BETTER AND FOR WORSE

Women organizing in Export Processing Zones

Mechtild Rosier

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NEW TRADE UNION PERSPECTIVES
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Women and Development Project CNV and FNV

SOMO (Center for Research on Multinational Corporations)
Keizersgracht 132, 1015 CW Amsterdam
tel: +31-20-6391291 fax: +31-20-6391321

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1. WHAT'S IN A NAME?

At the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies, a system of production evolved in which labour and capital were geographically separated. Large enterprises from the industrialized countries were seeking cheap labour, while the developing countries were looking for a way to solve their debt and unemployment problems.

International development organizations – like the World Bank and the IMF – regarded export manufacturing as a key development strategy for countries who had traditionally depended on agricultural exports.

Export manufacturing reduces the need to pay wages sufficient to develop the kind of internal market required under import substitution, but on the other hand demands a maximum reduction of production costs, principally wages, in order to compete effectively on the international market.

Governments have attempted to encourage foreign investment by lifting trade barriers and by offering tax holidays, subsidized credit, export subsidies, and freedom from import duties on the raw materials and machinery needed for production. Special 'Export Processing Zones' (EPZs) have been and still are being constructed, where foreign investors can start assembly operations, making use of the complete infrastructural facilities provided. But the availability of cheap labour still appears to be one of the prime determining factors for foreign investment.

Export-led industrialization has intensified dependence on the countries from which the investments originate while failing to generate self-sustaining growth.

More important in the context of this paper is the fact that export-led industrialization has restructured the labour force, marginalizing men by generating jobs mainly for women, who under import substitution represented only a small percentage of the industrial labour force. Export manufacturers prefer women workers, because they are cheaper to employ, less likely to unionize, and seem to have greater stamina for monotonous work.

Although they are working in dead-end, low-paid jobs, their incorporation into the industrial labour force gives women more independence and economic responsibility (Safa, 1993: 24-5).

This paper examines the position of women in EPZs, and looks at the strategies and forms of organizations used by trade unions and autonomous women's groups to successfully change the labour conditions of these women workers. First, however, let me explain what I mean by 'Export Processing Zone'.

In the literature we come across at least 19 different terms for these special zones, established – usually in developing countries – with a view to earning foreign exchange and reducing local unemployment. The term 'free trade zone' (FTZ), which has existed since the nineteenth century, is still widely used but in fact it originally referred to zones situated near existing trade routes and geared to the storage, transshipment and re-export of goods produced elsewhere. Nowadays FTZ refers to a customs-free enclave for bonded goods trade and its main activities are the packing and storage of goods for export. EPZs, which have evolved from the FTZ, are more particularly areas

where industrial products are manufactured and assembled, and not just stored for trade. (Verbruggen, 1987; ILO/UNCTC 1988: 1-4).

Other names used to describe areas in which export-oriented industrial activity is promoted by government incentives include 'Investment Promotion Zone', 'Export Production Zone', 'Special Economic Zone', 'Industrial Free Zone' and 'Maquiladora'.

In this paper I will use the term EPZ. However, definitions as to what constitutes an EPZ are at least as numerous as the terms used to describe the phenomenon.

According to the ILO, the function of EPZs is: to provide the technical, economic and legal framework and preconditions for the profitable use of low-cost labour and other factors of production, such as land, water, the environment, energy and raw materials, for world-market orientated, internationally competitive production. The principal requirements for such production are: modern infrastructure; an adequate supply of industrial inputs; and the lifting of any national restrictions on trade and payments which might hinder the free movement of goods and free transfer of capital and profits (Kreye et al. 1987: 5). The ILO fails to mention the severe restrictions on or even absence of labour legislation and trade union rights.

The definition of an EPZ to be used here is:

A clearly delineated industrial estate, which constitutes a free trade enclave in the customs and trade regime of the country, and where (foreign) manufacturing firms producing mainly for export benefit from a certain number of fiscal, legal, labour force and financial incentives.

Like most definitions this one, too, is inadequate for dealing with borderline cases. For example, the Manaus Free Zone in Brazil is more an 'Import Processing Zone', since most of its products are sold in Brazil. Other borderline cases are countries or areas which have no tariffs or import restrictions, so that the territory as a whole might be considered an EPZ – examples are Hong Kong, Macau and Singapore, but also entire regions and cities in China.

There has been a lot of discussion as to whether the narrow definition of EPZs as stated above should be widened to include other types of offshore facilities which have features in common with the EPZs. For instance, the many manufacturing firms that are located outside the EPZs, but which benefit from part of the same incentives and privileges. It is an important discussion because these facilities represent, in terms of employment or output, approximately half the weight of EPZs. In 1986, some 620,000 workers were employed throughout the developing world in these offshore manufacturing facilities, as against 1.3 million in the 'real' EPZs.

In this study I shall focus on the narrowly defined EPZ, including the borderline cases, but excluding all other offshore manufacturing facilities outside the zones. This choice has been motivated by practical considerations such as the availability and comparability of reliable (statistical) data, but also by the fact that in addition to being important economic enclaves, these zones are also important social and political phenomena. The essence of the nature of EPZs is their physical, social and economic segregation from the rest of the country. The infrastructural environment of the zones combined with this segregation is probably one of the keys to their success. However, success is a disputable concept when one looks at the actual benefits to the host countries in terms of industrial growth, finances, employment, and social and

technological development (ILO/UNCTC, 1988: 4-7). It becomes even more disputable when we look at the labour conditions of the workers involved (see section 3).

The first modern FTZ/EPZ was constructed in 1959 in Shannon, Ireland, and was followed by a second one in India in 1965. The history of FTZs, however, goes back much further, even as far back as the Middle Ages.

Many EPZs have been established in Southeast Asia, Central America and the Caribbean, in particular. In 1986 more than 60 countries had or were planning to have an EPZ. In that year the total number of established EPZs was 176, spread across 47 different developing countries. There were 86 zones under construction and a further 24 were planned. Seven developing countries have constructed their first EPZ since 1986, as shown in table 1 (see Appendix, p. 00).

2. EXPORT PROCESSING ZONES IN PERSPECTIVE

Judging from the number of zones in operation or under construction, the EPZ can clearly be rated as a highly successful strategy. The visible success of the Shannon zone and the influence of international agencies such as UNIDO and UNCTAD, have had an important effect on the proliferation of EPZs. Moreover, for national planners trying to promote industrial development, building a modern industrial estate with a sophisticated infrastructure was more glamorous than trying to transform the existing slow-growing industrial sector. As for the investors, everything was available in the zones and trade restrictions could often be circumvented (ILO/UNCTC, 1988: 2).

EPZs were created by developing countries in order to exploit their labour-cost advantage over high-income countries. Low labour costs, however, are never the only determinant in the potential investor's decision to invest in an EPZ. Equally important are the quality of the labour force and the political and social stability of the host country and surrounding region (ILO/UNCTC, 1988: 90-1).

It has proven to be very difficult to make reliable evaluations of the costs and benefits of EPZs for the host countries after 10 or 15 years of operation. One of the essential factors in the economic success of an EPZ lies in its combined ability to achieve a high rate of occupancy within the first few years of operation, and to keep total infrastructural investment costs within reasonable limits (ILO/UNCTC, 1988: 139).

The majority of EPZs were set up with the aim of attracting subsidiaries of foreign multinational enterprises, in the hope that they would generate large numbers of new jobs, and increase the host country's exports. In addition, the host countries hoped for technological development and development of local industry. Although there is a lot of literature available on the aims of host countries and the presumed results after years of operation of EPZs and the like, it is not within the scope of this paper to discuss these analyses here.

The size and relative weight of the existing EPZs vary considerably from country to country. For a comparison one can look at the proportion of each country's manufacturing employment accounted for by employment in its EPZs, but one can also look at output, added value or total exports. The export-performance and employment-generating effects should be judged in the general economic context of the 1970s and 1980s which were characterized by a world-wide recession, and growing unemployment. The development of EPZs affected employment in the industrialized countries, especially in the textile and garment industries where 400,000 jobs were lost in the OECD countries, while some 200,000 jobs were created in the EPZs. In the electronic and other industrial sectors such job displacements have been either absent or very marginal (ILO/UNCTC, 1988: 78).

Looking at the employment rate, there are developing countries – like Macau and Mauritius – where more than three-quarters of the employment in the manufacturing sector is accounted for by EPZ industries: in other words, small countries where industrialization started with the establishment of an EPZ. In these countries the strategies of EPZ enterprises and the linkages to the rest of the local industry are of vital importance. In Singapore, Malaysia, the Dominican Republic, Tunisia and Sri Lanka EPZs represent a lower but still very important share of industrial jobs, ranging from 35-16%. Hong Kong and Mexico, with around 10% of their manufacturing jobs in such

zones, form the next group. In most countries, however, EPZ employment is of very marginal importance, accounting for 1.5% or less. In Brazil, for instance, in contrast to Macau and Mauritius, the Manaus zone has hardly any influence on the country's international trade performance, unemployment problems, or on its industrial development. The more usual situation probably lies between these extremes, with EPZs and local industrial development stimulating each other's growth.

As has already been stated, even if EPZs account for a relatively small share of manufacturing employment, the overall importance to the country or area concerned may nevertheless be considerable, as for example in the contribution it makes to the balance of payments (e.g. Mexico).

The ownership structure of industrial firms operating in these zones differs from what is generally assumed. The proportion of foreign-owned firms is considerably lower, and the number of domestically owned enterprises turns out to be surprisingly higher than expected. Moreover, as a result of legal restrictions on foreign ownership, domestic investors often have an important share in joint ventures with foreign investors. One should not forget, however, that domestically owned firms tend to be smaller in size than the foreign-owned ones, which also influences their importance for the host-country.

A look at the percentage of net exports relative to total exports reveals not only the economic contribution of the EPZ to the host country, but also the extent of backward linkages with the local economy: higher net exports mean a higher volume of locally purchased inputs. EPZs can range from high net export ratio (Republic of Korea: 55%) to a very low, or even negative net export ratio (Malaysia: 5%).

EPZs in historical perspective

When we look at EPZs from a historical perspective it becomes clear that a range of economic, social, and coincidental factors have affected the evolution of EPZs. Having started out as a territorial concept, the EPZ is now on its way to becoming a special regime. The original concept of the EPZ was an industrial enclave, an area surrounded by fences, aimed at attracting (foreign) investors for export production. In the course of time it has become more and more a legal status attached to specific enterprises, regardless of their location or ownership structure. Basile and Germidis view this as the transition from first-generation to second-generation EPZs (1984). This evolution of EPZs into a statutory concept has in some cases already led to entire countries – Hong Kong and Singapore – or extensive regions – in Mauritius and Sri Lanka – becoming export processing areas.

The first-generation EPZs were established along very similar lines and developed in rather similar ways. Since the early 1970s several common development trends can be discerned (ILO/UNCTC, 1988: 150-5). These trends have changed the overall appearance of the EPZs.

- * the employment share of the dominant industry tends to decline as the years go by;
- * the proportion of women workers in the total workforce declines gradually. This trend is accelerated by measures taken by the host country's government to encourage male employment. In Mauritius, for example, the government lowered minimum wages for men in 1984 to the same level as those for women, in order

- to get more men employed in the EPZs (Luchmun, 1992);
- * the share of total added value accounted for by foreign-owned enterprises is slowly declining, also due to the fact that the number (and added value) of joint ventures between foreign and domestic enterprises is increasing.
- * a fourth trend is the increase in net exports as domestic industries gradually replace foreign suppliers;
- * closely linked to the growth in net exports is a fifth trend, namely, the growth in sales to the domestic market;
- * the ILO (1988: 152) names as sixth trend the increase in the rate of unionization of the workforce, but this is a rather speculative assumption, which I am unable to confirm.

Although a very wide range of industrial activities is represented in the EPZs, individual zones tend to concentrate their activities around one dominant industry. The most common ones are the electrical and electronics industry (Mexico, Malaysia, and Brazil) and the textile and garment industries (Mauritius, Sri Lanka and the Philippines).

This high degree of industrial monoculture is illustrated by the fact that the largest industry in an EPZ employs between three and five times as many workers as the next largest industry in that same EPZ. There are many theories about this monoculture phenomenon, a traditional one being that low labour costs are likely to attract labour-intensive industries. But that, of course, does not explain the dominance of one industry per EPZ. Nor does an explanation based on local factor endowments, educational levels or previous industrial traditions.

Though all these factors may partly account for the monocultures, we should not forget that purely random factors may have played an important role, too. The artificial nature of EPZs, demanding large infrastructural investments, will have stimulated governments to try to fill up the industrial space as rapidly as possible. Moreover the first investor in a new zone will attract more investors from the same industry and the same country, which to a certain extent scares off investors from other countries and industries (ILO/UNCTC, 1988: 37-50). There seems to be a correlation between the amount of foreign investment and the degree of concentration of industry in these zones (3-44).

I would like to add a few other trends in EPZ development to the list above. There seems, for instance, to be a trend towards a growing proportion of more highly qualified jobs. In many instances this will result in increasing employment of men, but in areas where there is no substantial difference in educational level between men and women and where women have the advantage of previous experience with EPZ work, this might open up ways for women workers to be promoted to jobs at a higher level, higher in remuneration, but also in status (Rosier, 1990: 54).

Furthermore, investments in new EPZs tend to come increasingly from Asian countries like South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong, who in the seventies were hosts to the first EPZ investors. These third world MNEs¹ now account for 16-22% of all foreign investors in EPZs.

A development pattern that is important in relation to employment in EPZs is the fact that a growing number of MNEs are subcontracting out parts of the production process.

¹ Multinational Enterprises

Since the mid-eighties restructuring and flexibilization have taken place in reaction to economic recession and growing competition. This has led to massive lay-offs mainly affecting workers with a fixed contract. Production work is subcontracted out to local firms, and often through these firms further on in a subcontracting chain leading eventually to homeworking women. In Hong Kong, for instance, I encountered women who had been laid off by electronics and garment companies only to be offered 'other' work as homeworkers instead. They ended up doing exactly the same work as before, only no longer under the direct control of the MNE, but at home for a subcontractor. For the MNEs this has the advantage of being cheaper, and of shifting the responsibility for working conditions onto others. For the workers this results in even worse labour conditions, and a more insecure position (Rosier, 1993: 3). It is here that the industrial sector shades off into the informal labour sector (see section 3 for labour conditions in EPZs).

Recently there has been a trend towards the development of offshore facilities for world market-oriented agricultural production (e.g. Sri Lanka), for services (Egypt), and data-processing (Barbados). These last two industries might also offer perspectives for women searching for more highly qualified jobs, but it is still too early to do any forecasting in this direction. Moreover, innovations in process technology have led to automation of production in an increasing number of plants in EPZs (Kreye et al., 1987: 17). Whether this development will lead to higher qualified jobs for women, depends on the efforts of trade unions, women's organizations and governments.

The early emphasis on exports is gradually giving way to a more liberal attitude towards imports, with as its ultimate form, the 'import processing zone', which already exists in Brazil: Manaus Free Zone (Possas, 1987).

3. EMPLOYMENT STRUCTURE AND PRODUCTIVITY

In 1986 some 45 developing countries and areas were actively involved in the EPZ business, and total employment in these zones amounted to 1.3 million people. Of these, 94.5% were to be found in the 14 largest EPZ countries: the remaining 31 countries and areas accounted for only 5.5% of the employment. This high concentration is mainly due to the novelty of the phenomenon, and the same rate of concentration can be seen at the regional level. In Africa 96.5% of total EPZ employment is to be found in the three main countries in terms of EPZ employment, namely Mauritius, Tunisia and Egypt. In Latin America and the Caribbean, Mexico, Brazil and the Dominican Republic account for about 90% of the regional EPZ employment. In Asia, which accounts for a little more than half of all the EPZ employment throughout the developing world, the concentration rate is lower, but even here 94% of the EPZ employment can be found in only eight areas and countries. The fact that these leading countries in terms of EPZ employment happen to belong to the group of so-called Newly Industrializing Countries (NICs) raises the question of whether these countries became NICs because of the presence of an EPZ industry, or whether it was their internal industrial dynamism and rate of economic growth linked with processes of innovation in domestic industries which made these countries NICs (ILO/UNCTC, 1988: 20).

Industrial employment in developing countries (excluding China), was estimated at 37.7 million at the beginning of the eighties (UNCTAD, 1985). By 1986, as already stated, 1.3 million people were employed in EPZs, about 3.5% of the total industrial workforce in developing countries. In 1975 this figure was only 5,500, so there had obviously been a tremendous growth in the intervening decade.

EPZ employment is not, however, evenly distributed over the different regions. In Africa we find only 10% of the total EPZ workforce, in Latin America and the Caribbean about 30% and in Asia 60% (Kreye et al., 1987: 10-11).

We will also see that the workforce profile differs per continent (and often per country). In the leading EPZ areas, the zones accounted for a very significant share of new manufacturing employment. In fact, in Mauritius almost all the new manufacturing jobs were attributable to EPZ industries.

Of the approximately 1.25 million jobs created in the EPZs between 1970 and 1986, about 850,000 were to be found in MNEs. EPZ enterprises have had far fewer indirect employment effects than other types of enterprises. In general, foreign-owned plants in EPZs exhibit a low level of production linkage with existing or proposed local plants. Whenever there is such a linkage it is usually temporary or marginal. Examples show that, where MNEs make use of local suppliers or subcontract parts of the production process out to local plants, this usually imposes a degree of specialization on the local firms, which makes them completely dependent on the MNEs, and does not favour a more developed form of economic integration (Kreye et al., 1987: 15). Any backward linkages they have are with local suppliers, and these contacts will certainly generate additional jobs.

EPZs also generate jobs indirectly through the local expenditure of the wages paid to

the workers. It is impossible to say whether the increase in subcontracting generates new jobs. It probably exchanges steady contract work for more flexible and insecure labour relations.

If the overall employment-generating performance of EPZs seems impressive it is important to note that the type of jobs thus generated are not necessarily the ones which contribute most to the host country's economic, social and technological development (ILO/UNCTC, 1988: 78), and even less the ones that improve the welfare of the (women) workers.

The nature of the work-tasks in EPZs can generally be designated as non-complex, labour-intensive segments of a more complex production process. It consists of the assembly of imported components and materials, including the making up of clothing.

The employers classify the work as unskilled and therefore pay low wages, but the tasks that have to be done repeatedly during long hours and with high rapidity, undoubtedly do demand skills and perseverance (Rosier/Halsema, 1990: 54).

It is necessary to distinguish between the actual level of human capital embodied in the women and the level of human capital which they are believed to possess. Men's skills are believed to be superior to those of women. A possible reason for this is the non-recognition of the skills women acquire in the home (Heyzer, 1986: 103). Abilities such as dexterity and accuracy are perceived as women's natural characteristics, and the informal 'training' by which they acquire such abilities, at zero cost to their employers, is neither acknowledged nor rewarded in payment (Redclift/Sinclair, 1991: 13-4). Not only do employers benefit from women's role as an 'unskilled', cheap, flexible workforce; male workers also maintain their relatively privileged position as more skilled and hence higher status workers (Cockburn, 1983, 1985). For women themselves the low paid occupations are the best option available given the absence of alternative opportunities, sometimes related to state policies which prejudice women's position in the formal economy (Lever, 1988).

The jobs in EPZs are occupied for the most part by young women entering the salaried labour force for the first time. The proportion of female workers of the total EPZ labour force ranges between 70 and 90%. The ILO report states that this high proportion of women is most probably due to the nature of EPZ industries (mainly electronics, textiles and garments), which in the industrialized countries also employ a very high proportion of women (1988: 78). This employment is therefore supposed to be merely an extension and replacement of the feminine role.

We assume, however, that this is not the whole story. Host countries attracted the MNEs to invest in their EPZs in order to create jobs for the many unemployed men! But the enterprises chose to employ young women. There is reason to believe that they prefer women workers since they are supposed to be cheaper, more docile, and less likely to be organized or to get organized.

In export-oriented industries efficiency and flexibility are important due to the severe competition on the world market, and sudden fluctuations in demand. Employers regard women's wage labour as being secondary both to their unpaid domestic labour and to men's wage labour. Therefore they are considered as more flexible and expendable or as temporary workers who have higher voluntary quitting rates and who may be more

easily laid off in recessions than men (Lim, 1978; Safa, 1981).

Uni-causal explanations for the fact that it is mainly women, and not men, who are working in the EPZs, are over-simplistic. A complex combination of factors is decisive for the segregation within the labour market. Not only material factors, such as wages, but also ideological determinants, among which gender is particularly important. The labour market is not a gender-neutral context, but is permeated by implicit gender ideology activated through the practices of management, unions, male workers, and women themselves (Cockburn, 1985; Game and Pringle, 1984). At the same time women's positions in paid and unpaid work are mutually determining. Women's paid work can therefore not be understood in isolation from their position in kinship and family structures or from their reproductive tasks (Redclift/Sinclair, 1991: 2).

But first let us take a look at the gender perceptions of employers, male trade unionists, family, and women themselves.

Gender perceptions

Employers

Employers have an interest in perceiving women as being less educated and hence less productive than men. The legitimation for this perception lies in the time women (are expected to) spend out of the labour force during the years spent rearing children (Mincer & Polachek, 1974). Employers believe women will be less attached to the firm than men, so they prefer to train male workers. The lower level of women's human capital is therefore also a consequence of their reproductive tasks.

The circularity of this argument lies in the fact that skill and productivity levels are not only the cause but also the result of lower female wages.

The main priority of female workers is perceived as being their home activities; their decisions are assumed to be constrained by domestic commitments. Men's first priority, on the other hand, is never perceived as being related to their potential or actual role as fathers. In short, the structure of the labour market plays an important role in reinforcing the gender division of labour in the home.

The ideology that sees women as having the major responsibility for child care and the home with its concomitant effect on their positions in paid employment, is common across the globe.

If women leave the labour force to rear the children the loss in household earnings will be less than if men were to leave the labour force during this period. Thus, there is a material incentive for the household, and men in particular, to allocate child rearing to women (Redclift/Sinclair, 1991: 5-17).

Trade unions

Studies by Cockburn (1983) and Rubery (1978) highlight the role of male-dominated trade unions, in structuring the labour market. Cockburn shows how male trade unionists exercise influence over access to particular jobs and over the skill definitions and wages associated with these jobs.

The confinement of women workers to the lowest segment of the labour market serves

the material interests of male workers and trade unionists. As long as men dominate the bargaining process, they can influence recruitment procedures so as to restrict women's access to 'their' occupations, and are able to limit the downward pressure on the wage level that occurs when women do enter the male-dominated section of the labour market.

Attitudes towards women's participation in trade unions constitute an obstacle to the improvement of their position in the labour market. And even where female trade union membership is substantial, their attendance at union meetings is often poor. This is partly the result of the inconvenient times at which meetings are held, but is even more a consequence of the alienating nature of union procedures and the frequent informal decision-making by men on occasions when the women are not present (Redclift/Sinclair, 1991: 18).

Family

Often the families of the young women working in remote EPZs are unenthusiastic about this form of employment. In many countries the prevailing ideology dictates that, in order to safeguard her sexual reputation, a woman's appropriate place is in a sphere separated from that of men.

Patriarchal family structures and relationships instil filial responsibility and obedience to (especially male) authority. In Malaysia personnel officers or local politicians recruiting employees for the EPZs, make deliberate use of the supposed patriarchal structure of employment relations in the EPZs to convince fathers of the rightness of sending their daughters into factory employment (Rosier/Halsema, 1990: 12).

Women

Women themselves have to balance family financial pressures and the need for a degree of individual economic autonomy against the threat to personal integrity posed by contact with males outside the controlled and legitimated sphere of kinship relations (Redclift/Sinclair, 1991: 17).

Women often lack employment alternatives, and because they normally intend to work for only a short period they are willing to accept and put up with dead-end jobs. It is the explicit intention of young single females entering factory employment to work for only a limited number of years until marriage. This has been observed in most developing countries, in Asia as well as in Africa and Latin America.

In practice, however, apart from variations per country and over time, labour turnover is lower than often thought. The average job tenure tends to increase over time, and seems to be higher in countries where female factory employment has been longer established (Hein, 1988: 67).

In Malaysia I saw how the young rural women recruited as EPZ workers expected to find a job as well as a husband in their new living surroundings. However, the EPZs were located so far away from towns and were so isolated, that the women, living in flats near the zones, had hardly any opportunity to meet men, apart from their supervisors. The areas around the EPZs are inhabited almost exclusively by women, crowded together in apartments and hostels (Rosier/Halsema, 1990: 14-5). The conditions in these women's 'ghettos' often give rise to the emergence of women's organizations (see section 4).

When we talk about women workers in EPZs we usually characterize them as young unmarried rural women, entering the labour force for the first time. This description does not do justice to the differences among these women. There are differences between continents, between countries, between various EPZs but also between different industries. In the Caribbean for example many employers prefer married women who are the main breadwinners, because they are considered to be more stable workers. In Singapore, many working-class families rely on the woman's income to raise their living standards and this provides an incentive for women to continue working after marriage. In Malaysia and Hong Kong, EPZ women workers told me that they usually send part of their wages to their parents, so that they are responsible for part of the family income. Many Asian women workers in EPZs are relatively highly qualified but there are no alternative jobs available to them that correspond to their level of education.

Not all the women are new entrants into the workforce. A significant minority has had previous jobs in other factories, in the service sector or even in white-collar occupations. In Latin America, unlike Malaysia and the Philippines, factory workers are generally not recent migrants from rural areas. In Hong Kong and Thailand most of the young unmarried women still live at home with their parents, while women workers in Sri Lanka and Malaysia usually live together in boarding houses and factory dormitories.

In Thailand and Malaysia, EPZ manufacturing work is considered prestigious compared to the work of domestic servants and plantation workers. In Hong Kong and Singapore, however, women prefer to work in the service sector. Working in the electronics industry is generally considered higher in status than working in the textile or garment industry.

Job tenure varies from country to country and from time to time. In Mexico a typical Maquiladore worker stays in her job for only a few years, but in Hong Kong, Morocco and Singapore many women work for ten or more years.

Labour conditions and ILO conventions

An assessment of labour conditions in EPZs presents several technical difficulties. Reliable data on hours of work, salaries, housing, health and safety, trade union rights etcetera are usually not available, and even when they are, what should be taken as the basis for comparison or judgement?

Despite this methodological problem, there are several things that can be said about the working conditions on the basis of what we know from trade union sources and from EPZ workers and/or their organizations. EPZs are usually not only geographically isolated areas but also legal and social enclaves. In their promotional material to attract investors, governments and EPZ authorities often take considerable liberties, not only with international labour conventions but also with national labour and social security regulations. For example, in Pakistan a new EPZ is being constructed near Karachi. It is reported that none of the Pakistani labour laws will be implemented in the new EPZ, and that provisions in the 1992 Finance Act exempt EPZs (CAW/AWWN, (12) 4, 1993: 16).

At present some 23 conventions and 21 recommendations adopted by ILO member

states are of particular relevance to women workers. Of these the ones that are especially important for women working in EPZs, are:

Convention: No. 100 Equal Remuneration, 1951
 No. 103 Maternity Protection (Revised), 1952
 No. 156 Workers with family Responsibilities, 1981
 No. 171 Night Work (Women), 1990

Recommendation: No. 67 Income Security, 1944
 No. 90 Equal Remuneration, 1951
 No. 95 Maternity Protection, 1952
 No. 165 Workers with Family Responsibilities, 1981

And although not of special relevance to women, certainly of special importance to women workers in EPZs, are Convention No. 87: Freedom of Association and Protection of the right to organize (1948), and Convention No. 98: Right to organize and Collective Bargaining. The ILO is currently working on a recommendation about part-time workers.

The ILO has an international mechanism for inquiring into the effective application of these conventions and recommendations in EPZs. Unfortunately, however, very little information is received by the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations from countries where EPZs are in operation (ILO, 1986). Similarly, trade unions in EPZs make very little use of the possibility of lodging complaints relating to freedom of association with the relevant Committee (ILO/UNCTC, 1988: 84-85).

EPZ host countries enjoy international competitive advantages as a result of the working conditions that prevail in those countries. Being able to produce goods for the world market at very low cost thanks to low wages is one main advantage, but the violation of international labour norms also confers an advantage over those who follow the rules. Again there is the difficulty of evaluating violations regarding maternity protection, health and safety, social security, night work, child labour, etcetera.

A complaint often heard from workers (or their representatives) concerns the remuneration of the workers. It is undoubtedly true that the average wages in EPZs are extremely low compared with those in developed countries. But since that is not a reasonable yardstick for comparison, we might look at the wages prevailing in the local manufacturing sector. When we do that we can conclude, as a rough generalization, that MNEs in EPZs usually pay slightly more than the host country's average manufacturing income outside the zone. The differences between countries with different per capita income are extreme. In St. Vincent (Caribbean), for example, a woman worker in an EPZ earns sixteen times as much each day as a woman in an

Indian zone. But this comparison is also quite meaningless unless you also consider the development level and purchasing power in each country.

Generally speaking the wages in EPZs compare favourably with those outside the zones. But the average wages of women are still lower than those of comparable male workers, ranging from 50 to 70 per cent of the equivalent male wages even where equal wage rates prevail. Sometimes factory work enables the women to make extra income. For instance, in Curaçao women employees at MNEs used contacts made at work to expand their former informal sector activities, such as the selling of foodstuffs and handicrafts (Abraham-Van der Mark, 1983). In Malaysia one comes across pyramid-selling franchises for cosmetics (ILO, 1985: 43), and home-based production of silk flowers and paintings to be sold on the local markets. So here there is a link with activities in the so-called informal sector aimed at generating extra income to supplement the women's wage-income.

The number of working hours and compulsory overtime form another source of widespread criticism by EPZ employers. The ILO has concluded that the average number of working hours does not differ significantly from other comparable industries in the host country, and are determined by the working habits prevailing in these societies (1988: 85-6). What they do not consider in this report is that although the number of working hours may be 'normal' for that particular industry, the workers, both inside and outside the EPZs, experience and present this as a problem. Especially for women workers, most of whom still have the responsibility for household, family and child care, the long working hours and overtime make their daily workload even heavier. The answer to the question why workers are prepared to work up to 60 hours a week should be sought in the combination of low basic wages, absence of other employment opportunities and, in particular, in insecure labour positions.

Major social problems arise in EPZs with shift work, and particularly with night work. The ILO Convention on the Prohibition against Night Work (Women), has been revised several times, the latest dating from 1990. Although 62 states have ratified this convention, they do not, regrettably, include those with substantial EPZ employment. In practice this means that at least 40% of the female workforce of EPZs, but probably much more, is working at night.

There are various occupational health and safety regulations, but they vary by industry as well as by country. The major psychological work hazard is stress, which is common to all jobs in EPZs. Sources of this occupational stress may be job dissatisfaction because of low wages and subordinate position; socially disruptive shift-work; compulsory overtime and extreme fatigue or a combination of these factors.

The electronics industry is always presented as a modern, clean industry, with cool and easy working surroundings. Enough has been written about the electronics industry for us to know that this image is far from the truth. Women working in the electronics industry have to peer through microscopes for long hours, which damages their eyesight. Others work with toxic solvents, acids and chemicals, without being aware of their exact effect. They often complain about headaches, nose bleeds, cold symptoms, disturbed menstrual cycles, nausea and skin infections (Gassert, 1985; Rosier/Halsema, 1990; WWW, 1991; CAP, 1983). Women working in the garment and textile industries are confronted with excessive noise and with constant dust circulation. Dye workers in the textiles industry work with cancer-causing dyes.

But here again it is very difficult to prove officially that there is a connection between the complaints and possible causes in the working conditions. In the meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of women are exposed to substances and conditions that are dangerous to their health. And when women workers are pregnant their fetuses are also at risk.

Many employers in EPZs react to the issue of health hazards by stating that there are medical facilities available in the factory, and that the women are given periodical medical check-ups. Women workers in the electronics industry in Thailand told me² that they were examined once a year by the plant physician, but that they did not get to see the results themselves. Sometimes after such a medical examination they would be transferred to another department of the plant, thus raising serious doubts about the results of the check-up (Rosier/Halsema, 1990: 104-6).

A common safety hazard connected with shift-work is the risk of being (sexually) harassed going to or coming from the 'graveyard shift', i.e. the night-shift. In several cases employers have reacted to women's complaints about harassment, by organizing transport for the workers. Other women have tried to solve the problem by walking home in groups and so looking after one other (Rosier/Halsema, 1990: 21; Rosa, 1992: 14).

Another widely known fact is that the workforce in EPZs has a very low rate of unionization. Although in most of the host countries of EPZs there appear to be no legal restrictions on the right of workers to organize in trade unions, the actual freedom and possibilities to form unions are very restricted. Many violations against unionization are reported in the ICFTU: 'Trade Union Rights, Survey of violations, 1992'.

The obstacles to organizing trade unions range from opposition by employers to prosecution of union activists under the umbrella pretext of 'national security'. In Malaysia the law prohibits public assemblies of more than five people while in the Philippines striking is expressly prohibited in EPZs, a ruling that is legitimized by the assertion that EPZs are of strategic economic importance. The ILO assumes that the fact that only very few complaints are addressed to their Freedom of Association Committee is an indication that workers' rights in EPZs are perhaps not quite as important a problem as they are often purported to be (1988: 99). Information from workers and organizers in the field, however, has taught us that the phenomenon of organization of (women) workers is an extremely complex subject which cannot be encompassed by such simplistic analyses. One might equally well suggest that only very few complaints came in because they were related to women and were consequently considered of less importance by male trade unionists.

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The author of this paper visited Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong in 1989 to research the organization and technical training of EPZ women workers. Mention of interviews and personal information refers to these SOMO research projects.

4. ORGANIZATION AND RESISTANCE

In the previous sections we have come across many issues that are important to women workers in EPZs, and which may constitute a reason or motive for organizing or taking action.

First of all there are the issues referred to in the ILO Conventions and Recommendations, such as maternity protection, equal remuneration, night work, and family responsibilities. But apart from those there are other issues related to women's work in EPZs which often prompt women to try to influence their situation: the deregulation of the labour market, lay-offs, pace of work, sexual harassment, compulsory overtime, together with more practical issues like sanitary facilities or too-short lunch breaks.

The situation of female workers in EPZs has often been described against the background of their culturally legitimized subordination by men at home, in the workplace and in trade unions; their multiple burden in production and reproduction; their lack of 'consciousness'; and their limited period of wage employment.

All initiatives to organize are related to this background but the overall perception of women can be seen to have evolved from 'oppressed victims' to 'women with experience, independence and creativity stand up for their own rights'.

This paper employs a broad concept of organizing, in order to do justice to the very wide and differentiated range of initiatives undertaken by women to change their situation. It includes everything from one-woman resistance to permanent change in the structure of the trade union movement (Rosier, 1993: 4-5).

The picture that then appears is one of women who are certainly conscious of their situation, but forced by their daily experience of subordination and by pragmatic considerations to seem – outwardly, at least – to consent with the kinds of control imposed on them (Wong, 1989).

The priorities and needs of women workers in EPZs partly overlap with those of workers 'in general', and are partly specific to their particular situation. The same applies to the forms of organization and the strategies they choose. The multiple identity of women leads to the use of coalescing strategies. The interaction of available time, place and space (psychic and strategic) determines the form of organization and action (Chhachhi/Pittin, 1991: 1,2,32).

From the descriptions of the many different initiatives aimed at organizing women EPZ workers, it will become clear that it is necessary to make a distinction between spontaneous and structural action, between approaches that are perceived as formal or informal. When we talk about formal organization we first, and regrettably often exclusively, look at trade union organization.

The right to union representation is a right that is universally recognized as basic to labour. However, for thousands of workers these remain but idle words. It would be ideal if trade union organization were permitted everywhere, and if these trade unions

were able to look after the interests of all workers, male and female, black and white, wage labour as well as self-employed and informal labour. But reality is different.

We have seen that, particularly in EPZs, trade union organization is severely restricted. And wherever it is possible to form trade unions, women EPZ workers are often under-represented in union membership.

There are several reasons why women have a low trade union organization rate. Very often trade unions seem to be interested in female membership only when it increases their rank and file. Male trade union leaders consider labour consciousness to be the first priority of the trade union movement, and do not perceive women's issues in employment as important trade union issues (CAW, 1990: 8).

A form of trade union organization that is sometimes tolerated or even stimulated by EPZ employers is the so-called in-house union. In practice this 'union' is usually a structure where some loyal workers, but predominantly employers, are represented for collective bargaining. But sometimes these unions are actually able to improve the working conditions. Rosa (1991: 15) describes how functioning within these yellow unions could offer possibilities for women in preparation for leadership in a 'real' union.

The trade union movement is becoming more and more aware that it must pay attention to women workers' issues if it is to recruit this important and growing section of the labour market. Many good and fruitful initiatives have been taken by unions all over the world to develop strategies to attract women members and to represent them in a satisfactory way.

Women in trade unions

Hong Kong

In Hong Kong there are two trade unions in which women have an important position: the Hong Kong & Kowloon Electronics Industry Employees' General Union (HKEWU) and the Hong Kong Clothing Industry Workers' General Union (HKCIWGU).

In 1989, the electronics workers' union had 2000 members, 80 per cent of whom were women, in over 100 different companies. The president of the union, Li Fung Ying, is a woman. One of their activities for women is a technical education programme. For about ten Hong Kong dollars women can go to school two evenings a week for a period of three months. There they learn more about all aspects of the electronics industry so that they will have more employment options should they happen to be laid off.

Union representatives try to be present whenever any negotiation is needed in a factory. Most employers are hostile towards the union, but sometimes they even ask the union to represent the workers in a labour dispute. In 1989 there was a strike at an American company called U.S. Fairchild. The workers were demanding better wages. The strike went on for a week and was so expensive for the company that they asked the union to negotiate with them. Scarcely two years before this the same company had laid off all the union members! The union represented the workers in the dispute and demanded recognition of the union by the management. Since then the employers and the union representatives have regular meetings.

The HKEWU was also able to negotiate an agreement about paid maternity leave in

several companies, and can sometimes even negotiate unemployment benefits. Besides the education programme they are very active nowadays on behalf of the growing number of part-time workers in electronics, who are not protected by the 'Labour Ordinance'. They are working to have the law amended to apply to all the workers, whatever their contract.

One matter of great concern to the union and the workers is the fact that most new investments in electronics take place in China instead of Hong Kong. Furthermore the employers recruit thousands of women workers in China, and bring them to Hong Kong. They claim that these women only stay in Hong Kong for training, but the union president says she knows that they work on temporary contracts in the Hong Kong plants.

Unlike in many other countries, young Hong Kong women entering the labour force do not prefer to work in the manufacturing industry. They prefer the growing service sector where payments and status are higher and working conditions are better (interview Li Fung Ying, 11-7-89).

The 'Clothing Union' (HKCIWGU) was established in 1985 and had a membership of 1200 by 1991. This young union is worthy of attention because, unlike other unions, 60 per cent of the leadership is in the hands of young women. Lee Gheuk Yan is the secretary. She is not very optimistic about the union's membership. Although they put a lot of energy into informing women in clothing and textile companies, and in trying to get better labour conditions for them, it is becoming more difficult every day to come into contact with potential new members. Most of the women are working in little factories and workshops and find it difficult to organize action because of their insecure position and the regular layoffs.

The union works with a 'hotline', where women workers can report any complaint or conflict concerning their work. They are advised by telephone how to handle the problem. In 1991 almost 200 conflicts were reported by 'hotline' and the union tries each time to organize more workers in connection with a complaint so as to be able to take collective action or to go on strike. Furthermore, the union has a travelling exposition about the Labour Laws and the activities of the union, and training programmes for women who want to be union leaders (interview Lee Chuek Yan, August 1992). The union is financially supported by TWARO, the Japanese regional affiliate of the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation (TWARO report 1991).

Malaysia

Many unions are trying to give more attention to women's issues by setting up a women's section within an existing trade union. In Malaysia trade unions have always been repressed and obstructed by employers and government. Especially in the electronics industry it is still almost impossible to form trade unions. The 'Malaysian Trade Union Congress' (MTUC) strives for a 'minimum labour programme' incorporating internationally accepted labour standards (Interview A. Dass, September 1992).

The unequal remuneration has for long been one of the most important issues for women. In Malaysia women account for about 25 per cent of union membership but very few of them have leadership positions. In 1988 Ariffin researched the low level of

unionization among women in EPZs and found that this was mainly due to the union's male-dominated structures (1989: 78-93). MTUC leadership consists for 75 per cent of men, who fight a leadership struggle among themselves. Women workers therefore often refer to the union as: "It's empty you see", a play on the acronym MTUC (Interviews with workers, July 1989). The Malaysian press goes to a lot of trouble to draw a negative picture of the MTUC. MTUC female membership is perceived as 'haram', meaning 'not in accordance with Islamic principles'. Islamic religious leaders use their influence against women who want to join the union, which constitutes a great disgrace for these women (Interview Cecilia Ng, October 1992).

In 1968 the MTUC started a Women's Section, in order to give more attention to issues like sexual harassment, child care, and working conditions. There was and still is a lively debate about the pros and cons of a separate women's division within the MTUC.

Since the beginning of the eighties the 'Electrical Industry Workers Union' (EIWU) and several textile and garment workers' unions also have Women's Sections which train women for union leadership and also give courses in bookkeeping, union history and labour legislation (Rosier/Halsema, 1990: 73).

The MTUC Women's Section strives for equal remuneration and child care facilities on a national level. In the EPZs near Kuala Lumpur and Selangor they have set up a 'Women's Hostel Project' with financial support from ICFTU in Brussels, and FNV in the Netherlands. Each house offers accommodation to 14 women (four to a room) working in electronics factories and earning less than about M\$120 a month. They have to apply for a place in a hostel, where a mentrix supervises the women. When the project started in 1981 there were not many women willing to live in the hostels out of fear of getting into trouble with the employer because it was a MTUC project. Union representatives have explained to the employers that their aim is to get these women better integrated into EPZ life, and to make sure that their honour is protected. In the hostels the women keep house together, and they are educated by women from the MTUC Women's Section. Twelve former habitants of the hostels have continued the initiative by renting a house together (Grace, 1990: 76; ICFTU, 1991; Rosier/Halsema, 1990: 96).

Uruguay

When unions and political parties were banned and public meetings prohibited in Uruguay during the dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s, working class women emerged as a force in politics. General poverty forced more women into the labour market to support their families. By 1985 they made up one-third of the workforce, employed in the lowest paid sectors. Women created new organizations, such as communal kitchens, and community shops. As a result of these collective activities women began to develop an awareness and concern for women's rights. They raised the idea of women-only commissions in the unions. The National Women's Commission of the PIT-CNT, Uruguay's major union, was created in 1986. They managed to get some of their demands taken up as union policy, such as equal opportunity legislation (in 1989) and the elimination of discrimination in labour agreements. Now they are striving for equal pay for work of equal value and demanding an explanation of the fact that women's skills are categorized differently from men's skills. Other issues they have successfully taken up are childcare facilities, health issues and domestic violence. A spokeswoman:

We're putting pressure on our male colleagues in a double sense, on the one hand we have to rethink the way the union works. On the other hand we've started a discussion with the men on the role they have to play in the home.

They are suggesting a new way forward by bringing women within the scope of the organized labour movement, and at the same time introducing new issues into union policy. Some traditional unions have recognized the need to broaden their power bases by involving themselves in community issues and affiliating with grass-roots organizations (Fisher in AWWN, (12)4, 1993).

The Philippines

Bataan is the largest EPZ in the Philippines, and contrary to most EPZs it is heavily organized. Labour legislation is applied throughout the country and freedom of association is guaranteed in the Constitution and enforced (FLT 90-32).

In the 1970s the organization of workers in EPZs reached its peak with a total of 15 unions under the leadership of the Federation of Free Workers (FFW) alone. Other federations likewise conducted massive organization work in the EPZs. The FFW has courses and other informative activities for women integrated into their regular education programme. FFW has representatives in the Congress, and has pushed for the enactment of a number of laws concerning maternity benefits, day-care centres, equal treatment of men and women, and against discrimination of women. The women's group of the FFW has built links with other national and international women's organizations, and has initiated projects like a credit cooperative, a food catering project and a food processing project. Issues that they consider important at the local level are: intensifying organization and skills training; ensuring that women's issues are integrated into collective bargaining agreements; finding methods to deal with sexual harassment and discrimination at the workplace. At a national level they recommend the inclusion of a women's agenda in FFW Policy; the formulation of definite positions on women's issues; support for laws that protect women; continuing research on women's issues; intensified education and training; the adoption of a quota system to stimulate the appointment of women to leadership positions; maintaining contact with the women's movement; and adoption of the recommendations outlined in the Philippine Development Plan for Women, which aim to mobilize women into the labour force and into union membership and leadership (PSI/FFW-BATU-WCL, 1992).

KMK, the Women Workers Movement in the Philippines was founded in 1984, and has an alliance with KMU, the May First Workers Movement. KMK has 20,000 members throughout the country, and one of the crucial issues they strive for is day care for the children of women workers. Although there is a law which obliges companies with at least 50 workers to house a day-care centre, enforcing this law is a problem. So most day-care facilities are set up with financial help from religious institutions and women's organizations. Other important issues that KMK tackles are housing, ventilation in the factories, and sanitary facilities. KMK has adjusted its organizing methods to the women's situation, by holding small group meetings at a worker's home. They have developed gender-sensitivity training within the labour movement and claim that it is getting positive feedback (MulMon, 1993: 16-20).

Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, the president has used his power under the declaration of a state of emergency to issue regulations severely restricting the exercise of basic trade union freedoms, particularly the right to strike. Any striker employed in an essential service industry is likely to be punished by termination of his or her contract. Essential services are very broadly defined to include all those trades covered by the 'Greater Colombo Economic Commission (GCEC) plus plantations and all export commodities. These provisions were used by the managers of Simca Garments Ltd. at Ja-Ela to justify the dismissal of 236 textile workers who went on strike in February 1992, in an attempt to get their union recognized. Another incident took place in 1993 when over 300 workers, mainly women, were locked out by companies in the EPZs after they had gone on strike in demand of their festival advance bonus. Not all the workers were reinstated after mediation by the Labour Ministry. During the lockout workers were forced to stay in a nearby church and to live on the proceeds of fundraising. Their persistence resulted in almost all the workers being taken back by the managers and in an increase in the minimum wage. Although there are no legal restrictions on the right to organize in EPZs, employer discouragement and difficulties of access mean in practice that their 50,000-strong female workforce (in three EPZs) are denied union representation. The government is now considering declaring the whole country an EPZ, which has far-reaching implications for the TU rights of many more workers (ICFTU, 1992: 33-4; AWWN, (12) 3, 1993: 7-8).

In many cases the girls employed in the EPZs are the only breadwinners in their families. House owners in the vicinity of the zones have grabbed the chance to exploit girls looking for boarding houses. Some ten to twelve girls are huddled together in each room. This has resulted in a most degrading form of lifestyle. In the factories the girls are treated like robots and no health facilities are available. Working on shift system they lack proper transportation between the factory and their accommodation. With the assistance of the 'World Solidarity Institute',³ the National Workers Congress (NWC) has built 'Shanti hostels'. The facilities for the 30 girls living there are good and they have the opportunity to follow Workers' Educational Training Programmes. These courses are open to all the EPZ women workers, and practical as well as strategic issues are dealt with.⁴ The Shanti service centre has also conducted an action-oriented survey to generate proposals and strategies for unions, and has organized a savings and credit society (WSM, 1993: 16).

As a result of various trade union campaigns, several progressive labour laws have recently been enacted, such as the Industrial Disputes Act and the Maternity Benefits Act. Trade unions in Sri Lanka are affiliated to political parties, but the NWC is completely independent and democratic. They have an extensive educational programme and in addition to training they also provide a Community Development Programme, offering among other things nursery schools, First Aid clinics, Health Awareness Schemes and recreational facilities. The Women's Council of NWC is engaged in a self-employment Programme, and is active in the EPZs.⁵

³ An organ of the Belgian Christian trade union federation.

⁴ International Seminar for Trade Union Women, October 1992.

⁵ International Seminar for Trade Union Women, 1992.

The Dominican Republic

The international trade union movement has also had an influence in the Dominican Republic. Economic restructuring away from agricultural exports toward export manufacturing has increased the incorporation of women into the labour force at the expense of male employment. In 1990 the female labour force participation rate was 35.5 per cent (1970: 25.7%). This restructuring of the labour force has profound gender implications at the household level, where women have acquired more economic responsibility, and men are being increasingly marginalized. Male unemployment, falling wages and inflation have increased pressure on women to work. But an increase in households headed by women is another factor forcing women to provide for their own living. In March 1992 135,000 workers (75% women) were employed in 23 EPZs, the second most important source of urban employment for women after domestic service. Hardly any union is operating in the EPZs although they are not legally prohibited. Employers react to union activity with layoffs and blacklisting (Safa, 1993: 24-9).

Labour laws guarantee freedom of association, the right to organize and negotiate collective agreements, freedom from forced labour, acceptable conditions of work, minimum wages, hours of work, health and social security. All these rights are guaranteed by section 502 (B) of the law relating to business passed in 1974 and revised ten years later.

The reality in the Dominican Republic is in sharp contrast to the legal situation. The expansion of EPZs during the 1980s was accompanied by workers' struggles against prevailing wages and working conditions. When in November 1987 a three-months-pregnant employee in the Macoris Free Zone was kicked by a Korean supervisor and lost her baby, there were massive spontaneous demonstrations that led to an assembly of over 2400 workers at which a union was formally established: the San Pedro de Macoris Free Zone Workers Union. In spite of the union's growing membership it was unable to prevent the many dismissals that followed strikes in several companies.

In 1990 the government finally bowed to national (CTI) and international (ILO) pressure and declared that trade unions could organize in EPZs, which finally meant the recognition of the San Pedro union. The president of the National Free Zone Council (employers) reacted: 'Labour laws have always existed, but companies in the free zone have always managed to ignore them'.

Organizing free zone workers in the Dominican Republic is limited by the structure of MNEs, the production culture of the EPZs and by the economic crises which place additional burdens on women. Despite this, the experience of the San Pedro de Macoris Free Zone Workers Union clearly demonstrates that there are opportunities. The strongly committed leaders of this union were able to develop an organizing strategy which proved very effective. Core members of the union established personal contacts with women during lunch breaks or while travelling to and from work. These contacts formed a basis for trust and friendship and became more formalized in house meetings in the communities. Committees were set up in the communities, which met regularly to discuss problems and strategies for action, such as organizing pickets. Meetings were held at places where women could bring their children and they provided a space for women to express themselves freely and to reveal their expectations of a new kind of union. Many women had formerly felt intimidated by the confrontational style of traditional, male-dominated unions, and preferred a more negotiatory style which would probably be more effective in dealing with EPZ managers, and also reduce the risk of

dismissal. The women wanted a union to serve their interests with respect to work but also with respect to their personal development, well-being and responsibilities. Issues that had to be handled were therefore: safe transportation, sexual harassment, domestic violence, the gender division of labour, child care facilities, and payment.

The union managed to forge links with other unions like FENAZUCAR and CTI, which supported them and could advise them on the basis of their many years of experience. They indicated that it was necessary to create awareness among the EPZ women workers. But fortunately the San Pedro union leaders chose to take a patient and non-judgemental approach to creating both awareness and confidence. In addition to forging links with other unions and learning from them, the organization also depended for its practical needs on the support of other community groups like the church and schools. From the women's movement the union has had support from CIPAF and Ce Mujer, who published information about them (Pineda/Magaly, 1990): an important organizing strategy is knowing how to use the media and to initiate public debate.

Equally important as the support of other groups is internal institutional strength, which is enhanced through training and planning. The fairly high educational level of the average worker in the EPZs increases the union's chances of promoting the practical and strategic gender needs of this group of women (Dunn, 1991: 11-21).

Thailand

As we have seen already, company unions or 'yellow unions' are often established by employers so that they will have control over the organization, and to prevent organization by a national union. In Thailand there is only one electronics company where the workers are organized. Ninety per cent of them are members of the yellow union. In June 1989 there were 2100 employees, 300 of whom had a temporary contract. National union activists were asked to sign a letter of resignation, for which they were offered money.

The yellow union has managed to reduce the daily working hours from eight to seven, and each year presents demands for better wages and benefits. Furthermore they have successfully petitioned for research into the effect of chemicals on health.

Unfortunately, the managers know precisely which union members are very active, and these are regularly laid off and blacklisted. At first union leadership was partly in the hands of women, but they were constantly being threatened by the management. Now there is an exclusive male leadership, and women's issues are pushed to the end of the list. Women try to work off the stress resulting from increasing production targets, by singing during work, and secretly talking when the male supervisors are not around (interview with women workers, June 1989).

Mauritius

The first EPZ in Mauritius was created in 1970, and proved to be so successful that the legal concept of the EPZ was expanded to cover the entire island. In contrast to EPZ location in many other countries, the employers in Mauritius were able to locate in areas where labour supply was readily available (Hein, 1988). In June 1992, the EPZ sector comprised 568 enterprises employing 63,400 female and 26,600 male workers. Industries are competing for skilled Mauritians, which leads to high turnovers of personnel, and thus to difficulties in organizing. The labour shortage has convinced the government to allow compulsory overtime in the EPZ, and to make a special effort to create jobs for men in the EPZ. In 1984 the government abolished minimum wages for

men, so that men and women could be employed on the same job with equal pay. Industrialization has radically transformed the way in which men and women need to organize their work and lives. However, the process of social change takes much longer than economic change so the household still remains the responsibility of women.

The considerable pressure for 'voluntary' overtime provides an argument for the fact that the EPZ is the least organized sector in Mauritius. In December 1990 only 9 unions were active in the EPZ, with a total membership of only 10,943 workers, i.e. 12% of EPZ workers. The EPZ trade union movement is characterized by a very low participation rate of women workers at all levels. Social and traditional attitudes prevent women from getting the support of their families to participate in trade unions. Furthermore, there is the lack of time, lack of trade union education and victimization of organizers by employers. Works councils are used as an instrument to diminish the importance of the unions by dealing with issues that would normally fall under the purview of trade unions (Martens, 1993: 3-16).

Other forms of organization and resistance

Since the unionization rate among EPZ women workers remains low, and most unions are dominated by men, a lot of issues that are important to these women do not get the attention they deserve. Therefore women have developed all kinds of alternative forms of organization or protest in order to tackle the issues that are not taken up by their unions. The struggle for better working conditions is waged individually or collectively, spontaneously as well as in a very formalized fashion (Wong, 1989: 58). Individual women workers may protest by refusing transfer to another department, or by working at a slower pace when new production targets are being fixed (Ong, 1987: 164).

A more collective 'method' of resistance are the outbursts of mass hysteria. Sometimes this seems to be the only legitimized way of reacting to stress situations. More than 40 outbreaks of mass hysteria occurred among Malay female workers between 1977 and 1983. The displays of violent convulsions, loss of consciousness and aggressive behaviour (towards supervisors and managers) are interpreted by the workers as spirit possession. The managers attribute the workers' behaviour to superstition. When many women are involved in such outbursts managers are forced to close down the factory temporarily, and to hire practitioners of magic to exorcise the spirits. Although the women believe that the outbreaks of hysteria are the result of supernatural causes, in interviews they reveal strongly felt grievances over low wages, fear of managers and a strong desire to organize a union. The punitive stance of the management towards unions denies the workers a legitimate channel to express their complaints. This is reinforced by the Malay cultural taboos on open communication of anger. In this way mass hysteria channels hostility to the supernatural plane (Lee, in CAP, 1983: 76-8).

In addition to these unorganized forms of resistance, women undertake a wide range of organizing initiatives aimed at empowering themselves and striving for better working and living conditions.

Mexico

Mexico has plugged itself into the world economy by attracting foreign companies to establish factories in Mexico. In exchange, the government maintains law and order in

addition to cheap labour by, for instance, dismantling trade unions. Ten years ago there were 80 'maquiladores' situated near the U.S. border. Now there are some 900 (!) of these zones all over the country, occupied predominantly by American, Japanese and German firms. In recent years a growing proportion of the production is being transferred to isolated rural areas and is sometimes done by homeworkers. In 1968 CIDHAL was one of the first women's organizations in Mexico. Its original work revolved around research, documentation and the organization of conferences. Since 1975 CIDHAL has started to work closely with the women they had formerly only talked about. It has an advisory involvement in the Garment Union of the 19th September, which was formed as an autonomous trade union following the 1985 earthquake.

Dominican Republic

A similar kind of organization is located in the Dominican Republic. The 'Research for Action' group CIPAF focuses on women's working conditions. Their research data are prepared in easily understandable forms, often with cartoons. They arrange meetings with the neighbourhood housewives' committees where they talk about issues related to the lives of the working women (IRENE, 1992: 27-8).

Malaysia

A very good and successful initiative in Penang, Malaysia, is the 'Women Workforce Action Group' (WWAG). This organization was set up to support women coming to the island of Penang to look for a job. On the island there are several EPZs surrounded by steel fences and closely guarded against 'trespassers'. It takes at least one hour by bus to get from the EPZs to Georgetown, the nearest, and only, town in Penang. Most women workers have neither the time nor the money to make that trip and in any case everything they need is supposedly available in the vicinity of the factories.

Young women arrive in Penang every day and the WWAG offers them temporary accommodation. When I met R., the woman who founded WWAG, she was busy day and night, working on equipment for the house which is intended to be used as a meeting centre for women workers and as a temporary shelter for newly arrived women who have not yet found a job or a place to live. Virtually everything in R.'s life revolves around WWAG, with inevitable consequences for her husband and seven children. R., her family and friends believe that the situation of women workers in Malaysia can and must be improved in spite of hindrance from the authorities and company managements prohibiting any form of labour organization. R. herself has worked for several electronics companies, each time in a different department. Her most recent job was at 'Mostek', a company that went bankrupt in 1985, as a result of which thousands of women were laid off. R. was one of the leaders in the demonstrations and actions that spontaneously followed the massive layoffs. Due to her militancy, she was blacklisted and was unable to get another job in the EPZ. In her previous jobs she had always been trying to uncover wrongs and initiate discussions with fellow workers for whom she functioned as a counsellor. As a result, managements considered her a 'troublemaker'. After her dismissal her home became a kind of 'open house' where women continually dropped in to ask for advice. Then R. decided to set up accommodation to provide help and shelter. Together with some friends, she started to produce shampoo, using her grandmother's recipe, and earned enough capital to rent a new house designed and equipped as a meeting centre and place of refuge. Besides offering temporary housing she tries to provide the women with some basic training. She has registered WWAG officially as a company, claiming that she provides cooking, sewing and housekeeping

lessons. In that way she hopes to escape from government control. R. told me:

These women must be made more aware of their situation. Generally speaking the women coming from the rural areas are very naive. The clean factories with all facilities appeal to them. They do not come to Penang to learn something and they let the bosses patronize them. At school they haven't learned to stand up for their rights, and once they work in a MNE they are guaranteed that the managers will take care of everything. We try to teach them to think for themselves!

The main aim of WWAG is to offer the women 'tenagawanita', which means 'women force'. Some of the women who stay at the centre are themselves trained as labour organizers in order to spread the initiative (Rosier, in WWW, 1991: 134-6; Rosier/Halsema, 1990: 94-6).

Hong Kong

A women's organization which has evolved into an Asian network of organizers, and researchers is the 'Committee for Asian Women' (CAW) which is based in Hong Kong, but is active in some twelve countries. In 1992 CAW became an autonomous organization, separate from the 'Christian Conference of Asia-Urban Rural Mission', from which it had originated in 1981.

Since their foundation they have directed their attention to labour conditions and rights in the EPZs. Now, although they are increasingly offering financial support for organizing, they are mainly concerned with disseminating information and advice on strategies. They closely follow the developments in industrial restructuring, and keep their target groups informed through their 'Asian Women Workers Newsletter'. These Newsletters are published four times a year and carry reports about strikes, lay-offs, human rights violations, women's organizations, trade unions and health and safety in the industries.

CAW has many contacts with European and American women's groups and networks. Moreover, they were among the first Asian organizations to concern themselves with flexible workers and homeworkers, both in the export industry and the informal sector (Rosier, 1993: 33).

Another quite young organization that tries to catalogue and draw attention to the extent and implications of homeworking related to the Hong Kong Export industry, is the 'Hong Kong Association of Women Workers' (HKAWW), founded in 1989. They function as a support centre for homeworking women, and inform them about their employers (which are mainly the EPZ enterprises), and about current piece-good rates. The HKAWW is well aware of the fact that more regulated labour conditions for homeworkers will probably speed up the flight of industries to new EPZs in China, so it strives for technical training and the creation of alternative employment for the thousands of women who are being expelled from manufacturing industries but cannot be absorbed by the service sector (Rosier, 1993: 34).

China

The recent inflow of foreign investment to China has provoked worker resistance and strikes. Since early 1993, a number of strikes have taken place in Zhuhai, one of the flourishing Special Economic Zones in southern China. There are now about 2,000 foreign investment factories in Zhuhai, employing 200,000 workers, most of whom are

young women. Strikes have occurred as a result of dissatisfaction over low wages, which are sometimes even below the legal monthly minimum of 335 yuan. Workers have also complained about the poor living conditions in the factory dormitories, long working hours, and the absence of safety facilities for workers who have to work in a dangerous or toxic environment. Furthermore, most foreign investors refuse to permit a trade union. In most of the recent strikes, local government has pressurized the workers to return to work for fear that their actions will affect the inflow of foreign investments (CAW: AWWN, (12)3, 1993: 9-10).

Philips Workers Group

One example of a factory-related organization is the 'Philips Workers Group' (PWG). It was the result of a spontaneous sit-in action in 1988. The sit-in was actuated by dissatisfaction with sanitary regulations and lunch prices in the factory. For each production line consisting of 20 to 40 women there was one five-minute-break per day to go to the toilet. They were also discontented with the high prices they had to pay for their lunch. The sit-in lasted for three days and succeeded in ameliorating the sanitary arrangements and lowering the cost of lunch. The management had threatened to dismiss the activist women but mediation by organizers of the 'Neighbourhood and Workers Service Centre', a community centre based in the Kwun Tong industrial area, meant that they did not lose their jobs. The success of the sit-in led to the formation of the PWG. Since then they have tried to become registered as a Philips factory union, but the management has squashed this initiative. As an informal union, and supported by the Neighbourhood Centre, they have concentrated on setting up a Provident Fund and on getting the payment bonuses that women with a minimum of ten years of service are entitled to. Philips tries to circumvent payment of these special grants by changing the official company name every few years. The PWG leaders hold meetings in the offices of the Neighbourhood Centre, where they also print a newsletter in which women workers can publish whatever they want. They organize regular meetings for all the Philips women workers, where issues related to working and living conditions can be discussed in an informal setting. Sometimes they manage to invite a member of the parliament in order to ask him questions about the labour policy and urge him to give political attention to their problems (Rosier, 1993: 34-5).

Malaysia

The PWG is an example of fruitful cooperation between a community centre and a factory-based women's group. Another possible form of concerted action involves cooperation between a research group and a more action-oriented organization. The 'All Women's Action Society (AWAM) in Selangor (Malaysia) was initially engaged in researching the position of women in export industries. More recently they have turned to organizing educational meetings, for example on the use of chemicals in the electronics industry. Through these meetings AWAM tries to interest women in the union or other organizing activities. In the past the 'Women's Development Collective' (WDC) was closely connected to AWAM, but nowadays they are a more independent academic research group, specialized in gender-based research into EPZs. Their inquiries form the basis for the actions that the AWAM organizes in collaboration with unions and workers (interview with Cecilia Ng of WDC, October 1992).

WDC started in 1984 as an informal group, but was registered as a company in 1988. In addition to education they have developed resources for other women's organizations. They support the, as yet unsuccessful, attempts of the electronics workers to form a National Union for Electronics Workers (NUEW). In November 1992,

WDC organized an international conference on the health and safety of electronics workers together with 'Persatuan Sahabat Wanita Selangor', another working women's group and with financial support from the Dutch trade union federation. The international two-day session in English was followed by a one-day workshop in Malay for women workers and organizers only. The conference was successful in generating interest and discussion about health hazards, partly due to the wide coverage in the media. A follow-up activity of the Conference is the formation of a new group: the 'SHE Network' consisting of conference organizers and helpers. Their aim is to organize further workshops and to network internationally with other similar networks; other planned activities are publications in English and Malay, for a general audience as well as workers; and the setting up of a 'Hazards Hotline' for telephone counselling on the subject (WDC 1992, 1993; FNV, 1992, no. 20).

Jamaica

Jamaica has 6 EPZs throughout the country, mainly along the coast; the garment industry predominates (Dunn, 1991: 23). Although the constitution specifies that workers have the right to organize, managers in EPZs have persistently refused to allow organizing. Nevertheless, women workers have found support from community-based and religious organizations. The 'Women's Action Committee' (WAC), a broad-based group of seven individuals and fifteen organizations is very concerned about the EPZs. WAC was formed as a result of one of the recommendations of a national study into wages and working conditions, commissioned by the JTURDG, an umbrella organization for the five major unions, and the Canadian Development Agency (Dunn, 1987). WAC has become an effective lobbying group, and in 1990 published a booklet for EPZ workers outlining their rights and responsibilities.

Further support for EPZ women has come from the St. Peter Claver Roman Catholic Church, which formed the 'St Peter Claver Free Zone Women's Group' in 1988. This group provides a forum in which women can share their problems and experiences. They have become active in the women's movement and joined the WAC as well as the 'Association of Women's Organizations in Jamaica'. Classes are given in practical skills and consciousness-raising and social outings are organized. One of the most pressing problems in the surrounding area, the housing problem, has been taken on by the formation of a housing cooperative. Several international organizations helped the group to obtain the necessary funds to buy eight houses. Female members of the Coop have the lease of these houses where they can live with their families. Should the husband leave the family, the woman and her children are guaranteed a place to live. The women of the Coop have produced a video about their experiences, entitled *We run things*. They share this with other women in a bid to inspire discussion and spread empowerment. They too have learned that handling the media is an important strategy in organizing. The Coop has helped to improve health facilities and transportation. Through affiliation with other women's organizations and their education and campaigning, the Coop is helping women to meet their productive, reproductive and community managing roles at the community level, an approach that for many women is less threatening than a traditional trade union (Martens, 1993: 24-5; Dunn, 1991: 22-30).

Sri Lanka

We have seen the difficulties facing trade union organization in the three EPZs in Sri Lanka, but also the achievements of the NCW there, such as the educational programmes and the Shanti hostel project. Researcher Kumudhini Rosa views the

crowded boarding houses where women workers live in another, more positive manner (Rosa, 1989; 1992). She states that the experience of living together involves sharing similar problems and developing a collective responsibility and she sees the organization of cooking, eating, sleeping and washing in one place as helping to build a community life.

Within the factories, where union organizing is not encouraged, covert forms of organizing develop, such as eye contact and use of the local language. Managements have often tried to counter these informal forms of resistance by forbidding talking or only allowing one woman at a time to go to the toilet, but these measures provoke the women to rebel even more. Although these women may superficially appear passive to management, they have in fact an extremely sophisticated culture of subversion.

Various organizations have taken initiatives to support women workers in the EPZs. We have already seen the support given by Sri Lankan churches, both financial help and the provision of education and a place to meet. One of the Catholic centres initiated a food Coop to combat the rising food prices, for which the villagers had blamed the women. The food Coop resulted in a lowering of the prices of basic food items, and demonstrated that it was possible to develop strategies beneficial to both the women and the villagers.

Support also comes from the 'Legal Advice Centres', who help the women to organize campaigns against sexual harassment, and for safe transport facilities. The Legal Advice Centre specializes in giving free advice and intervening on behalf of the workers in labour disputes.

The Sri Lankan organizations described here tend to be for women workers rather than of women workers. And it should also be observed that all these groups function outside the zones and therefore can only touch on some of the issues. According to Rosa (1992, 18), it is vital that their activities be linked to the issues women workers face on the factory floor and to the spontaneous actions they undertake. A Women's Centre has been set up by a group of women who were themselves once factory workers. They offer a multi-faceted programme aimed at getting women workers organized. But more importantly, they manage to link inside and outside zone-related activities in the publication and distribution of a newsletter. This provides a medium for publicizing labour conditions in different factories, but is also a vehicle through which women can express themselves, mobilize support and state their views to employers and authorities. Management reactions to the newspaper have ranged from reprimanding the authors to even giving their own response in the newspaper (Rosa, 1992: 11-9; Rosier, 1993: 79).

Taiwan

In Taiwan women workers organized in the face of plant closure. In 1986, after the Cannon Textile Co. started to invest in Indonesia, and the number of workers in their Taiwan factory started to drop from over a thousand to only 200 at the time of the plant closure in June 1992. Organizers from the Solidarity Front of Women Workers (SFWW) came into contact with the women workers at the Cannon factory who wanted to form a union, and educational programmes were started. The approaching plant closure provided crisis situations, straining the relationships not only among the workers but also between workers and their families, who sometimes objected to their activities. The workers, motivated and encouraged by the SFWW, launched a struggle

which lasted for two and a half months. They finally won the retrenchment pay and other payments which the company owed them, but they did not succeed in stopping the final closure of the plant, which also meant unemployment for all of them. Some of the younger workers were able to move into the service industry, but for the older women, the only choice was to work as cleaners or in other part-time jobs, such as family factories with sweatshop conditions even worse than in most EPZ factories (CAW: AWWN, (12) 3, 1993: 15-6)

Issues and strategies

The cases we have examined have revealed many issues that are of major importance to organizations of women workers in EPZs. We have repeatedly encountered the need for individual economic autonomy, equal remuneration, employment alternatives, secure labour relations, education and technical training, occupational health and safety regulations and transport facilities. Then there are issues that are more related to reproduction, such as the need for child care facilities, reasonable prices for basic food items, measures against sexual harassment and proper housing.

As far as women in trade unions is concerned, we have seen that male dominance in trade union structures, agenda-setting and decision-making together with the low qualified, unstable occupational position of women and obstruction of union organization by employers and governments, result in a relatively weak position for EPZ women in trade unions. Fortunately, however, there have also been many instances of positive initiatives by trade unions and TU federations, who have taken up the challenge to fight for the needs of women working in EPZs. Often this is done by establishing a women's section within an existing union; sometimes unions are set up with predominantly female leadership. Other effective strategies are collaboration between unions and women's organizations, the integration of women's issues into the regular TU programme, and the training of women to be union leaders.

Because of women worker's multiple identities and responsibilities, they tend to choose other strategies than their male counterparts. Women always relate their working conditions to their personal interests and multiple responsibilities; women organize to meet their practical and strategic gender needs. Loosely defined, practical gender needs relate to women's ability to survive and fulfil their reproductive, productive and community-managing work. Strategic gender needs relate to women's empowerment, their participation in decision-making and the establishment of a society that facilitates more equitable relationships between men and women. EPZ jobs are likely to enable women to meet practical gender needs, and to achieve some level of economic independence. The constraints of export production and the economic conditions imposed by structural adjustment, however, limit their ability to use these jobs for personal development and for meeting strategic gender needs (Moser, 1989; and Molyneux, 1985, in Dunn, 1991: 2). This suggests the need for a type of organization which reflects women's multiple roles and needs.

Usually the preferred action strategy of women workers is less confrontational towards employers and this proves to be more effective in the specific EPZ situations. For example, in the Caribbean many EPZ women workers are heads of the household and the sole support of their children, and therefore cannot afford to lose their jobs through confrontational (union) activities. They prefer to adopt a negotiatory style.

In most EPZs union organization is wellnigh impossible and labour relations are insecure. Against this background women have developed more subtle ways of improving working conditions, and a method of step-by-step organization, vividly illustrated in the case about the Dominican Republic. This method seems to lead to the most stable and effective women's unions or organizations. It starts with a core group of organizers who build up friendship and trust with other workers through personal contacts. The next step is to organize house meetings in small community groups where the sharing of experiences is vital, and from which committees can be set up, and the initiative can spread further. These house meetings provide an important space for the women to express themselves freely, whereas in traditional unions women often feel insecure and reluctant to speak up. The committee can collectively nominate an activity that will unite the interest of the group and focus their attention. This activity may be a strike, but may also be a literacy class or a child care facility. Any success such an action has contributes to the continuance of the group, and the empowerment of the women.

Also very effective are the organizations that manage to forge links with other groups. These may be women's groups but can also be unions, religious, legal advice, research or community organizations and, of course, (international) networks involved in improving and publicizing the labour conditions of EPZ women. Making effective use of the media so as to initiate public debate is a vital organizing strategy.

In order to form and also maintain a strong and effective organization, there is a need for collaboration on the basis of consensus and for a strengthening of institutions. This relates to the creation of a formal structure, but even more to the provision of leadership training for members to ensure continuity of the organization.

Participating in the process of developing their organization gives women a sense of purpose and power and produces a cadre of new women leaders capable of creating a climate for meeting strategic gender needs.

Recommendations

- * Trade unions, local as well as national, and international federations, must recognize the interrelatedness of the productive and reproductive needs of women workers in EPZs, and incorporate women's issues into their regular trade union programme.
- * The specific situation prevailing in EPZs demands specific trade union strategies towards women workers, but also towards employers and authorities. Trade unions should learn from the effective strategies and organizing methods developed by women's organizations as a way of raising awareness and improving working and living conditions of EPZ women workers.
- * There seems to be a trend in EPZs towards more highly qualified occupations. Trade unions must strive to upgrade the technical competence of women workers so as to increase their access to better qualified and remunerated jobs.
- * In order to get a fair remuneration for women EPZ workers, trade unions must demand a new job evaluation of the work that is done mainly by women in EPZs, one that takes account of the skills that women possess and that are required for the work but which are often treated as skills women do not have to learn.

APPENDIX

Table 1 EPZs in developing countries by region and country, 1986

Country or region	EXPORT PROCESSING ZONES		
	in operation	under construction	planned
Africa	25	63	6
Egypt	4	1	2
Gambia	-	1	-
Ghana	1	-	2
Kenya	-	1	-
Lesotho	-	-	1
Liberia	1	-	-
Mauritius ¹	7	-	-
Morocco	1	33	-
Nigeria	-	-	-
Senegal	1	-	-
South Africa ²	-	-	-
Sudan	-	1	-
Togo	1	-	-
Tunisia ³	9	25	-
Zaire	-	1	-
Asia and the Pacific	95	14	10
Bahrain	2	-	-
Bangladesh	1	-	2
Brunei	-	1	-
Fiji	-	1	-
Hong Kong ⁴	14	-	-
India	2	4	1
Indonesia	2	2	1
Iran	-	-	1
Jordan	3	-	-
Korea ⁵	11	-	-
Malaysia	11	-	-
Pakistan	1	-	4
Philippines	3	2	-
Singapore ⁶	22	-	-
Sri Lanka	3	-	1
Syria ⁷	6	1	-
Thailand	1	-	-
Tonga	1	-	-
Turkey	2	2	-
United Arab Emirates	1	-	-
Yemen	1	-	-
Taiwan, China	4	1	1

Latin America and the Caribbean	56	9	8
Bahamas	1	3	-
Belize	-	1	-
Brazil	1	-	-
Chile	2	1	-
Colombia	6	-	-
Costa Rica	1	1	-
Dominican Republic	5	1	2
Ecuador	-	-	1
El Salvador	1	-	1
Guatemala	1	-	1
Haiti	1	1	2
Honduras	1	-	1
Jamaica	2	-	-
Mexico	23	-	-
Netherlands Antilles	1	-	-
Nicaragua ⁸	1	-	-
Panama	2	-	-
Puerto Rico ⁹	2	1	-
St. Lucia	2	-	-
Trinidad and Tobago	1	-	-
Venezuela	1	-	1
TOTAL	176	86	24

1 EPZ conditions available country-wide with 7 major industrial parks.

2 EPZ conditions available at 4 industrial sites.

3 EPZ conditions country-wide with 9 major industrial estates.

4 EPZ conditions country-wide with 14 major industrial areas.

5 Three EPZs, 6 industrial export estates, 2 heavy industry estates.

6 EPZ conditions country-wide with 22 major industrial parks.

7 Joint Syrian-Jordanian EPZ under construction.

8 Not in operation since 1983.

9 EPZ conditions country-wide with 2 EPZs and 96 industrial parks.

Source: ILO/UNCTC, 1988, p. 11-12

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