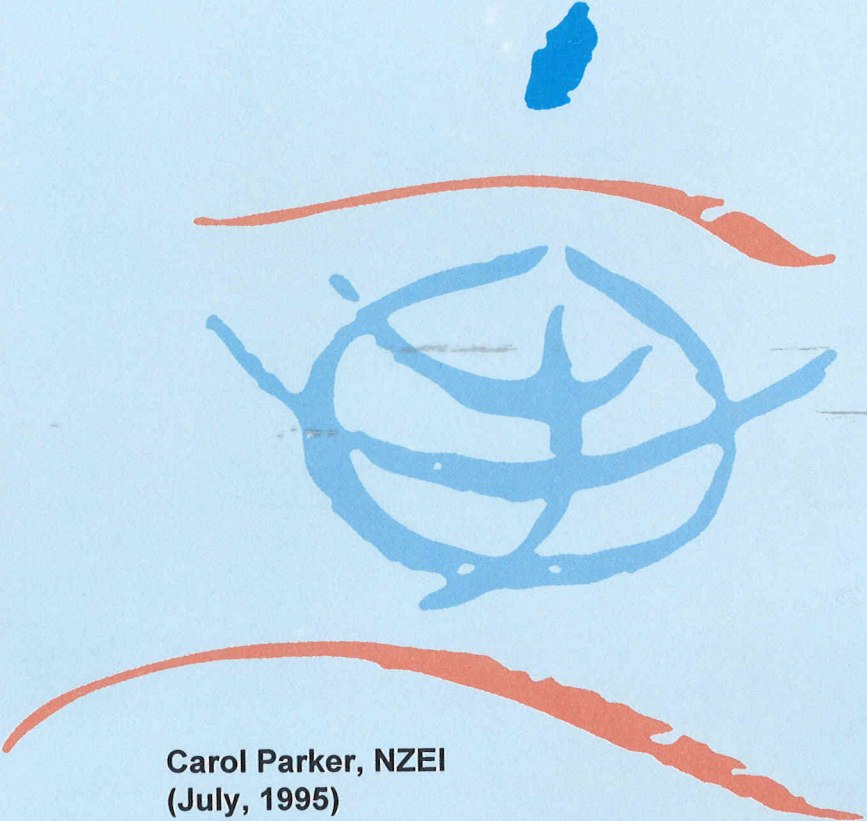




WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY



Carol Parker, NZEI
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**Education International / Internationale de l'Education / Internacional de la Educaci3n
Boulevard Emile Jacqmain 155
1210 Brussels / Bruxelles / Bruselas
Belgium / Belgique / B3lgica**

**Tel : + 32.2.224.06.11
Fax : + 32.2.224.06.06**

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Introduction

Women in developing and developed nations have been historically and are, at present, consistently disadvantaged by their place in any economy. This paper briefly highlights six areas in which change must be made to ensure that women have some chance of taking their place as equals in local, national or international economies. Any paper of this nature will necessarily only touch on areas of importance to some and omit those of importance to others. This is a beginning.

- (i) Women and work
- (ii) Impact of free market policies on women
- (iii) Structural adjustment
- (iv) Legislation, conventions
- (v) Retirement policies, restrictions on property ownership
- (vi) Trade union membership

(i) Women and work

'For woman to be equal, she must have equal access to the economic resources of society. The equality of woman begins with her ability to participate fully and on an equal basis with man in gainful activity. This, however, is only a first step towards equality. This activity must provide her with the resources to be economically independent. Without a clear commitment and intensified efforts on the part of governments to provide new opportunities with adequate resources for women, as well as for men, the numbers of women and men forced to struggle for survival will increase dramatically. Without a more equitable distribution of the world's resources, the informal sector will grow substantially as women and men engage in illegal as well as legal activities to obtain the resources for survival. Consequently, women and children the world over will bear the disproportionate burden of the pain and agony associated with an increase in poverty and hunger.'¹

Women are constantly at work, whether waged or unwaged. The initial considerations that governments need to act upon are:

- ensuring a fair distribution of paid work,
- ensuring that the conditions under which waged work is undertaken take full account of individual and social responsibility for unwaged caring work,
- ensuring that the responsibility for unwaged caring work is shared between families, other groups and the government,
- ensuring that opportunities are provided in all situations for women to take up and make progress through any job without discrimination because of gender or lower wages than men.

The globalisation of economies and the continuing world economic crisis creates misery for women in all parts of the world.

