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Like Totally 80s: Supporting Missions and Partners in the Field

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Anicca Jansen was a member of USAID's Office of Microenterprise Development from its launch in 1994 until her retirement from government service in June 2013. During that time she managed and monitored several Implementation Grant Program grants which supported the development of microfinance institutions. With a heavy focus on Africa and Haiti in the early years, her work later expanded to Eastern Europe, Haiti, and the Mideast. From 2001 to 2004 Anicca served as USAID's West Africa Regional Technical Advisor for Microenterprise and Microfinance.

USAID supported small enterprises and their access to finance since its creation in 1961, but it was in the 1980s that support became more deliberate and focused. As Beth Rhyne¹ put it, "Small enterprise stood at the intersection of two primary (but often conflicting) A.I.D. objectives, its legislative one of reaching the very poor, and the administrative one of promoting the private sector." [Click here to read full document.](#)

This was a critical time for USAID and the broader development community to gain a richer understanding of microenterprises and their importance to both urban and rural economies, farm and non-farm households. From 1978 to 1990, USAID supported the Small Enterprise Approaches to Employment (SEAE) project, originally through the Office of Urban Development. The two major components of the SEAE project were PISCES I and II (Program of Investment in the Small Capital Enterprise Sector) followed by ARIES (Assistance to Resource Institutions for Enterprise Support). Meanwhile, the Office of Rural Development also supported the Off-Farm Employment Project, led by Carl Liedholm at Michigan State University (MSU). [Experiments in Small and Microenterprise Development]. During the life of the SEAE project, the Office of Urban Development merged with the Office of Rural Development to create the Employment and Enterprise Development Division,

broadening the focus beyond the urban informal sector to include rural, off-farm enterprises and employment.

While PISCES and the MSU work focused on better understanding enterprises through case studies and evaluations, ARIES2 was designed to understand and strengthen the organizations that were implementing micro and small enterprise projects. ARIES provided training and technical support to implementing partners such as CARE, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Freedom from Hunger, Save the Children, and the local partners with whom they worked. In addition to increasing understanding of microenterprises, these projects raised the issues of cost-effectiveness and financial self-sufficiency. Private voluntary organizations (PVOs) and non-governmental organization (NGOs) became more aware and accepting of the need for cost-effectiveness. In addition, the idea of developing self-sufficient financial services providers, with cost-covering interest rates, became more widely accepted.

The SEAE project highlighted the many ways that microenterprise and microfinance could be supported, but left it to USAID Missions to design programs suited to their country context. A 1989 inventory found at least 87 programs focused solely on microenterprise, or with microenterprise as a component of a larger private-sector project. It was estimated that the budgets for these programs were about US\$290 million over their total project life. [USAID Microenterprise Stocktaking Report. December 1989. James Boomgard]