

● Family & Development Progress Update

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One of a series of initiatives of
the U.S. Agency for International Development:

The Environment Initiative

The Democracy Initiative

The Partnership for Business and Development

Family and Development

plus

Toward Strategic Management, and

The Administrator's Evaluation Initiative

Overview

This draft conceptual framework builds on the Family and Development Initiative. It sets forth goals and strategies and indicates how ongoing and planned programs fit into this initiative. It also describes how this initiative links with and reinforces the Agency's other initiatives.

The goal of development is to improve people's lives. Successful development depends on people's participation -- the central theme of this initiative -- and it is this theme which helps bring together all the initiatives. The family plays a key role in driving economic growth and in allocating benefits to individuals. Economic growth cannot be sustained without widely distributed benefits. Focusing on people and families also is essential to democratization because democratic institutions built on a base of social misery and unrepresentative leadership are not sustainable.

The family is the critical mediating force between people and institutions in all countries. A better understanding of the role of the family in development will strengthen countries' capacity to pursue policies favoring political and economic liberalization and will enhance efforts to directly improve family and individual well-being.

I. Goals and Strategies

The overall goal of all the Agency initiatives is to improve the well-being of individuals. Under the Family and Development Initiative, there are two sub-goals. They are:

- 1) to enable families to make better choices; and,
- 2) to facilitate family members' participation in the economic, social, and political life of their countries.

Enabling families to make better choices requires, on the one hand, increased options for and supply of services, and, on the other, information and education so that families can take advantage of the options and resources available to them. The strategies for achieving these goals are to:

- Increase family income by expanding opportunities for participation by families in the economy;

- Strengthen the family's capacity to care for and support its members through improved access to and expanded options for health care, family planning, education, nutrition and other social services;
- Promote pluralism by encouraging and facilitating the participation of families in community and societal decision making;
- Reduce the impact of conditions that place family members at risk and enable people affected by crisis to regain the social support systems needed to survive.

There are at least four major spheres of action in which these strategies can be implemented:

o The family as an economic system

Economic activity in developing countries frequently is concentrated at the family level. Family members can be helped to diversify income sources through removal of barriers to employment, credit, business creation, land, and property rights. Increased family consumption, saving, and investment not only provide impetus for sustained economic growth, but also mobilize families to support the type of policy changes that enable growth to occur. Activities might cover sectoral policy reform; small and micro-enterprise development; family food security; small-scale savings, and credit opportunities; and adult education and skills training, with emphasis on females.

o The family as a social and biological reproductive system

The family has the primary responsibility for nurturing and protecting its members from infancy. Children are introduced to the culture, values, and norms of their society by their families. Responsible parenthood is key to the health and well-being of future generations. For families to be empowered to perform these critical functions, they need access to and expanded options for inter alia: early childhood care and development; health care; family planning; nutrition programs; physical shelter; and basic education for children and adults, ensuring equal access by females.

o Political choices and the family

Deepening democratic reform depends upon extending and institutionalizing local level participation and the exercise of free choice. Top down policies that open up participation in institutions and call for devolution of authority must be accompanied by efforts from the bottom up to prepare for such participation.

Activities reducing intra-family inequities and supporting political pluralism through families include: decentralization of programming, budgeting, and management decisions to communities; expanding access to information and raising adult literacy level, with emphasis on females; education and information on legal rights and civic participation; electoral reform facilitating registration and secret balloting; reform of bank regulations and commercial codes to permit women to receive credit; reform of family law to permit more equitable inheritance and child custody; and liberalization of rights to land, property, free assembly and expression.

o Families at risk

Many families are at risk or are undergoing serious transformation due to civil strife and war, substance abuse, environmental hazards and AIDS. As a result, the number of refugees and displaced people, orphans, and street children has increased. Some of these conditions cause families to be at risk temporarily. In others, the risk can be chronic. In the developing world, growing numbers of isolated households are headed by young females. These households are disproportionately impoverished, and more and more of them are replicating themselves. Such families typically lack education and suffer from ill health, low productivity, and extreme poverty. Targeted assistance to families at transitory risk includes disaster assistance and emergency feeding programs to help families continue functioning. For families at chronic risk, low-cost, self-help housing for the homeless, reduction of exploitative labor practices, support for child care, nutrition, and parenting programs are appropriate.

II. The Role of Family-focused Analysis

Experience has shown that the success and effectiveness of development programs can be hampered by lack of understanding of family dynamics. Compiling and documenting examples of development activities that have been enhanced (or hindered) by an understanding of family dynamics is an important first step. Analysis can give insight into family functioning and survival strategies that inform the design and implementation of development activities. Results of such studies provide a baseline from which to assess the impact of our programs.

At a broader level, expanded use of "family level" analysis in project and program planning and monitoring will enhance the success and effectiveness of a broad range of development efforts. Analytical activities supporting this initiative include literature reviews and analyses of secondary data on family dynamics and their role in the development process and field-based applied research keyed to planned programs or policy reform.

III. Programmatic Agenda

The Family and Development Initiative emphasizes areas in which A.I.D. historically has made important contributions. Although people-based development is not new, this family initiative framework provides an integrated strategy and a mandate for people-based development principles. To improve their own lives and to realize their potential contribution to development, people need to be empowered through wider access to skills, services, and resources and the knowledge and education to choose among and use the opportunities available. This framework has been developed with the understanding that it will be necessary to maintain and possibly to redirect and/or expand options and services in the following areas:

- Basic education, with particular emphasis on female education and on parenting and child development in early childhood years;
- Sustainable child survival;
- Family planning and safe motherhood;
- AIDS, with particular attention to pediatric AIDS and the effects of AID Son family structures and support systems;
- Household production of goods and services; food security; microenterprise;
- Gender and generation issues particularly regarding intrahousehold allocations of time, power, and control over resources;
- Human rights, family law, protection of children, and political participation by family members;
- Disaster assistance and other programs for refugees and displaced persons;
- Assistance for separated families and provision of family or community care for orphans;
- Environmental activities in which families are important stakeholders.
- Policy reforms that take into account the role and needs of families and open up options for their participation in the economic, social and political life of their countries.

Bureaus and Missions are encouraged to incorporate the Family and Development Initiative into their respective programming planning and reporting cycles. The above areas are indicative of ways in which activities affecting families should be reflected in programming decisions. All appropriated accounts, including DA, ESF, DFA and P.L. 480 are eligible to support this initiative. All modalities, including bilateral project and

non-project assistance, buy-ins to regional bureaus of Agency programs, Peace Corps cooperation, PVO/NGO grants, and university linkages are appropriate.

IV. TALKING POINTS

QUESTION: Is this initiative intended to replace traditional programs such as child survival, nutrition, population, and basic education?

ANSWER: No. These programs are still priorities for A.I.D. This initiative is intended to ensure that the critical role that the family system plays in the survival, nutrition, and education of children and in family planning decisions is more fully factored into programs in these areas. The initiative affirms people-based development principles and is intended to consistently strengthen programming in these areas. This initiative provides a lens through which programs that have less direct impact on people can be designed, implemented, and monitored in order to enhance their effectiveness.

QUESTION: Is this just a matter of "old wine in new bottles"?

ANSWER: Not entirely. Focusing on the role of the family in development is not a new idea. It is used in many areas, from farming systems research to education policies. However, there are many instances where it is overlooked and could provide important insights for the design and implementation of policies and programs. The perspective reflected by this initiative should flow through A.I.D.'s current and new programs to improve their effectiveness and impact on people. In some cases, there may be new activities, in others expansion of on-going programs that have successfully focused on the family, and in still others a new lens through which existing activities are viewed.

QUESTION: How does this initiative relate to three other initiatives: Democracy, Business, and the Environment?

ANSWER: The goal of these initiatives is improvement in the lives of people. The Family Initiative reflects recognition that people do not operate alone. Individuals express many of their needs, make choices, and avail themselves of resources within the context of their family relationships. In order for development planners to formulate effective economic and social policies and programs, they need to understand how and why the family chooses to make use of economic and social resources on behalf of its members. A better understanding of the role of the family in development will strengthen our ability to pursue effective policies for economic and political liberalization as well as management of natural resources.

QUESTION: Where's the beef in this initiative?

ANSWER: This initiative is not an add-on to our program. Enabling families to make better choices and facilitating their participation in the economic, social, and political life of their countries are concepts that are relevant throughout our programs. The result of using these concepts should not be measured by separate resources or programs, but in the increased effectiveness of our programs through a focus on people and their family systems.

QUESTION: Is family defined as household for the purposes of this initiative?

ANSWER: Both the concept of the family (defined as having kinship bonds) and of the household are relevant to this initiative. Both focus on the organizational level and dynamics that operate between the individual and society. The family is a social system. The household is an analytical and operational construct that is often used in survey research and can provide valuable insights for the design, implementation, and monitoring of development interventions. Because family members outside the household may exert powerful influences on what happens to individuals within the household, household data may have to be supplemented by other analyses in order to understand completely family relations in a development context.

QUESTION: Does the initiative mean that development impact should be tracked and measured in terms of families rather than individuals?

ANSWER: No. Indicators like infant mortality and per capita income will always be standards for tracking progress. At the same time, the family system cannot be ignored, because the allocation of resources to and within families significantly influences the level of consumption, health care, and education available to each family member. Indicators based on individual or macro level statistics can be supplemented by household surveys and qualitative data on family systems in order to better understand the dynamics and track the process of development in any particular situation.

QUESTION: How will this initiative deal with the many family structures and value systems and the differing degrees of autonomy that individuals have in diverse family systems?

ANSWER: Socio-cultural differences make it impossible and inappropriate to apply a standard definition or normative form of "family." Whatever form they take, families have important social, biologic, economic, and political functions. The aim of the initiative is to understand and work with family systems, not to judge them. It must be recognized that in some societies, intra-family dynamics can be more authoritarian than democratic. It is also true that many aspects of this initiative and other A.I.D. programs bring greater equity and voice to individual family members, sometimes at the expense of family authority. These situations must be dealt with realistically and sensitively.

QUESTION: Does this initiative apply to non-project assistance?

ANSWER: Yes, perhaps in some instances more usefully than to project assistance. More careful consideration of the people-level outputs of policy changes and programs on individuals, families, and communities can greatly enhance our ability to use creatively these assistance modes. Analyses leading to recommendations for policy change and program interventions are critical to identifying accurately the impact of our assistance efforts.

QUESTION: What is the relationship between the analytic and programmatic components of the initiative?

ANSWER: This initiative is partially based on previous A.I.D. experience in using and dealing with the family as both an analytic optic and an agent and beneficiary of assistance programs. In many countries and sectors, we already know enough to identify program level activities which are consistent with and will further this initiative. At the same time, there are other areas where further study and analysis are required to better understand how things work and what types of influences or interventions might be appropriate. At a broader level, expanded use of "family level" analysis in project and program planning and monitoring will enhance the success and effectiveness of a broad range of development efforts.