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ORGANISING WOMEN WORKERS IN THE SRI LANKAN FREE TRADE ZONES<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

The entry of large numbers of women into the Free Trade Zones' (FTZ's) labour force, as a result of the restructuring of capital in the late 1960s is of considerable economic and social significance. Owing to the setting up of Free Trade Zones a new strata of workers were added to the already existing and often organised workforce. This new layer of workers are mainly composed of young women, a significant percentage are single and have limited experience in waged employment. In many places the women came from rural areas and lived either within the Free Trade Zone compounds or within close access to the zone, in boarding houses.

These specific circumstances have both contributed towards organisation among these workers and created certain obstacles. As these workers are largely women, living together because of their employment in the FTZs and employed in very similar types of jobs, their situation does provide opportunities for organising.

However, workers employed in FTZs are often in waged employment for the first time in their lives, and confront special constraints in organising themselves. The anxiety of the state to maintain a 'stable' environment for investors, ends often with state control, labour control, and non implementation of labour laws. This makes these workers often more vulnerable than workers outside the FTZs, who have experience in factory employment and have, even to some extent, access to organisation within their factories.

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The extent to which employment in the FTZs in developing countries is of benefit to women remains a controversial subject <sup>2</sup>. Some recent contributions have stressed the gains for women in terms of greater freedom and status arising from earning a wage <sup>3</sup>. Others have more reservations, pointing to the precarious nature of such employment in many countries, and to the fact that it is generally only available to women for a short period of their lives <sup>4</sup>.

Elson and Pearson have suggested that the gains for women of employment in the FTZs, should not only be assessed in terms of wages but also take account of the opportunities to acquire a sense of responsibility, co-operation and solidarity with other women. Becoming organised helps to develop the capacity for self determination. While the economic gains may be limited and temporary owing to the mobility of capital, organisation may enable women to develop self confidence and a new social identity and to acquire new skills.

A variety of forms of resistance and organisation has emerged among women workers employed in Free Trade Zones (FTZs). These have not been systematically examined globally. However by focussing on Sri Lanka it is possible to see that organisation does indeed confer benefits though these depend on the particular forms it is able to adopt.



The legal framework and the direct intervention of the State have influenced the methods of resistance adopted. Various organisations, including trade unions, and womens organisations have faced considerable risks to reach FTZ workers. Women workers themselves have spontaneously developed both overt and covert forms of defense. Members of these organisations often have been arrested and some have vanished without trace.

The Organisational forms adopted are not static but continually evolving in response to economic and social change. Their development is based on an accumulating experience which has been gained through past efforts, failures as well as successes in the FTZs.

Access to material about the organising and resistance of women workers in FTZs remains difficult. While account of significant strikes and campaigns find their way into print, much of the history made daily on the factory floor remains undocumented.

My personal involvement and practically based knowledge of the Sri Lankan case has enabled me to draw on oral sources for the period 1978-88 and continued research since, which give greater depth to the assessment of the changes in consciousness which occurred among the women.

In Sri Lanka the new wave of the women's movement arose at the same time as the Free Trade Zone. Many groups began initiating discussions in the villages about the effects FTZs would have on the community. I was involved with other women in setting up a women's centre to support the workers. We provided legal, medical assistance, reading and library facilities, a place for



socialising and meeting. Through this experience I was able to develop an understanding of the organisational capacities of the women workers, and learn how they interpret their own experiences and life stories.

This participatory learning formed the basis for further research on the forms of organisations and resistance which are developing among of women workers employed in the FTZs.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF THE FREE TRADE ZONES

"3 1/2 hours out from Manila, the bus to Mariveles, the small town near the zone, has to slow down. Soldiers dressed in combat fatigues and well armed with automatic weapons cast their eyes over the bus before waving it through. Notices announces that you are entering a special security area..The main industrial complex is surrounded by high walls and wire fences. No one can enter without a pass. All workers have to carry identity cards and have to queue while they are security checked in and out... this industrial zone is governed by its own armed police force with its own intelligence service and network of spies.." 5

With some minor exceptions, this description sums up a FTZ. Within these "industrial zones" various firms are encouraged to set up factories which produce for the world market. The Greater Colombo Economic Commission a special authority is granted the responsibility for all negotiations with foreign and local investors, control of labour relations, implementation of labour laws and in some cases recruitment of labour.

At present there are three FTZs operating in Sri Lanka. The first was set up in 1979 in Katunayaka (15 miles north of Colombo) adjoining the only international air port, and the second in Biyagama (14 miles from Colombo) The Biyagama FTZ was set up in December 1985. A third being in Koggala (20 km from Galle) was set



up in 1991 and is located in access to the natural harbour of Galle, in the South of Sri Lanka.

By December 1990 the Greater Colombo Economic Commission (GCEC), the special authority responsible for FTZ in Sri Lanka, approved 337 projects, 120 of which were in commercial operation. 65 were in the Katunayaka FTZ and 23 in the Biyagama FTZ. The rest were in the Greater Colombo Economic Area (coming under the authority of the GCEC).

By December 1991 the employment figures read at 84,514 in the FTZs as well as in the Greater Colombo Economic Commission enterprises<sup>6</sup>. An overwhelming majority of these workers were engaged in the textile, wearing apparel and leather products sector, the dominant production sector for the FTZs in Sri Lanka. Other products were in the range of rubber products, porcelain figurines, fishing gear, metallic products etc. Electronic firms are very few.

Investors come mainly from Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore while US, German, British, Belgian firms also operate as either single or joint holders with Sri Lankan firms.



The process of liberalisation of the economy needs to be seen within the accent set by the present President of Sri Lanka when he states

"We will broadbase our economic structure, so that the whole population can enjoy the dividends of a liberalised economy. Those who are rich can use their riches to make other rich. The sphere of exports can play a major role in this. We have now further liberalised the setting up of export oriented industries anywhere in Sri Lanka, which will make the entire country an export processing zone. As exports grow, trade will replace aid. Then we will become truly independent.."<sup>7</sup>

Under the direction of the President a scheme has been launched by the Greater Colombo Economic Commission to set up 200 garment factories all over the country. While garments has been the prime foreign exchange owner, emphasise is being laid on strengthening its full capacity through taking the garment factories to the village level. In 1991 alone Sri Lanka earned 33 billion rupees through garment exports to countries such as the USA, the EEC, Canada, Sweden, Norway and Japan.<sup>8</sup>

One main incentive for foreign firms to move into the Sri Lankan FTZs is the low labour costs and the access to Sri Lanka's unfulfilled Multi Fibre Agreement (MFA) quotas for garment exports to developed countries.

#### ■ THE COMPOSITION AND BACKGROUND OF THE WORKFORCE

International Labour Organisation statistics of 1986 claim that 1.3 million workers were employed in Free Trade Zones in the developing countries.<sup>9</sup> This figure was expected to rise significantly during the next years.

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In Sri Lanka 85%-90% of the workers employed are women. They are between the ages of 17-29 years. Particularly in the Katunayaka and Biyagama FTZs two thirds of the workers come from neighbouring village areas and the others from the rural areas (mainly in the south of the country, 4-5 hours by bus from Colombo). This is different in the Koggala FTZ where nearly all the workers are employed from the surrounding areas.

The women are employed in paid factory employment for the first time in their lives. They are educated, having 8-12 years of schooling and are therefore literate and have high aspirations.

Ethnically Sinhala workers<sup>10</sup> dominate the workforce (97%). Some 56% of these workers are Buddhist while 41% are Catholics (Voice of Women 1980). Katunayaka, Negombo, Andiambalama areas just outside the FTZ are predominantly 'catholic areas' which probably explains the heavy catholic component. The negligible participation of Tamil and Muslim workers in the FTZ workforce is particularly significant.

Workers are recruited through the Members of Parliament, in the villages where they come from. The "correct" political affiliation is therefore a necessary precondition to obtain a job in the FTZ.<sup>11</sup>

The wages are determined by the wages board - and is calculated on the basis of a minimum rate linked to the items being produced and therefore the "skill" they possess. A worker could be "skilled", "semi skilled" "unskilled" or "a trainee". An experienced machine operator is a "semi skilled worker" earning Rs.31.00 - Rs.35.00 per day, (equivalent to US\$ 1.10, as at January 1989)<sup>12</sup>.



Surveys and interviews stressed economic reasons for women's entry into the FTZs. Supporting their families was a recurrent reason given. They frequently saw their employment in the FTZs as a temporary means of livelihood. However, many had developed new aspirations through their employment and the opportunity of earning wages.

The women hoped to have time to educate themselves further. For example Leela explains,

"I believed that I would have the chance to study further. The day I arrived at the GCEC office, I asked the officer whether I have to work on Saturdays and Sundays. He replied that this would happen only occasionally. But now, by the time Monday or Tuesday arrives, they have already forced us to sign agreeing to work on Saturdays and Sundays. If we do not sign, they remove our time cards and then we have the option to leave the factory and never enter it again.." <sup>13</sup>.

The lives of the women workers can be summarized like this:

"Shift work dictates the total life pattern of the worker. It defines sleeping, recreational and socialising hours as well as working hours.. tight supervision combined with minimum quotas and fixed work postures have resulted in tremendous stress on the women workers. The awareness that little or no opportunities exist for them to acquire further skills or pursue her education creates a situation of conflict in her own predicament. She finds herself trapped within the demands of the assembly line and continuing responsibilities to support and help their families.." <sup>14</sup>

The women who come from the rural areas find boarding facilities within the villages adjoining the FTZ. Prior to the existence of the FTZ these villages were rural and houses were built to accommodate small families. However, after 1978, the villagers found an additional income through renting out rooms to the women workers. As the houses were ill equipped for such purposes, the living conditions were at best inadequate and often appalling.



The women usually share rooms, each room holding up to six or even eight women. In 1990-91 the average charge for a worker who occupies 'mat space', with shared toilet, bathing and cooking facilities was Rs.100-150 per month. One toilet and well are often shared by all the women - sometimes the numbers ranging from 40 - 50 workers in one boarding house. The women operate on what they call a 'shift system' to ensure that all the women had access to facilities. In 1991 the average charge for a worker who occupies "mat space"<sup>15</sup> and is provided with food was Rs.600-700 per month<sup>16</sup>.

#### ■LABOUR MANAGEMENT

Managements often supported by the special authorities responsible for the "smooth" functioning of the FTZs, are extremely concerned to prevent any form of labour organising among the workers. Various tactics have been adopted. These range from social provision, controlled forms of participation and suppression of autonomous organisation. Industrial management is closely linked with political measures of control which include laws surveillance and intimidation to secure industrial peace.

Although some of these social activities (such as beauty contests) or gifts were offered to workers, the response to and success of such programs in terms of diverting them from other issues has not been positive. Infact the women are suspicious each time such a plan comes under way. Managements have sought to establish welfare societies or sports clubs in which the workers have shown little or no interest.



The Greater Colombo Economic Commission has not enacted laws to curb the right of workers to self organisation, although in reality workers possess hardly any rights to organise themselves at all.

The GCEC provides a complaints office where workers can lodge complaints with promises of being dealt with. However, the effectiveness of this office is questionable as the workers find they gain little or no respite through going to it.<sup>17</sup>

● Workers councils are encouraged in factories, where management with elected workers can sit together to resolve problems. Here again the women complain that the elected members do not always express the interest of workers at the shop floor, and the workers councils remain only on paper. For instance Leela claims,

"In our factory there is a workers' council. Representatives have been elected from the different sections to the council. During the first meetings, the workers who talk a lot were given a pay rise. They behave the way the Management wants them to! Our problems go under! ... after the first couple of meetings the workers' council hardly ever meets..."<sup>18</sup>

The GCEC itself intervenes in disputes, supposedly to bring about a just settlement - but Leela says,

" The only authority who can intervene directly on our behalf is the GCEC. But when they act so openly on behalf of the management, we realised that we can no longer depend on the GCEC to take our side or the side of justice. Every month at least 25 petitions reach the GCEC from our factory alone. There must be a reason why they refuse to respond to our pleas..."<sup>19</sup>



To date no trade union exists within any Sri Lankan FTZ enterprise. Trade Unions are not encouraged to form branches within the FTZ, although the GCEC brochure states that "...employees have the right to form and join a trade union. Recognition of such unions by employers is not regulated by law.."<sup>20</sup>. Nevertheless the idea that prevails among the workers is that they are not allowed to form trade unions. This is accentuated by the heavy reprisals meted out to workers for even attempting to organise themselves. Unfortunately the national trade unions themselves have done nothing to change this idea or act directly to intervene within the FTZs.

The level of repression against labour activists or workers who intervene in disputes on the factory floor has increased dramatically during the last months. Many workers have disappeared or been killed, merely for speaking up. Fear is used as a weapon to keep the workers suppressed and intimidated.

The legal restrictions curbing labour organising has been implemented in Sri Lanka more covertly, and workers take high risks if they step out of line.

#### **ORGANISING AND RESISTANCE**

Despite the repressive laws and conditions, and enormous pressure to earn sufficient wages which must stretch to support their families in the villages, the women workers have developed diverse and new ways of organising which often go beyond the traditional forms prevalent outside the FTZs.



The political and economic contexts of Sri Lanka influence the methods that have been adopted. Compared to other countries especially in South east Asia Sri Lanka was a late comer in the establishment of FTZs. For instance in the Philippines the political and labour movement developed an experience and maturity, during Marcos' martial law regime, which has little comparison to Sri Lanka.

The type of industries that Sri Lanka has attracted are mainly the production of Garments and light industries. The type of work the women are engaged in offer expectations to the women workers of a specific nature and determine their attitudes and aspirations for the future. Moreover the women workers' responses to their situations have played a central role in the surge of new forms of organising and resistance that have developed during the past years in all three countries.

#### ■ INFORMAL AND SPONTANEOUS FORMS OF ORGANISING

The life in the boarding houses fosters a sense of unity and strength which women share towards each other. The experience of living together as women involves sharing similar problems, and dreaming similar dreams. The women develop a collective responsibility which has strong sustaining powers. Organising the cooking, eating, sleeping, washing, within one place contribute towards building a community life. This community feeling, a sense of belonging, becomes an important support structure, offering them the chance to take the edge off their loneliness of being away from their homes and families.



Women workers have found covert means of communication and organisation at work. Within the factories women develop covert forms of organising. In situations where union organising is not encouraged, eye contact, initiatives of small groups, use of local language in the presence of foreign managements become very important. Actions that result from these forms of contact are not decisions taken at prior meetings, but spontaneous forms of resistance developed by the women workers themselves. In the words of a Sri Lankan zone worker Rohini,

"We have our own ways to organise ourselves. This is very important for us. After a period the workers have got accustomed to these methods. They know how to act given a particular situation..for instance if new production targets are introduced. It is at the beginning that it is difficult, but after a while this changes and new and varied methods begin to develop.." <sup>21</sup>

Spontaneous strikes in Sri Lanka, "wild cat strikes" in Malaysia<sup>22</sup> Sympathy strikes in the Philippines<sup>23</sup>, are not always pre-planned activities of the women workers, rather they come through on-the-spot situations requiring immediate action. Besides strikes lowering the production target when pressure is placed on them to increase their productivity or helping another worker who is slow to reach her target, have been small but important ways to develop support and survival methods.

Managements have tried often to counter these informal forms of resistance by using rules such as "talking is not allowed" or controlling the use of the toilets "one woman at a time"! The result of these measures provokes the women to rebel more.



Organisational support is not confined to the actual place of work. For example in Sri Lanka, an important part of the women's daily lives is spent getting to and from work. Transport facilities are not provided for the women who have to report to work at 9.30 p.m. for the night shift. As a result women trek through unlit roads which has given a free hand to thieves and rapists. If one should walk along the road leading from the zone, it is easily discernible that the women move in groups intent on the purpose of getting home soon and staying together.

Occasionally they call out names to ensure friends are still there. Although these are not the safest methods, the women find it better than waiting alone at a bus stop or expect the authorities to provide them with transport.

These forms of resistance and mutual aid do not suddenly arise when women find themselves in the FTZ. They are adopted from strategies familiar to women already. Living in an authoritarian household, learning to be an obedient student, and later a disciplined worker, gives way to covert and sometimes overt forms of rebelling. Externally the women might appear passive to male heads of households or management; infact they have an extremely sophisticated culture of subversion.

#### ■TRADE UNION ORGANISING

It has been unfortunate that the trade unions which are active in factories located outside the FTZs have<sup>been</sup> unable to take a definite step towards organising workers in the FTZs. Although trade unions are officially permitted in the FTZ enterprises, the general impression that is spread is that trade unions are banned. What is



Why  
not

unfortunate is that no trade union has challenged this position and initiated methods to getting access to the workers.

Besides this the trade union structures which are at present explain! strictly defined also could become an obstacle in the organising of FTZ workers. It would be difficult to imagine that branch unions could be organised within the FTZ enterprises! New and creative organisational forms have to be developed and the trade unions would need to look at the flexibility of their structures to permit new thinking.

#### COMMUNITY ORGANISING

Various organisations have set up centres directed at women workers. They have differing reasons for working in these areas and therefore have a range of approaches and ideologies. Nevertheless, they have faced similar problems and repression from the state, and have found ways to work together on specific issues.

Christian organisations, both catholic and protestant, have formed a distinct and important part in the response to the needs of workers in the FTZ.

Both catholic and protestant groups have worked with the women workers since the inception of the FTZ in 1979. Separately they initiate the setting up of various facilities for women, and activities which attempt to integrate women into the village communities and create a channel by which they could educate the women about their rights.



There are seven catholic centres in the villages adjoining the FTZ. Some of them provide boarding house facilities for the workers, and in some, nuns are available to lend a sympathetic ear to the problems of the women. Space is provided where the women can meet to discuss and socialise. Library facilities are available in some of the centres while seminars or social activities are often organised.

At the very early years of the FTZ being set up, food Co-op was initiated by one of the catholic centres, to combat the rising prices of food, for which the villagers blamed the women. The women workers who came to know of it bought shares to build up a capital so that the Co-op could be set up. The result was the lowering of prices of basic food items, due to a high degree of patronage by the villagers and FTZ women. This forced the other shopkeepers to bring their prices down. The experience demonstrated to the women workers that it was possible ~~possible~~ to develop strategies together which proved beneficial to them and the villagers, while also winning the confidence of the community.

Organising campaigns with an alliance of women's groups, the Legal Advice Centres, and the Buddhist organisations, to stop the sexual harassment of women workers returning after work, brought the active participation of all to the fore. The women made posters, pamphlets, and did door to door campaigning themselves. The message was preached in every church and Buddhist temple. Petitions were sent to the Greater Colombo Economic Commission, requesting for security and transport for the women. These experiences brought the women and the active organisations closer



together, bringing sensitive and hidden subjects to the open about the relation of outsiders to the workers' problems.

where? - Legal Advice is provided by nearly all the centres. However, a Legal Advice Centre specialises at giving free advice as well as intervening on behalf of workers- either free of charge or at a minimum basic charge. It gives support and advice only to workers. The lawyers and full time personnel write and distribute pamphlets on legal issues to the workers, while seminars and discussions are organised where workers are invited to participate. It plays an important role in a situation where the basic rights of workers are daily disappearing. The Legal Advice Centre came under very heavy repression recently. Full time personnel have been physically attacked and some have even disappeared.

A Womens Centre has been set up by a group of women who were themselves factory workers before. It offers FTZ workers a multi-faceted programme with diverse facilities which include legal and medical assistance, library facilities, and training in alternative skills. It conducts study seminars and discussions, providing education for women on their rights.

#### ■ An Assessment of the Centres

All these organisations tend to be for women workers <sup>rather</sup> than of women workers. They have in most situations been set up by external groups. Nevertheless, the centres have run considerable risks to work in the areas of the FTZs - sensitive areas where police victimisation is rampant. Their members have not simply provided



useful services but faced real dangers in order to seek justice for the women workers employed in the zones.

What is of relevant<sup>e</sup> here to observe is that all these organisations are functioning outside of the zone and therefore can only touch a small periphery of the workers. The need to link the activities of these organisations with the issues the women workers directly on the factory floor (face) as well as the spontaneous actions that they undertake, is of extreme importance.

The link between these two ie. organisations taking initiative from outside and actions of women workers within the workplace are taken as the entry point for the publishing and distribution of a newspaper initiated by an autonomous womens group. This provides a medium by which the women learn to express themselves, share their ideas with other women, and create a vehicle through which they can state their views to employers or those in authority as well as mobilise support for their demands.

The FTZ newspaper is maintained by an independent group of women (a collective) who have been for many years active in different organisations in the FTZ. The newspaper (published since 1984) opens itself to articles, poems, stories sent in by the women workers themselves. Apart from this the collective writes linking articles, gives advice, news of campaigns or activities of other organisations in the zone.



The newspaper is published in large numbers and is sold at a basic charge to the women workers. During the initial five years the paper was distributed free of charge and thereby making the paper available to all and therefore widely read and made popular. The paper is sold across the boarding houses, and sometimes along the streets where women go to work. On many occasions it was found that the paper made itself way into the factory, although they are officially not allowed to take it inside! Inside the factory it travels down the assembly line or someone pins it up on the notice board!

● The response to the newspaper from the managements has been diverse. While some take great pains to find out who gave out information related to the factory (and sometimes reprimand them) others find it a useful method by which to obtain information about themselves and the views of the workers and their expectations /grievances. Sometimes managements send responses to articles appearing in the paper, which is published in the next issue giving all the workers a chance to see this response.

● The FTZ newspaper has been an important campaigner on issues such as night work, sexual harassment and problems relating to organising and difficulties of women travelling to and from work.

#### **The November 7th Movement**

Cooperation between the different organisations active in the Katunayaka FTZ has brought a range of protest against the conditions of work and lack of responsibility of the authorities towards the lives of the workers in the zones. On the 7th of November 1992, a mass protest action took place at the FTZ



Katunayaka, bringing together Community groups, Political organisations, Womens organisations, Religious organisations and Trade Unions. The protest was staged despite police and through heavy thug attacks. The 42 organisations which united towards this action distributed a pamphlet explaining their position as well as listing their demands for better and just working conditions of work for the FTZ workers.

It must be understood that all the initiatives described above pertain mainly to the Katunayaka FTZ while there exist two other FTZs in other parts of the country. Hardly any such initiatives have been taken by groups or trade unions in the other two zones.]

### Conclusions

In the Katunayaka zone it has become apparant that direct, indirect -overt, covert methods of organising have been undertaken. These organisational methods have tended to approach the women not simply as workers employed in factories but have also taken into consideration their lives in the boarding houses, on the streets and in the community. New forms of organising will continue to appear through the interaction of these methods and through the capacities of women workers to resist.

A newly emerging consciousness can be seen among women workers in this recent phase of industrialisation. Since the employment of the women in the FTZs, very basic changes have taken place in their lives and attitudes. Many women realise before long that their employment in FTZ factories is not as brief as they originally expected. They see it will occupy most of their youthful lives and therefore they consciously or unconsciously



resolve to make it as liveable as possible for themselves and others. They also see that marriage is not necessarily a way out of their jobs; many women workers are married and have still to continue to work in the FTZs. They recognise that returning to their villages and resuming their former lives before employment in the zone is also not as easy as they once thought. The FTZ experience has left its mark on cultural patterns and on the women as individuals.

Facing the reality that they may be in FTZ factory employment for quite a while, and confronted by the difficult conditions of work and living; they still dream of a better life for themselves and for their families, a fairer deal on the job. The conflicts and contradictions between dreams and reality in their daily lives, combines with the collective understanding which is coming from organising their lives together with other women. From Sri Lanka Rohini describes how she gained the power of self assertion and a sense of mutual connection to other women.

" ..Anyway working in the FTZ was an experience worth to have had. I grew up a lot during that period. I myself can't see any changes in my appearance, but I think you can see that better! But I grew in my ideas, what it is to fight for what I believe. At home I was protected by my parents. We had no idea of being responsible towards each other. But now it is different. Now I know what suppression is. What repression is. I also know that I have to stand against it.

I like the freedom I got through this job. The freedom to make my own decisions, to spend money, to go to places I like to be. It is also a hard life. There were many days I felt I could not cope. Money was often scarce. I was often hungry..but we learnt to deal with such situations. I sometimes imagine to go back to the village. I know that it won't be easy.

Now that FTZs have been established in Sri Lanka I could say that there are good and bad sides to it. From my personal experience I know that I grew and learnt about being a woman worker and to live together and be responsible for other women. But the State and Authorities should take more responsibility for the thousands of women who leave their villages and come to work in the FTZ. They should ensure that decent wages are paid. That transport, and security is provided that decent living conditions are ensured. That the right of women to



organise is protected. They should take our side. FTZs have provided us jobs. That is true. But we also want to feel secure and justly treated..." <sup>24</sup>

Her statement indicates the extraordinary transformation which capital has effected in translating the life of a village girl into a FTZ worker.

The diverse forms of organising are mutable and dynamic. They have emerged out of a new form of industrialisation and they will continue to adapt and reconstitute themselves as circumstances and consciousness shift. Rather than simply studying the movement of capital, the emergence of a new awareness both as women and as workers needs to be much more closely examined in specific FTZs.

#### NOTES:

1. This paper draws heavily from " Rosa, Kumudhini : The conditions and organisational activities of women in free trade zones: Malaysia, Philippines and Sri Lanka (forthcoming), WIDER, Helsinki."
2. Susan Joeques, Women in the World Economy: An INSTRAW Study, OUP. New York.
3. Gillian H.C. Foo and Linda Y.C.Lim, 'Poverty, Ideology and women Export Factory workers in South-East Asia'in (Eds) Haleh Afshar and Bina Agarwal, Women, Poverty and Ideology in Asia. MacMillan Press, UK, 1989, 212-232.
4. Noeleen Heyzer, 'Daughters in Industry', Asian Pacific Development Centre, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 1988.
5. International Labour Reports, 'We Can Fight', July/August 1985, 13.
6. Greater Colombo Economic Commission, brochure for Sri Lanka EXPO 92 in Colombo, Nov: 18th-22nd 1992.
7. President Ranasinghe Premadasa, "Daily News", Sri Lanka 27 April 1992, 17.
8. "Daily News", Sri Lanka, 27th April 1992, 17.
9. International Labour organisation and United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporation (ILO/UNCTC), Economic and Social Effects of Multinational Enterprises in Export Processing Zones, ILO, 1988, back cover page.
10. Sinhalese form 80% of the total population of the country.



Tamils 12%: Muslims and Burghers (Sri Lankans with European ancestors) 8%

Religion composition country wide:

Buddhists: 64%	Hindus: 20%	Christians: 6.5%
Catholics: 7%	Muslims: 7%	Others: 1%

11. Kumudhini Rosa, Women Workers' Strategies of Organising and Resistance in the Sri Lankan Free Trade Zone (FTZ), Institute of Development Studies, 1989, 8.

12. A male forman - "a skilled worker" earns an equivalent of US\$1.65 per day.

13. Kumudhini Rosa et.al. 3.

14. APHD et.al. 98.

15. The space in which a sleeping mat/matress can be placed with some room for placing a suitcase at the end of the mat.

16. Committee for Asian Women, 'Many Paths Many Goals', 1991, Hong Kong, appearing in the article 'Da Bindu - a space for women workers', 64.

17. Kumudhini Rosa et.al. 5.

18. Kumudhini Rosa et.al. 3.

19. Kumudhini Rosa et.al. 4.

20. Greater Colombo Economic Commission Brochure for Investors, Colombo, n.d. 8

21. Drops of Sweat, 'Listen to me', July 1990, Germany. 4-5.

22. In september 1980 a wave of "wild cat strikes" took place in the Bayan Lepas Zone in Penang involving atleast 10 factories, including the RUF Malaysia Firm (100% German) making transistor radios and various components. The main issue was a demand for higher wages. (APHD)

23. In the Bataan FTZ, three general strikes have taken place since 1982, which was a result of "sympathy strikes" by workers who came out to support other workers on strike.

24. Drops of Sweat, 'Listen to me' 1990, 4-5.