

Socio-demographical description ca. 2000. Women and poverty in the Southern Common Market member countries

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Resumen

Este trabajo tiene como único objetivo describir sucintamente algunas características sociodemográficas de las poblaciones que integran los cuatro países miembros del Mercosur, con especial énfasis en la situación de pobreza de las mismas —en particular las condiciones de carencias de las mujeres de esta región—.

Palabras clave: estudios de población, mujeres, pobreza, Mercosur.

Abstract

Socio-demographical description ca. 2000. Women and poverty in the Southern Common Market member countries

This work has a single objective to briefly describe some socio-demographical characteristics of the populations which shape the four member countries of the Southern Common Market, with special emphasis in the poverty situation in them —particularly the conditions of scarcity of this region's women—.

Key words: poverty, socio-demography, Southern Common Market, women.

Presentation

Southern Common Market is composed by part States (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay)¹ and associate States (Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru). Although the chosen countries are related by means of trade links, this work has as a single objective to briefly describe some socio-demographic characteristics of the populations that integrate the four country members with special emphasis in the poverty situation —particularly the lack conditions of the women in this region.

¹ Venezuela was firstly incorporated as associate country and recently, in 2006, became member country.

At first, we perform a conceptual approach to the subject of poverty and to certain topics linked to it; secondly, we open the analysis of some chosen indicators so as to identify similarities and differences useful to describe the population's heterogeneity intended to interact in said environment. Later, we analyze the poverty situation of women in the region, treatment that gives way to the final comments.

Some conceptual precisions

Accepting the premise that 'it is impossible to measure what is not conceptualized', we present below the definition of 'poverty' and certain terms linked to it.

In the discourse of poverty studies it is frequent to find expressions that try to explain or give an account of the phenomenon in analysis. There is some talk on 'marginalization', 'inequality', 'vulnerability', 'exclusion' and on occasions, 'de-affiliation'. These terms are not interchangeable and have a particular look on the phenomenon of poverty, at the same time they set different paths at the moment of announcing programs and actions to modify the diagnosed situation, at least, foreseen as possible.

Let us anchor the enounced terms. There is consensus that poverty is the privation of essential actives and opportunities all human beings have the right to (Arriagada, 2003: 1). In its widest adaptation, which tries to include the dimensions both material and non material, it is defined by the absence of income or low income; the lack of access to goods and services provided by the State, such as social security and health, among other; absence of household property and other kind of patrimony; null or low educational levels and training; lack of free time for educational, leisure and relaxing activities, and that is expressed in lack of autonomy and absent or limited familial and social networks (Arriagada, 2003: 2-3).

The term 'marginality' is bound to the process of urbanization; it is used to call the sectors of rural population and minor cities which migrated to larger cities, this is, more urbanized, with greater availability of employment in the industrial sector and with an widespread availability of services (health, education, housing, transport, etc). the antithetic pair is constituted by the countryside and the city; the margin is assimilated into the rural environment and downtown into the city.

Conversely, when 'social inequality' is referred to, special attention is paid to the resources' supply (economic, social, cultural and political) of the different

social strata. The antinomy poverty / wealthy is reflected, on the one side, in the process which leads to poverty; and on the other, to wealth concentration.

The concept of vulnerability points toward insecurity and the risks people face before crisis' situations and incapacity or difficulty to respond. This term refers to the processes that can lead people, families or communities to fall into poverty, both in their external-objective aspects (conjunctural economic crises which worsen the scarcity in employment conditions) and the internal-subjective ones (situations of lack of protection, psychological or physical damage). Vulnerability can also be understood as a relation between the capacities of people, families or communities and the structure of opportunities—in the market, in society in the State—. From the possible combinations between these factors result the different degrees and sorts of vulnerability.

Another conceptual paradigm linked to poverty studies is that of 'social exclusion'.² It appeared in the European discussion and with broad diffusion in the Latin American agenda—given the situations of poverty and exclusion created by the economic accumulation model—the expression refers to the lack of social bonds that link the individual with family, community, society and civil rights. It is a relational concept which combines mechanisms and sorts of exclusion that can be present at different levels such as the institutional, social cultural and territorial.

As an alternative response to the concept of exclusion, the term 'de-affiliation' appears, which remarks the dynamic character of the privation states, this is to say, privileging the optics of process. It is considered that de-affiliation must not be treated as an individual process but as a social phenomenon derived from the principles of the ruling development model.

Finally, in the toil of pondering the occurrences which spur the populations of the region, the perspective of gender contributes with elements to the analysis which empower the program and policies desired to be implement against poverty.

Analytically, for a complete diagnosis on the poverty situation, it is necessary to distinguish certain basic dimensions of it:

1. Sectorial dimension: education, employment, health, income and labor insertion, housing.

² Hand in hand with exclusion we reach the word 'discrimination'. Social behavior based in making people's certain external characteristics essential so as to link them to socially constructed characteristics in order to negatively segregate the groups identified as such. This can be the case of discrimination because of gender, ethnic, marital status, etc.

2. Ascribed factors: gender, ethnic group, which cross sectorial dimensions, as well as age and people's vital cycle.

3. Territorial dimensions: since in order to contribute to alleviate poverty it is indispensable to work from initiatives and potentialities existing in the communities (social capital) and in the place of residence.

Hence, this work only sketches a concise panorama of poverty, emphasizing some elements ascribed to women's situation in the four countries chosen for this analysis.

Brief demographic review of Mercosur's country members

The total population is approximately 216 558 000; 79 percent of this population abides in Brazil, 17 percent in Argentina, 2.5 in Paraguay and 1.5 percent in Uruguay. The highest femininity index is to be found in Uruguay and the lowest in Paraguay (table 1); the regional index is 102.6 women per hundred men. These indexes are associated with the structure by gender and age of the populations, where the Uruguayan's population structure is the most aged, and that of Paraguay the youngest. Argentina and Brazil have an intermediate position; however, the former shows a greater narrowing in the base and a superior broadening at the top.

These changes are explained, partly, because of the descent of fertility both in women and men.³ Nevertheless, there is only information of feminine fertility, which limits the analysis, showing one of the problem's faces, which could lead to underestimate a country's fertility level.⁴

As it is observed in figure 3, at the beginning of the period Brazil and Paraguay had very close fertility rates—close to six or seven children per women—. In the 1960-19650 quinquennium Brazil witness a descent in fertility due to a severe policy oriented to its descent to overcome, even, Argentina in the 1990-1995

³ The other factors that interfere and have a preponderant role are mortality—which, generally speaking, descends before fertility does—and migrations. The momentum and generation have important roles as well.

⁴ What is the average number of children a man would have out of a hypothetical group of men who along their fertile life had their children according to the fertility rates by age of the period of study and were not at risks of mortality from their birth to their death? Logic indicates that if this indicator was to be calculated it would be superior to that of women as men exposition time to have a child is superior to that of women since men's fertile period is longer as well as their propensity to form second unions.

TABLE 1
TOTAL POPULATION BY GENDER. MERCOSUR PART STATES,
2000 (IN THOUSAND)

Country	Women	Men	Total	Population (%)	Femininity index
Argentina	18 869	18 163	37 032	17.1	103.9
Brazil	86 346	84 347	170 693	78.8	102.4
Paraguay	2 724	2 772	5 496	2.5	98.3
Uruguay	1 718	1 619	3 337	1.5	106.1
Mercosur	109 657	106 901	216 558	100.0	102.6

Source: Celade, *Boletín Demográfico* num. 62.

period, and reach almost identical among Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay by the end of the period (2.2 children per women). The projections of feminine fertility predict for Paraguay a global fertility rate, for the quinquennium 2005-2010, of 3.5 children per women,⁵ being the highest for the countries in the analysis.

It is worth mentioning that Paraguay is the country with the highest percentage of rural population in the region (44 percent), followed by Brazil (20 percent), Argentina (10 percent) and finally Uruguay (7 percent).

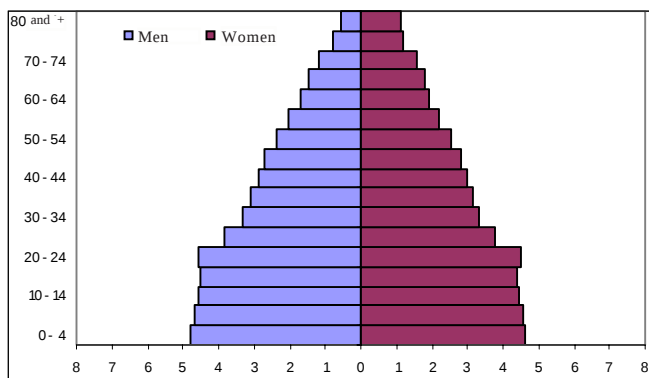
These disparities observed at the demographic level could indicate others larger in the economic one. They are contrasts that directly mention one of the problems that affect the full application of the Platform of Action in relation to the topic of gender and poverty in the framework of a growing worldwide expansion of economy: the non-structured an rural-zone economies (ECLAC, 2001: 5).

Separately, among the indicators chosen to characterize these populations the following are mentioned: percentage of population older than 60 years of age, life expectancy at birth (years), the rate of global illiteracy, the rate of school attendance of urban population between the ages of 13 and 19, the percentage of heads of family in the total urban households, poverty incidence according to the head of family gender, the rate of urban unemployment, the total of urban employed people and the urban employed people in low productivity sectors.

⁵ It is pertinent to point out this measure varies according to urban-rural zone and according to the education level reached by women.

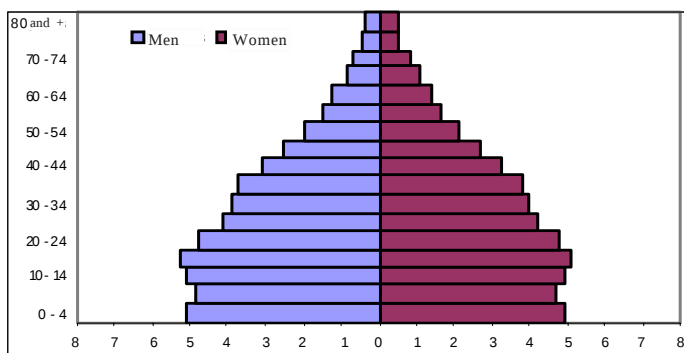
GRAPH 1
POPULATION ACCORDING TO QUINQUENNIAL AGE GROUPS BY GENDER.
MERCOSUR PART STATES, YEAR 2000

Argentina



Source: Table 1, annex.

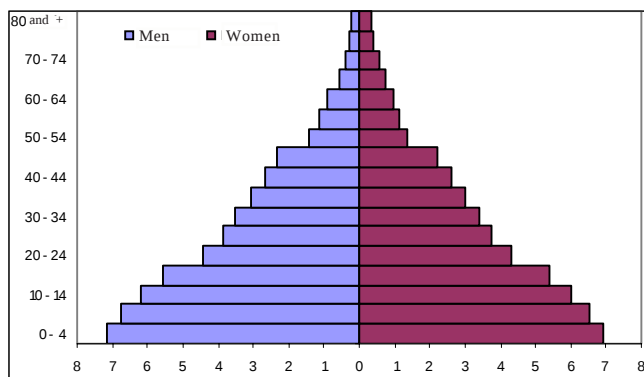
Brazil



Source: Table 1, annex.

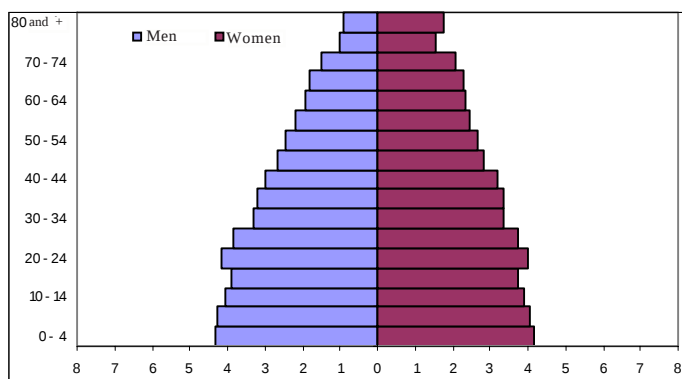
GRAPH1
POPULATION ACCORDING TO QUINQUENNIAL AGE GROUPS BY GENDER.
MERCOSUR PART STATES, YEAR 2000 (CONTINUATION)

Paraguay



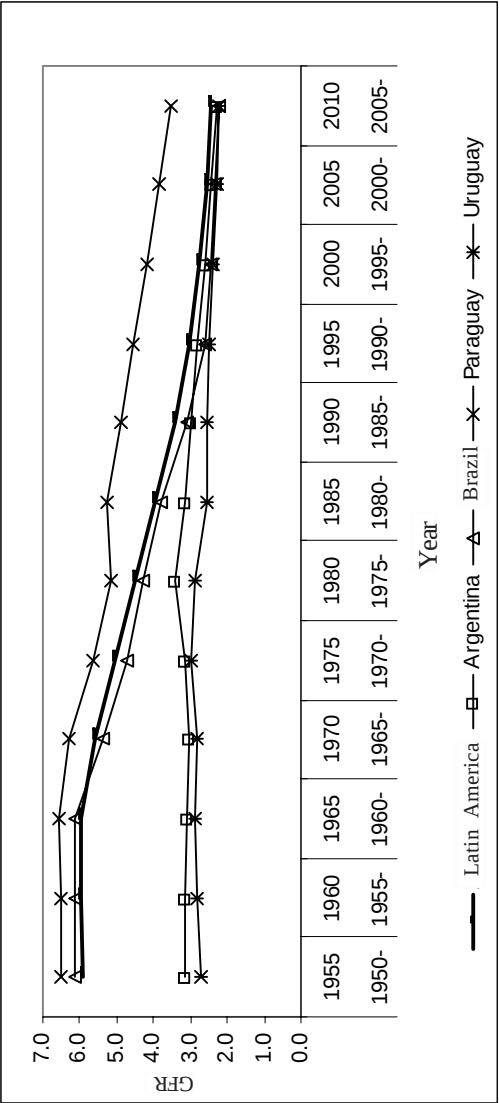
Source: Table 1, annex.

Uruguay



Source: Table 1, annex.

GRAPH 2
GLOBAL FERTILITY RATES. LATIN AMERICA AND MERCOSUR COUNTRY MEMBERS,
PERIOD 1950-2010



Source: Cepal, Unidad Mujer y Desarrollo.

TABLE 2
WOMEN AND MEN BY RESIDENCE AREA. MERCOSUR PART STATES
2000

Country	Population distribution		Femininity index	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Argentina	89.6	10.4	106.0	87.1
Brazil	80.4	19.6	105.9	89.6
Paraguay	56.1	43.9	106.5	88.7
Uruguay	93.0	7.0	109.3	73.7

Source: Cepal, Latin American and Caribbean Center of Demography.

The two first indicators favor—in all of the considered countries—women, who have greater life expectancy than men—hence, there are larger percentages of women older than 60 years of age—. Nevertheless, it is necessary to wonder about the conditions of life they will have to face in the current retirement and pension regimes in their countries of residence. This added to the fact that nowadays around 60 percent of the women who live in urban zones are in working ages are not employed nor receive assignments because of their domestic chores at their own households.

As for the formal education level, Brazil is the country that has the worst illiteracy conditions, even though there are no differences between women and men. Paraguay is next, the situation there is detrimental for women, who have two more percentage points of illiteracy than men.

Despite the setback experienced by Argentina—stressed in the last decade—this country has the highest levels of school attendance among women aged between 13 and 19. In the case of men, Uruguay shows huge inconveniences in school attendance of those between 13 and 19 years of age.

The highest urban unemployment rate is observed in Argentina (14 percent), where it is higher among women, factor which must be added to the low productivity of urban employments, sector which has 42 percent of the urban employed women and 58 percent of the urban employed men. Neither is the situation easy in Brazil (11 percent) and Uruguay (11 percent). Paraguay shows an inferior rate because of the high rural population percentage, which contributes to decelerate this indicator's growth.

Women and men's economic participation rates (graph 4) show for the former a slight increase and for the former a decrease. Rates corresponding to men are close to each other in the different countries, whereas in those of women there is a greater feminine participation in the Uruguay's labor market. Brazil and Paraguay show similar behaviors. Argentina is the country with the lowest feminine participation, contrasting with its educational levels. This enables us to affirm that feminine capital, besides being under-utilized, is the object of multiple discriminations, as a study carried out by ECLAC for Latin America states so.

Summarizing, in spite of the advancement in women's educational levels, it is pertinent to underscore that these have not been always accompanied by equality conditions in employment and income for the same years invested in education as in men's case. It is possible to affirm that there are still socio-cultural factors that influence the relations between genders and perpetuate discriminatory elements that prevent women from applying all their acquired knowledge.

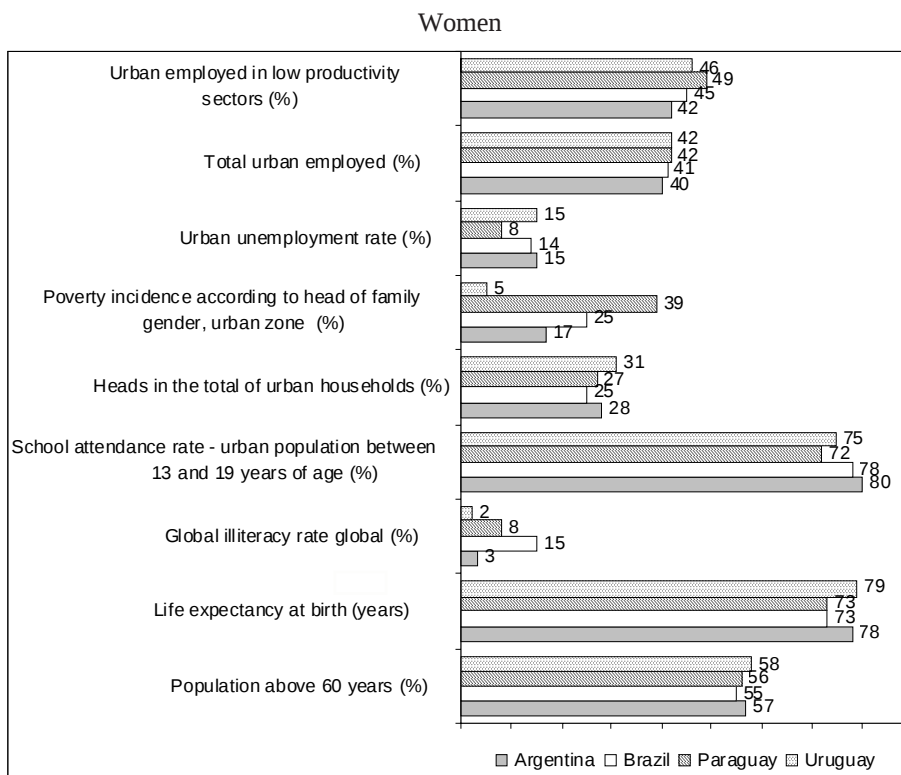
At the time it becomes necessary to develop programs that orient and coordinate actions destined to integrate the educational, production and social prevision systems. In the systems of production and social prevision women's necessities have remained unattended for long. This is one of the factors which surely influence on the low feminine participation in Argentinean labor market—besides the conjuncture properly so—.

In respect to the gender of the main person in the household, Uruguay is the country with greatest percentages of women in such situation, followed by Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil (graphs 3 and 5). Nonetheless the percentage of men in the aforementioned category is always superior, given the structure by these populations' marital status.

As for the incidence of urban poverty according to the gender of the head of family, Paraguay is the most delayed country, flowed by Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay (graphs 3 and 5).

When performing the dispersion diagram, applying the method of linear regression and estimating the r^2 coefficient (graph 5), it can be seen there is a low positive relation (Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay) and moderate (Uruguay) between men and women, if one considers the percentage of older-than-60 population, life expectancy at birth (years), the global illiteracy rate, the rate of urban school attendance of population aged between 13 and 19, the percentage of family heads in the total of urban households, the incidence of poverty according to head of family gender, the urban unemployment rate, the total employed people and the urban employed people in low productivity sectors.

GRAPH3
SELECTED INDICATORS FORMERCOSUR COUNTRY MEMBERS,
YEARS CA.2000

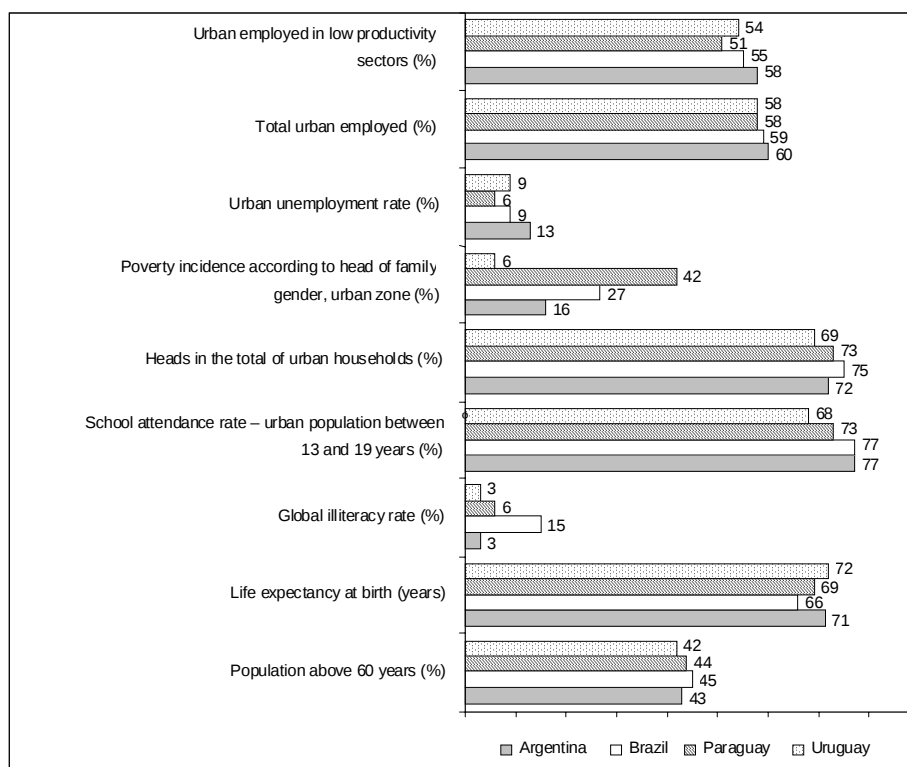


P.T.O.

The value that is farther from the regression line is the percentage of family heads in the total of urban households due to the wide breach between women and men, given the interference of marital status. Nevertheless, the linear equation allowed obtaining the parameters corresponding to each one of the countries and shows the better Uruguay's situation in respect to the rest of the Southern Common Market's countries.

GRAPH3
SELECTED INDICATORS FOR MERCOSUR COUNTRY MEMBERS,
YEARS CA. 2000
(CONTINUATION)

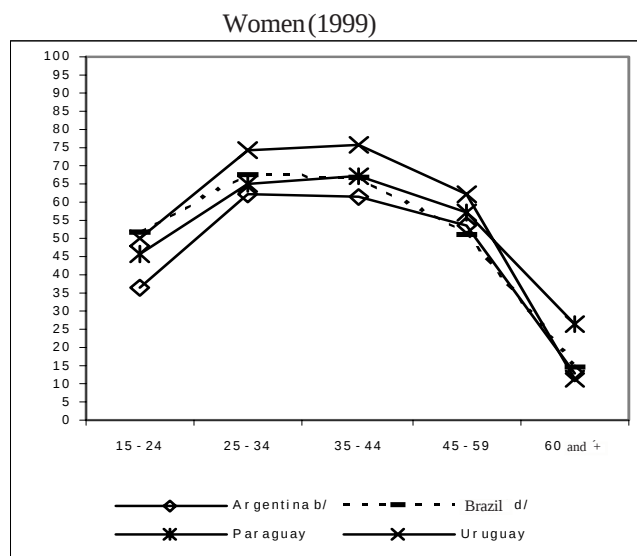
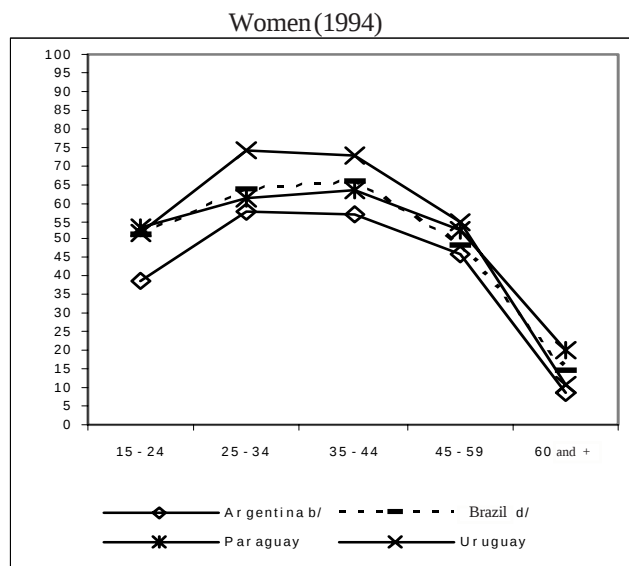
Men



NB: population above 60 years, life expectancy and global illiteracy rate (2000); urban population school attendance rate between 13 and 19 years of age, heads of family in the total of urban households, poverty incidence according to gender of the head of family, urban unemployment rate and total employed population (1999); urban employed in low productivity sectors: Argentina (1998), Brazil (1997), Paraguay and Uruguay (1999).

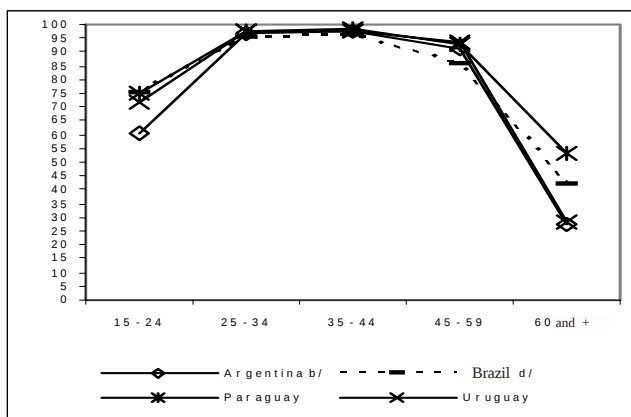
Source: Cepal, Unidad Mujer y Desarrollo.

GRAPH4
ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION RATE OF WOMEN AND MEN BY AGE GROUPS,
YEARS CA. 1994 AND 1999 (PERCENTAGES).
MERCOSUR COUNTRY MEMBERS

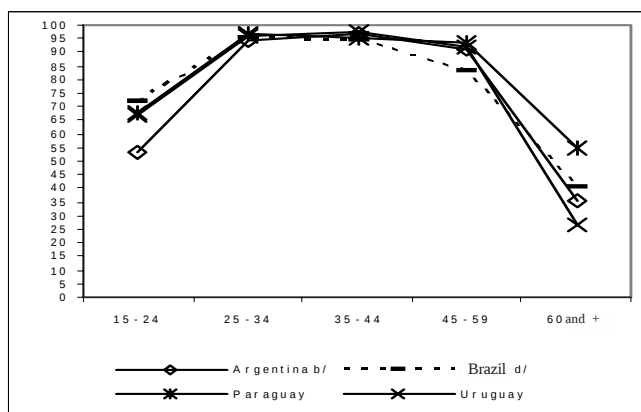


GRAPH4
ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION RATE OF WOMEN AND MEN BY AGE GROUPS,
YEARS CA. 1994 AND 1999 (PERCENTAGES).
MERCOSUR COUNTRY MEMBERS
(CONTINUATION)

Men (1994)



Men (1999)



^b period 1994: Greater Buenos Aires + 18 conglomerates.

period 1999 : Greater Buenos Aires + 26 conglomerates.

^d period 1994 : 7 Metropolitan Areas plus urban remainder.

period 1999 : 10 Metropolitan Areas plus urban remainder.

Source: Cepal, Unidad Mujer y Desarrollo, upon the base of special tabulations from the household surveys in each of the countries.

It is worthy remembering that Argentina, in the 1990-2002 period, showed a serious deterioration in its inhabitants' life conditions caused by the severe economic program the national government implemented, which only provides the conditions for the life conditions' improvement of a very narrow sector of the Argentinean society (table 3). In said period, Brazil and Uruguay decreased poverty however, there were some signs of increment in 2002. Paraguay shows stagnation both in poverty and indigence (ECLAC, 2004: 16-22).

Poverty situation in Mercosur with emphasis in aspects linked to the condition of being a woman

In this section, in consonance with the objective stated by the IV Woman's World Conference (*IV Conferencia Mundial de la Mujer*) and the Summit on Social Development (*Cumbre sobre Desarrollo Social*), we retake the need to insist on the construction of indicators, not only of diagnosis but also of tracking of the equity goals between women and men (ECLAC, 2001: 23).

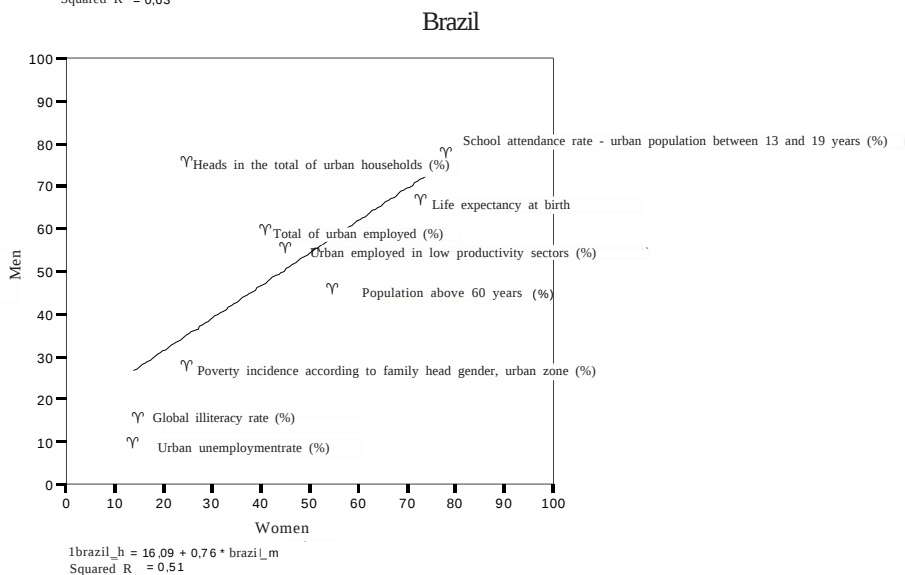
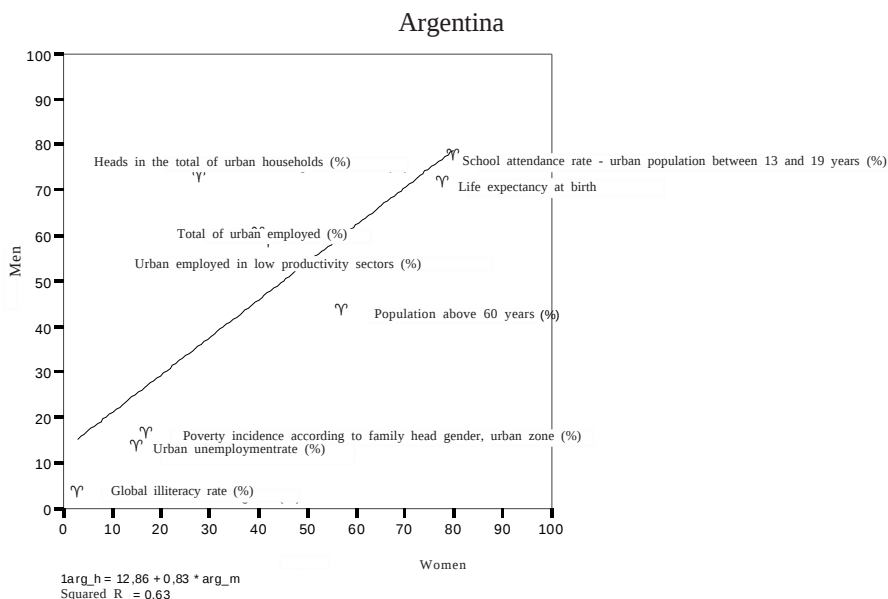
If the femininity index⁶ is calculated in poor and non-poor households — mere diagnosis indicator— superior or inferior proportions of women when the measure is above or below a hundred can be observed. In graph 6, the changes which took place in the indicator are also shown, comparing the years 1991, 1999 and 2002.

In Argentina—year 2002—the femininity index in poor households is below hundred in the age groups of 0-6 and 20-59 years of age. Data corresponding to the years 1994 and 1999 seem to indicate there was a higher proportion of women between 7 and 59 years of age in poor households which seems to disappear in 2002. This causes doubt in the information, since the urban conditions of life in Argentina have not been modified. It is presumable that girls and young women, who in 1994 and 1999 were between seven and nineteen years of age, in an eight-year gap, have not achieved to change their poor to non-poor state given the socio-economic situation this country undergoes (graph 6).

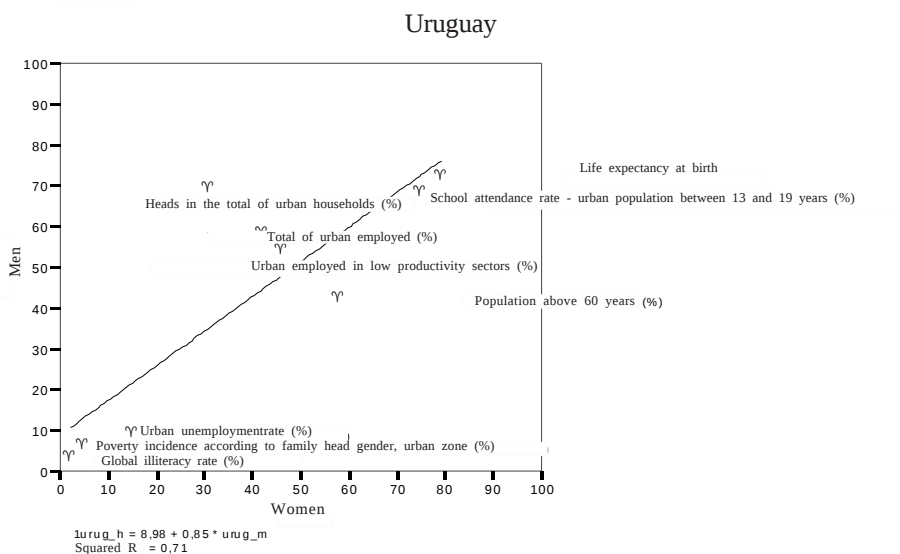
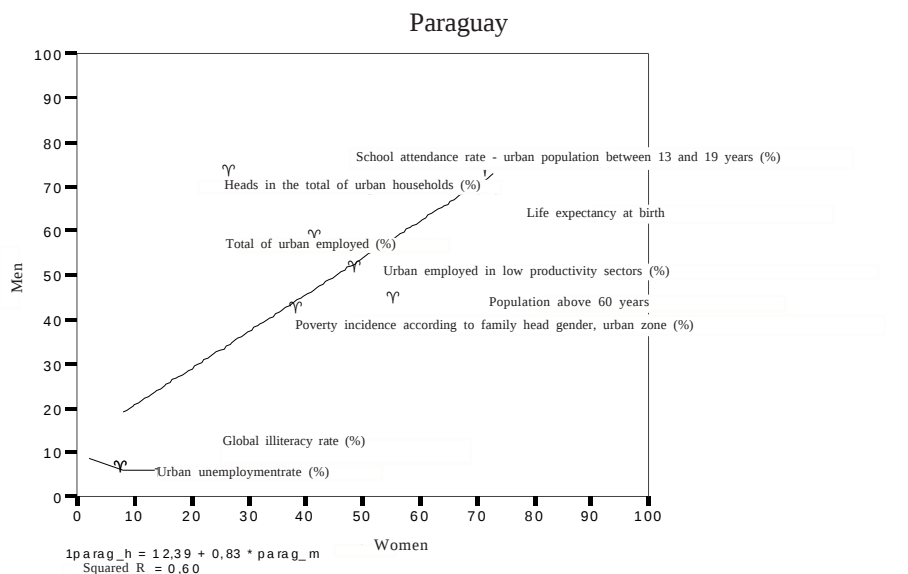
Brazil has a larger number of women in poor households than in non-poor ones. An increment in this figure in 2002 is also observed, with the exception of the age groups of 0-6 and 13-19 years of age (graph 6).

⁶ It is known that the number of women is superior to that of men because of their survival. Nonetheless, when the relation between women and men is superior to a hundred in poor households, this datum becomes a warning signal for those in charge of social policies.

GRAPH5
DIAGRAM OF DISPERSION, LINEAR REGRESSION AND R^2 COEFFICIENT
CORRESPONDING TO SELECTED INDICATORS FOR THE MERCOSUR PART
STATES, YEARS CA. 2000



GRAPH5
DIAGRAM OF DISPERSION, LINEAR REGRESSION AND R^2 COEFFICIENT
CORRESPONDING TO SELECTED INDICATORS FOR THE MERCOSUR PART
STATES, YEARS CA. 2000
(CONTINUATION)



Source: Cepal, Unidad Mujer y Desarrollo.

TABLE 3
POVERTY AND DESTITUTION MAGNITUDE
IN MERCOSUR COUNTRY MEMBERS, 1990-2002.
PERCENTAGES

Households below the poverty line ^a						
Urban zones						
Country	Year	Country total	Total	Metropolitan area	Other urban zones	Rural zones
Argentina	1990			16		
	1994		12	10	16	
	1997			13		
	1999		16	13	21	
	2002		35	32	39	
Brazil	1990	41	36			64
	1993	37	33			53
	1996	29	25			46
	1999	30	26			45
	2001	30	27			45
Paraguay	1990			37		
	1994		42	35	51	
	1996		40	34	48	
	1999	52	41	33	53	65
	2001	52	42	35	51	65
Uruguay	1990		12	7	17	
	1994		6	4	7	
	1997		6	5	6	
	1999		6	6	5	
	2002		9	9	10	

^a Includes the households below destitution line or in extreme poverty .

TABLE 3
POVERTY AND DESTITUTION MAGNITUDE
IN MERCOSUR COUNTRY MEMBERS, 1990-2002.
PERCENTAGES
(CONTINUATION)

Households below destitution line					
Urban zones					
Country	Year	County total	Total	Metropolitan area	Other Urban zones Rural zones
Argentina	1990			4	
	1994		2	2	3
	1997			3	
	1999		4	3	6
	2002		14	12	16
	1990	18	13		38
Brazil	1993	15	12		30
	1996	11	8		23
	1999	10	7		21
	2001	10	8		21
	1990			10	
	1994		15	10	21
Paraguay	1996		13	8	20
	1999	26	14	7	23 42
	2001	27	15	9	23 41
	1990		2	1	3
	1994		1	1	1
	1997		1	1	1
Uruguay	1999		1	1	1
	2002		1	1	1

Source: Cepal, Unidad Mujer y Desarrollo.

In Paraguay, the index of femininity of poor households surpasses hundred in the age group of 20-59 years of age, which at the time shows an increment between 1994 and 2002. This index in non-poor households is superior to hundred between 0-19 years of age; datum which must be researched in detail because of the asymmetry of its behavior (graph 6).

Uruguay shows a greater proportion of poor women, fundamentally between 7 and 59 years of age, with decrements in 1994 and 2002.⁷

The referred data of graph 6 show that in all of the considered part countries—with the exception of Paraguay—femininity index of poor households at the age of 60 and above is below a hundred, which indicates perhaps a greater mortality of poor women or better economic conditions in the oldest feminine generations.

At the same time, data in graph 7 could indicate that, at least in Brazil and Paraguay, the phenomenon of feminine poverty is preferably urban.

Separately, the probability that women belong to poor households⁸ between the ages of 20 and 59 shows differences according to the country, kinship relation, type of household and marital status. The highest risk take place in Argentina, between separated women, as there are 3.07 times more possibilities of living in a poor household if they are in this category; this is to say, the risk is 1.93 points superior to the average one for women in this age group.

Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay display very close probabilities between each other, yet with some differences between categories. In Uruguay, the risk of separated women is 2.94 times superior and also among widows is notorious (2.37). In Paraguay the case of widows is distinguishable (2.54) and that of the mono-parental households (2.36). In Brazil, the highest risk indicator is to be found in mono-parental households (1.64).

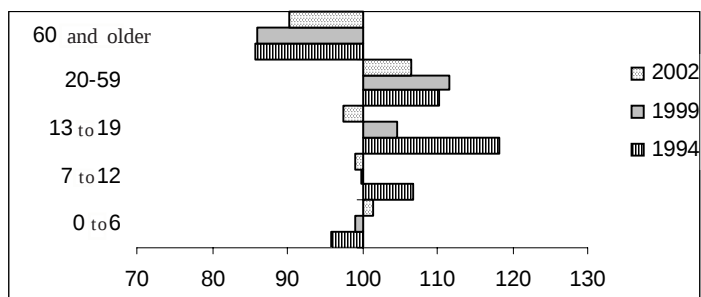
⁷ The diminution in the proportion of poor women between 1994, 1999 and 2002 observed in Argentina and Uruguay, could they be explained, partly, because of the grave situation of poverty that affects a larger number of people in these countries? Perhaps, many a men that in 1994 could have been not considered as poor, in 2002 could have changed situation. Hence, the indicator could have descended for the case of women, despite the circumstances had not changed. This indicates said measure can be useful to diagnose contexts where the poverty situation is not modified in the short term. Therefore, in the analyzed context this indicator is of little help for the diagnosis of the women's poverty situation.

⁸ The Risk Indicator (IR) of women of belonging to poor households is a relative indicator, as it considers how the situation affects more to poor households than non-poor households. If IR is one, it is supposed that men and women have the same possibility to belong to poor household. If IR is superior to one, it is interpreted as women have more possibilities than men to belong to poor households; if IR is inferior to one, men have more possibilities than women to belong to poor households. Cfr. Milosavljevic, 2004:12.

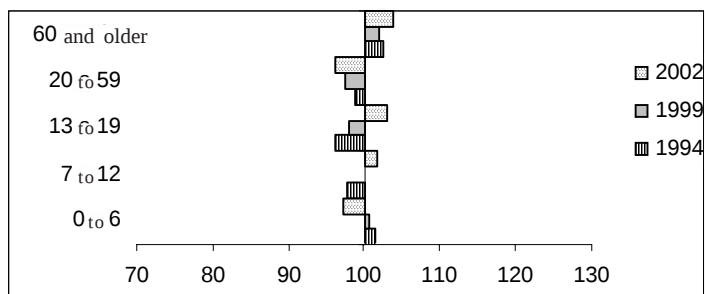
GRAPH6
FEMININITY INDEX IN POOR AND NON-POOR HOUSEHOLDS
IN URBAN ZONES ACCORDING TO AGE GROUPS.
MERCOSUR MEMBER COUNTRIES, YEARS CA. 1994, 1999 AND 2002

Argentina

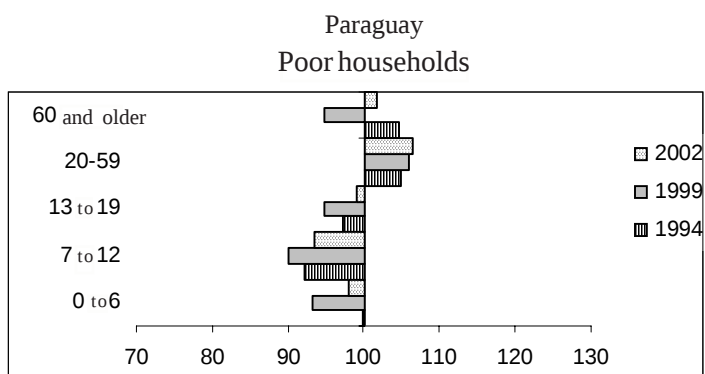
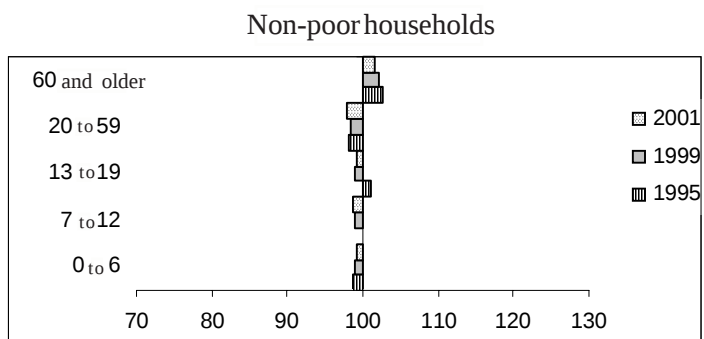
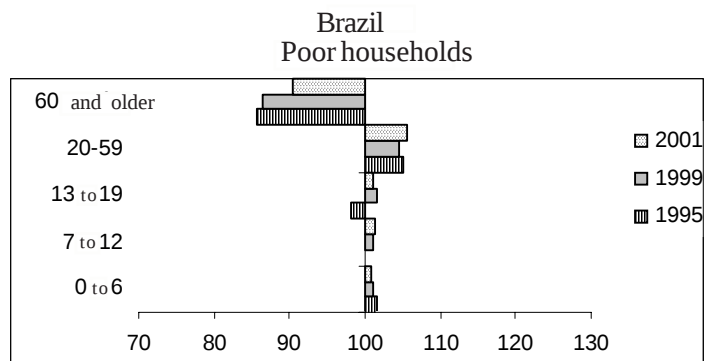
Poor households



Non-poor households

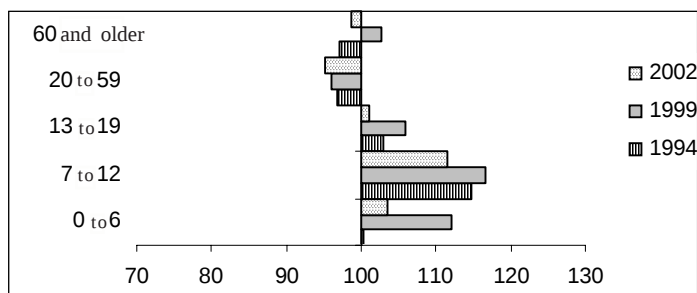


GRAPH 6
FEMININITY INDEX IN POOR AND NON-POOR HOUSEHOLDS
IN URBAN ZONES ACCORDING TO AGE GROUPS.
MERCOSUR MEMBER COUNTRIES, YEARS CA. 1994, 1999 AND 2002
(CONTINUATION)



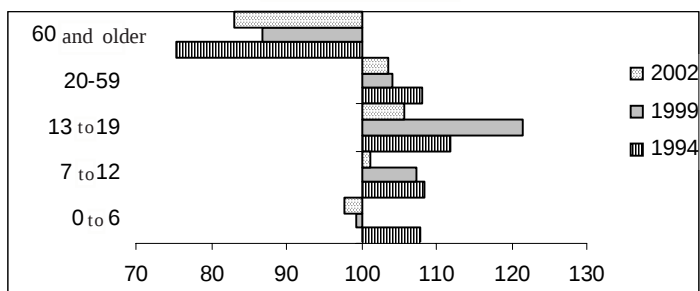
GRAPH6
FEMININITY INDEX IN POOR AND NON-POOR HOUSEHOLDS
IN URBAN ZONES ACCORDING TO AGE GROUPS.
MERCOSUR MEMBER COUNTRIES, YEARS CA. 1994, 1999 AND 2002
(CONTINUATION)

Non-poor households

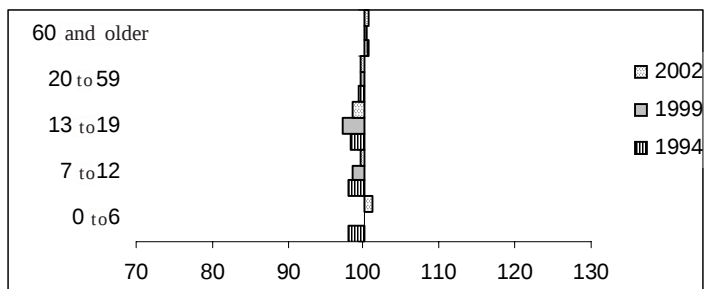


Uruguay

Poor households



Non-poor households



Source: CEPAL, Unidad Mujer y Desarrollo, based on the special tabulations from the household surveys in each country.

In relation to the women's economic participation rates, even if it has not increased in recent years, it did not reach that of men both in poor and non-poor sectors. It is noteworthy that according to this information, poor women work in a smaller proportion than their non-poor counterparts, with the exception of Uruguay's case. It is notorious the high participation rates of women who reside in rural zones in Brazil, either poor or non-poor (table 5).

When analyzing the economic participation rate of the population of 15-60 years of age by poverty condition, according to the number of underage people at the household (no children, one child, two children, three or more children), it is observed that the measure is always superior in men for they are always the ones who more often work outside the household.

Women in poverty situation always exhibit lower rates, independently from the condition of having children or not, and if they have them from their number. They are followed in growing order by non-poor women, poor men and, finally, non-poor men. This is so in all of the analyzed countries (graph 8).

In Argentina, between 1994 and 1999, there is an increment in the rate as the number of children increases among poor or non-poor men. Poor women who have the highest participation rates are those who have one child (41 percent) and those with no children (39 percent). In the case of non-poor women, those who do not have children are the ones who show the highest rates (59 percent). In general terms, the participation rate in economic activities decreases according to the condition of having children or not.

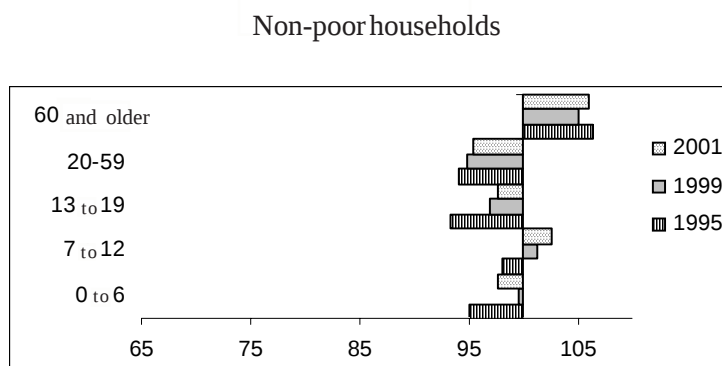
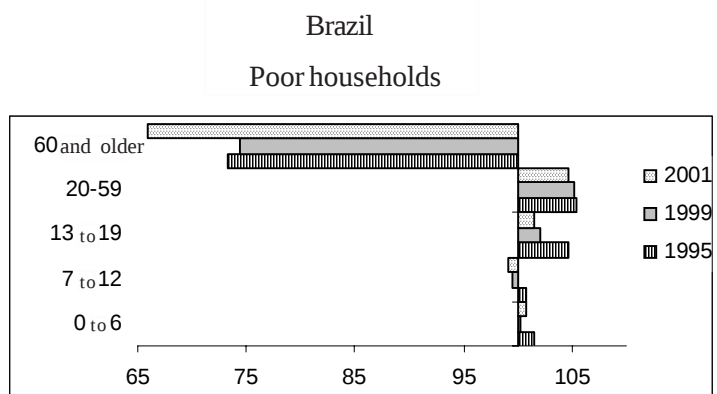
In Brazil this is not so; women have rates that slightly decrease with the number of children, mainly in the case of poor women. Women in poverty situations have a lesser participation than their non-poor counterparts. However, in the latter, when they have three or more children, the rate falls moderately.

In Paraguay, poor women have rates that slightly increase with the number of children, yet visibly below those of men. In Uruguay, women's economic participation is higher in the categories with no children, with a child or two children. When women have three or more children, economic participation decreases.

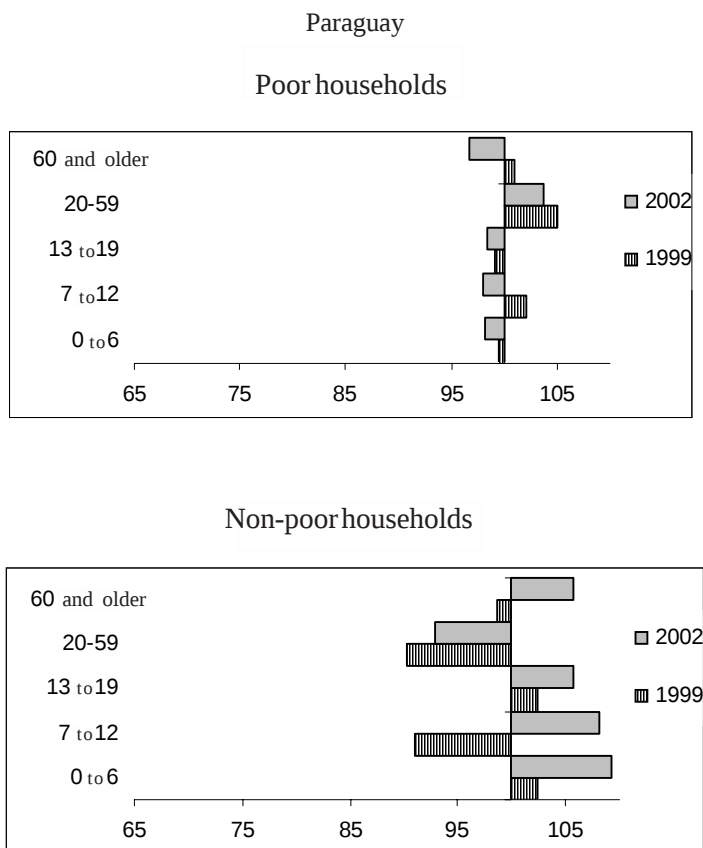
Apart from this, when performing the dispersion diagram, applying the method of linear regression and estimating the coefficient r^2 , it can be seen an almost evident moderate positive relation⁹ between the participation rate of the

⁹ If rates had not changed between 1994 and 1999, the relation between them would be perfect, i.e., $r^2=1$. Therefore, data indicate that poor women's situation is the one which changed the most between 1994 and 1999 ($r^2=0.78$).

GRAPH7
FEMININITY INDEX IN POOR AND NON-POOR HOUSEHOLD
IN RURAL ZONES IN BRAZIL AND PARAGUAY. CA. 1995, 1999 AND 2002



GRAPH 7
FEMININITY INDEX IN POOR AND NON-POOR HOUSEHOLD
IN RURAL ZONES IN BRAZIL AND PARAGUAY, CA. 1995, 1999 AND 2002



Source: CEPAL, Unidad Mujer y Desarrollo, based on the special tabulations from the household surveys in each country.

TABLE 4
RISK INDICATOR OF WOMEN BETWEEN 20 AND 59 YEARS OF BELONGING TO
POOR HOUSEHOLDS IN URBAN ZONES OF THE MERCOSUR PART STATES,
CA. 1999

		Argentina	Brazil	Paraguay	Uruguay
Age	20-59	1.14	1.07	1.06	1.04
	Head	1.36	1.21	1.01	1.08
Kinship	Spouse	0.80	1.30	1.15	0.87
	Daughter	1.11	1.04	1.05	1.06
	Other	1.35	0.92	0.80	1.00
	Unipersonal	0.58	0.85	1.36	0.18
Sort of household	Bi-parental	1.00	0.96	0.99	0.97
	Mono-parental	1.61	1.64	2.36	1.81
	Extended	1.56	1.13	1.00	1.05
Marital status	Married	0.98		1.05	0.93
	Separated	3.07		1.90	2.94
	Widow	1.32		2.54	2.37
	Single	1.31		1.01	1.25

Source: Milosavljevic, 2004: 14.

population between 15 and 60 years of age by poverty condition, according to the number of underage people in the household of poor women corresponding to the years 1994 and 1999. The relation is positive and high when considering the same measures in non-poor women and poor and non-poor men (graph 9).

The distribution of the points around the line clearly shows the lower participation rates of poor women in all of the countries in this analysis. The lowest rates are located on the left side on the distribution and correspond to Argentina. In the upper right side are the highest rates, where the position of Uruguay prevails.

The distribution corresponding to men show differences between poor and non-poor; nevertheless it also shows the evident difficulties which Argentina undergoes in employment issues.

TABLE 5
PARTICIPATION RATE IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OF MEN AND WOMEN BY POVERTY CONDITION AND ZONE,
CA. 1994, 1999 AND 2002. MERCOSUR COUNTRY MEMBERS
(PERCENTAGE FROM THE TOTAL POPULATION OLDER THAN 15 YEARS OF AGE)

Country	Year	Urban				Rural			
		Poor		Non Poor		Poor		Non Poor	
		Woman	Man	Woman	Man	Woman	Man	Woman	Man
Argentina ^b	1994	24.6	63.0	42.5	75.8				
	1999	34.1	69.7	46.2	74.4				
	2002	42.1	70.2	47.9	73.6				
	1995	46.0	82.4	53.3	81.9	64.9	93.7	62.6	89.8
	1999	47.8	81.2	54.3	79.4	62.6	92.3	63.0	88.2
Brazil ^d	2001	46.9	79.4	55.6	79.4	59.3	90.9	61.2	87.9
	1994	43.1	84.9	59.9	86.5				
	1999	42.7	81.6	61.3	84.0	35.6	88.9	52.3	87.6
Paraguay	2002	49.8	80.7	59.7	81.7	44.2	90.4	56.2	89.7
	1994	46.6	82.8	47.2	74.3				
Uruguay	1999	47.5	80.5	49.8	72.8				
	2002	50.3	82.6	50.2	70.7				

NB: ^b and ^d graphic idem.

Source: Cepal, Unidad Mujer y Desarrollo.

Finally, these differences acquire meaning when one thinks of the dissimilar activities women and men perform in rural and urban environments. Mainly when it is considered that women devote a great deal of time to domestic activities, which include cleaning, cooking, child and elderly care, shopping, etc.¹⁰ This is to say, data represented in graph 9 refer to the sheer inequalities according to gender, the very same that are stressed before poverty.

This global description of the situation of women in these countries must not obscure the interregional differentials which have not been approached. Neither have the population volumes that are fundamental when the time comes to design policies been considered.

The potentialities and needs of the population in evident poverty situation have not been considered. Firstly, as the available information has aggregated data that prevent local analysis; secondly, for direct sources are not used, i.e., the complete analysis comes from the use of methodologies which consider the poverty issue from the perspective the indirect methods provide.

Final comments

From the finished analysis comes out, as a first measure, the need to boost employment sources. If by means of feminine labor households' incomes are increased and poverty situations are avoided, it is also important to distinguish the measures that must accompany the insertion of women in labor market.

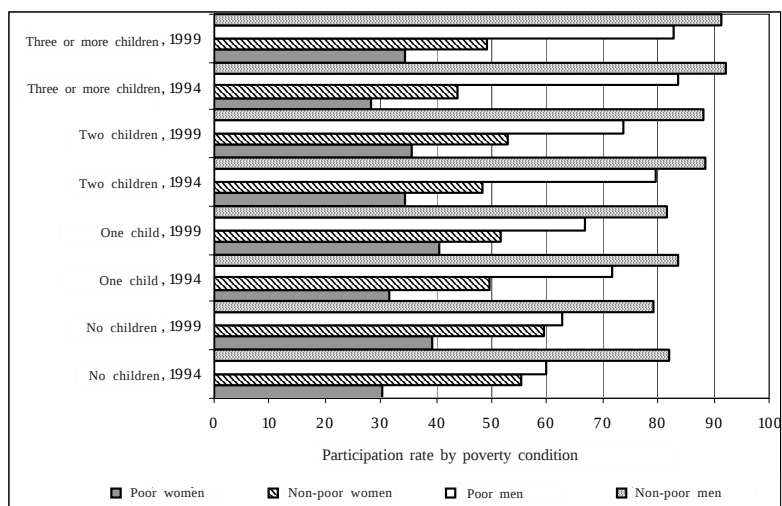
In order for said insertion would be perceived in terms of welfare there must exist, mainly in cities, State's nursery schools and elementary and secondary public schools of double schooling, with school mess halls. Hence, a women's massive incorporation to labor market would be secured. If conditions would favor employment they should also boost gender equality. Legislation in labor and family rights must provide and protect the situation of women who because of diverse circumstances (death, separation, divorce, ailment, etc) change from being economically inactive to being the heads of family—very frequently in charge of underage people—.

Moreover, when one knows the marital status is the variable which better predicts the risk women have to belong to poor households in urban zones; a topic which can be put aside when approaching poverty from the gender perspective.

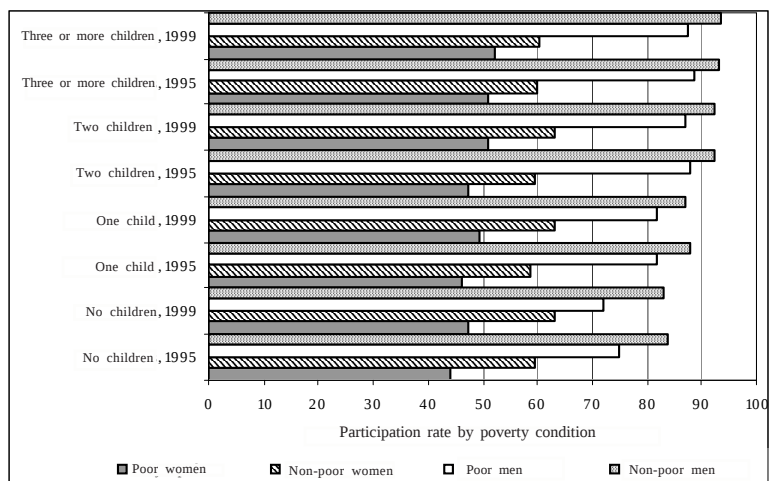
¹⁰ As there are not surveys on time use in these countries, neither is it known time women devote to unpaid activities at the household—chores the most of them perform whether they have a job or not—

GRAPH8
PARTICIPATION RATE OF THE POPULATION FROM 15 TO 60 YEARS
BY POVERTY CONDITION ACCORDING TO UNDERAGE PEOPLE AT THE
HOUSEHOLDS, MERCOSUR PART STATES

Argentina

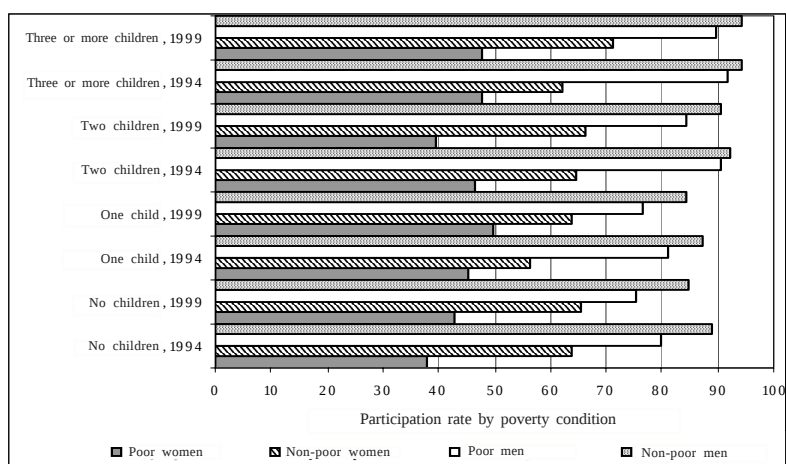


Brazil

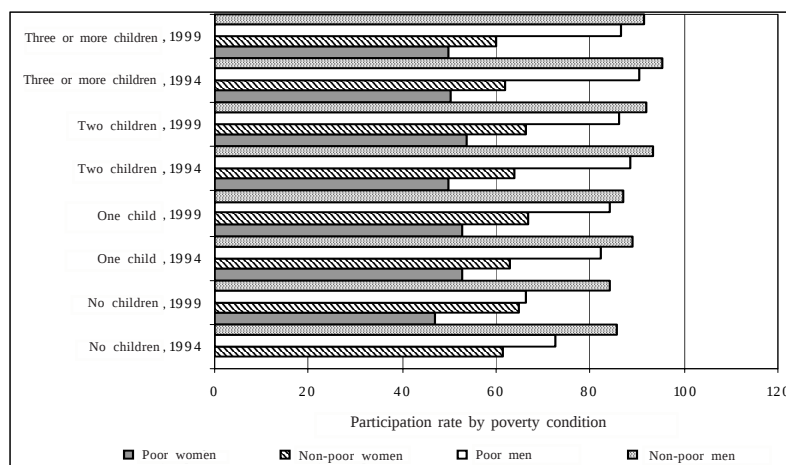


GRAPH8
PARTICIPATION RATE OF THE POPULATION FROM 15 TO 60 YEARS
BY POVERTY CONDITION ACCORDING TO UNDERAGE PEOPLE AT THE
HOUSEHOLDS, MERCOSUR PART STATES

Paraguay



Uruguay



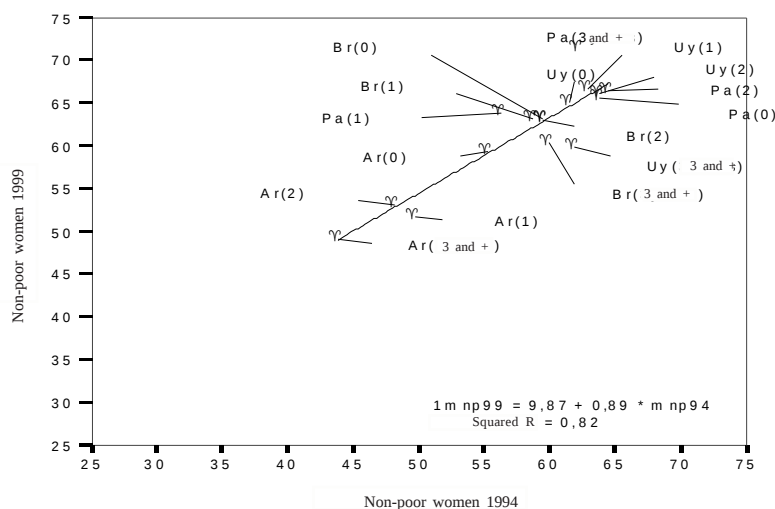
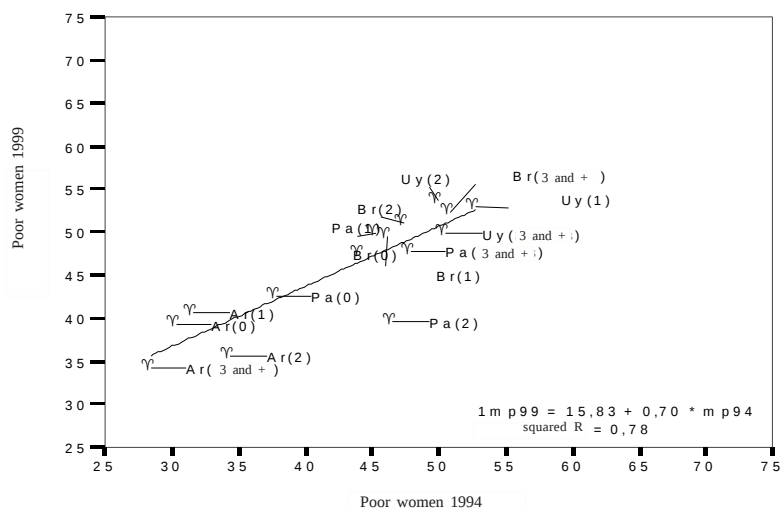
^a Participation: poor (non-poor) employed women (men) from 15 to 60 years of age with minors from 0 to 14 years of age.

Total of poor (non-poor) employed women (men) from 15 to 60 years of age

Source: Cepal, Unidad Mujer y Desarrollo.

GRAPH9

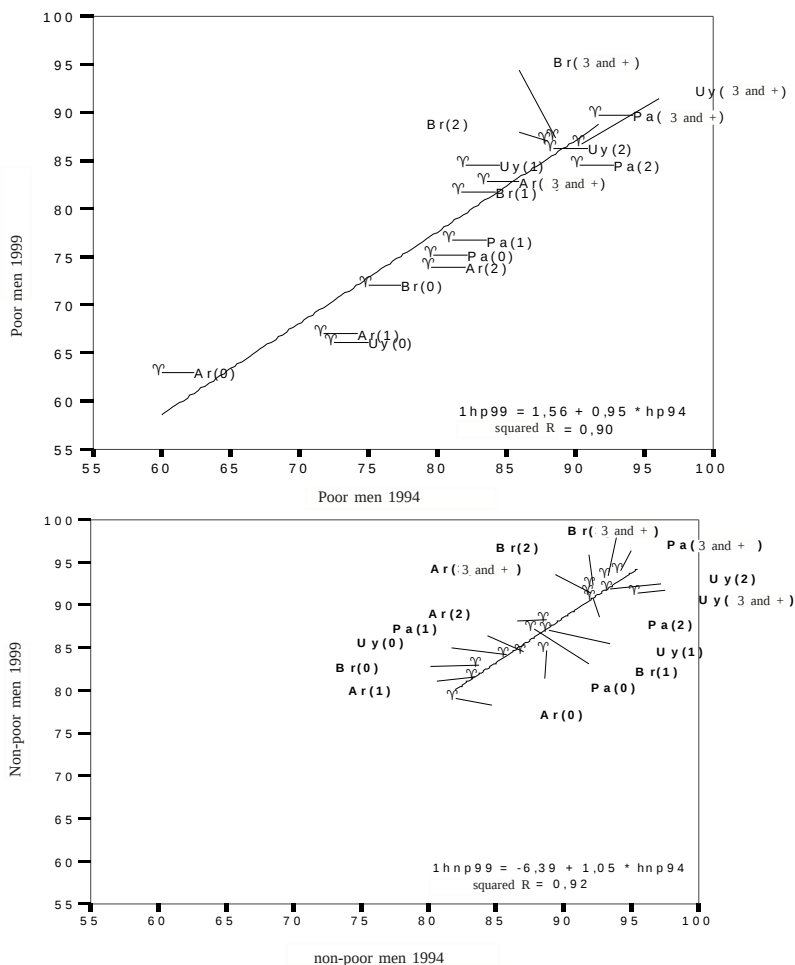
DIAGRAM OF DISPERSION, LINEAR REGRESSION AND COEFFICIENT R^2 CORRESPONDING TO THE PARTICIPATION RATE OF THE POPULATION FROM 15 TO 60 YEARS OF AGE BY POVERTY CONDITION ACCORDING TO THE NUMBER OF MINORS AT THE HOUSEHOLD YEARS CA. 1994 AND 1999. MERCOSUR COUNTRY MEMBERS.



Source: Cepal, Unidad Mujer y Desarrollo.

GRAPH9

DIAGRAM OF DISPERSION, LINEAR REGRESSION AND COEFFICIENT R^2 CORRESPONDING TO THE PARTICIPATION RATE OF THE POPULATION FROM 15 TO 60 YEARS OF AGE BY POVERTY CONDITION ACCORDING TO THE NUMBER OF MINORS AT THE HOUSEHOLD YEARS CA. 1994 AND 1999. MERCOSUR COUNTRY MEMBERS.



^a Participation: Poor (non-poor) women (men) from 15 to 60 years with minors from 0 to 14 years of age.

Total of employed poor (non-poor) women (men) from 15 to 60 years of age

Source: Cepal, Unidad Mujer y Desarrollo.

It is so since the proportion of women older than 15 years of age without income easily surpasses that of men, leaving them in very unfavorable situations in the cases of separations, divorce or widowhood, mainly when they become the family heads in charge of minors.

If it is intended to incorporate women to the workforce in Mercosur it is necessary to review the legislations in labor and family right as high-priority topics in order to reach the integration of populations which compose it in terms of welfare.

Linguistic specificity should not be forgotten, as neither the specificities relative to gender, not only with the intention to create maps of critical scarcities, but also with the aim to develop activities that articulate programs of health, violence and women's rights.

Nonetheless, in societies where it is recurring to encourage a forced kinship—as social institutions do not provide the support they should to their populations—it is of the utmost importance to be very scrupulous when designing policies and at the moment of performing concrete actions to contribute to the situation of people in poverty situations and who do not respond to the social cannons of having a 'well-constituted' family.

It would also be a high priority to develop information sources which allowed foreseeing different context in accordance with the countries in Mercosur.¹¹ Disaggregated and integrated socio-demographic information at local and global scale would allow designing strategies—not only centered on commercial interchange, but also cultural, educational, tourist—which broaden communication and cooperation—environmental conservation, preservation of the autochthonous communities' cultural heritage, etc— both between the part States and those associated.

Another important topic, given the acute poverty situation prevailing in the region, is the manner of designing public policies that improve the economic situation of both men and women. In order to do so, is it necessary to modify the income distribution in the region? Are the criticisms redundant despite the lack of actions?

¹¹ See Eurostat experience.

These criticisms could be decisively oriented to show how, in spite that in Argentina the per capita social expenditure reached in the 2000-2001 period 1650 USD (calculated at the value of 1997), poverty increased. This judgment must be extended to Uruguay, where per capita social expenditure is 1494 USD (1997); and Brazil, where it is 936 USD (1997). These countries, altogether with Argentina, are the three of the region with the highest social expenditure per inhabitant. Paraguay only destines 148 USD (1997) per capita to social expenditure. Which programs are these funds destined to? This question goes beyond this work's reaches, yet it could be found in the base of the 'programs to eradicate unemployment and poverty' currently valid in the considered countries and which are scarcely fruitful.

Separately, if in 1991 Mercosur appears, it is noteworthy that in concordance with its creation poverty situations have increased in Argentina, become stagnant in Paraguay and stopped decreasing in Brazil and Uruguay. Thus, it is imperative to draw near the economic objectives to those of welfare for the populations which compose it.

In the analysis we have not paid attention to women's health, that of their children as well as the housing situation, nevertheless it is clear that the latter is a central element to diagnose poverty. Territorial analysis should be circumscribed to the local so as to dimension the macro-structural perspective with the micro-social one.

Annex

TABLE 1
POPULATION ACCORDING TO QUINQUENNIAL AGE GROUPS AND GENDER,
MERCOSUR COUNTRY MEMBERS, 2000

Age	Argentina		Brazil		Paraguay		Uruguay	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
All	18 163 493	18 868 309	86 423 725	88 295 299	2 771 821	2 724 629	1 618 895	1 718 167
0-4	1 778 545	1 720 256	8 924 413	8 584 601	394 350	379 364	144 572	138 552
5-9	1 738 362	1 683 360	8 491 811	8 205 961	370 718	357 900	142 051	136 042
10-14	1 697 757	1 646 635	8 905 041	8 626 571	340 606	329 782	135 882	130 235
15-19	1 671 348	1 625 619	9 222 848	8 971 366	304 656	295 571	130 077	125 121
20-24	1 695 903	1 665 365	8 273 517	8 273 999	243 888	236 980	137 979	133 732
25-29	1 417 648	1 400 008	7 241 642	7 394 485	212 847	207 249	128 028	124 524
30-34	1 237 263	1 228 302	6 738 902	6 927 035	192 687	187 286	110 140	111 662
35-39	1 154 192	1 164 819	6 413 411	6 656 959	169 711	165 493	107 115	112 166
40-44	1 062 588	1 115 428	5 374 364	5 647 742	146 486	142 277	100 486	106 997
45-49	996 928	1 046 246	4 438 573	4 719 269	127 311	121 426	89 851	94 897
50-54	873 611	929 047	3 454 276	3 728 552	76 513	74 895	81 076	88 712
55-59	741 624	804 551	2 600 897	2 871 240	63 254	62 689	73 077	81 720
60-64	625 005	718 918	2 155 226	2 454 606	49 079	52 486	64 585	77 592
65-69	535 325	662 037	1 574 397	1 860 083	31 375	39 620	61 249	76 146
70-74	433 616	585 597	1 204 006	1 485 177	22 659	31 759	49 609	68 865
75 - 79	290 934	446 306	749 357	970 914	14 338	20 812	33 499	52 458
80 and older	212 844	425 815	661 044	916 739	11 343	19 040	29 619	58 746

Source: Cepal/Celade.

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