

**THE STATUS AND ROLE
OF RURAL WOMEN**

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P R E F A C E

This study entitled "The Status and Role of Rural Women" is implemented based on an agreement reached by the GTZ Project - Support for Modernization of Macedonian Agriculture and the "Friedrich Ebert" foundation - office in Skopje, as well as several associates of the Institute for Social, Political and Juristic Research in Skopje.

The research on the status of rural women in Macedonia that has been conducted at present is mainly based on statistical indicators or partial and sporadic surveys. This kind of research, although insufficient and rare, presents certain data based on which some demographic structural changes in the rural population can be identified, as can some limited information about rural women. However, due to the complexity of some processes in rural areas and their impact on rural women, some occurrences remain insufficiently clarified.

The main goal of this research was to study scientifically the status of women in the household, in agriculture and in the rural family.

BASIC METHODOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF THE RESEARCH

In Macedonia forces of industrialization, urbanization, migration and deagrarization have caused significant changes in the structure of the population and rural households, thus creating many issues regarding the status of women in rural households. The government's macroeconomic and microeconomic policies and programs, including the agrarian policy, were not necessarily created in a manner, which would enable them to be reviewed for their impact on women, in particular, those who live in rural areas.

Compared to the situation of 1948, when 72% of the population lived in the countryside, today only 40% of the total population of the Republic of Macedonia lives in rural areas. According to the census of 1994, 121 villages are entirely abandoned, meaning absolutely no one lives in these villages currently.

What makes rural problems especially difficult is a very high number of elderly and illiterate members of the population.

The gender structure among illiterate and insufficiently educated people is not evenly distributed between men and women. Women are predominant among that are illiterate, or lack a complete primary education, whereas men are predominant in the groups that have completed secondary and undergraduate education.

A total of 88,5% of children are covered by mandatory primary education in rural areas, of which 88,9% are male and 83% are female (1997 data).

A special and very important feature of life in the countryside is the disproportional enhancement of economic, social and cultural standards relative to their contribution to the local society as a whole. This is partially a consequence of traditional rural isolation, negligence and low rural standards, but it is also a consequence of a lack of sufficient infrastructure for education and health related institutions.

The discrepancies between developed and underdeveloped areas, the city and the village, farmers and non-farmers, and men and women in Macedonia have expanded because the economic power of the household has been the only driving force affecting rural education and population growth.

The lack of planning in the process of deagrarization resulted in a situation in which the agricultural burden was transferred mainly to women, are the elderly in particular. Specifically, women are increasingly becoming farmers in rural households, in particular mixed households. As more men find employment in non-farming businesses and as more children enroll in schools, normal farming work is increasingly becoming women's responsibility.

These circumstances create the kinds of conflicts that the woman farmer experiences – conflicts that arise between her responsibilities to the farm, household and family.

Although women have become the pillar of agricultural production, they are still not sufficiently represented in agricultural associations (farmer associations, cooperatives). Hence, they are still pressured by traditional relationships and the ownership factor.

It is not only economic dependence on a husband that determines the status of the rural women as wives. Many other rural factors affect the status of women, including the structure of the household, the professional orientation of family members, living and communal conditions in the countryside, etc.

Economic transition has had a tremendously negative impact on women's employment (salary), particularly that of rural women. Rural women often have no other choice but to accept socially insecure work, to work in an insecure domestic situation, or to be unemployed.

Large fragments of rural women live in poverty, in particular those who live in remote and mountainous villages.

1. Objectives of the Research

The study is expected to produce certain elements that can usefully serve to create measure of the agrarian and rural policy, as well as to determine the relationship between the social and economic status of women, on one side, and aspirations for changes in activity on the other side.

Hence the main objective of this study is the exploration of economic, social and cultural movements in the countryside and their impact on the status of women. Actually, the study is expected to:

- The processes that take place in the countryside, their intensity, the modules of their expression and, in particular, their impact on the social and economic status of rural women;
- The basic factors that determine women's status in the decision-making process of agricultural production, especially those related to the introduction of new programs in the farming process, family planning and family relationships.

Based on the above, this study will emphasize the impact economic and social policies, as well as the directions for social action to further improve the status of women in rural areas and agriculture.

Additionally, the research that was conducted for the purposes of this study created opportunities and conditions for further follow-up on issues directly and indirectly related to the status of rural women and will thus provide for comparative analysis relative with other countries.

2. Subject of the Research

Taking into account the research objectives, it is obvious that the entire empirical research effort is complex.

Actually, the research covered the processes and changes that have taken place in the countryside.

The successful achievement of predetermined objectives requires exploration of the following:

- Rural settlements, as habitations in which nearly 40% of the population of the Republic of Macedonia lives, from the point of view of the tendencies and factors that impact the status of rural women. In that context, the research subject includes: the configuration of settlements, social and economic characteristics, etc;
- Rural households, their basic social and economic features and the organization of rural life;
- The status of women in the family.

3. Methodological Approach

For the purpose of a more thorough exploration of the status of rural women in the countryside, the study conducted a survey.

The survey consisted of 40 questions and was conducted in November 2001. The survey polled 800 rural women, all living in villages.

Selection was made on the basis of random samples of living settlements.

Rural settlements in the Republic of Macedonia were classified by altitude (configuration), as either plain (low-lying, up to 800 m altitude) or mountainous (over 800 m of altitude).

The selected sample of women in the countryside (using the criteria of altitude) features the following structure:

Rural women, 20 years of age and above

Configuration	Number of women		%	
	Total	In sample	Total	In sample
Plain	212.351	680	85,6	85,0
Mountainous	35.841	120	14,4	15,0
Total	248.192	800	100,0	100,00

In the second phase of the sample constitution, a selection of 80 villages was defined - 68 of which were located in the plain areas with the remaining 12 in the mountainous areas.

In the last phase of the sample constitution, a selection of 10 women per village was done from each of the previously defined villages.

I. THE STATUS OF RURAL WOMEN AND THEIR ROLE IN AGRICULTURE

In the Republic of Macedonia, rural women are still a significant power in agriculture. Rural women represent the working power that substitutes for men working in non-agricultural activities, and thus women undertake the work responsibilities in agricultural production. Because of insufficient general and expert education, rural women have no alternatives to agricultural responsibilities; the **activities** of rural women in agriculture emerge as a consequence of **social and economic necessity**, not **their own choice**.

The social status of rural women refers to their status in the household, on the family farm, in the family and other primary groups, as well as in rural public life.

In general, the following processes affect the status of rural women:

- Industrialization,
- Modernization,
- Deagrarization,
- Migration,
- Urbanization.

However, other processes affect this status as well, including traditional concepts and beliefs related to the position and role of

women in the households and rural communities as the primary location for working and living.

1. The Social and Economic Characteristics of the Female Rural Population

Industrialization, deagrarization and urbanization have caused significant changes in general population structure. The active population has to migrated to urban settlements and industries, and away from rural areas and agriculture, which has inevitably led to the disintegration of traditional rural and agrarian structures. The male labor force has been concentrate in other industries, which has contributed to a distortion in the gender and age structure of the rural population.

A significant social and demographic change in agriculture has been the transfer of the work load from men (who traditionally were the main agricultural force) to women. This transfer of the workload represents a significant issue, but it was expected that this problem would be overcome through social and economic development. Examples from developed countries reveal that at a higher agricultural development level, the female's labor force¹ migrates more than that of men, which leads to a subsequent improvement in gender structure¹.

¹ (In France, men's working power within the active agricultural population increased from 64,6% in 1954 to 67,1% in 1962. - N.Gerviasa, C.Servolina i J.Weilla: Une France sans paysans, Editions du seuil, 1965.)

Table 1: Dynamics of the process of work load transfer to women in agriculture

Year	Agricultural population			Active agricultural population		
	Total 1	Female 2	% 2 : 1	Total 3	Female 4	% 4 : 3
1953	818.467	412.799	50,44	372.634	127.611	34,25
1961	721.550	370.540	51,35	323.661	121.326	37,48
1971	657.138	329.933	50,21	306.975	110.577	36,02
1981	392.299	213.030	54,30	215.779	104.344	48,35
1994	226.498	112.574	49,70	91.354	20.871	22,85

Sources: Our own computations, Population of Yugoslavia in the post-war period, Federal Bureau of Statistics, Belgrade, 1966, page 111; The Population According to the Vital, Ethnic, Educational and Economic Characteristics, book II, Bureau of Statistics of Republic of Macedonia, page 49.

The active male agricultural population decreased 55% during the period 1953 – 1981, and the active female agricultural population decreased 18% during the same period. However, during the period 1981 – 1994, an opposite tendency has been registered – the active male agricultural population decreased 37%, and the active female agricultural population decreased 80%. These data suggest the assumption that the active female work power migrates away from the village and the agriculture into the urban areas and to non-agricultural industries.

1.1. Age Structure

Changes in age structure have been dictated by changes in fertility and mortality rates, as well as by migration. Depending on the way in which these factors exert influence, different age structure is formed at certain stages of demographic development.

Changes articulated through the age structure of the rural population, measured in 5-year intervals, disclose demographic development in rural areas.

Table 2:
Structural dynamics of the rural population by age group
during the period 1961-1994.

	1961	1971	1981	1994
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
0-19	47,6	45,3	41,10	36,0
20-39	28,4	27,1	28,3	30,5
40-59	15,9	17,3	19,6	19,0
60 and over	8,0	10,0	10,8	14,2
Unknown	0,1	0,3	0,2	0,3

Source: Statistical review # 65, #126 and book I of 1994, Skopje,
 Bureau of Statistics of Republic of Macedonia

The first age group (0-19) demonstrates a descending trend, from 47,6% in 1961 to 36,0% in 1994. The share of the other age groups (20-39, 40-59, and 60 and over) increases each at a different rate and pace. A significantly steep increase has been observed for the "60 and over" age group. Thus, the rural population of the Republic of Macedonia is at the doorstep of demographic aging, according to its share of the elderly population.

As far as the gender structure of the active agricultural population, we should point out the low percentage of women in age groups 20-29 and 30-39, and the high share in age groups 40-49 and 50-59, relative to that of men. This certainly indicates that female work force in agriculture is relatively older to that of men.

Table 3:
Structure of active agricultural population by age group and gender

Condition in 1994

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0
0 to 19	5,9	5,3	8,1
20-29	22,0	23,2	18,1
30-39	21,6	22,1	19,8
40-49	18,4	17,4	21,9
50-59	19,1	18,9	19,8
60 and over	12,8	13,0	12,1
Unknown	0,2	0,1	0,2

Source: Population census, households, real estate and agricultural companies in Republic of Macedonia, 1994. Book II.

One of the most important characteristics of the aging of the work force in agriculture is the distribution of employed by age. The available data show certain trends that took place during the time from 1971 to 1994.

Table 4: Structure of agriculture workers by age groups and gender

	1971			1994		
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
Do 19	19,8	27,3	15,0	5,8	8,0	5,2
20-24	12,0	15,4	9,9	10,2	9,6	10,4
25-34	15,8	18,4	14,1	23,1	17,5	24,7
35-44	16,9	17,3	16,7	20,5	22,4	20,0
45-54	13,1	11,4	14,2	18,3	21,2	17,5
55-64	13,2	6,9	17,3	17,0	15,6	17,4
65 and over	0,0	3,1	12,6	4,9	5,4	4,7
Unknown	0,2	0,2	0,2	0,2	0,2	0,1

Source: Census of population and real estate, 1971, Book III; also 1994, Book II, Skopje, Bureau of Statistics of Republic of Macedonia

From the above data we notice certain trends toward older agricultural workers as the share of younger generations (up to 19 years of age) in agriculture decreases by 14 percentage points. The age structure by gender in the two observed years shows that women in agriculture were, on average, younger than men in 1971. In 1994, the share of women is lower than that of men, which indicates a process of aging of women's labor power in the agriculture.

An analysis of the structure of labor in agriculture by gender also shows that the differentiation of farms by ownership structure articulates significant changes.

**Table 5:
Share of women's labor on family farms categorized by
farm size in the Republic of Macedonia**

<i>Size of farm</i>	<i>Year</i>	
	<i>1960</i>	<i>1981</i>
<i>Total</i>	52,5	50,9
<i>Up to 0,50 ha</i>	71,8	62,1
<i>0,51 - 1,00 ha</i>	59,8	54,0
<i>1,01 - 1,00 ha</i>	63,4	50,9
<i>2,01 - 3,00 ha</i>	51,1	49,2
<i>3,01 - 4,00 ha</i>	50,3	48,2
<i>4,01 - 5,00 ha</i>	49,7	47,9
<i>5,01 - 8,00 ha</i>	49,0	47,1
<i>8,01 - 10,00 ha</i>	49,2	48,0
<i>Over 10,01 ha</i>	49,7	48,7

Source: Statistical review #18, 1971, and internal material, census of population, households and real estate, 1981

The above distribution demonstrates out that there used to be a larger female's labor force on private family farms, relative to that of men. Specifically, in 1960, women's share of labor was 52,5%, and in

1981 it was 50,9%; this situation reached its peak on farms not larger than 2 hectares (58,9% in 1960 and 54% in 1981).

Of special interest is the fact that the share of the female's labor force on family farms fell, whereas that of men increased. Accordingly, we can note increases in the female labor force on family farms stopped. The share of female labor force falls in all categories of family farms, and the largest drop is registered with smaller size farms. For example, categories of farms "up to 1 ha" register a fall in the women's labor force of 7,9% percentage points.

1.2 Employment of Women

Employment is one of the most important indicators of the status of women in society. Women become active members of society when they are employed.

Based on certain data, women in Macedonia are scarcely employed in agricultural industries, and even less in agricultural service industries. Thus, in agriculture production as a whole, there are 27.843 men and 7.463 women. In the agricultural service industries there are 91.913 men and 439 women. Of interest is the fact that of all the women employed in agriculture, 2.001 have completed higher education, 1.009 have completed primary education and 1.055 are not qualified educationally.

According to the above, we can conclude that women are employed as simple agricultural workers within households, and that their official status has not reached a minimum satisfactory level. At the same time, female employees in these industries have traditionally been less qualified than male employees.

A minor portion of the female population in rural areas of the Republic of Macedonia is employed in non-agricultural businesses: one small fraction is employed in industrial production (processing capacities located in rural areas), and the rest are employed in non-commercial activities, in particular education and public health. An

additional negative factor is that because of recent bankruptcies of many companies, the first facilities to be closed were exactly these, the ones located in rural areas. And just as is the case in other countries in transition, we are now witness to a process of women coming back to the household because of less opportunity for employment. Due to traditional customs, female's job loss is not perceived as tragic as it is when men lose their jobs - women will always continue having the non-paid work of taking care of the household and family, which is not the case with men.

1.2 Education Structure

Rural women still do not have the two basic preconditions for the normal comfort that comes from having free time. This is because of the following:

- Physical activities of more than 10 hours/day do not leave enough time for women to pursue their own wishes and interests and they often must take passively;
- The level of education of rural women minimized opportunities for effective usage of free time.

**Table 6:
Education level of female population ages 15 and above,
according to the census of 1994**

	<i>Urban</i>		<i>Rural</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>TOTAL *</i>	450.668	100,00	281.817	100,00
<i>No school</i>	27.747	6,16	43.290	15,36
<i>Uncompleted primary school</i>	73.779	16,40	87.990	31,22
<i>Primary school</i>	135.900	30,16	111.863	39,69
<i>High school</i>	162.840	36,13	32.591	11,59
<i>Undergraduate</i>	48.617	10,79	3.597	1,28
<i>Unknown</i>	450	0,10	665	0,23

*) Differences between the number of the total population on over 15 years given in the first line is a sum of the persons in particular lines included persons over 15 years, who are still attending primary school.

Source: Book III, population by vital, ethnic, educational and economic features, Bureau of Statistics of Republic of Macedonia, page 36.

From the data in table 6 we can see that in the Republic of Macedonia, every third person in the female rural population older than 15 years (31,22%) has not completed primary school. It is also easy to note that persons who have completed high school and education beyond that are much less likely to live in rural areas than in cities, and these persons are more likely to be men than women.

The low education level of the rural population in general, and in particular of women, significantly limits the impact of modern technology and the achievements of women, without which the successful management of agriculture, the household and children's education is not possible.

In families where both the husband and wife are educated, household authority switches. In these families, normally both the husband and wife manage the family budget, i.e. the husband manages the family budget less than usual.

The more the education level of the rural population increases in general, and especially that of the woman-mother, the more the man's decision-making authority decreases. Based on research conducted in the country, it can be noted that in rural families where both husband and wife are educated, the decision making process diverts away from the husband.

There also exist objective factors (traditional customs, rural settlements with no cinemas, means of mass communication etc.) that minimize the opportunities for women to properly use free time. In fact, women in rural areas often use their free time for additional household work (knitting, embroidery etc.).

Even though the remains of traditional family relationships still exist in rural families - according to which the husband and wife rarely spend their free time together - these days the influence of modern family relationships is felt more intensively; thus, women spend more of their time with their husbands.

2. Women and Rural Economic and Social Conditions

During the last twelve years the economic and social development of the Republic of Macedonia have seen a negative trend, in general and in certain industries; of special interest within this period is that agricultural production actually increased. For example, during the last several years production difficulties have continued and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contracted. Also, real household revenues decreased and unemployment grew, which sparked the emigration of younger generations abroad.

The transition process caused a drop in agriculture subsidies from 1,4% of GDP in 1994 to 0,4% in 2001. Agricultural families achieve annual revenues that are on average 15% lower than those of non-agricultural families, and 25% lower than those of mixed households.

All of the above, as well as some other data not mentioned here, have contributed to the worsening of social and economic conditions rural areas and in agriculture. The rural living standard has deteriorated, and the material and social security of the rural population has weakened.

Private farmers and other participants in rural economic activities face serious problems and difficulties in performing tasks, developing programs and plans, and getting involved in a new system with new ways of managing agriculture.

Besides this, as a result of the turbulence mentioned above and negative and more complex economic conditions, more questions have been asked about implementing research on the status of rural areas, with an objective of collecting subjective ideas about certain aspects of this complex issue.

One of the issues has been the evaluation of the economic and social conditions of the village (read: rural areas).

Table 7. Women's positions on rural economic and social conditions in the last 10 years.

	<i>Improved</i>	<i>Worsened</i>	<i>Stayed same</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>Total</i>
a) Village configuration					
1. Plain	9,9	52,9	33,3	3,9	100,0
2. Mountainous	13,6	58,2	25,5	2,7	100,0
b) Age					
1. 18 to 29 years	15,0	40,2	39,5	5,5	100,0
2. 30 to 39	9,6	54,5	32,8	3,0	100,0
3. 40 to 49	7,7	61,2	25,7	5,5	100,0
4. 50 to 59	14,4	56,8	26,7	2,1	100,0
5. 60 and over	6,8	51,4	39,0	2,7	100,0

c) Education					
1. Illiterate	6,3	40,6	50,0	3,1	100,0
2. Incomplete primary	6,4	55,1	36,4	2,1	100,0
3. Primary school	10,0	56,1	28,6	5,2	100,0
4. High school	13,5	54,0	29,5	3,0	100,0
5. Undergraduate	18,6	48,8	25,6	7,0	100,0
d) Type of household					
1. Pure household	2,6	65,1	28,3	3,9	100,0
2. Mixed household	10,5	51,0	34,1	4,4	100,0
3. Non-agricultural	19,5	50,4	29,3	0,8	100,0
e) Monthly household revenues					
1. Up to 6200 den.	9,1	64,3	23,4	3,1	100,0
2. 6201-9300 den.	10,7	55,1	28,3	5,9	100,0
3. 9301-12400 den.	9,9	45,7	39,5	4,9	100,0
4. 12401-21700 den.	8,2	44,3	46,4	1,0	100,0
5. 21701- 31000 den.	28,6	28,6	42,9	0,0	100,0
6. over 31001 den.	0,0	33,3	66,7	0,0	100,0
f) Employment status					
1. Employed	21,1	40,0	38,5	0,0	100,0
2. Farmer only	3,0	53,4	35,6	5,0	100,0
3. Employed AND farmer	14,0	54,7	26,7	4,7	100,0
4. Retired	14,0	58,0	26,0	2,0	100,0
5. Retired and farmer	9,7	45,2	41,9	3,2	100,0
6. Housekeeper	15,8	46,6	32,9	4,8	100,0
7. Housekeeper and farmer	6,8	56,2	33,9	3,2	100,0
8. Student	15,8	47,4	21,2	15,8	100,0
9. Unemployed	6,3	68,8	23,4	1,6	100,0

These results, within the context of general economic and social conditions in the Republic of Macedonia (an insufficient increase in labor efficiency, a drop in the gross domestic product, a fall in

the level of exports, decreases in public spending, a general expansion of poverty and poor economic conditions in rural areas), have been described as deteriorating by women (53,6%).

With the intention of reaching deeper into the presented indicators, an assessment of the status of rural areas follows according to the social and economic conditions of surveyed individuals.

The indicators that refer to the social and economic status of rural areas over the past 10 years, obviously suggest that, although it is a subjective position, this significantly depends on the education level of women. In other words, the more the education level of rural women increase, the greater the number of surveyed women who describe the social and economic status of rural areas as "improved".

Illiterate women who said the social and economic status of rural areas "stayed the same" are believed to have no real interest in conceiving of reality, are not well informed and have little participation in various decision making processes.

A somewhat similar trend to the above can be noted for the assessment of the social and economic status of rural areas by the rural household types. The answer of "worsened" is, more than average, concentrated in pure agricultural households (65,1%), and is least concentrated in non-agricultural households (50,4%).

Therefore, it is clear, and our position is thus reconfirmed, that a specific assessment of the social and economic status of rural areas in Macedonia is directly determined by several factors, one of which (certainly the primary one) is that the status of women in society predetermines their position with regard to this question.

Village configuration also affects in a certain way the results of the survey sample. For example, 58,2% of the women in the mountainous areas indicated that conditions in the rural areas "worsened".

There is another correlation that is associated with monthly income. Specifically, the answer "worsened" is most often given by

households with monthly incomes of less than 6.200 Macedonian denars (64,3%), and more rarely by households with monthly incomes that range between 21.701 and 31.000 denars (28,6%), on are above 31.000 (33,3%).

Women's professions, i.e. their varying working status, also impacts their position on the status of rural areas. Within that context, unemployed women (68,8%), retired women (58,04%), homemakers/farmers (56,2%) and pure women farmers (55,4%) belong in the category that believes that social and economic rural conditions actually "worsened". On the other hand, each fifth employed woman (21,2%) answered that rural social and economic conditions "improved".

With an aim to more precisely determine the factors that affect the decision-making process women use in an assessment of the general social and economic rural conditions, a question was asked regarding the **basic (primary) rural problem**.

Table 8: In general terms, according to your opinion, what is the primary rural problem?

Problems	Village configuration		Total
	Plain	Mountainous	
Bad communal infrastructure	21,2	36,4	23,3
Insufficient health care	8,8	9,1	8,9
Lack of money	21,4	14,5	20,5
Bad household keeping conditions	2,0	7,3	2,8
Bad access to educational, cultural and other institutions	5,7	2,7	5,3
Unemployment	28,3	20,0	27,1
Social insecurity	8,4	9,1	8,5
Insufficient participation in the government	2,8	0,9	2,5
Violence (criminal)	0,6	0,0	0,5
No problems	0,9	0,0	0,8
TOTAL	100,0	100,0	100,0

The fact that most of the surveyed population selected the problem of "unemployment" (27,1%) clearly articulates the seriousness of the problem that the Republic of Macedonia faces.

Going further and looking at village configuration, it is worth noting that the main problem in the mountainous villages is "bad communal infrastructure" (36,4%).

The regional division of the rural areas exhibits a relatively significant statistical distortion in terms of identification of the main rural problem. Thus, according to the region, "unemployment" is the most frequently indicated problem in the Vardar region (52,5%), "lack of money" is most frequently mentioned in the Southeast region (28,0%), and "bad communal infrastructure" is the most frequently selected answer in the Northeast region (45,0%).

The working status of rural women also affects their opinion on rural problems. In that regard, the main rural problem for employed women is "bad infrastructure" (36,5%), for female farmers it is "social insecurity" (pension) (18,8%), and finally, for both employed female farmers and retired female farmers it is "lack of money".

Only unemployed women (48,1%) and homemakers (31,5%) chose "Unemployment" (27,1%) as the most frequent answer.

3. Status of Women in the Household

Rural women normally perform two economic functions - in the areas of **spending** and **production**. This comes from the nature of the rural household, which acts as both production unit (farm) and spending unit (household). Due to this, rural women perform the functions of both **homemaker** and **farmer (agricultural producer)**. Rural women still perform their homemaker function in difficult circumstances: burdened by the labor of agricultural production, lacking sufficient knowledge about homemaking, living in unsatisfactory communal conditions and with underdeveloped infrastructure, in particular in the mountainous areas.

3.1 Women and Agricultural Problems

With regard to economic and social development in agriculture, the research reveals that each third rural woman (34,3%) considers the most serious rural problem to be an **"unstable market for agricultural commodities"**; each fourth woman (26,8%) believes it is **"financial problems (lack of money)"**; and each sixth sees the biggest problem as **"large engagement in agricultural production"**. The working status of women exhibits relatively significant divergence from the normal distribution. The option of **"unstable market for agricultural commodities"** is highly (and above average) concentrated around women who are **"employed farmers"** (47,7%) and **"farmers"** (45,5%). On the other hand, those who believe that **"lack of money"** is the main agricultural problem are **"retired agricultural producer"**, whereas the social category **"student"** answered that the main agricultural problem is the **"large engagement of women in agricultural production"** (47,4%).

The village configuration also exhibits a certain correlation with the some of the opinions about agriculture problems. Within that context, it is interesting that women in mountainous areas believe that the **"large engagement of women in the agricultural production"** is the most serious agricultural problem, whereas the women in plain villages answered that the most serious agricultural problem is the **"unstable market for agricultural commodities"** (37,1%).

3.2. Programs for Support of Women-Farmers (Agricultural Producers)

The issue of support for agricultural production undoubtedly deserves special attention. The programs and measures of agrarian policy for the development of agricultural production must consider the question: **"Which programs for support of female farmers should be developed/supported?"**

Within the context of this issue, the public (rural women) opinion on the most important programs/measures for their support is certainly important. What exactly is the rural women's opinion on the support of farmers (agricultural producers) can be observed from the following data.

Most of the surveyed pointed to the program of **"Financial support (credits)"** (43,4%), as well as the program for obtaining **"Social security (pensions) for rural women"** (35,5%).

The regional division of women exhibits a certain statistical correlation with the female position on programs for support of "women farmers". Most rural women who support a program of **"Financial support (credits)"** are grouped in the Vardar region (60,0%), while those who selected the program of **"Social security (pensions) for rural women"** are grouped in the Pelagonija region (53,0%), Southeast region (52,0%), East region (45,5%) and Northeast region (41,3%).

Another factor which exhibits a statistical correlation with programs in support of rural women farmers is level of education. Specifically, illiterate women and those who did not complete primary education overwhelmingly selected the program of **"Social security (pensions)"** (40,6 : 42,8%), and women who completed primary and high school chose the program of **"Financial support (credits)"**.

The working status of rural women is the next factor that exhibits a correlation with programs in support of rural women farmers. The program of **"Social security (pensions)"** was mainly selected by **retired women** (62,0%), as well as women who are **pure farmers** (41,6%).

The program of **"Financial support (credits)"** was predominantly selected by the **"retired women farmers"** (61,3%), as well as **"employed farmers"** (53,5%) and **"homemakers and farmers"** (48,6%).

This position, which differs from the general distribution of answers, can be explained by the fact that these social groups have to tackle more financial problems during the production process because they have resolved the social issue of "being retired" by becoming employed in some other economic activity.

The **need for technical assistance** was the second issue on which research activities were focused. In most cases, women ask for agricultural technical assistance from their **"friends and relatives"** (31,0%), and the available **"agricultural associations"** (20,0%). Only 21,9% of the survey sample indicated that they did not have any need for technical assistance.

As far as the social and economic attributes of surveyed individuals, data show that technical assistance from **"friends and relatives"** is usually asked for by women with a lower level of education, retired female farmers and female farmers. Thus, technical assistance from relatives and friends was asked for by 38,5% of women who have not completed their primary education, 41,6% of pure female farmers and 48,4% of retired female farmers.

Of the women who that they asked **"agricultural associations"** for technical assistance, most belong to the groups that have completed high school (25,7%), are between 30-39 years of age (23,7%), and are employed female farmers (30,2%).

However, women who have completed at least the undergraduate level indicated that they asked the available agricultural extension service for technical assistance (11,6%).

As far as a definition of the need for technical assistance, it is of special importance to identify the **area in which female farmers need technical assistance**. This is how the need for technical assistance will be recognized in this (agricultural) economic sector, which is a precondition for the further improvement and development of agricultural production.

Research data point out that the largest percentage of rural women understand that technical assistance in the **"sale of agricultural commodities"** (26,0%) and technical assistance in **"production input procurement"** (20,0%) will overwhelmingly contribute further development of agricultural production.

Reviewing the positions of the surveyed population by region, it is clearly visible that the surveyed from the Vardar region (42,5%), Southwest region (32,0%), Southeast region (32,0%) and Polog region (33,3%) give the most importance to technical assistance in the **"sale of agricultural commodities"**. On the other hand, the surveyed from the Eastern region give the most importance to technical assistance in **"production input procurement"** (35,6%).

The size of the agricultural property also affects women's determination with regard to need for technical assistance. This is particularly visible with regard to the technical assistance in the **"sale of agricultural commodities"**, where the need for such technical assistance is proportionally correlated to the size of agricultural property.

Table 9: Need for technical assistance

<i>Size of Property</i>	<i>Production process</i>	<i>Procurement or production input</i>	<i>Sale of agricultural commodities</i>	<i>Advertisement and promotion</i>	<i>Total</i>
Up to 1 ha	14,4	47,3	36,3	2,0	100,0
1,1-2 ha	19,1	31,3	41,2	8,4	100,0
2,1-3 ha	16,5	28,5	43,1	11,9	100,0
3,1-5 ha	11,3	9,7	50,0	29,0	100,0
5,1-8 ha	10,7	28,6	46,4	14,3	100,0
Over 8 ha	0	32,8	58,9	14,3	100,0
Total:	15,2	32,4	42,3	10,1	100,0

In other words, the larger the agricultural property, the greater the number of surveyed women who feel the need for technical assistance in the "sale of agricultural commodities".

The next research question was rural women's **satisfaction** with the technical assistance provided. Thus, the surveyed were asked the following question: **"How satisfied are you with the technical assistance you have used so far?"**

The answers received indicate that nearly one third (31,1%) use no technical assistance at all, and that each fifth woman (21,1%) satisfied (very satisfied 1,9%, somewhat satisfied 19,3%) with the received technical assistance. The regional division again shows relatively significant statistical divergence with regard to the correlation of used technical assistance. Thus, according to the region to which they belong, women of the Polog region express a high level of satisfaction with technical assistance (31,2%) as do woman in the Southeast region (28,0%), whereas a high level of dissatisfaction (somewhat dissatisfied and very dissatisfied) is expressed by the women of the Vardar region (55,0%).

Some correlation can be noted between the satisfaction of used technical assistance and the working status of the women. Namely, some divergence from the normal distribution is noticed for pure women farmers, of whom 32,6% are satisfied with technical assistance, while 22% of the category "homemaker and farmer" are dissatisfied.

The process of modernization in agricultural production, primarily developments in machinery and chemistry, changed the traditional division of labor between the men and women in rural areas. Today, all or nearly all of men's tasks can be women's tasks as well. There remain very few tasks today that women are still not able to perform. Women's involvement in certain tasks has been reduced (plowing, sowing, harvesting) not because the men have undertaken the responsibility for their implementation, but because of the introduction of new techniques and technologies in agricultural production.

It is interesting to note that women act as a supplementary work force in the implementation of certain agricultural tasks, which suggests that there has certainly been reduction of women's engagement in rural agricultural activities.

Women farmers are mostly engaged in the agricultural operation of "digging" (38%). Because of the constant labor division, this kind of production is suitable because it is usually located in the backyard and provides opportunity for alteration of tasks during the working day, allowing women to perform the functions of both the homemaker and the farmer.

Rural female participation is not at the same level on all family farms, i.e. it depends on the farm's social and economic attributes: **size of property, modernization level, social structure, professional orientation of family members, number of household members, etc.**

With regard to the working operation of "digging" in relation to size of agricultural property, the largest category is families with property longer than 8 ha (75%) and the category of women who are only engaged in agriculture (50,5%).

Realistically, we can not confirm that labor division on the basis of gender has entirely disappeared, but men are still performing the complex and difficult agricultural and household tasks.

However, women can also perform these tasks on rare occasions; women do not assume them as men's tasks, but they do perform them as agricultural producers regardless of gender.

The authority of the man (head of household) lost its prior significance; thus, in rural households the voice of other family member is increasingly heard.

With an aim of confirming the current democratization of rural household relationships, these changes were observed in the research through the agricultural decision-making process. The question was asked: **Who in your family decides questions about agricultural production/farming?** The answer were as follows:

1. Household head (man)	24,1%
2. Homemaker (woman)	5,4%
3. Man and woman together	35,4%
4. All adults in the household	18,9%
5. There is no farming	15,9%
6. No answer	0,4%

Based on the above data, it is clear that women authority on this issue is still insignificant, but that the high percentage of joint (together with the man) decision making is an important indicator of a modern relationship in the household.

There are also differences in women's attitudes about decision making in agriculture, based on education level. In this context, the highest level of decision making is achieved men who live with illiterate women (31,3%), and lowest by those who live with women who have completed high school and/or undergraduate education (20,0%).

On the other hand, women with high school and undergraduate education indicated more often than average that decisions are made by all adults in the household (25,6%).

The working status of women also correlated with household decisions related to agricultural production. Thus, most of the women who are only engaged in farming said decision are made by the "homemaker and household head (woman and man)" (54,5%), as did the social group of homemakers and farmers (47,0%).

The two economic functions of rural women - **homemaking** and **farming** - switch interchangeably during the day so much that it is hard to determine if rural women are predominantly homemakers or farmers.

4. Women's Attitudes About Their Living and Working Environment

In relation to economic, social and other developments in the Republic of Macedonia, the research suggests that in most cases (52,4%) rural women believe that they should **"live in the countryside and be employed"**; additionally, 24,4% think they should **"migrate to cities to live and work"**, and only 12,8% believe they should **"live in the countryside and work in agriculture"**.

Village altitude exhibits an influence over women's determination of living and working environment. So, for example, the attitude of **"migrate to cities to live and work"** is overwhelmingly concentrated in the mountainous rural areas (32,7%).

Table 10: Living and working environment by altitude

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Plain villages</i>	<i>Mountainous villages</i>
<i>Live in village and work in agriculture</i>	18,6	19,0	16,4
<i>Live in village and be employed</i>	52,4	53,9	42,7
<i>Migrate to city to work and live</i>	24,4	23,0	32,7
<i>No answer</i>	4,6	4,1	8,2
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0

The type of household is the next factor that exhibits a correlation with rural women's opinions about living and working conditions. In that context, each fourth woman (25,7%) of pure agricultural households wants to **"live in the countryside and work in agriculture"**; on the other hand, 37,4% of women in non-agricultural households **"do not want to live in the countryside and do not want to work in agriculture"**.

There are distinct differences in choice of living and working environment with regard to women's age as well. Most of the surveyed individuals between 18 and 29 years of age (36,2%) implied that they **"want to migrate to cities and work and live there"**. The choice of **"live in the countryside and work in agriculture"** was most frequent for women of over 60 years of age (39,0%).

Level of education exhibits relatively significant statistical divergence with regard to living and working environment. This is especially visible for the option **"live in the countryside and work in agriculture"**, and this option is inversely correlated with the level of education of those surveyed. This option was most frequently chosen

by illiterate women (37,5%), and those who have not completed primary education (34,8%), but rarely by those who have completed high school (3,4%), and not at all by those who have completed an undergraduate degree. On the other hand, those who pointed out that they **"want to migrate to cities and work and live there"** exhibit an opposite tendency. This position was chosen by 48,8% of those who have completed high school and undergraduate education, and only by 10,9% of illiterate women.

Table 11: Living and working environment according to level of education

Level of education	Live in village and work in agriculture	Live in village and be employed	Migrate to cities to live and work	No answer
Illiterate	37,5	37,5	10,9	14,1
Not completed primary school	34,8	41,7	17,1	14,1
Primary school	19,3	52,4	23,0	5,2
High school	3,4	65,0	30,8	0,8
Undergraduate	0,0	51,2	48,8	0,0

The working status of women is the next factor that exhibits a correlation with the determination of living and working environment. In that respect, most of the women who answered that they want to **"live in the countryside and work in agriculture"** belong to the following social groups: pure farmer (28,7%), retired farmer (29,0%), and homemakers/farmer (27,9%). Trivial interest is expressed by the employed woman (3,8%) and the non-employed (1,6%), and there is no interest at all among female students.

Conversely, a very high interest in being able to **"migrate to cities and work and live there"** is expressed by female students (57,9%).

In the context of the above opinions and preferences of living and working environment, rural women were asked to answer the

question of "**what are the living needs in the household**", here is what they answered:

1. Development of agriculture	12,8%
2. Improvement of household economic conditions (increase revenues)	39,9%
3. Secure household care and assistance	7,8%
4. Improvement of living conditions	5,5%
5. Better children's education	11,0%
6. Employment	22,0%
7. No living needs	1,0%
Total:	100,0%

In general terms, the answers "**Improvement of household economic conditions**" and "**Employment**" conform to the already presented information about the social and economic condition of rural households.

Analyzing the answers reveals that better educated women care a lot more about being employed, and less educated women care more about agricultural development.

Table 12: Living needs, by level of education

	<i>Illiterate</i>	<i>Not completed primary education</i>	<i>Primary education</i>	<i>High school</i>	<i>Undergraduate</i>
<i>Agriculture development</i>	17,2	16,0	14,9	8,0	4,7
<i>Improve economic condition of household</i>	42,2	38,0	38,7	43,9	30,2
<i>Secure household care and assistance</i>	23,4	16,6	52,2	0,8	0,0
<i>Improve living conditions</i>	1,6	4,3	6,7	5,9	7,0
<i>Children's education</i>	4,7	7,5	16,7	9,7	7,0
<i>Employment</i>	9,4	17,1	17,1	30,0	51,2
<i>No living needs</i>	1,5	0,5	0,7	1,7	0,0
<i>Total</i>	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

For employed women, the greatest living need is to "Improve the economic condition of the household " (55,8%), and for women farmers it is "Agricultural development" (29,7%). As for retired women, there is a significant increase in those who feel the need for " Secure household care and assistance " (20,0%).

Next, there is another correlation related to the type of household. Namely, 27% of pure agricultural households, and less frequently by mixed households (10,9%) chose the answer "Agricultural development". The living need "Employment" is most typical for women in non-agricultural households (31,7%) and least typical for women in pure agricultural households (18,4%).

II. STATUS OF WOMEN IN RURAL FAMILIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

The family as the primary societal group has been attracting the interest of a great number of societal researchers for quite some time now. This has contributed to the collection of a base of scientifically verified data related to family life, as well as to the impact of society on the family. Yet it looks like it can be concluded that, from a societal perspective, the status of women in rural families has not been sufficiently studied.

It should be noted in advance that the entire transformation of the family in the Republic of Macedonia inevitably contributed to changes in the status of women in the family. In the patriarchal human society, i.e. in the patriarchal family, which still exists nowadays in particular rural areas of the Republic of Macedonia, the notion that women are inevitably tied to the family and have nothing to look for outside of it still exist. With the act of marriage, the woman becomes totally dependant on the man in every aspect. Besides, based on the hierarchical set-up of family relations, the woman is also subordinated to the father- and mother-in-law. Specifically, in the patriarchal family gender plays an important role relative to the age of family members. In that respect, the mother ranks very low in the family hierarchy. She can never become equal to the male family members; her authority can never increase. In addition, the mother-in-law behaves like a supervisor to the daughter-in-law (more like a dictator, rather than a parent), and she is above her in the hierarchy. The daughter-in-law's authority is low relative to the mother-in-law, because she is a new family member, a newcomer, whose main duty in the household is taking care of the family².

² Check out: Family in transition, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1964, page 65, 76

In some regions of Macedonia, seniority widely observed, which comes with age. The young, regardless of gender, have been subordinated to the older. Yet there are some other regions (that exist even today) in which male members, regardless of age, are ranked higher relative to female family members³.

The generally unfavorable status of women in the patriarchal family in rural areas is, in the first place, a result of the private ownership of production assets. The woman works actively on her husband's property and at the same time is a homemaker, performing most of the household work. Raising and educating children is her duty as well, and she is rarely involved in family planning⁴.

The processes of industrialization and urban planning caused major changes in the entire societal structure, and these changes did not skip even the most private and intimate social entity: the family. The family existed as a self-sufficient social group for quite a long time, within which a person could not express sufficiently her/his abilities and qualities. The position and role of each family member was rigorously determined inside the family⁵.

One of the basic indicators of progressive change in almost all aspects of family life is the change in the status of women; their choices are becoming broader, and are therefore becoming increasingly equal with their husbands. This enables women to become an equal factor in the entire social and economic development of society. Education and employment are the most significant factors enabling women to become equal with men and they also contribute to the greater economic security of women.

³ See: Same, page. 95, 96.

⁴ See: Mr. Borislav Dimkovic, PhD, Social status of rural women, Rural Sociology, br.63-64, 1979.

⁵ See: Zagorka Golubovic, Family as Human Community, Naprijed, Zagreb.

In this study, the status of women in rural families will be observed through the following indicators: family planning, family relations, and family system of norms and values.

1. Family Planning

Family planning is organized action with regard to the reproductive function of the family, both by society and the family itself. However, this action is not performed on an institutional level, rather it is done on a family level. Its basic purpose is to achieve greater humanization of the family function, where the family-planning process is associated with "demographic neutrality". Within the family, the husband and wife should decide freely number of births, having in mind not only their own but also broader societal capacities and needs. This objective could be reached by greater democratization of family relations, those of the husband and wife in primarily, which assumes enhancing their knowledge in the field of biological reproduction. Through family planning, as a principal human right, the society treats the family unit as a "human society", recognizing the uniqueness of the family as the primary societal unit.

Since the reproductive behavior of the woman exercises great influence over the general condition of the family and her status in the family itself, this study tried to determine newly occurred changes in female attitudes about this issue, which in great part determine the status of woman in the rural family.

From the research performed to date, it is recognized that changes in the reproductive behavior of women are normally determined by several factors: education, ethnicity, social status and professional standing etc.

In this study, this issue was addressed by asking surveyed individuals several questions.

The following question were asked: "Before you were ever married, how many children had you wanted to have?". The general distribution of received answers is as follows:

	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
1 child	20	2,5
2 children	356	44,5
3 children	214	26,8
4 children	86	10,8
more than over 5 children	4	0,5
Have not thought about this	<u>120</u>	<u>15,0</u>
Total	800	100,0

The above data undoubtedly show that all the advantages of family planning have been acknowledged and recognized even in rural areas in the Republic of Macedonia. Even though the above data actually show declarative attitudes in the women surveyed, this, general tendency has been confirmed by all research performed to date, by the Institute for Social, Political and Juridical Research, as well as official governmental statistical data. The fact that more than two thirds of the women surveyed have chosen to bear up to three children is an indirect articulation of progressive changes in the status of women in the family. This helps in the development of a new model of the family, according to which a maximum of three children will be born, which creates a necessary precondition for a gradual transition from patriarchal to modern families in which is emphasize the role of women.

It is a known fact that women's attitudes about reproductive behavior are closely related to age. Thus for example, while only 8,1% of the surveyed women between 18 - 29 years of age would choose for a fertility rate of 4-5 children, none would choose to have 6 or more children. Even 33,7% of women over 60 years of age (only 4 women

in this category were surveyed) would prefer giving birth to 4-5 children, and even 50% of them would give birth to 6 or more children.

Until a few decades ago, under conditions of general economic underdevelopment, in which the agrarian sector was dominant, the status of women in the family was particularly difficult. Patriarchal family relations used to tie women to agricultural production (farming), as well as the raising and education of children and, above all, the responsibilities of homemaking.

Today, global societal progress brings more equality between both genders, which will be the subject of further analysis.

Previous research shows that women's attitudes about the fertility rate are also determined by the type of family in which they live.

Table 1: Women's position on fertility rate by type of family

Number of children	Type of family		
	Agricultural	mixed	Non-agricultural
One	0,7	3,4	0,8
Two	43,4	43,4	50,4
Three	25,0	29,1	18,7
4-5	12,5	11,4	5,7
6 and over	0,0	0,8	0,0
Don't know	18,5	11,8	24,4
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0

The tendency toward a higher fertility rate occurs most with women from agricultural and mixed families, whereas that same tendency is much lower in non-agricultural families.

If we take into account the fact that more children create greater obligations for parents, and add that the burden of raising and educating children in rural areas of Macedonia falls largely on women,

engaged in farming in families of agricultural and mixed type, it is evident that the status of women in these families is less favorable relative to the status of women in non-agricultural families, most of whom only play the role of homemaker.

However, the reproductive behavior of women and family planning are closely related to the ethnicity of women, i.e. the larger family. This conclusion is confirmed by the data collected from research performed in this field, which is clearly presented in the following table:

Table 2: Women's positions on fertility rate by ethnicity

Number of children	Ethnicity				
	Macedonian	Albanian	Turk	Serbian	Other
<i>One</i>	3,2	0,7	0,0	0,0	0,0
<i>Two</i>	52,4	19,7	6,7	28,2	45,5
<i>Three</i>	22,8	40,1	53,3	30,8	18,2
<i>4-5</i>	6,4	25,4	20,0	20,5	9,1
<i>6 and over</i>	0,3	0,0	6,7	2,6	0,0
<i>Don't know</i>	14,8	14,1	13,3	17,9	27,3
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Accordingly, with respect to women's preparedness to give birth, there exist great differences between Macedonian and Albanian women. Even before getting married, the Albanian woman (in contrast to the Macedonian) is ready to give birth to more children, which diverse from the model of the modern family. We can conclude that the reproductive behavior of Albanian women, which is characterized by high fertility rates, acts as one of the factors which disables the transformation of the Albanian family into the above mentioned

modern family type; this inevitably does not lead to improvement in the status of women in these families.

In contrast, and according to the above data only 6,4% of surveyed Macedonian women (even before getting married) stated that they wanted to have 4-5 children (this option was selected by as much as 1/4 of surveyed Albanian women). This means that Macedonian women are no longer treated as a "field in which the husband sows the seed of life" (Bahoffen). At the same time it means that for them, based on an increased family planning tendency, biological reproduction is no longer a basic and primary function.

It is worth mentioning that according to the performed research and available statistical data, and with respect to wanted children versus children who have actually been born, there are no significant differences between Macedonian and Albanian women. It is known that having fewer children (family planning) greatly alleviates the traditionally burdened status of women in the rural family, and it also means a great step forward toward further emancipation.

Additional analysis will mention more examples that show progressive change in the status of women who live in rural areas of the Republic of Macedonia. This refers to a very traditional belief, for a long time was a main feature of the patriarchal rural family in Macedonia, according to which the basic and most important function of women in families was to give birth to as many children as possible. Of course, in these cases there can not even be a word about family planning concepts. In fact, "family planning" was directed toward giving birth to as many children as possible, who will later be used as necessary labor on the father's agricultural property. In doing this, nobody cared about the real status of the woman in the family, which used to be very unfavorable position.

In that context, the surveyed rural female population we asked the following questions: "Should the man abandon the woman if she can not have children?" The received general distribution of answers is as follows:

	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Yes	9	1,1
Perhaps in certain cases	89	11,1
Absolutely NO	616	77,0
Don't know	<u>86</u>	<u>10,8</u>
Total:	800,0	100,0

According to the above data, we can conclude that the action mentioned, (gently referred to here as "inhumane behavior" toward women) does not exist anymore. This means that the woman is now viewed as an equal human being who is in no way expected to only give birth to children; rather, she possesses other qualities as well. The fact that the answers were given by women themselves confirms even more strongly progressive changes in their consciousness, as well as their lack of willingness to accept long-practiced subordinated positions.

In comparing this question with other independent variables, we did not register any significant diversions from the declared general distribution of answers. An exception is the comparison of answers to this question given by women from the two largest ethnic communities in Macedonia, Macedonians and Albanians; great differences exist with regard to this question. Specifically, while 81% of Macedonian women believe that the husband should absolutely not leave the wife if she could not have children, only 58,5% of the Albanian women gave the same answer to this question. This inevitably indicates the relatively lower level of emancipation for Albanian women, i.e., their relatively less favorable status in rural families, despite some progressive change in comparison with their status from several decades ago.

It should also be stated that in the patriarchal family of rural areas of Macedonia, beside the fact that women were required to give birth to as many children as possible, it was also strongly preferred that those children be male. Specifically, male children in the traditio-

nal rural environment were especially appreciated because they were expected to become the father's successors at some time in the future.

With regard to this issue, the surveyed rural women were asked the following question: "Should the woman continue giving birth until she finally gives birth to a male child?" The answers are presented in the following table:

	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Yes	45	5,6
Perhaps in some instances	130	16,3
Absolutely NO	559	69,9
Don't know	<u>66</u>	<u>8,3</u>
Total:	800	100,0

In this case, too, the positive transformations of women in rural families are visible, which obviously suggests a greater level of female emancipation. The desire for a male child has almost always been present in patriarchal families, and the woman used to accept this as reality. As a result, female children were considered less desirable.

These examples, although on a much smaller scale, exist even today. The type of family also exerts some influence over the answers of women to this question. Specifically, it is known that patriarchal family relations are predominant in pure agricultural and mixed families, whereas non-agricultural families are more typical of modern family relations because of the existing material base. In that context, 68% of women surveyed from agricultural and mixed families believe that a woman should not continue giving birth to more children until she gives birth to male child, and 77,2% of surveyed women from non-agricultural families answered this question the same.

There exists a significant relation between this question and female ethnic background. Actually, while 76,9% of surveyed Macedo-

nian women believe that a woman should absolutely not continue giving birth until she gives birth to a male child, the percentage is much lower of similar answers received from Albanian women - as low as 45,1%. Therefore, male children in Albanian families are still much preferred relative to female children, which indicates the level of transformation of the Albanian rural family and the status of women in it. It also speaks to the practical existence family planning in the Albanian family.

Still, in general terms, despite these leftovers from the past in a certain way, the presented data signal the beginning of the end of male domination in the patriarchal family in Macedonia; at the same time they mark the beginning of the creation of a new, modern family, based on human and democratic relationships, in which the woman becomes increasingly equal with the man with regard to both her role and responsibilities.

2. Family Relationships

The complex relationships established between family members actually represent one of the most important and composite spheres of the family, primarily because it represents the most basic and most intimate societal group.

Until a few decades ago, patriarchal family relationships dominated in Macedonia, and some remaining evidence of them can still be found nowadays in certain areas. It is worth mentioning that Macedonia became involved in the monetary economic system relatively late, as well as contemporary societal movements. Consequently, changes in family life have been hard to notice. Family relationships used to be regulated in a specific patriarchal manner, with the noticeable existence of a certain human dimension. Family relationships used to be characterized by peacefulness, discipline, and the status of women used to contain all the elements of traditional subordination⁶.

⁶ See: Vera Erlih, Op. cit., page 430.

However, it is well known that recent major changes in the general domestic societal system, which were mentioned in the preface, strongly affected change in family relations. Thus, authoritative relations, typical of family relations in which the women was subordinated in the family, are gone nowadays and are replaced with relations of equality among all family members, and especially the wife and husband.

Due to the type of available empirical data, both quantitative and qualitative approaches will be used analysis that follows. This allows an observation of the content of family relations, not only the structure, and refers to the relations between the wife and husband and those between the parents and the children, which will help us to observe the status of women in rural families.

The indicator in determining the status of women in the family will be the answers of the surveyed individuals that refer to the attitudes of husbands toward wives when in dispute. The data from the survey reveal the following information:

	No.	%
Gets in quarrel, yells	243	30,4
Gets out of home	182	22,8
Quiet, smokes, drinks	88	11,0
Beats her, curses	9	1,1
Does not get angry	148	18,5
No husband	79	9,9
Not sure	51	6,4
Total:	800	100

According to patriarchal family norms, the tough behavior of the husband toward the wife, which very frequently was transformed into physical abuse, used to be considered quite normal behavior because that was the only way to demonstrate who was "the boss" in the family.

When asking the above question we considered the fact that the human being is, in addition to other roles, "a family being", i.e.

he/she tends to keep certain family issues within the family at any price. Thus, we believe that the above data is of special interest, especially because past societal research efforts in Macedonia never touched on this very significant segment of family life which, finally, determines the type of the family.

The above data reveal visible changes in this segment of family life. A sharp fall in the extreme behavior of the husband toward the wife is evident (beating, cursing), which used to be a predominant and frequent form of behavior in the traditional patriarchal family in rural areas. Specifically, the directly aggressive behavior of the husband, which used to be a normal and usual practice in the patriarchal environment, is now almost nonexistent in rural families in Macedonia, and thus can be considered a rudiment of former practices. In fact, even in cases when there is certain conflict, the husband reacts very peacefully toward the woman (in a relatively high percentage), which undoubtedly means that the family relationships become increasingly modern, i.e. that the status of women in rural families in Macedonia has tended toward positive and progressive change.

The division of work among family members can also determine the status of women in rural families. Specifically, the division of work, to a certain extent, represents a primary relation in the family, which determines the rest of family relations.

The different roles of family members in implementing family work/tasks are another important component, which differentiates the modern family from the patriarchal. Thus, while modern family relations are characterized by the roughly equal roles of the husband and wife in the implementation of family tasks, patriarchal family relations are characterized by the subordinate role of the wife relative to that of the husband. This is why the implementation of homemaking activities is primarily the responsibility of the woman.

In order to draw conclusions about the general situation in this area, the surveyed population was asked the following question: "What is the division of family tasks in your family?" The surveyed women gave the following answers:

	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
I do all the work myself	162	20,3
To some extent, I get help from other family members	275	34,4
Equally divided among all family members	337	42,1
I have almost no work to do	11	1,4
I have a housekeeper	1	0,1
Not sure	<u>14</u>	<u>1,8</u>
Total:	800	100

According to the above data, and despite past tradition, modern rural family relations in Macedonia have developed very fast. Specifically, the woman accomplishes all household work in every fifth surveyed family, which clearly suggests that she is overloaded with work and still subordinated - that she has a hard and disadvantaged status in the family - which again is a confirmation of leftovers from patriarchal relations in family life. Conversely, the information that reveals that roughly half of rural families divide the household workload approximately equally among all family members undoubtedly suggests a tendency for intensive change in women's traditional subordinated status. Women are becoming increasingly equal in the family and are gaining more authority, which used to be an exclusive privilege of the husband only.

Bringing this issue in line with other independent variables reveal certain interesting, but nevertheless expected, conclusions.

Namely, taking into account the age of the surveyed women, it becomes apparent that the most democratic family relations exist for women between 18 and 29 years of age. Of the total number of surveyed women in this age group, as many as 58% answered that homemaking work is equally distributed among all family members.

However, only 36% of the women over 60 answered the same to this question. This clearly suggests that older generations are primarily the carriers of traditional patriarchal relationships, while modern family relationships that lead to better status for women in the family are normally related to younger generations.

Also, there is a great differentiation in the answers of surveyed women according to nationality/ethnicity. Hence, while almost half of the surveyed Macedonian women (48%) answered that homemaking work is almost equally distributed among family members, the answers we received from Albanian women differ greatly; only 21% of them indicated that there is equality in distributing the household workload among family members. Although some progressive changes in all segments of family life are noticeable in Albanian families, the above information reveals the relatively greater inflexibility and isolation from societal influences that exist in Albanian families, when compared with Macedonian. Above all, this is definitely a result of the strong tradition, which persistently threatens to preserve the subordinate status of women in Albanian families in general, and in rural areas in particular.

Actually, the status of woman in the family can be very successfully observed if the authority they enjoy in the family structure is taken into account.

It must not be forgotten that the authority the parents used to enjoy in the family was absolute until two or three generations ago. In that context, the authority of the husband was dominant, while the authority of the wife was far less. For example, a married son was not allowed to sit, smoke, drink or talk to his wife in hi/her father's presence. It was also a custom to kiss the hand of the father, mother, grandfather etc. In these patriarchal environments there existed a so-called "natural authority", which was described as a natural instinct of subordination to the older⁷.

⁷ See: Vera Erlih, Op.cit., page 32, 38,47.

Changes in the general societal and economic environment in Macedonia are the main reason for the changed status of women in the family. In that regard, changes in family members' authority should be viewed as related to the general transformation that occurred under the influence of the above mentioned processes of industrialization and urbanization. Changes in the economic structure of the family (employment outside of the family, changes to agricultural property, etc.) bring radical reforms in family relations as well. The authority of the head of the family increasingly loses influence, and the voice of the rest of the family is more and more an issue in the families of the Republic of Macedonia.

However, despite the above mentioned changes in general societal structure that greatly affect the family and family relations, there still remain certain factors that slow the equalization of family relations, especially in rural areas.

In this study, changes in family members' authority, which determine the status of women in the family, are first going to be determined by looking at the management of family budget.

The family budget represents one of the most crucial and critical components of family life in general. We should immediately stress that one of the main characteristics of the patriarchal family is that the husband manages the family budget because the wife is simply not believed capable of performing this critical task. This behavior toward the family budget exercises great influence over the family relations in general, and it also greatly affects the status of the women in it.

Fortunately, the process of industrialization changed the economic base of the patriarchal family and thus caused immense changes in the status of women even in this segment of family life. It is very typical in industrially developed societies and modern families for women to become increasingly equal with men in managing the family budget.

Changes, which affect the intensive transformation of the traditionally disadvantaged and subordinate status of rural women, exist in the Republic of Macedonia. The intensity of these changes are undoubtedly confirmed by the data received from this study.

The answers to the question, "Who in your family manages the family budget?" fully correspond with previously mentioned conclusions.

	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Wife and husband	600	75,0
Children	11	1,4
All family members	169	21,1
No answer	<u>20</u>	<u>2,5</u>
Total:	800	100,0

It is evident that in rural families in the Republic of Macedonia, the process of equalization of family relations is moving progressively ahead. The increasingly improving equality of women with men related to managing the family budget suggests that major progressive changes in the status of women in the rural family have occurred. One of the reasons for these changes in the status of women (amplified family authority) is certainly the fact that now women (as well as other family members) are active in generating family revenue, which was not the case before⁸.

From a sociological point of view, one of the most reliable indicators of the character of family relations, i.e. family authority, is undoubtedly the decision-making process in the family.

In analyzing family relations, it should be taken into account that they are not only determined by the social, economic and cultural

⁸ See: Ruza First, Authority Structure in Rural Households, Rural Sociology, No.7, 1969.

features of the family, but by the character of the spouses as well, to a great extent. Specifically, family relations, which at the same time represent the most intimate relations established in society, are personal relations between closely related individuals, i.e. they represent non-institutionalized relations⁹. It can only be added that one can not view independently the influence of personality on family relations and general family relations; family relations are largely affected by the actions of individuals.

In any case, the sociological research accomplished to date confirms that in traditional families the husband makes all major and important decisions. Furthermore, research in this area suggests that in underdeveloped regions, changes in family relations and family authority are much shallower, relative to developed regions. Thus, between the two extreme points of authority - patriarchal and equal - there exists a whole spectrum of transitional forms of authority¹⁰.

One of the more important family decisions is certainly the purchase of more valuable family items. As has been the case in the presentation thus far, and in order to compare family relations in the Republic of Macedonia, it is necessary to return to the features of the two extreme types of family relations.

In extreme patriarchal family relations, it is typical for the husband to make the decisions about purchasing all critical and important items in the family. On the other hand, in families with modern family relations all members of the family are equally involved in the decision-making process purchasing most critical family items, especially those who are most interested in the particular item. Of special interest in this study is the status and role of women with regard to this issue.

The following is information related to the issue of purchasing critical family items, received from the research:

⁹ See: Zagorka Golubovic, *Family as Human Community*, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1981, page 187 and onward.

¹⁰ See: Ruza First: *Op.cit.*

	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Husband	155	19,4
Wife	62	7,8
Husband and wife	386	48,3
All family members	184	23,0
No answer	<u>13</u>	<u>1,6</u>
Total:	800	100,0

The results from the above research, once again, offer insight into the status and role of women in rural families in the Republic of Macedonia.

This horizontal profile of family relations, i.e. family authority, reveals that major changes have occurred in the structure of family authority. 20 or 30 years ago the authority of the father was the determining factor¹¹, today the husband's authority is sharply reduced, and he increasingly consults his wife and acts less selfishly when purchasing critical family items. This at the same time, means an increase in female authority in rural families and increasing equality with the husband, which suggests massive progressive in the status of women in the family and great equalization of family relations.

Yet, if this issue is viewed by ethnicity of the family, a somewhat different distribution of authority among the family members is evident.

¹¹ See: Naum Matilov, Changes in the Modern Family in Macedonia, doctoral dissertation, Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade, 1990.

Table 3. Purchasing of critical family items, by the ethnicity of the family

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Who makes the decision about the purchase</i>					<i>Total</i>
	<i>Husband</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Husband and wife</i>	<i>All family members</i>	<i>No answer</i>	
<i>Macedonian</i>	16,2	5,7	48,9	27,7	1,5	100,0
<i>Albanian</i>	32,4	14,8	48,6	2,1	2,1	100,0
<i>Turkish</i>	53,3	6,7	26,7	13,3	0,0	100,0
<i>Serbian</i>	10,3	15,4	33,3	38,5	2,6	100,0
<i>Other</i>	9,1	0,0	90,1	0,0	0,0	100,0

Because the above results in absolute terms are very low for the rest of the surveyed families (which would lead to questionable conclusions), we will comment on the results that refer to Macedonian and Albanian families only.

Although the level of involvement of Albanian woman in the decision-making process for purchasing critical family items is relatively high, there are twice as many Albanian families as there are Macedonian families in which the husband makes the decision on purchasing critical family items. Clearly, that father's authority is strongest in Albanian families. Second, only a small portion of Albanian families decides collectively (including all family members) about purchasing critical family items, relative to Macedonian families. This suggests that family authority is concentrated with the parents in Albanian families, which is one of the features of a typical patriarchal family. At the same time, it also means that the process of equalization of family relations in Albanian families proceeds at a slower pace than to that of Macedonian families.

When viewing this topic by type of family, it can be concluded that the authority of the husband (undoubtedly anticipated) is most dominant in agricultural families (27%), and is weakest in non-

agricultural families (16,3%). Conversely, the authority of the wife is weakest in agricultural families (4,6%), and is strongest in non-agricultural families (13,0%). In this case mixed families are a kind of a transitional model between the other two types of family. It is known that based on the character of property, patriarchal family relations are predominant in agricultural families, and the status and role of women are disadvantaged for many reasons. At the same time, the presence of modern family relations in non-agricultural families contributes to a much more satisfactory status for women in rural families.

Change in the structure of family authority, and in that context change in the status of women in rural families, will be presented through the determination of the character of family relations associated with making decisions about marriage.

Let us first stress that not long ago this issue was talked about in a traditional way. Namely, the parents, usually the father, would make the decisions about the marriage of a family member. Any substantial deviation from this generally accepted rule was considered as incident. Thus, the young people directly involved in marriage had absolutely no influence over the selection of a future spouse, and therefore they were in a completely subordinated position.

In this context, referring to spouse selection in patriarchal environments in Macedonia, Vera Erlich indicates that in this kind of environment the parents of the young make the decision almost exclusively; the opinion of the young about the marriage is almost meaningless¹².

However, in modern living conditions, and even in rural families, family relations and family authority have gone through major changes and are completely different from the above. In this context, the question was asked "Who in your family makes the decisions related to marriage?" - The following answers were received:

¹² See: Vera Erlih, Op. cit., page 146.

	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Husband	13	1,6
Wife	8	1,0
Husband and wife	77	9,6
The young	602	75,3
All family members	41	5,1
No children	38	4,8
No answer	<u>21</u>	<u>2,6</u>
Total:	800	100,00

The research information reveals very interesting modern movements in family life have caused the destruction of traditional patriarchal relations and principles and the destruction of the old structure of family authority. In this case, the information that the wife decides about marriage of the young only in rare instances should not be considered isolated from global tendencies; if viewed in isolation, this information can not be an indicator of the status of women in the family. In the patriarchal family, the issue of the young getting married used to be exclusively under the control of the parents. Current condition, in which the marriage decision is made by the young themselves, represents a great step forward in the modernization of family relations, which indirectly suggests that the status of women in rural families follows the same progressive trend.

The children within the family can also depict the status of women in the family through decision making regarding employment and various other forms of assistance. If, for the sake of comparison, we look at the typical patriarchal type of family, we will find that the father is the one who has the exclusive right to decide and determine the working tasks of the young. In this context, the opinion of the women is not taken into account at all. One of the basic features of

the other type of family relations is that the women, and often the young themselves, are involved in decision making about the working tasks of the young¹³.

The following data enables a determination of what type of family relations presently exist in rural family relations in Macedonia, i.e. what changes have occurred in family authority and in the status of the women in the family.

The results from this survey are as follows:

	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Husband	62	7,8
Wife	170	21,3
Husband and wife	347	43,4
All family members	164	20,5
No answer, no children	<u>57</u>	<u>7,1</u>
Total:	800	100,0

This information clearly implies that major changes have occurred lately with regard to this issue. It is obvious that in the Macedonian rural family, as has been mentioned, the modern family relations are the norm, which contributes to the improvement of the status of women in rural families. Even more, with respect to this issue, women often dominate over men, i.e. the wife is usually the one who determines the working tasks of the young, which says a great deal about her changed status and the role she plays in today's rural families. Yet in most instances, the husband and wife decide jointly about the kind and amount of engagement of their children. Consultation between husband and wife demonstrates the positive side of the destruction of the patriarchal structure¹⁴.

¹³ See: Naum Matilov, Ibidem.

¹⁴ See: Vera Erlih, same, page 231

The status and role of women in rural families can also be determined through the analysis of family relations associated with female role in deciding on further education of the children.

In the modern living environment, the education of the young is one of the most critical factors affecting both the horizontal and vertical mobility of the population, especially the rural population. In traditionally isolated living environments, individuals used to gain all their knowledge and capability by getting involved in business processes and being employed. Becoming educated outside the family used to be the privilege of more reputable and financially better situated families. No wonder, as the issue of children's education was in totally controlled by the father.

Although these instances exist to a certain extent even today in rural families in Macedonia (according to previous research), they are still considered to be the segments of traditional patriarchal relations. This is also confirmed by the results of this study.

The question was asked: "Who in your family decides about the further education of the children?" The distribution of answers is as follows:

	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
No children	51	6,4
Husband	29	3,6
Wife	10	1,3
Husband and wife	198	24,8
Young themselves	406	50,8
All family members	97	12,1
No answer	<u>9</u>	<u>1,1</u>
Total:	800	100,0

The displayed data reveal large changes in family relations with respect to this issue. The father's authority continuously recedes, thus becoming increasingly only symbolic. Actually, in this specific instance, the wife's authority is symbolic, too. However, if, according to the available data, general progressive changes in family relations are taken into account, this also implies that the status of women in the family has also been modernized. Specifically, when issues of vital importance and interest to younger generations are discussed, their authority in making decisions about their own future and prospects increases steadily. This means that in this specific case, and similar to previously analyzed issues, the penetration of new democratic relations in the family (i.e. the equalization of family relations which greatly influences general family structure and family life) is increasingly intensifying. Also, these changes occur in all family types, regardless of ethnicity or any other factor. Modern changes in the status and role of women in rural families in the Republic of Macedonia should be viewed in light of the above statements.

3. Family Systems of Values and Norms

Another way to determine the status of women in the family is through an analysis of the family value system, i.e. through its changes over time. The family value system, while seems to have an autonomous character, is still under strong influence by the broader general societal structure. In implementing some of the specific roles within the family, the individual actually abides by values and norms, which to a certain extent are generally adopted at a given historical point of time and represent its product. The variable character of family values and norms can best be viewed through their historical development (evolution), which in general terms has moved from a patriarchal value system, through a "transitional form" into a modern system of values and norms, which also is a subject to further changes and modifications¹⁵.

¹⁵ See: Ms. Olivera Buric-Jukovic, PhD: Changes in family life affected by women's employment, Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade, 1968, page 126-172, as well as

However, in order for the societal value to become personal, it needs to be accepted and/or adopted by the specific individuals. To a large extent, the character of the societal environment determines this adoption.

Thus, in the patriarchal family environment, where authoritarian family relations are predominant, the young usually have to adopt a so-called "heteronomous" value system. This requires the young to adopt the values and norms dictated by another authoritative person, and the autonomy in making decisions in this instance is minimal.

Next, in transitional family types like ours, as well as in modern ones, the system of values is not dictated from outside as an item that must be accepted; a so-called "autonomous" value system is created in which the autonomy of the individual is predominant and central. In this regard, the family should not simply be described as a medium between society and the individual. This is because in transferring societal values and standards to family members, the family also cares about an individual's capacities and potential, leaving enough space to the individual for self-determination. The conflict between the heteronomous and autonomous value systems, the latter of which is often present in the families of "transitional type", usually affects positively the younger generations which tend to accept the autonomous system of values and norms, provided it is based on a realistic foundation¹⁶.

In this study, changes in the value system have been determined through the opinion of surveyed women in rural areas about certain issues of vital importance to family life. They too served as indicators for observing the change in the status of women in rural families.

Ms. Slobodan Jaksic, PhD: *The Family in the Value System in Yugoslavia*, Contemporary Administration, Belgrade, 1978.

¹⁶ See: Ms. Zaga Peric-Golubovic, PhD, *Op. cit.*, page 197 and onward.

In this context, surveyed women in rural areas of the Republic of Macedonia were asked to indicate how much importance they gave to level of education, nationality, economic status and religion in selecting a spouse.

Below is the information on the importance of education in the selection of a spouse:

	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Not important	228	28,5
of little importance	139	17,4
of medium importance	144	18,0
Very important	266	33,3
No answer	<u>23</u>	<u>2,9</u>
Total:	800	100,0

It is known that in the patriarchal environment, marriages are usually conducted between women and men that belong to the same class, ethnicity, religion etc. In this regard, the level of education, nationality and other factors used to be very important in arranging marriages. However, data indicate that in the modern environment getting married becomes increasingly a personal matter for rural women, which suggests that the old value system (where the level of education of the potential spouse was a critical factor in determining the possibility of marriage) is disappearing. In this specific case, only one third of the surveyed women consider education to be an important factor in selecting a spouse, while the others do not consider it important. The fall of the importance of education in determining marriages indicates that social differences between genders become initial condition for the society to open to the heterogamy, which is an

immense step forward toward the greater emancipation of rural women¹⁷.

In other words, this means that the main values for women (in modern rural families in the Republic of Macedonia) in selecting a spouse is mutual attractiveness between partners. This circumstance, in a way represents modernization, the improvement of the status of women in the family and the abandonment of the old patriarchal value system.

It is worth mentioning a particularly large deviation from the general distribution of answers (applying to all factors: level of education, economic status, ethnicity and religion) occurs if we view the answers by the ethnicity of the families. Due to the above, further discussion will relate the results of research on the ethnicity of the families of the surveyed women.

Thus, for example, as to the importance of education in selecting a spouse, as many as one third (33,6%) of surveyed Macedonian women did not care much about the educational level of their spouse, while only 6,3% of the Albanian women answered this question the same way. Conversely, while only 23,3% of Macedonian women stated that the level of education is very important to them in selecting a spouse, four times as many Albanian women (81,7%) gave the same answer. These answers strongly illustrate the current position of the Macedonian family between patriarchal and modern value systems as well as the differences associated with the position and role of women in these two different and distant family value systems.

Below is the information on the importance of economic status in the selection of a spouse:

¹⁷ See: Ruza Petrovic: Marriage and Social Stratification, Sociology, No. 1-2, Belgrade, 1991, page 234.

	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Not important	216	27,0
of little importance	116	14,5
of medium importance	203	25,4
Very important	254	31,8
No answer	<u>11</u>	<u>1,4</u>
Total:	800	100,0

This data, which is similar to the above data about the importance of education, confirm that the economic status of the spouse is no longer a determining and critical factor in the decision making process about marriage. Specifically, as few as one third of the surveyed women point to the economic status of the spouse as a very critical factor in getting married. It should also be mentioned that the difficult economic condition of rural families in the Republic of Macedonia is one of the relevant reasons for such answers. Nevertheless, the remaining two thirds of the surveyed female rural population do not put much emphasis on the economic status of the spouse when getting married. To them, other features of the spouse that are not directly related to economic status are much more important in the selection process.

However, as has already been stated earlier, if the responses of the surveyed women are viewed by ethnicity (Macedonian and Albanian, the two largest ethnic groups in the country), there is great differentiation in the answers to this question. Specifically, the economic status of the spouse is not important for 31,0% of Macedonian women, and the same is true for 4,9% of surveyed Albanian women, whereas it is very important for only 21,1% of surveyed Macedonian women and for as 85,9% of surveyed Albanian women.

This information confirms the disadvantaged position of Albanian women in the family, who, because of a generally complex and difficult role in the family, get married almost exclusively for

material/economic reasons. One of the most relevant contributions to these conditions is certainly the relatively low education level of Albanian women, as well as the traditional isolation of Albanian family from the societal developments. In this regard, Macedonian families have intensively abandoned the above mentioned traditional beliefs and attitudes (the importance of education level and economic status in marriage). This, in turn, gets them closer to modern values and norms, and thus the status of Macedonian women in the family is by far more favorable.

However, while the research reveals that "education level" and "economic status" are not determining elements in deciding about marriage, absolutely different information is associated with the factors "ethnicity" and "religion". Specifically, although the research includes only the declarative positions of the surveyed women, the great relevance that is associated with ethnicity and religion in deciding about marriage suggests that traditional patriarchal values have been kept within the family. The bottom line is that this, to a certain extent, disables the transformation in the status of women in rural families.

This condition has been illustrated very persuasively by the results of the research.

Below is the information on the importance of ethnicity in the selection of a spouse:

	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Not important	27	3,4
of little importance	43	5,4
of medium importance	55	6,9
Very important	662	82,8
No answer	<u>13</u>	<u>1,6</u>
Total:	800	100,0

Below is the information on the importance of religion in the selection of a spouse:

	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Not important	22	2,8
of little importance	25	3,1
of medium importance	45	5,6
Very important	698	87,3
No answer	<u>10</u>	<u>1,3</u>
Total:	800	100,0

The above general distribution of answers reveals that according to the opinion of the surveyed female population in rural areas of Macedonia, the above values (ethnicity and religion) play an extremely important role in deciding about marriage, and as such must be taken into consideration.

Yet, if the answers are viewed by ethnicity of the families, it can be concluded that patriarchal features are not equally present in Macedonian and Albanian families.

Specifically, while for surveyed Albanian women ethnicity is very important in 96,5% of the cases, it is important for only 80,6% of Macedonian women. The same scenario applies to the importance of religion in selecting a spouse. Thus, literally all of the surveyed Albanian women (100%) feel the religion of the spouse has to be taken into account when getting married, and the same attitude applies to a significantly lower percentage of surveyed Macedonian women - 84,8%.

The diverse ethnic composition of the population in the Republic of Macedonia makes it possible, depending on the communication between ethnic communities, to register ethnically mixed marriages. These are a significant indicator of the openness

and/or isolation of a specific societal environment, as well as the status of women in the families. After World War II, the percentage of ethnically mixed marriages among the total number of marriages in the Republic of Macedonia has constantly been in the vicinity of 10%¹⁸, which means that 90% of marriages are ethnically pure (homogamy). In practice, this condition is considered "normal", especially since one of the usual preconditions for getting into marriage is the necessary closeness and intimacy between woman and man.

Despite the apparent differentiation associated with the answers received from the surveyed female population of Macedonian and Albanian ethnic decent, the empirical material from this research confirms that general conditions on this issue have not experienced noticeable changes. Nearly all of the surveyed women, regardless of their ethnicity and religion, education level, age, working and family status, etc., believe that the ethnicity and religion are critical factors, moreover, the women of Albanian ethnicity even believe these are the determining factors in marriage. Given the current social, economic and political climate in our broader environment, which affects the definition of the family value system, these attitudes were expected and represent a reflection of the current condition. The military actions in the Republic of Macedonia that were ethnically based sharpened and isolated inter-ethnic relations to a great extent, which contributed to the strengthening of nationalism. This surely affected the family value system and strengthened elements that support ethnic homogeneity and isolation, which definitely slows down social prosperity, in any respect. These influences in particular affect the status of women in the family negatively, which, as we have seen, exhibits many progressive tendencies and comes closer to modern family relations in many segments of family life.

¹⁸ See: Ruza Petrovic: "Features of the Marriage in Yugoslavia", book: Household, Family and Marriage in Yugoslavia, Institute for Social Research of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, Belgrade, 1987, page 236.

CONCLUSIONS

The Macedonian village has gone through a process of dynamic transition during the past several decades.

In addition to positive changes, several negative processes occurred as well. The intensive deagrarization and uncontrolled rural exodus contributed to a massive rural devastation and inhibition of the agrarian population. The social structure of the rural population in the Republic of Macedonia has been changed and reduced to several social categories. Non-agricultural individuals and individuals with dual jobs (farmer + worker) are predominant in rural households now.

The rural population is on the edge of demographic aging.

It is important to mention that the female labor force in agriculture is older relative to the male labor force. As the female labor force ages, homemaking generally deteriorates, the land is not thoroughly cultivated and less cattle is raised on farms.

Rural women are the majority in following groups: illiterate (75%), with no education (73%), no complete primary education (57%); men are the majority in groups who have completed high school (68%) and undergraduate education (73%).

The absence of an appropriate rural development policy - the process of infrastructure building (communal, social services) - is a major negative element in the general development policy of the Republic of Macedonia. Many villages nowadays are out of reach of social and economic development and their social and economic life dies steadily. Complaints identify reduced productivity, increased unemployment, decreased personal spending and magnified poverty as problem, which explain the answers of women to whom the general condition in rural areas has worsened (54%).

As a result of an objective and realistic consideration of living problems, "**unemployment**" has been emphasized as the most

significant factor. It is a fact that a large portion of the rural population is insufficiently employed in agriculture and lives on the edge of poverty. Thus, when talking about rural development, one should consider the possibilities for diversification of the rural economy, i.e. diversification of the revenues of rural households.

There is a strong determination that the most serious problem in agriculture is the "**insecure market for agricultural commodities**".

The unorganized and insecure marketing of agriculture commodities creates a notion of risk in agricultural production and is certainly a negative element in the comprehensive development of rural areas in the Republic of Macedonia.

From the presented information, it appears that there exists a great need for financial support (credits) for the development of agricultural production. Rural women see the future in "**living and being employed in the village**" (52,4%).

However, the village needs infrastructure development as a precondition for diverse economic and cultural development, which would secure a higher living standard for the population.

Special attention should be paid to development of the service sector and securing a suitable environment for investment (domestic and foreign) in the development of small enterprises.

This study, as well as other preceding research in this area, confirms that progressive social and economic development causes a series of changes in all segments of family life, and subsequent positive change in the status of women in the family as well. As a result of newly created global social conditions, individuals gain new knowledge about marriage, family and family planning. This contributes to the formation of new modern attitudes which can further significantly affect the practical reproductive behavior of women, which in turn strongly determines their roles and status in the family. This social influence over family planning plays a determining role i.e.

represents a significant indicator of the general emancipation of the women. For that reason, this factor will receive a great deal of attention in this concluding section.

For example, research confirms that of various non-institutional social components (economic, cultural, sociological, etc.) have a very strong influence on individual opinion about family planning. Specifically, under the influence of these and other factors, this study reveals that most of the surveyed women believe there should be at most three children per family. This confirms the assumption that the surveyed women understand current difficult economic conditions, which they must face just like society as a whole, and therefore that they believe that increased fertility leads to a worsening of the condition. These attitudes gain even more validity when taking into account that this research covered only the rural female population, and that one can realistically conclude that the old traditional attitudes about family planning have been overcome to a great extent.

One of the basic indicators of progressive changes in this direction, as was mentioned earlier, is certainly the changed general status of the women in the modern family. In this context, the changes in reproductive behavior are of special importance, because they undoubtedly lead to faster destruction of the patriarchal type of family. However, this general tendency does not occur with the same intensity in families of different ethnicity, which certainly contributes to the slower development of a family planning process in the Republic of Macedonia relative to other countries. Namely, the data from our research indicate that there is a tendency for higher fertility in Albanian families relative to Macedonian. The fraction of Albanian women who declared that they wanted four, five or more children in marriage is significantly higher than that of Macedonian women. It looks like the main reason for this circumstance is the high percentage of illiterate in the female Albanian population, which according to official statistical data is twice as high as that of Macedonian women. The influence of illiteracy in the female population on biological reproduction is multilateral. First of all, illiterate women normally do not accept initiatives on family planning, relative to those who are educated. They are also more resistant to influences that come from the environment, and

they are more likely to be under the conservative influences of tradition and religion, as well as other ethnic prejudices.

Although the influence of society on the patriarchal family is very apparent (as we have seen), in the newly created situation the problems that families face are of such nature that in order for them to be successfully resolved, the family needs to establish far more intensive communication with the broader society. This would certainly lead to a greater emancipation of women, as well as improvement of female status in the family.

As far as family relations are concerned, (which are also relevant indicators of the status of women in the family), the research shows that even though the husband has kept the dominant position in the family, his authority in the modern family in the Republic of Macedonia is constantly decreasing, and has lost its former role and importance. Thus, in analyzing the questions related to making critical decisions in the family, it is clear that the authority of the husband decreased constantly, and the husband and wife increasingly make decisions jointly. Radically changed family relations are those between the parents and children (inter-generation relations). These changes are in particular visible when processing questions directly related to and of interest to the young. Although the authority of the parents is still present when making the most critical family decisions, it exhibits a downward trend, according to the data collected. In addition, the opinion of the young is increasingly respected and heard when making family decisions that are directly related to the young themselves. The authority of the young is more and more apparent. All this information suggests that for family relations in the Republic of Macedonia, the presence of both old and new elements is apparent, and the conflict between the two undoubtedly leads to the modernization of family relations. Finally, these trends definitely lead toward modernization of the status of women in the family.

The changes induced by the processes of industrialization and urbanization in the global societal system also affected the system of values and norms in the family. This is another indicator of the status of women in the family. These processes in the family, similar to the

ones analyzed above, create a conflict between old and new attitudes. This leads to further abandonment of traditional family values and norms, and acceptance of modern oriented family values and norms. These changes should be considered only as a first step toward the modern family and modern family relations, because, at least for now, not all of the conditions for accepting the new family value system in our society have been fulfilled.

We should view the level of emancipation of rural women in the Republic of Macedonia in light of the above thoughts. Her status in the family, although still burdened with certain patriarchal prejudices, moves toward the status and role that women have in the modern family, in general terms.