IMPROVING CENSAL ACCOUNTING OF FEMALE WORKERS[1]

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I. INTRODUCTION

The international recommendations that guide the collection of labour statistics have been severely criticized. It has been pointed out that the labour force approach (registering the current not the usual activity status) follows the model of developed economies, and the behaviour of salaried, stable, full-time workers (Blacker: 1980, Anker: 1983). It is inadequate to capture a seizable part of the labour force in developing countries where labourers are more likely to work seasonally, part-time, to be unemployed, and to engage in a fluid pattern of economic activities. It has also been pointed out that the criteria used to classify economic and non-economic activities are inconsistent and that the distinction itself has no sense because of the difficulty of conceptualizing the difference between both or the absurd of attempting to do it, especially in rural areas where self-consumption production prevails. The use of a short reference period, on the other hand, ignores seasonal, sporadic or occasional workers.

Even though the definitions of work and economic activity have not made explicit sex-distinctions, the problems and inconsistencies they suffer affect differently women and men (as well as young and old people). Indeed, it is a fact that although up to the censuses of the 80's international standards neither explicitly included nor excluded from economic activity self-consumption production, national practices have included it when performed by males but excluded it when by women.

This state of affairs is due to the working modalities of many women in developing countries --discontinuous, on a part-time basis, in the traditional sector of the economy, in family firms without pay, on their own account, within the household. It is also due to the socially shared ideas about the sexual division of labour which assign the leadership of production to men and of reproduction to women. This leads many working women (and data gatherers) not to see their activity as economic but as part of the homemaker's duties, or of the help they owe to other

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(male) productive members of the household. Blacker(1980) assigns to these pre-conceptions the apparently arbitrariness of the distinction between economic and domestic activities. He says:

> 'Let us take, for example, the chain of processes leading to the production of a loaf of bread: the harvesting of the wheat, the threshing and winnowing of the grain, the milling or pounding of the grain into flour, the kneading of the flour into dough, and the baking of the dough into bread. Where, it may be asked, in this series of actions does economic activity begin and end? I suggest that in practice the answer is determined not by the intrinsic nature of the operation, but by the point at which it is performed by "housewives" --i.e., by female unpaid family workers'. (p. 72)

Anker (1983), in turn, has pointed out that those activities usually done by women (like subsistence livestock or food processing) are considered non-economic as if the criteria were based on existing knowledge about male and female activity patterns.

These issues are responsible for the low quality of the measurement of the female economic participation. In the agricultural sector in Latin America the evidence are many (among others, ECLAC: 1982, Deere and León de Leal: 1982). There is growing evidence outside the region also (Blacker: 1980, D'Souza: 1980, Baster: 1981, Benería: 1982, Dixon: 1982, Pittin: 1983, Ibrahim: 1983, Anker: 1983, Anker, Khan and Gupta: 1987, Zurayk: 1983, Hamad: 1984).

International organizations which issue recommendations on labour statistics have taken up the issues only sporadically up to the 80's. Barely two years before launching the censuses of the 80's, the United Nations explicitly acknowledged the difficulties involved in capturing female workers, especially if married, due to the dominant stereotypes. These warnings, neither translated into a re-conceptualization of work and economically active population nor in guides for their operationalization, did not make for improvements in the 80's.

On the side of specialists in population and employment, suggestions for changing data collection instruments have also been scarce (Blacker: 1980, Lopes (1981), Anker: 1983).

Evidence of the underenumeration of female workers are abundant, instead. The validity of Latinamerican censuses in this respect has been assessed comparing the activity rates produced by censuses and by household surveys taken around the same time, for the same population, using the same conceptual definition of labour force, reference period, and working-time requirements (Wainerman and Recchini de Lattes: 1981).

To give a few examples, the 1970 population census of Sao

Paulo (the most developed region of Brazil) undercounted 18 per cent of female but only 3 per cent of male workers, more among female occupied in agriculture (60 per cent) than in all other activities (10 per cent), more among unpaid family workers (84 per cent) than among salaried women (9 per cent). In the Northeast region (the most backward of Brazil), 52 per cent of female worker but a bare 4 per cent of male workers were not counted. Again, the female invisibility was higher in agriculture (63 per cent) than in the rest (44 per cent), among unpaid (88 per cent) than among salaried workers (29 per cent).

These conceptual and technical failures were taken up at the 13th. ILO Conference of Labour Statisticians in 1982. The new recommendations modify those issued in 1954 and in use until the 80's. They define the economically active population as:

> 'all persons of either sex who furnish the supply of labour for the production of economic goods and services as defined by the United Nations systems of national accounts and balances, during a specified time-reference period. According to these systems, the production of economic goods and services includes all production and processing of primary products, whether for the market, for barter or for own consumption, the production of all other goods and services for the market and, in the case of households which produce for the market the corresponding production for own consumption'. [emphasis added] [2]

The ILO recommendations improve the labour force definition in a number of aspects which will probably have a wider effect among women. The major ones are the explicit inclusion of self-consumption producers (whenever this activity makes 'an important contribution to the total consumption of the household'); the elimination of the minimum working-time criterion, including unpaid family workers, and the adoption of one-hour work to qualify as active; the use of two reference periods to collect information on the usual and the current active population. [3]

Vagueness remains, however, as regards aspects like the criteria to distinguish economic and non-economic activities (e.g., why repairing is not economic whereas improving and

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2. The current Systems of National Accounts include all market activities and three types of non-market activities: production of primary products for own-consumption, their processing, and the own-account production of fixed assest. This definition has been revised for use in the 90's. See Special Issue on the Review of the United Nations System of National Accounts, The Review of Income and Health, June 1986.

3. See Rao and Mehran (1984) for a clear statement of the concepts and limits of economic activity adopted by the 1982 ILO resolution and its relation with national accounts criteria.

building a house is, why processing primary products for storage like cheese, butter, is economic but cooking products of the own farm for the inmediate consumption of the household is not), and what is meant by an important contribution to the household's consumption (for what kind of household structure?, for which consumption level?, using objective or subjective parameters?).

These vagueness, as well as the lack of recommendations for operationalizing the concepts, may endanger the validity of future censuses. Few studies have faced these problems systematically. Two come from the ILO context (Trigueros Mejia: 1986; Anker: 1983 and Anker, Khan and Gupta: 1987). The study summarized here forms part of a research on the same line. Its aims were to test: 1) the extent to which the standard census procedure distorts the portrait of females' participation, mainly in the agricultural and the informal sector, 2) the effects of various factors assumed responsible for it, and 3) the adequacy of an alternative procedure which follows closely the recent ILO's standards and is able to be applied in censuses.

2. THE STUDY DESIGN

The research was conducted in Argentina and Paraguay, in two urban and two rural areas. We will deal here only with the rural areas: Leandro N.Alem (Argentina) and Piribebuy (Paraguay). Both are based on agriculture, both are extremely poor areas, old settlements with a prevalence of small land-holdings (smaller in Piribebuy) and subsistence economy. Labour demand exists all through the year in both, except from july to september. The Argentinian locality is, however, relatively more developed, with a more differentiated economy and greater market opportunities for its agricultural production than the Paraguayan locality.

Field work was carried out between august and september, the period of low labor demand chosen to make our test stronger, We conducted two methodological surveys in each locality on statistically representative, hence comparable, household samples totalling 1,400 and 1,152 active-age persons of both sexes (12 and 14 years and over in Argentina and Paraguay respectively). [4]

One of the surveys (CENSAL) reproduced the standard Latin American population censuses (questionnaire and interviewers' training). The other one (CENEP), the alternative procedure. Both used the same conceptual definition of labour force to

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4. The research included three other surveys in each of the two rural and the two urban localities. One applied CENEP procedure with one-year reference period. Of the other two, one combined the CENEP questionnaire and the CENSAL interviewers' training and the other, the CENSAL questionnaire and the CENEP's training, both for one-week period.

investigate the current (previous week) activity status of the population, without any working-time requirement, following the 1982 ILO's quite closely, but with some modifications. Firstly, we focused on one segment of self-consumption labourers: producers of primary products (vegetable cultivation, sowing, poultry and animal caring, which are mostly female activities). We placed no stress but we did not explicitly exclude people processing primary products produced by themselves or producers of fixed assets like houses, boats,canoes (mostly male activities). Secondly, we did not exclude self-consumption producers whose activity does not make an important contribution to the total household's consumption but we got data on the time worked that may be used as a proxy of importance. Whenever possible we requested interviewees to answer by themselves.

The CENSAL survey investigated the activity status with the following single question and pre-coded response alternatives:

Q7. What did you do last week?

Worked
Did not worked but had a job
Looked for work
Engaged in household activities
Studied
Is retired, pensioned or rentier
Is sick or invalid
Other situation, which one?

The CENEP questionnaire used seven questions for the same purpose. They actually displayed the pre-coded CENSAL responses into four questions (Q7, Q9, Q10, Q12) and added three more. One of them, the self-consumption module (Q13), was presented at the end of the household interview to every member classified as economically inactive in Q7 to Q12. It was printed separately, in a second schedule. The phrasing of the questions required a yes or no answer before proceeding to the next one. They were:

Q7. During last week, did you work at anything?

Q8. And during that week, did you do or help to do any activity, paid or unpaid, inside or outside your household, if only for a few hours? For instance: helping in a grocery store or kiosco; selling crafts, food, vegetables, newspapers, lottery tickets or cosmetics; planting, harvesting or raising chickens to be sold, washing, ironing or sewing clothes for others; making confitures, cheeses, or knitting to sell; taking care of children or old people for pay.

Q9. During last week, did you don't work because of illness, leave, strike, bad weather conditions or any other temporary reason, even though you had a job or an occupation?

Q10. During that week, did you look for a job or any activity by talking to friends, offering yourself in a firm, adevertising or answering ads, or in any other way?

Q11. During that week, did you stop looking for a job or an occupation because either you or a family member were sick, because of bad weather conditions, or for any other reasons?

Q12. And during that week,

Where you a housewife and didn't you work?
Where you a student and didn't you work?
Where you retired,pensioned or rentier and didn't you work?
Were you chronically sick or invalid and didn't you work?
Were you in another situation?

Q13. Although you've already said that you didn't carry out any activity, during last week, did you work in the family farm or did you raise chickens for your own or your family consumption even if only for a few hours?

Contrarily to the (two-hours) CENSAL training of interviewers, exclusively devoted to handling the question, the CENEP training comprised four sessions (two days) and involved two sections. One, devoted to handling the questionnaire included role playing and evaluation of the trainees. The other aimed at sensitizing data collectors to the socially shared ideas about the sexual division of labour in order to make them aware of groups (women, young and old people) liable to be defined as inactive on the exclusive basis of sex and age (see Wainerman: 1988 for the description of this test). This section was not meant for use in censuses but to assess the presence of sex biases among interviewers.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Sex-differential CENSAL underenumeration of workers

The CENEP survey enumerates more workers in the less developed Paraguayan context than in the Argentinian, and significantly much more among women than among men in both areas. The CENEP female activity rates are almost three and six times as great as the CENSAL rates of Leandro N. Alem and Piribebuy, respectively. The corresponding CENEP rates for males do not surpass more than ten per cent the CENSAL rates (see Table 1 and Chart 1). Therefore, the CENEP survey reveals that the majority of women (around 90 per cent) are contributing economically, as well as most men do. It worths recalling that these results were produced during a period of low labour demand. This picture is consistent with what is known of poor small land-holding areas, where the subsistence of the household unit is based on the labour of all of its members, whether old, young, women or men.

TABLE 1

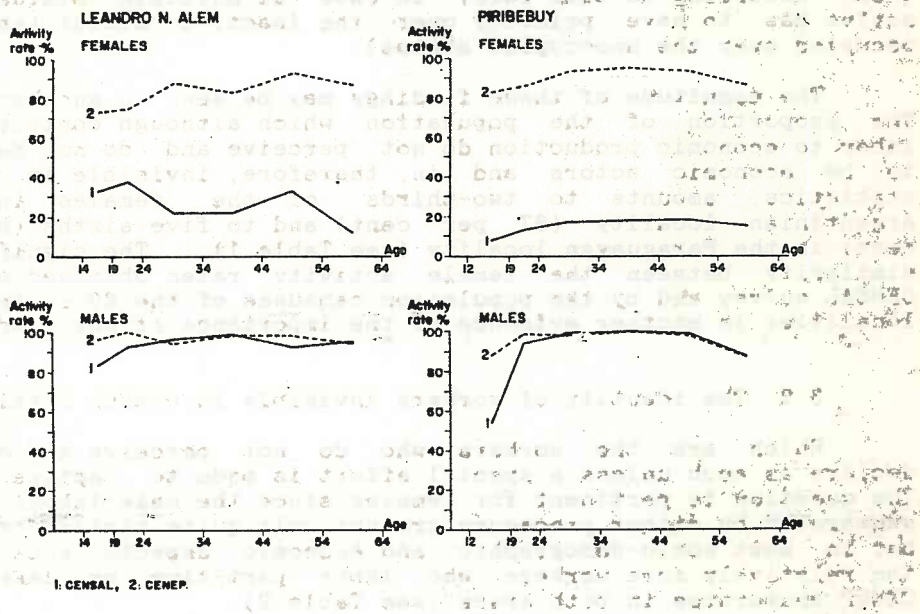
CENSAL and CENEP economic activity rates by sex and locality.

Data collection procedures	LEANDRO N.ALEM Females	Males	PIRIBEBUY Females	Males
1980/82 population censuses(1)	28.4	84.7	14.3	88.2
CENSAL (2)	26.6	91.0	13.7	83.6
CENEP (3)	80.5	95.2	87.6	92.8
CENSAL undercount: (3-2)/3	67.0	4.4	84.4	9.9

NOTE: differences between rates 1 and 2 are not significant for females but they do are for males at the .05 level, in both localities. Differences between rates 2 and 3 are significant at the .05 level for both sexes, in both localities except for Leandro N. Alem males.

However, it openly contradicts most labour force census statistics in Latin America which record an extremely low participation of rural females, much lower than among urban females (Elizaga and Mellon: 1971).

CHART I. Leandro N. Alem and Piribebuy. Female and male economic activity profiles according to the CENSAL and CENEP surveys.



As we already said, the economy of both areas is based on the agricultural sector, but most of the production in the Paraguayan locality is devoted to self-subsistence whereas that of the Argentinian locality is largely sold in the market. The CENEP and the CENSAL portraits of the male labor in both areas are significantly similar. Both surveys give significantly different portraits of the female labour, instead (see Table 2). The weight of women occupied in the agricultural sector, mostly producing for their own consumption, is much greater according to the CENEP than to the CENSAL survey. The latter gives more weight to (small scale) manufacturing, (petty trade) business and service sectors.

The fact that in the Argentinian locality, where most of male-agricultural workers produce for the market, as well as in the Paraguayan locality, where the majority produces for own-consumption, a procedure like CENEP does not capture significantly more workers than other which reproduces the standard census, indicates that male who work in agriculture, either for sell or for own-consumption, define their activity as work, perceive themselves as workers and declare to be active.

The situation is quite different on the side of females. A very high proportion among them do not define their activity as work and do not perceive neither declare themselves as active but as housewives (economically inactive according to the censuses). The priority rule that according to international standards censuses are assumed to apply is not put into practice among them. According to this rule, in case of multiple status, the active has to have priority over the inactive status (and the occupied over the unoccupied status).

The magnitude of these findings may be seen in another way. The proportion of the population which although contributing labor to economic production do not perceive and do not declare to be economic actors and is, therefore, invisible in census statistics, amounts to two-thirds of the females in the Argentinian locality (67 per cent) and to five-sixths (84 per cent) in the Paraguayan locality (see Table 1). The significant similarity between the female activity rates obtained by the CENSAL survey and by the population censuses of the 80's in both localities is another evidence of the importance of our findings.

3.2 The identity of workers invisible in census statistics

Which are the workers who do not perceive and do not declare as such unless a special effort is made to capture them? The question is pertinent for females since the male labour force enumerated by either procedure are not only quite similar in size but in most socio-demographic and economic aspects, except for the relatively more workers who labor part-time or less that CENEP enumerates in both areas (see Table 2).

TABLE 2

Economically active population recorded by the CENSAL survey, the CENEP survey and Q13 according to socio-demographic and occupational characteristics, by sex and locality. Percentages.

Socio-demographic and occupational characteristics	LEANDRO N. ALEM					PIRIBEBUY				
	Females			Males		Females			Males	
	CENSAL	CENEP		CENSAL	CENEP	CENSAL	CENEP		CENSAL	CENEP
		Total	Q13				Total	Q13		
Age group	(81)	(256)*	(121)	(323)*	(339)	(95)*	(502)*	(325)	(558)	(499)
14-19	21.0	16.0	9.9	12.4	19.8	16.8	29.1	32.9	14.9	21.6
20-54	67.9	68.0	67.0	68.1	62.5	69.5	57.2	42.2	70.7	67.0
55 and over	11.1	16.0	23.1	19.5	17.7	13.7	13.7	25.0	14.4	11.4
Position in household	(81)*	(256)	(121)	(321)	(339)	(94)*	(502)	(325)	(557)	(498)
head	8.6	6.3	4.1	72.9	67.2	25.5	9.6	8.6	57.0	58.6
spouse	49.4	65.2	68.6	0.0	0.3	34.0	50.0	50.7	0.0	0.0
son/daughter	39.5	17.6	14.9	24.6	28.6	36.2	35.1	36.1	38.2	38.4
other	2.5	10.9	12.4	2.5	3.9	4.3	5.4	4.6	4.8	3.0
Occupational sector	(81)*	(255)*	(121)	(321)	(340)	(90)*	(498)*	(325)	(528)	(499)
agriculture	77.8	91.4	100.0	84.4	85.9	44.4	82.1	100.0	81.8	84.6
manufacturing	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.3	7.9	17.8	6.6	0.0	7.4	4.0
construction	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.9	2.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.4	4.9
business	2.5	1.5	0.0	1.6	0.6	27.8	6.2	0.0	1.7	4.6
services	18.5	6.3	0.0	1.9	2.1	10.0	5.1	0.0	1.5	1.6
other	1.2	0.8	0.0	0.9	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.2	0.3
Destination agriculture production	(63)*	(233)*	(121)	(271)	(292)	(40)*	(406)*	(187)	(402)	(422)
mostly market	87.3	45.9	0.0	85.2	89.3	30.0	7.1	0.0	19.7	25.2
mostly self-consumption	12.7	54.1	100.0	14.8	10.7	70.0	92.9	100.0	80.3	74.8
Employment status	(81)*	(255)*	(121)	(320)	(337)	(90)*	(498)*	(325)	(528)	(499)
employer + employee	17.3	5.1	0.0	20.0	23.4	10.0	4.4	0.0	15.0	16.3
own-account + unpaid family	82.7	94.9	100.0	80.0	76.6	90.0	95.6	100.0	85.0	83.7
Place of work	(81)*	(255)*	(121)	(321)*	(338)	(90)*	(498)*	(325)	(528)	(499)
establishment	17.3	6.7	0.0	36.8	28.7	2.2	2.6	0.0	13.6	15.8
employer's home	9.9	3.1	0.0	0.9	2.4	7.8	2.9	0.0	3.0	2.6
street, route	1.2	1.2	0.0	4.0	5.3	13.3	3.6	0.0	6.6	4.4
own home	71.6	89.0	100.0	58.3	63.6	76.6	91.0	100.0	76.7	77.2
Time worked	(78)*	(251)*	(121)	(319)*	(338)	(88)*	(497)	(325)	(527)*	(494)
1-19 hours	6.4	34.7	59.5	1.3	6.2	10.2	19.1	21.5	1.9	6.5
20-34 hours	10.3	31.9	32.2	10.7	17.2	13.6	32.0	32.6	23.1	26.1
35 hours and over	83.3	33.4	8.3	88.1	76.6	76.1	48.9	45.8	75.0	67.4

NOTE: asterisks denote differences betr survey rates that are significant at the .05 level.

As regards females, in the Argentinian locality CENEP counts a working population much larger than the CENSAL survey. Both are similar in age-structure but differ in most other aspects. The CENEP is more liable than the CENSAL survey to elicit females who are wives of the household's head, the overwhelming majority being active in agriculture, producing mostly for own-consumption as unpaid family aids or on own-account basis at home, half-time or less. In Paraguay the situation is grossly similar.

TABLE 3

Self-consumption producers rescued by Q13 according to their initially declared inactivity status, by sex and locality. Percentages.

Inactivity status	LEANDRO N.ALEM		PIRIBEBUY	
	Females (121)	Males (20)	Females (325)	Males (30)
Housewife	93.4	0.0	90.2	6.7
Student	2.5	15.0	9.8	86.7
Retired, pensioned	3.3	50.0	0.0	6.7
Sick, invalid	0.8	20.0	0.0	0.0
Unknown + other	0.0	15.0	0.0	0.0

The differences between the CENEP and the CENSAL portraits of the female labour force, in both localities, are partly due to the workers captured by the self-consumption module (Q13) and partly to those elicited by the remaining questions (7 to 9). Q13 contributes to capturing self-consumption producers who otherwise overwhelmingly declare to be housewives, and much less frequently students when initially responding to the interviewer (see Table 3). The other questions --actually Q7 (see Table 4)-- make a greater contribution to eliciting workers who are more visible either because more among them work outside the agricultural sector or, if inside it, somewhat more frequently selling their production in the market, on a salaried basis, full-time, outside their homes.

3.3 Reasons for the greater recording of female workers by CENEP

The CENEP differs from the CENSAL procedure in two aspects: the questionnaire and the training of interviewers. We will show below that CENEP's greater sensitivity is primarily due to the questionnaire, secondarily to the interviewers' training.

When examining the capacity of CENEP's questions to record the labour force we focus on the employed population since unemployment is virtually non-existent in both localities, as it is in every society based on subsistence economy. Data varies

not have been made explicit to women that self-consumption production is considered work, as Q13 did, the measurement of its labour force participation would have been quite inadequate.

If the female workers elicited by Q13 are excluded, the activity rates significantly decrease from 80.5 to 42.3 per cent in the Argentinian locality and from 87.6 to 30.2 per cent in the Paraguayan one, thus cutting down the differences with respect to the CENSAL rates (see Table 5).

With the available information it is impossible to assert how much of CENEP enumeration is due to the questionnaire and how much to the training, among other reasons because a better questionnaire leads to a better application. There is some evidence, however, that both had effects but that those of the questionnaire were greater.[6] One piece of evidence is that the differences between the CENSAL and the CENEP rates excluding workers enumerated by Q13 is substantially smaller than those with respect to the total CENEP rates, i.e., including workers enumerated by Q13 (see Table 5). This is true for females and males, though the size of the differences among the former are huge. Since both CENEP rates were obtained by identically trained interviewers, it can be hypothesized that the effect of the latter is less than the effect of the questionnaire.

TABLE 5

Activity rates based on the CENSAL survey and the CENEP survey (total and minus Q13), by sex and locality.

Activity rates		LEANDRO N.ALEM		PIRIBEBUY	
		Females	Males	Females	Males
CENEP	(1)	80.5	95.2	87.6	92.8
CENEP minus Q13	(2)	42.3	89.9	30.2	86.9
CENSAL	(3)	26.6	91.0	13.7	83.6

NOTE: The differences between rates 1 and 2, and 2 and 3 are significant at the 0.5 level for females but not males, in both localities.

The greater enumerating capacity of CENEP questionnaire can be attributed to different reasons. Firstly, by displaying the response alternatives of the CENSAL item in a set of questions to

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7. As mentioned in footnote 4, the research included three other surveys. Two were meant to test the relative effect of each factor while keeping the other constant. Much too late we realized that the personality of the interviewers was an explanatory variable confounded with the type of training. The relatively low number of interviewers that participated in each survey did not allow to randomize this variable, therefore we fail to assess the said separate effects.

significantly by sex (see Table 4). In both areas, around 90 per cent of the employed male labour force counted by CENEP is elicited by Q7 (`During last week, did you do any work´?), and no more than 6 per cent by Q8 and Q13. Q8 re-iterated Q7 conveying the meaning of work through concrete activities chosen among those less visible as economic. Q13 --the self- consumption module-- made explicit, again with concrete examples, that certain activities whose products do not go to the market but are consumed in the household are to be considered work also.

These results make it plain that one single item phrased as Q7 is adequate enough to register most of the male labour force in either locality. Indeed, if the workers counted by Q13 are excluded, the male activity rates decrease not significantly.

Among females, however, Q7 proves quite inadequate. It elicits only one-third and one-half of the employed labour force in the Paraguayan and the Argentinian locality respectively (see Table 4). Practically all of the remaining employed females are brought in by Q13. The lack of recording capacity of Q8 was totally unexpected; we had anticipated a much higher capacity for it and a much lower for Q7. [5] The overwhelming capacity of Q13 went much beyond our expectations instead.

TABLE 4

Economically active population recorded by each of CENEP´s questions, by sex and locality. Percentages.

Questions	LEANDRO N.ALEM		PIRIBEBUY	
	Females (256)	Males (340)	Females (502)	Males (500)
Employed	99.6	100.0	99.2	99.8
Q 7	50.6	91.4	32.8	93.6
Q 8	0.8	0.3	2.0	0.4
Q 9	1.2	2.4	0.0	0.0
Q 13	47.4	5.9	65.2	6.0
Unemployed Q10 + Q11)	0.4	0.0	0.8	0.2

NOTE: all differences between the female and male activity figures are significant at the .05 level, in both localities.

These results show plainly that, contrary to males, one single item such as Q7 is not adequate to register most of the female agricultural labour. In both localities studied, had it

[5]. Contrarily to these results, in the surveys conducted in the two urban areas and in those using a one-year reference period (in the urban and the rural areas, see footnote 4), Q8 recorded a seizable proportion of female (but not male) workers.

be read (and answered) one by one, interviewers and interviewees are compelled to read them one at a time before proceeding to the next. In the CENSAL survey, instead, many interviewers read the response alternatives in one go (as many data collectors in population censuses do, in spite of being instructed to do otherwise). In doing so, interviewers learn about all the alternatives and are directed towards choosing answering either to have worked, or to have looked for a job, or to have been engaged in household chores, etcetera. In this situation, it is not surprising that many women engaged in some kind of economic activity, in addition to domestic chores, declare themselves housewives because they consider this role to be the main one in terms of social acceptability or because of the time devoted to it. The same happens with retired people or with students.

Secondly, the inclusion of one question especially addressed to convey to the (female) interviewees that certain activities whose products do not go to the market but are consumed within the household are also to be considered work captures a substantial portion of the female labour force otherwise self-identified as housewives (around 90 per cent) or eventually as students (see Table 3).

Thirdly, the CENEP phrasing `did you work at anything´ (Q7) is less biased towards formal employment than it is the CENSAL phrasing `did you work´.

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Up to the censuses of the 80´s, international standards neither included nor excluded self-consumption production from the definition of economic activity. National censal practices, however, did capture it when performed by men, not by women. The new ILO´s recommendation favouring its inclusion will redress this state of affairs if procedures that adequately translate them are produced. We faced this challenge designing a procedure able to be applied `in spirit´, if not in full details, to measuring the activity status in future population censuses. Its ultimate aim is to grant female workers (especially but not exclusively self- consumption producers) the same chances of being counted in labour statistics as men have.

CENEP procedure counts a greater number of female (but not male) workers than a standard censal procedure in two small land-holding rural areas in Argentina and Paraguay. As a result, the absolute majority of women (as well as of men) are shown to contribute to economic production. The low additional recording of male workers indicates that they perceive themselves and are perceived as workers --either when producing for the market or for own consumption. It also indicates that standard population censuses are sufficiently adequate to count them. The high additional recording of females, instead, shows that many of them,

perceive themselves and are perceived exclusively as housewives, thus violating the priority rule assumed to govern censuses, and that these are quite inadequate to register them.

The assessment of the reasons for the higher sensitivity of CENEP procedure leads to conclude that population censuses have to replace the one apparently single question used to investigate the activity status for a set of questions to be answered one at a time by yes or no. At least one of them should transmit to the interviewees the meaning of work. Especial care must be taken to insure that it also includes the production for own-consumption.

The women incorporated in the accounting by CENEP are many: about two-thirds and five-sixths of the female labour force recorded by the CENSAL survey in the Argentinian and Paraguayan locality, respectively. Only six per cent of male workers are in the same situation, in both localities.

The few male producers for own-consumption invisible in the censal statistics are young students and old retired or sick persons who devote little time to their activity. The many female in the similar situation belong to the central-age groups of active life. They declare themselves housewives. Many work part-time or less. Whether people who work for a short time should be counted equally as people who work part-time or full-time is another issue which, however, cannot be tackled if no reliable enumeration of everyone contributing to production exists, and the time they devote to it.

Neither the CENEP nor the CENSAL survey set a minimum working time to define persons as economically active. It is not to be attributed to a temporal requirement, therefore, the priority that many working females assign to domestic chores when informing about their activity status. Other reasons related to the socially shared ideas about the sexual division of labour seem responsible for the non-perception of interviewees and of (male and female) interviewers of their activity status.

The pertinence of the new recommendations for the censuses of the 90´s and the urgency for re-designing the instruments to put them in practice are highlighted by the empirical evidence supplied here. If not faced, the future censuses will keep on offering a quite distorted portrait of women´s contribution to the economy and to the society at large. Each country has to decide whether investing in these changes is worthwhile, but with awareness of the omission they are ready to accept.

The size of the distorsion has been made evident here. The producers of information used by policy makers, researchers and planners have the chance of diminishing it.They are also the ones to face the non-negligible problem of keeping the comparability of the statistical series since any change that improves the enumeration of some segments of the labour force at the same time endangers the interpretations of the social changes.

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RESUME

Il a été réconu généralement que les recensements dans la pluspart des pays en développement compte les travailleuses an dessous de la réalité et ceci surtout dans le secteurs informel et agricole. Entre les raisons principaux nous constatons: la définition conceptuelle de la condition de l´activité proposées à travers des récommendations internationales et, en plus, les définitions opérationelles employées par la plupart des pays (les deux étant élaboré suivant le comportement des travailleurs masculins au sein dés économies developpées); ainsi que les normes culturelles concernant la division du travail par sexes partagée parmi les dessinateurs du recensements et les sujets interrogés.

Ce papier expose quelq´uns des résultats d´une recherche conçue pour: 1) détérminer le degré de <<compte en moins>> dans les recensements standard en ce qui concerne les travailleuses, en particulier dans l´agriculture qui produit pour sa prôpre consommation et 2) détérminer l´éffectivité d´une procedure alternative en vue d´améliorer la précision de compte.

Deux enquêtes méthodologiques ont été réalisées parmis des échantillones représentatives de la population dans deux régions rurales en Argentine et Paraguay. Une d´elles a été basée sur la procédure standard de recensement tandis que l´autre a été une alternative. On été touché quelques 2.700 individues potentiellement actives. Les deux enquêtes ont mis à l´oeuvre de très près la definition pour la force de travail récommendée par la 13ème. Conference de l´OIT.

La procédure alternative a donnée comme résultat pour les femmes un nombre deux tiers plus haute que la méthode standard pour l´Argentine et cinq sixièmes plus haute pour le Paraguay. La différence pour les hommes n´était qu´à peine un six pour cent en plus pour les deux régions. Cette petite différence apporte l´évidence que les males se définent a soi-mêmes (et sont définis par les enquêteurs) comme travailleurs, soit qu´ils produisent pour la vente ou pour leur subsistance. La grande différence trouvée pour les femmes montre à son tour que celles-ci se définent (et sont définies par les enquêteurs) comme femmes de ménage, toute en violant ainsi la règle de priorité d´ont l´application est récommendee pour les recensements.

Après ceci,le papier fait une description des travailleuses invisibles dans le contèxte de l´enquête conduite d´après la procédure du recensement standard et analise les raisons de la plus grande précision de compte de la procédure alternative.