

**WOMEN'S STUDIES PROJECT
EVALUATION**

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by

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ABBREVIATIONS

BASICS	Basic Support for Institutionalizing Child Survival Project
CEMICAMP	Centro de Pesquisas e Controle das Doencas Materno-Infantis (Brazil)
CERPOD	Centre d'Etudes et de Recherche sur la Population pour le Developpement (Mali)
CIDEM	Centro de Informacion y Desarrollo de la Mujer (Bolivia)
COOPI	Cooperazione Internazionale (Bolivia)
CTO	Cognizant Technical Officer
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys
FHI	Family Health International
IAC	In-country advisory committee
ISSA	Institute for Social Studies and Action (Philippines)
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
OPS	Office of Population Studies (Philippines)
POLICY	Policy Analysis, Planning, and Action Project
POPCOM	Commission on Population (Philippines)
PPC	Bureau for Program & Policy Coordination, USAID
PRIME	Program for International Training in Health
POPTECH	Population Technical Assistance Project
PROISA	Proyecto Integral en Salud (Bolivia)
PROMUJER	Programas para la Mujer (NGO, Bolivia)
RFA	request for abstract
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Childrens Fund
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WSP	Women's Studies Project

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Women's Studies Project (WSP) is a 5-year cooperative agreement between Family Health International (FHI) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Global Bureau's Office of Population (under the Center for Population, Health and Nutrition). The total planned life-of-project budget is \$8.6 million. The project began in September 1993 and is scheduled to end in September 1998.

The objectives of the WSP are as follows:

- To support research on the immediate and long-term consequences for women of family planning programs and methods.
- To help improve family planning and related reproductive health programs through increased knowledge of the needs and perspectives of women.

The WSP has four major elements, with level of effort distributed as follows:

- Research program (60 percent)
- Technical assistance (20 percent)
- Liaison with women's groups (10 percent)
- Dissemination activities (10 percent)

This evaluation of the project is focused on two major areas:

- The project's technical accomplishments, including results achieved to date under each of the above four major components
- Design, structural, and management issues that have affected project implementation and results

In addition, lessons learned from the project are synthesized, and their potential application to current and future programs is suggested.

Technical Accomplishments of the WSP

Overall, the WSP is well on its way toward achieving the desired results set forth in the cooperative agreement and subsequent modifications agreed to by USAID; nonetheless, there are some issues that have affected the results. Both accomplishments and issues with regard to the four major WSP components can be summarized as follows:

- The WSP conceptual framework has not been used to its full potential, but it has helped increase understanding of the WSP and served as an organizing tool for documenting research strategies and disseminating results.
- The overall impact of the WSP research program may have been affected by a lack of clearly articulated research strategies at the country level.
- The integration of qualitative and quantitative research has generally been successful and valuable, and appears to have enhanced the validity of the research.
- The use of resources on secondary analyses that were not in accord with WSP objectives may have been counterproductive.
- The WSP has achieved a notable level of diversity in both project focus and participation.
- The quality of the data and analysis observed in the field visits appears to be high, the methodologies used are both sound and often innovative, and the research is likely to contribute importantly to understanding the impact of family planning and bringing women's perspectives to bear.
- Assessments of WSP technical assistance to participating researchers and others involved in the studies are highly positive.
- The original design of the WSP underestimated the importance and complexity of working with women's advocacy organizations, especially at the U.S. and international levels, and this has had negative effects. It is important for the WSP to continue to reach out to these groups and attempt to develop consensus on major issues.
- Considerable success has been achieved in working with women's organizations at the country level. The effort to involve women's groups at this level has helped increase attention by WSP participants to gender issues.
- The level of effort for dissemination in the WSP design (10 percent) is insufficient.

- Budget cuts have affected dissemination disproportionately.
- Process lessons learned from the WSP are likely to have as great an impact as research results if effectively documented.
- Availability of WSP datasets and instruments would allow further dissemination of WSP products and longer-term impact.

Design, Structure, and Management of the WSP

While in general terms the WSP is functioning well, it is a complex project that has been affected by major design and implementation issues, including the circumstances surrounding its origin, design, and award; the effects of differing perceptions and expectations by key stakeholders; and the adequacy of human and financial resources and the project's timeframe.

- The WSP has disparate, multiple objectives—such as obtaining credible research results vs. building research capacity, and assessing impacts on women vs. integrating women's perspectives and empowering women—without a clear, functional definition of their relative importance and relationship.
- The WSP may be too complex, for example, in trying both to conduct research and to develop new models and strengthen capacity. It might have been more effective to limit the project objectives, especially for a project, such as the WSP, aiming for innovation.
- There was insufficient consensus on how innovative the WSP was supposed to be—whether the fundamental purpose was to document family planning impact or to develop an innovative model for both assessing the impact on women and involving them in the assessment process; how innovative the means to accomplish that purpose needed to be; and what level of risk in implementing such a complex project (e.g., the risk of working with untried partner organizations) would be tolerable to USAID to achieve the desired results.
- The ambiguities in the project design and evolution contributed to divergent expectations that have negatively affected the project. Greater consultation between USAID and organizations with interest and expertise in the subject area, and transparency in the design and selection process could have avoided some of these problems.

- The distinctions between impact on women and women’s empowerment and between women and gender were never clearly articulated, and this has caused various problems. It is very difficult to incorporate these distinctions post hoc.
- Insufficient time and resources were allotted to deal with the complexities of the project. Innovative, complex approaches take a great deal of time, money, experience, skill, and flexibility, both to foresee problems and to deal with the unforeseen.

In spite of the above issues, the WSP is functioning remarkably well, thanks to considerable flexibility, staff skill, and effective oversight and advisory mechanisms and management processes. Communication, decision-making, and reporting processes work well. The use of in-country advisory committees (IACs) has been particularly effective, and it has been found that local secretariats can also be an effective means of both oversight and capacity building.

Lessons Learned and Their Applications

The most important lessons learned from the WSP for other population, health, and nutrition activities can be summarized as follows:

- Clear and coherent objectives developed in consultation with major stakeholders, selection criteria that ensure the means to achieve those objectives, and adequate time and budget are important to avoid misperceptions and delays, enhance credibility, and maximize impact.
- A guiding conceptual framework is important to ensure that the research addresses the right questions, and that there is a coherent structure to shape the project findings and enhance their impact on policy and programs. Sufficient time should be allowed to develop and refine a conceptual framework, phased to fit the implementation schedule.
- Written research strategies, based on the overall objectives and the conceptual framework, are important.
- A focus on qualitative as well as quantitative methodologies has proved effective for this type of research. The innovative approaches and broad participation achieved by the WSP should be used as models for future research activities.
- The in-country oversight and advisory mechanisms used by the WSP, particularly the IACs, have been highly effective. Local involvement and ownership enhance utilization of both the research and process results.

- Women's advocacy organizations (both international and in country) are core constituents for activities dealing with women and gender issues. These groups should be fully involved in design, implementation, dissemination, and advocacy for policy and program changes based on project results. Such involvement requires a significant commitment and planning to include the necessary mechanisms and resources from the very beginning of a project.
- To achieve the desired impact on policy and programs, sufficient time and money must be allowed to analyze complex data, synthesize the findings, develop adequate dissemination strategies, and disseminate the results.

Possible linkages with other activities to help sustain WSP accomplishments include the following:

- Other cooperating agencies and projects should be informed of the results of the WSP and encouraged to support policy and program modifications based on those results.
- Other relevant population, health, and nutrition projects and programs should be encouraged to establish or strengthen relationships with women's health advocacy organizations, both international and in country, in order to build on the relationships established by the WSP and strengthen USAID's transition to an integrated, gender-sensitive reproductive health focus.
- The network of local researchers and IAC members developed by the WSP is a resource for current and future population, health, and nutrition activities. Their involvement in future activities would also continue to enhance the local capacity developed by the WSP. The Office of Population, Center for Population, Health and Nutrition, should try to maintain contact with these individuals, inform them of other relevant activities in their countries, and ensure that project implementers are encouraged to seek their involvement.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations on WSP Technical Accomplishments

- The WSP conceptual framework should be updated to reflect all the research conducted. It would be useful to dedicate all or part of a final in-country advisory committee (IAC) meeting in each emphasis country to reviewing the framework in light of country research findings. The WSP could use this input to reassess and revise the framework.
- The research strategy for each emphasis country should be documented, with input from researchers and IAC members, and disseminated to all WSP participants in each country. The strategy document should acknowledge any divergence between country and WSP priorities, explain WSP priorities, and, if applicable, note how countries' other research needs can be addressed.
- The WSP should strive to give qualitative and quantitative research findings equal weight to the extent that they are relevant to the research, and effectively communicate those findings both to policymakers and to program designers and implementers.
- Future research projects should ensure that all activities, including secondary analyses, advance the overall project objectives. Before secondary analyses are funded, the types of analyses that can be produced from a dataset should be determined and their value to the project objectives assessed; there should also be some prospect for deriving practical recommendations from the analysis. Other criteria should include the interest of policymakers, donors, and other key country actors. Secondary analysis may be of limited value in investigating a very new topic or an old topic with a new perspective.
- For the remainder of the WSP, the WSP and USAID (particularly the Office of Population, Center for Population, Health and Nutrition; the Center's Gender Working Group; and the Office of Women in Development) should focus on promoting communication with women's advocacy groups, including those not now actively involved with the WSP and skeptical of it. The purpose of these efforts should be to discuss research and process results from the WSP, and promote collaboration in dissemination and policy/program advocacy. Proactive means will be necessary.
- Future projects with a research component should consider increasing the resources available for dissemination to 30 percent.

- For effective dissemination, research results should be accompanied by clear discussion of the implications for program design, service delivery, quality of care, and the like.
- It is important to document and disseminate process results as well as research results, including research innovations and participation, experience in integrating qualitative and quantitative research, and experience in integrating a women-centered or gender perspective into the research. The variables that affect successful participation of IAC members should also be documented. It might be particularly useful to develop a short but comprehensive “road map” of how the different elements of the WSP interrelate, and what has been learned from each element.
- Dissemination strategies must ensure that consensus on messages is achieved and that messages are tailored to the intended audiences. Strategies also should try to foresee and minimize damage from possible misinterpretation or misuse of findings, particularly those related to sensitive topics. Researchers should be aware that controversial or unexpected findings will be closely scrutinized, and be prepared to defend their methods and analyses.
- A final dissemination conference in Washington, D.C., is recommended, with broad participation by USAID, cooperating agencies, women’s organizations, and organizations actually or potentially interested in follow-on or related activities. If possible, presentations in New York should be considered.

Recommendations on Design, Structure, and Management

- For the remainder of the WSP, the Office of Population, the Gender Working Group, the Office of Women in Development, and USAID Missions in the emphasis countries should focus on promoting attention to the WSP in presentations, seminars, and cooperating agency meetings, and on encouraging collaboration in dissemination and use of the project results.
- Consideration should be given to extending the completion time for the WSP by at least 6 months and adding sufficient funds to ensure adequate dissemination of both research and process results. If possible, an additional period of time and an adequate budget should be allowed to develop cross-country analyses and make instruments and datasets available for use by other researchers.

- To the extent possible, clear, limited, and internally coherent objectives should be developed for innovative and/or complex activities to minimize divergence in perceptions and expectations.
- For innovative future activities, the means and skills needed to achieve the desired results should be carefully assessed, and accurately reflected in the request for abstract (RFA) and selection criteria.
- Consensus should be gained among major stakeholders through extensive consultation from the earliest stages of project design, particularly for innovative activities.
- Women's empowerment and gender issues should be built into project objectives and implementation mechanisms, and the RFA and selection criteria should require appropriate expertise in these areas. If needed, gender training should be provided for project participants during the formative stages of the activity.
- For future projects, particularly those taking an innovative approach, adequate resources and time to deal with the unexpected should be allowed.
- Because the IAC mechanism has proved useful in dealing with issues deriving from new approaches and widely varying perspectives, it should be considered for similar innovative or complex Center for Population, Health and Nutrition activities.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Women's Studies Project

The Women's Studies Project (WSP) is a 5-year cooperative agreement between Family Health International (FHI) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The total planned life-of-project budget is \$8.6 million. Funding is provided by the Office of Population, Policy and Evaluation Division, under the Global Bureau's Center for Population, Health and Nutrition. Funds have also been provided by the Global Bureau's Office of Women in Development. Some staff time and other direct costs (approximately 5 percent of the total) are contributed by FHI, and several subprojects are supported with non-USAID funds. The project began in September 1993 and is scheduled to end in September 1998.

In 1990, the Office of Population initiated a major effort to evaluate the impact of family planning programs. A comprehensive plan was developed under the umbrella title Evaluating Family Planning Programs Impact Project. The first component was the EVALUATION project, awarded in September 1991, which focuses on the impact of family planning on levels and patterns of fertility. To complement research on the demographic and health impacts of family planning programs, the second component, awarded in September 1993, focuses on examining the impact of family planning on women's lives; this effort became the Women's Studies Project, so named by FHI to indicate the research focus of the cooperative agreement.

The objectives of the WSP are as follows:

- To support research on the immediate and long-term consequences for women of family planning programs and methods.
- To help improve family planning and related reproductive health programs through increased knowledge of the needs and perspectives of women.

To achieve these objectives, the WSP is expected to undertake four major program elements, with the suggested percentage distribution of resources and relative emphasis, and required and suggested outputs:

- **Research program** (60 percent)

The WSP supports a research program in a limited number of developing countries based on an initial conceptual framework of the impact of family planning on women's lives. Required outputs include, for each emphasis country, development of an overall country research strategy, establishment of an in-country advisory committee (IAC), and selection of local researchers to conduct the research program.

- **Technical assistance** (20 percent)

The WSP is expected to provide technical assistance, both to in-country researchers and to USAID or other USAID-supported organizations, for the analysis of women's needs and gender issues in population and family planning programs. A suggested output is the development of guidelines for incorporating gender considerations into family planning programs.

- **Liaison with women's groups** (10 percent)

The WSP is required to involve women leaders and women's advocacy groups in both the international and in-country activities of the project. In addition, it is expected to liaise with donor agencies that have taken the lead in supporting women's advocacy groups.

- **Dissemination activities** (10 percent)

The WSP is expected to develop dissemination activities to ensure that its research results will be used to the maximum extent possible. Required outputs include an overall dissemination plan for the project and in-country research utilization plans. Suggested outputs include in-country workshops to allow researchers to share skills and regional meetings to promote cross-country experiences.

The WSP focuses its efforts on six emphasis countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Zimbabwe. Single studies have also been carried out in Jamaica and Mali; in addition, secondary analyses of existing data for Bangladesh, Malaysia, Nigeria, and the Philippines have been conducted.

1.2 Evaluation Purpose and Methodology

This evaluation was conducted in the fourth year of the 5-year cooperative agreement. There are no current plans to renew the WSP or to have a direct follow-on project. Therefore, this WSP evaluation is not focused on future funding support; rather, the evaluation objectives are:

- To assess the extent to which the purposes of the project design have been accomplished.
- To address the adequacy of current plans for disseminating and using the research results.
- To suggest which elements of the project merit inclusion in future activities of the Center for Population, Health and Nutrition, and in what form.

The Population Technical Assistance Project (POPTECH) was contracted by the Office of Population, Policy and Evaluation Division, to deploy a two-person evaluation team. The team began its work on April 14, 1997, and developed interview guides (see Appendix D) based on the questions in the Scope of Work (see Appendix A). After 6 days of briefings and interviews in the Washington, D.C., area and at FHI headquarters in North Carolina, the two team members conducted separate field visits to Bolivia and the Philippines, two of the WSP's six emphasis countries. After completing the country visits (about 8 days each), the evaluation team reunited at FHI headquarters in North Carolina for debriefing, and then continued to Washington, D.C., to debrief USAID on May 7 and finalize the evaluation report.

The evaluation is also based on an extensive literative review (see Appendix B) and personal and telephone interviews with key individuals associated with the WSP, including USAID Cognizant Technical Officers and Technical Advisors, members of the Gender Working Group, FHI WSP staff, members of the overall Technical Advisory Group and the IACs for several emphasis countries, members of in-country WSP secretariats or FHI country offices, members of women's advocacy organizations (both in country and U.S.-based), and local consultants and researchers (see Appendix C).

1.3 Organization of This Report

This report attempts to answer the questions in the Scope of Work in chapters examining the two major aspects of the WSP:

- Its technical accomplishments, including results achieved to date under each of its four major components (Chapter 2)

- Design, structural, and management issues that have affected project implementation and results (Chapter 3)

Conclusions and recommendations appear at the end of Chapters 2 and 3; the recommendations are also summarized at the beginning of the report following the Executive Summary. The final chapter synthesizes the lessons learned from the WSP and suggests how they might be applied in other programs, both current and future.

2. TECHNICAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE WSP

2.1 Overview

The objectives and major elements of the WSP are outlined in Chapter 1. The first 2 years of the project were devoted mainly to preparatory activities, including forming the Technical Advisory Group, conducting needs assessments and selecting the emphasis countries, establishing the IACs, and soliciting and selecting research proposals and researchers. A number of analyses of existing datasets were also supported during this period, using data from Nigeria, Malaysia, Bangladesh, and the Philippines.

Most of the 25 field research studies began in the third year and are still ongoing. Some later-starting studies are still collecting data, but most are in the data analysis stage. Start-up and data analysis delays have been experienced in several countries, mainly as a result of the need to involve many parties in the review process and ensure that all pertinent concerns are addressed. These delays have cut into the time available for synthesis and dissemination of project results during the last year of the project. Studies are currently scheduled to be completed no later than January 1998, although some could take longer. The WSP plans to complete its final synthesis report by May 1998, and to hold a final conference in June of that year to share project results.

Although the findings are not yet widely available, the research promises to yield significant results. The experience gained through this complex and innovative project is also providing important lessons for similar undertakings in the future (see Chapter 4).

The following sections discuss significant achievements and issues for each of the four major WSP components: research, technical assistance, liaison with women's groups, and dissemination. Conclusions and recommendations are summarized in the final section.

2.2 Research Program

As indicated in Chapter 1, the objective of this program element is to support a research program in six to eight developing countries based on an initial conceptual framework of the impact of family planning on women's lives. The relative level of effort for this program element suggested in the cooperative agreement is 60 percent.

In each emphasis country, the project is required to develop an overall country research strategy, establish an IAC, and select local researchers to conduct the research. In addition, the WSP is required to follow related research developments in other countries and by other groups. Comparative or cross-country studies are encouraged. Finally, revision of the initial conceptual framework for the project is specifically required. A final report summarizing what has been learned from the research program about the relationship between family planning programs and other aspects of women's lives is due in the last year of the project.

2.2.1 Role of Conceptual Frameworks

The WSP research component was to be guided by an initial conceptual framework (Hong and Seltzer, 1994) serving as an explanatory model to guide WSP research priorities and structure findings. This framework considered effects on six aspects¹ of the lives of female family planning users and employees of family planning programs. A principal activity planned for the research component was to operationalize and revise the framework as research results became available. In fact, a different framework was developed (Hardee et al., 1996), rather than a revision of the initial one.

Because of the timing of the research projects, however, these frameworks have not been used to their maximum advantage. The initial framework did not adequately address all the issues of interest in the rapidly changing context in which the WSP took shape and began implementation, and the USAID Cognizant Technical Officer suggested it be de-emphasized (see Section 3.2.1). Work began on the later WSP framework in the fall of 1994. This framework incorporated broader concepts of gender, life-cycle factors, and reproductive health.² A description of the framework was included in the January 1995 WSP newsletter. However, the full conceptual framework working paper (Hardee et al., 1996) did not become available until after the initiation of most WSP research projects, which limited its usefulness in informing research design. The WSP maintains that the framework paper was seen as more essential for headquarters' staff in developing the final synthesis report than for individual investigators, since no subproject would cover more than a small portion of the framework. An additional conceptual framework, developed by J. M. Stycos in 1995, which focused on the short-term psychological impacts of family planning, was also made available.

The WSP framework (Hardee et al., 1996) has been presented to the IAC members and researchers in the six emphasis countries, though it is not routinely consulted, nor is it known to a wider audience, in part because it is available only in English. Nevertheless, the framework is useful to explain the WSP and serves as an organizing tool for developing and presenting research strategies and disseminating research results. The current publication presents the framework and the ways in which WSP research addresses particular components; it will be updated upon completion of the WSP to reflect all the studies undertaken during the 5-year period.

¹ The six aspects were personal autonomy/self-esteem, health, educational attainment, employment and economic resources, family relationships, and public standing.

² This framework considers four main clusters of variables: (1) family planning, pregnancy, and childbearing; (2) the individual, family/household, and societal/economic spheres; (3) the social, political, and economic context and gender norms; and (4) life-cycle stage and other personal factors.

The framework's validity and overall explanatory power would be enhanced if the perspectives of the researchers and IAC members in the emphasis countries were incorporated. A final IAC meeting in each country could be dedicated specifically to reviewing the WSP framework in light of the in-country research findings. This information could then be used to reassess and refine the framework. The final product would be one that had been proposed, tested, and revised by a multinational, multidisciplinary team working in the spirit of participatory research, with a gender/reproductive health focus.

Still a fourth conceptual framework, with a more specific and limited purview, became available during the evaluation period (Bisgrove and Viswanathan, 1997). This framework grew out of planning for the Philippine Cebu survey and in-depth interviews, and focuses on what information should be collected on women's work and how it should be analyzed. Its impact on the WSP has yet to be assessed. Its focus on family planning use and women's economic participation will be of particular interest in the Philippines, Bolivia, and other emphasis countries where research on women's economic participation and reproductive health has been undertaken.

2.2.2 Overall Research Strategy in Emphasis Countries

The Requests for Abstract in the emphasis countries yielded an admirably diverse array of project designs and topics. Projects were selected to represent a broad range of research interests; however, the overall impact of the research endeavor may have been affected by the lack of explicitly articulated, overarching research strategies at the country level. This lack of overall vision may have been due in part to the limited and late availability of a unifying conceptual framework, as discussed above. It may also have been due in part to the WSP's commitment to a participatory approach in developing research agendas and projects.

The development of research strategies has been uneven. Researchers in some countries have engaged in concerted discussions, and an overall research strategy is implied in their work. For example, in the Philippines, research teams developed a core questionnaire and agreed to collect comparable data in each of their three research sites (in addition to site-specific modules) to facilitate later cross-regional comparisons. Investigators also have participated in IAC meetings and workshops where each investigator's research has been discussed. In Zimbabwe, all four studies were planned together as complementary elements in a country strategy.

In Indonesia and Egypt, researchers have participated in IACs and/or workshops and have received information through local newsletters, though informants in Indonesia did not appear to have a strong sense of the overall effort there.

In Brazil and Bolivia, researchers and IAC members do not appear to be very aware of what their counterparts are doing or how their particular research fits into a larger picture, both nationally and internationally. For example, Brazilian researchers commented that their only opportunities

for sharing their work are when they attend annual IAC meetings. The fact that the two study sites are far apart geographically has precluded visits, and since there are only two studies, a limited need for technical assistance, and limited funds, no workshops have been held. In Bolivia, researchers and IAC members are aware of the research being done by the WSP and other related projects, but do not have a clear idea of how each project fits into the larger context of policy and program needs in reproductive health and women's quality of life. It appears clear from this varied experience that special efforts are needed to bring researchers together and develop a clear sense of a coherent strategy.

Documentation of an overall strategy for each emphasis country is recommended, even though the research is now nearly complete. Such an explicit, overall strategy would be useful to orient current researchers in analyzing and presenting their data, and would also enhance the long-term impact of the WSP in countries where continuing or follow-on research projects are a possibility. These brief strategy papers could be based on the country needs assessments and WSP framework, with input from researchers and IAC members. The strategies should acknowledge when country-level priorities and WSP priorities diverge, why the WSP prioritizes topics as it does, and, where applicable, how the WSP or FHI plans to address the countries' other research needs.

2.2.3 Issue of Divergent Objectives

The WSP has two research objectives: (1) to produce reliable research findings on family planning and reproductive health and their effects on women's lives, and (2) to incorporate innovative processes for strengthening local capacity, developing new models of participatory research, and incorporating a gender-sensitive or women-centered approach to project implementation. Both objectives are critical to project success, yet these divergent perspectives have on occasion created tension and competition for project resources.

Budget, personnel, and time limitations have affected the ability of the project to fulfill both of these objectives equally well. Sometimes, decisions have been made to pursue one at the expense of the other. For example, making a commitment to support junior researchers has involved time-consuming technical assistance and lowered expectations regarding the quantitative and qualitative data analysis. On the other hand, giving priority to quality and timely research results has meant less local capacity building and participation by women's groups. It should be recognized, however, that the need for such tradeoffs is an issue faced by many USAID projects, not just the WSP.

Given the difficulties of achieving both of these objectives equally well, the WSP has made every effort to balance needs and budget constraints. It is clear, however, that having these divergent objectives has had consequences for the project (see Section 3.2.1).

2.2.4 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Methodologies

As part of its approach to innovative research, the WSP has emphasized the importance of integrating various methodologies into research design. It has stressed the use of qualitative methodologies, including case studies, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions, as well as survey research. The project has made every effort to achieve multidisciplinary representation on the IACs and to provide adequate technical assistance in data collection, management, and analysis, especially for less familiar methodologies.

Throughout the emphasis countries, research projects that used one or more qualitative methods were chosen. Most WSP survey research has used qualitative methods to inform instrument design, a process that has been innovative for some research teams. Many projects have combined qualitative and quantitative data analysis in an effort to bring greater depth to their understanding of women's lives. In the Philippines, participants have expressed concerns about how to deal with contradictions between qualitative and quantitative findings, since they are well aware that both types of research are methodologically rigorous and do not want to favor one over the other.

Purely qualitative studies are also being conducted under the WSP, particularly to explore sensitive uncharted issues regarding family planning, reproductive health, and sexuality. Case studies have been used effectively as well to document health service delivery innovations in Bolivia, Jamaica, and the Philippines. The Bolivian case studies have been received with enthusiasm by those interested in health care delivery. Service providers from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and public-sector institutions, as well as ministry of health personnel and reproductive health researchers, have all commented that documenting successful experience is an important contribution to understanding how to provide quality integrated services for multi-ethnic populations. At the time of this evaluation, most qualitative studies had not yet been completed; however, it appears that the research will contribute significantly to a better understanding of the role of family planning in improving women's quality of life.

Despite the challenges encountered, the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods has been valuable and seems to have enhanced the validity of the research. Researchers trained primarily in quantitative methods have reacted quite favorably to including qualitative methods. Their overwhelmingly positive response can be summed up by the comment of one respondent, who indicated she "would never think of doing survey research again without prior qualitative research."

The main challenges presented by qualitative research have involved the training of principal investigators and the time required. In some countries, qualitative research capabilities are limited. Technical assistance has been provided to many less-experienced researchers; it has been expensive and time-consuming and has had variable results. Most researchers seem to have

underestimated the amount of time needed to analyze qualitative data, which could affect the timely availability of results. Translating and coding of lengthy interviews has also consumed considerable time and resources. In some cases, deadlines for completing research studies have had to be extended because of the time needed for data analysis, shortening the time available for synthesis of the findings and development of dissemination strategies.

A key task for the WSP will be to present qualitative findings to policymakers and program designers and implementers in a way that gives those findings as much weight and credibility as quantitative ones. Rightly or wrongly, there is a tendency to trust numerical expressions of social phenomena. The WSP is in a position to disseminate effectively qualitative findings that can enrich the analysis of reproductive health, family planning, and the needs of women; complement quantitative findings; and foster participatory approaches to research.

Several informants questioned the ability of FHI, the WSP implementing agency, to oversee qualitative research. Some noted that FHI is known primarily as a quantitative research firm, that its in-house capability for qualitative research is not as strong as it could be, and that qualitative research specialists are underrepresented on the Technical Advisory Group. The evaluation team found that the WSP has made every effort to overcome such shortcomings, both perceived and real. It has provided a “mini-library” of qualitative resources; contracted with local specialists to conduct training workshops; and provided extensive technical assistance in data collection and analysis, including the use of Ethnograph and dTsearch data analysis software. Qualitative researchers on IACs have been very helpful in reviewing and strengthening the rigor of the qualitative research.

2.2.5 Use of Secondary Analyses

In an effort to generate results early in the implementation period, the WSP chose to support analyses of several existing datasets, with varying degrees of relevance to the project objectives. In at least one case, Nigeria, secondary analyses were undertaken because the WSP hoped to include Nigeria among the emphasis countries and to develop new data more specifically tailored to the WSP. When Nigeria’s participation in the WSP fell through, the secondary analyses proceeded, but the linking data were lacking. In addition, the focus of the WSP itself shifted somewhat, making the analyses less relevant. Similarly, the WSP had also hoped to include Bangladesh as an emphasis country, but this did not work out. In the Philippines, support for secondary analyses derived from a preexisting relationship with the Carolina Population Center for the Cebu longitudinal survey—in effect, from the existence of a target of opportunity.

In hindsight, it appears that this focus on secondary analysis may have been to some extent counterproductive. The WSP clearly believed it would be cost-effective to set aside some funds to address the key issues of the project using data from previous studies, which might also provide useful insights for new research development. Some valuable information has been

produced, particularly by the Bangladesh study, which raised some important issues; the Cebu data is also relevant to WSP objectives. However, all the studies did not contribute equally to advancing the objectives of the WSP. These studies have also used resources that might have been better used for original research, technical assistance, or dissemination. Moreover, although the Bangladesh research used qualitative data, the other secondary analyses may have helped reinforce the image of the WSP as predominantly quantitative in orientation (which may or may not have been the best approach for answering the research questions), and this has affected the perceptions and commitment of some groups with a qualitative, women- or gender-focused agenda (see Section 2.4 below and Chapter 3). In any such future efforts, care should be taken to ensure that all activities advance the research agenda and objectives, and make the most effective use possible of the available resources.

2.2.6 Diversity and Quality Achieved

A notable accomplishment of the WSP is the level of diversity achieved regarding both the research focus and participation within the emphasis countries. Geographic diversity has been achieved through the selection of six emphasis countries from around the world and four complementary countries. The fact that projects were selected outside capital cities and urban areas within each emphasis country is particularly commendable.

Ethnic and cultural pluralism has been achieved through a focus on diverse study populations, with research conducted in a variety of languages whenever appropriate in a national context. Men's perspectives and their effects on women's family planning use, health, and lives have been included. Diversity in participation has been achieved through IAC membership; selection of researchers; and the methods employed in conducting the research, including community meetings to discuss research priorities, focus group discussions, and subsequent dissemination activities involving the informants.

Overall, as observed in the field, the quality of the data collection and analysis seems very high. Research teams are developing innovative research designs and themes with methodologically sound techniques. Based on observation and interviews, there appears to be little doubt that the research will contribute substantively to illuminating the impact of family planning programs on women, as well as bringing women's perspectives to bear.

2.3 Technical Assistance

The WSP was originally expected to provide technical assistance both to in-country researchers and to USAID or other USAID-supported organizations on issues related to gender or women's perspectives on family planning programs. Technical assistance was to represent approximately 20 percent of the project level of effort. Development of guidelines for incorporating gender considerations into family planning programs is a suggested output under the technical assistance component.

2.3.1 Technical Assistance in the Emphasis Countries

The WSP has made a significant effort to provide technical assistance to in-country researchers and IAC members. This effort has included providing bibliographic materials, funding workshops on research methods, delivering one-on-one training in data management and analysis, and providing other services at the request of the researchers.

In-country partners' assessments of the quality of the technical assistance provided have been almost universally positive. Several informants appreciate the fact that the WSP assigned a technical monitor to each project; researchers feel they received much more personalized and consistent attention than has been the case with other similar research projects managed overseas.

The only criticism expressed was the desire for long-term, on-site technical assistance, that is, WSP support for someone in country to provide backstopping. Budget constraints have not allowed for this, but this expressed desire is a tribute to the usefulness of the technical assistance provided. In emphasis countries with a particular need to strengthen local research capacity, there was greater need for technical assistance. In hindsight, more resources should have been assigned to this component to achieve the capacity-building objective.

2.3.2 Technical Assistance to USAID and USAID-supported Organizations

To date, the principal technical assistance provided by the WSP to USAID has been support to the Gender Working Group. Gender training for the Center for Population, Health and Nutrition was funded through the WSP (though provided by outside consultants). WSP staff drafted a working paper for the Gender Working Group entitled *Through a Gender Lens: Resources for Population, Health and Nutrition Projects* (Pfannenschmidt and McKay, 1997). As a resource guide, it outlines basic concepts and arguments for the inclusion of a gender perspective in population, health, and nutrition projects; reviews questions to be answered in project development to respond to gender issues; and summarizes current frameworks and tools for gender analysis and training.

This paper became available during the evaluation period, so its use and impact have yet to be determined. Initially, some participants in the Gender Working Group did not think the paper reflected a sufficient level of sophistication or detail, and revisions were made. Some members of the GWG also saw the effort as an opportunity to build the gender capabilities of the WSP. Nonetheless, it is apparent that the WSP played a role in helping to clarify thinking on these issues and reconciling differences of opinion among USAID staff on the content and audiences for this paper and its accompanying annotated bibliography. There now appears to be agreement that these documents are useful as an introduction to help people become conversant with the issues and available English-language resources. The paper was recently presented by FHI/WSP staff in a meeting with other cooperating agencies, and a Gender Working Group member remarked that the WSP had made a very good presentation. The paper's utility may be broadened through translation into other languages and wider distribution.

During the course of the WSP, it was decided to de-emphasize technical assistance to USAID, other than exceptions such as the foregoing, for two reasons: (1) it was felt that until research results became available, there would be little substantive experience on which to base technical assistance, and (2) because there were other sources of technical assistance on gender issues, there was little demand from USAID Missions or projects for such assistance from the WSP. It quickly became apparent that the most valuable technical assistance contribution by the WSP would be working with the research teams, and USAID concurred in this change of emphasis.

2.3.3 *Limitations*

As with other aspects of WSP implementation, the shifting priorities of the project affected the provision of technical assistance, particularly the integration of a gender perspective into the research designs (see Chapter 3 for further discussion). This is reflected in the evolution of research priorities over the life of the project. Earlier research projects tended to focus on women as a separate population; later research has integrated a greater range of women's activities, male perspectives, and the impact of gender roles and inequalities. This incorporation of gender reflects the evolution of thinking within the WSP, but perhaps the technical assistance would have been more effective had this broader gender perspective been introduced from the start.

To their credit, WSP staff often recognized their own limitations vis-a-vis methodological and substantive issues in gender theory and reproductive health. The WSP employed creative means to address these limitations, through either contracting in-country expertise for technical

assistance or acquiring knowledge and training skills through workshops, seminars, and information gathering.

Finally, it should be noted that not all researchers are equally receptive to technical assistance. WSP staff seem to be clearly aware of weaknesses in research designs and analysis, and have made every effort to provide “culturally sensitive” technical assistance. Nevertheless, some situations arise in which the WSP must assume a more proactive role in the research analysis if reliable data are to be produced.

2.3.4 *Gender Guidelines*

Only one emphasis country, Bolivia, has the interest, together with the capacity, to develop gender guidelines for program implementation in the health sector. The Bolivian gender guidelines project will build on the experience of a prominent women’s advocacy organization in training health care service providers. The implementing women’s NGO has a great deal of experience, but the limited time frame is of some concern. Drafting guidelines is one necessary activity, but, as one informant pointed out, is insufficient for incorporating gender-sensitive, quality reproductive health care services. Issues regarding training, implementation, follow-up, and impact evaluation are being considered, and a plan is being drafted to ensure that the guidelines have a more permanent impact after the WSP has ended.

Some informants questioned whether WSP staff have the necessary knowledge and experience regarding gender theory and practice, particularly in a Latin American setting, to provide the technical assistance needed for this activity. In response, the WSP acknowledges that its primary role is that of managing partner among an alliance of several local NGOs with expertise in gender training and reproductive health.

2.4 *Liaison with Women’s Groups*

The cooperative agreement required the involvement of women leaders and women’s advocacy groups in both the international and in-country activities of the WSP. In addition, the project was expected to liaise with donor agencies that have taken the lead in supporting women’s advocacy groups. The relative weight of this project component was established at 10 percent.

2.4.1 *Liaison with International Women’s Groups*

Establishing productive relationships with women’s organizations has proven to be an unexpected challenge for the WSP. The original project design underestimated the importance and complexity of working with international women’s organizations, and the cooperative agreement

assigned insufficient resources to meet the challenges of creating a positive public image for the WSP and cultivating strategic alliances with advocacy groups. A significant proportion of time and resources was spent during the first year of the WSP seeking rapprochement with groups somewhat critical of the project, which may have negatively affected start-up activities (see Section 3.2.1).

Despite repeated efforts on the part of the WSP to inform and engage key women leaders, there appear to be lingering misperceptions among U.S.-based and international women's advocacy organizations regarding the project's legitimacy in research and dissemination. There exists a perception that the WSP is ill informed about gender issues and reproductive health, and that the type of research done under the project is neither innovative nor participatory, with limited involvement at the country level of women leaders and representatives of women's groups. It is clear that some of these tensions have deeper roots and reflect larger issues between some women's organizations and USAID programs in general, including USAID's approach to reproductive health; they are not directed only at the WSP and FHI.

These barriers are as much an issue of public relations as of the perceived quality of research. Every effort should be made to improve the perceptions of these organizations, which represent a key constituency for WSP research findings. Dissemination strategies should clearly address these concerns and be designed to influence the opinion of these organizations positively. A focus on process issues and policy implications as well as research findings is one potentially useful approach. Dissemination meetings should also make every effort to include women's organizations. Relations need to be strengthened using mechanisms beyond attendance at Technical Advisory Group meetings or inclusion on mailing lists. Perhaps enlisting Technical Advisory Group members and USAID personnel in more positive promotion of WSP accomplishments would also help dispel these misperceptions.

2.4.2 Liaison with Local Women's Groups

The WSP has successfully integrated representatives of women's advocacy groups and women leaders in most phases of its in-country activities.³ Women's groups were identified and interviewed during the needs assessments; leading feminist researchers were encouraged to apply and, in some cases, were selected for WSP research projects; where applicable, women's groups or individuals have been contracted to provide technical assistance in such areas as gender analysis or qualitative research methods; IAC membership and observers demonstrate a broad representation of women from the NGO, media, academic, and public sectors; and women leaders

³ The only notable disaffection found was among a women's group in the Philippines; however, their opposition was not to the WSP, but to FHI because of its perceived support for the use of quinacrine, in spite of FHI's clearly stated position that quinacrine should not be used until proven safe. FHI has not engaged in any research on quinacrine in the Philippines.

and organizations representing women's interests are invited to and attend dissemination activities.

Key informants from women's groups indicated their approval of WSP in-country activities. Several commented on the usefulness of the IAC as a mechanism for allowing different, sometimes competing, actors to contribute equally to a project in which they have nothing at stake. The IACs have created an opportunity for women's groups, academics, government agencies, and other institutions and key actors within the emphasis countries to share an interest in improving research capabilities and findings.

The concerted effort to involve women's groups has had a positive impact on attention to gender issues, even though, as noted elsewhere (see Chapter 3), the "gender perspective" was largely added on during the course of the WSP. Local women's advocates have made important contributions to the overall discussions and focus of the research and technical assistance activities.

2.4.3 Liaison with Interested Donors

Though not a primary focus of WSP liaison activities, other donors have been involved in the project activities, primarily as observers of Technical Advisory Group and IAC meetings and as collaborators in research activities. For example, the Rockefeller and Ford foundations are funding work in China in collaboration with the WSP to examine qualitative and survey data regarding the changing roles and positions of women in society and the household/family, family relations and the value of children, and changing individual psychological and physical factors that have resulted from the use of family planning and childbearing. In Bolivia, interested donors have been approached to support activities that provide continuity for WSP-related efforts. In Brazil there have been collaborative activities with the Ford and MacArthur foundations.

2.5 Dissemination

The dissemination component focuses on the development of activities to ensure that research results will be used to the greatest extent possible. This component was assigned a relative project emphasis of 10 percent. An overall dissemination plan for the project and in-country research utilization plans are required outputs under this component. In addition, the cooperative agreement suggests in-country workshops to allow researchers to share skills and regional meetings to promote cross-country experiences.

2.5.1 Insufficient Emphasis in Original Design

The 10 percent level of support for dissemination is insufficient to attain the ambitious goals set out for the WSP. For an innovative research project, dissemination is the cornerstone of implementation. Dissemination activities translate research findings into useful policy and program development tools. Without adequate dissemination, the research might as well never have been done, because actors in policy and program circles have neither the time nor the inclination to wade through long research reports to find the information that applies to their work.

Future projects that contemplate a research component should consider increasing the resources available for dissemination to 30 percent.

2.5.2 Effect of Budget Reductions

The impact of the proposed budget reductions falls disproportionately on the dissemination phase of the WSP. The reductions are planned for the final year, which is the time period designated for the vast majority of dissemination activities. This impact is exacerbated by the fact that completing the research has generally taken longer than expected, and without definitive results, it is impossible to fully develop issues, audiences, and strategies for dissemination. The negative impact of the reduced budget has implications beyond the quality of dissemination plans or the media selected for dissemination. As noted above, dissemination is the cornerstone of effective social research. To further limit inadequate resources is to render the research component practically nonexistent.

Other aspects of WSP project success are also dependent on timely, strategic dissemination of quality results. As noted above, appropriate dissemination would serve to enhance the project's public image, strengthen alliances with research and advocacy groups, and generate appropriate policy and program recommendations, as well as make available valuable research on reproductive health and women's lives.

The budget reductions are a source of concern for WSP personnel. Both U.S.-based and in-country staff are aware of the cuts and are making every effort to mitigate the effects. They rightly fear that overall WSP achievements and the possibility for lasting impact will be diminished if adequate funds are not available for dissemination.

2.5.3 Dissemination Topics

At this point in the WSP, it is difficult to comment on the dissemination of specific research findings, since so few final reports are available. Discussed below are some dissemination topics that may not have been fully considered in existing dissemination plans.

Research Results and Policy Implications

A key task will be to make WSP findings policy relevant, particularly at the national level in the health sector and related institutions. The research products would be enhanced by including clear discussions of the research implications for program design, service delivery, quality of care for reproductive health, and so on. Every effort should be made to engage policymakers and program managers, and not limit the dissemination to interested academics or IAC members.

For example, the dissemination activities associated with the publication of the Bolivian case studies (Paulson et al., 1996) targeted both policy actors and service providers. In separate forums held in two different cities, the publication was presented and discussions held with a focus on the applicability of the research finding to participants' work. The dissemination activity served not only to distribute the case study, but also to generate a public debate regarding integrated reproductive health services, the role of the state in providing such services, and the possibility of replicating the models presented. Diversifying presentation media (i.e., publication in English and Spanish, accompanied by public workshops) appears to increase the impact and utility of the research products for policy and program purposes.

Process Elements in Research

An important contribution of the WSP experience is the process itself; documentation of and commentary on the process of conducting innovative research are very useful. It is important to focus on process elements as well as research results of the projects undertaken in each of the emphasis countries and disseminate this experience. The WSP has asked country monitors to collect information directly from in-country colleagues so as to better describe the process and lessons learned in the final synthesis report.

One important process issue is the application of participatory research techniques in cross-cultural settings. With the growing interest in making research more relevant to women's health and development needs, the WSP could present its experiences in developing participatory research mechanisms, their successful application, and the challenges faced in the field.

For example, the role of the IACs could be discussed from an organizational and management point of view (see Chapter 3), specifying the qualities and variables that play a role in the successful participation of IAC members. The WSP could highlight the ways in which participatory research, involving informants, local women's advocates, service providers, and

other interested actors, is in the long run a more effective way of conducting research, implementing projects, and guaranteeing long-term effects.

A second process issue is the impact the WSP has had on the way in-country researchers view research, ethics, and peer review. According to several informants in various countries, the WSP's use of IACs and adherence to informed consent has benefited the research community. In the Philippines, as a result of the WSP, a university has institutionalized an ethics review board for human-subject research. Discussions have extended beyond clinical trials to include social science research and informed consent.

Reproductive health research should reflect an awareness of possible ethical implications. In the Philippines, researchers anticipated that the research would uncover domestic violence and other issues that required attention. Research teams developed a referral list, checked on availability of services, and provided referral information to women identified as at risk for domestic violence or in need of other services. Similar research in Bolivia also uncovered domestic violence, but the principal investigator did not anticipate the situation, and so the research team was not prepared to handle identified cases. The broad spectrum of experiences in the WSP will allow cross-cultural examination of process issues to demonstrate commonalities and differences throughout regions.

In countries where a culture of academic peer review is not common, WSP activities may have a positive demonstration effect for researchers. The IAC meetings provide a forum that not only improves the quality of the research under immediate review, but also introduces a practice of open review and collaboration among researchers in the national context.

A third process issue is the incorporation of a gender focus in both the research analysis and the project implementation. As noted above, emphasis on gender has become more clearly articulated during the course of project implementation. The mechanisms by which the WSP informed its partners of the gender focus, the tools and information employed, and the levels of gender integration achieved in each country are of interest and should be documented.

Datasets and Codebooks

A great deal of interest was expressed in having the WSP-generated datasets available for further analysis by outside researchers. Through the use of electronic media, the project's research designs, instruments, datasets, and codebooks could provide a valuable resource to many researchers interested in reproductive health and women

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2.5.4 Local and National Dissemination Strategies

Almost all emphasis countries have drafted a dissemination strategy for the research conducted in country. Reflecting the lack of final results, these strategies focus more on the audience and the medium and less on the message being disseminated. Most emphasis countries have scheduled IAC meetings that will focus specifically on dissemination strategies in country. As results become available, the dissemination strategies should be refined and messages tailored to the intended audiences.

Secretariats and IACs are well aware of the budget limitations affecting dissemination and are seeking creative, cost-effective means to achieve maximum visibility for WSP results. Taking advantage of IAC diversity and the high profile of most members, IACs will be expected to participate substantively in dissemination activities. IACs in several countries, including Bolivia, the Philippines, and Zimbabwe, include prominent members of print or televised media; these women can play a pivotal role in designing strategies, networking, and presenting WSP results in different venues.

In-country workshops are an effective dissemination vehicle for presenting final results. Along with presenting results, these workshops should be designed to achieve consensus and build coalitions of key actors within public-sector institutions, NGO service providers, advocacy groups, and research institutions by fostering dialog and exchange of experiences. The Bolivian case studies dissemination activity is a successful example of this type of exchange.

Secretariats should also anticipate the misinterpretation or misuse of findings, particularly negative ones. The WSP needs to develop dissemination strategies for minimizing potential negative impacts, particularly as regards the media. For example, WSP participants in the Philippines realize that findings regarding domestic violence threaten to overshadow the results of the rest of the study, and there might also be correlations with family planning use that could be misinterpreted. It will be important to acknowledge the import of family violence; put it in the context of the larger research; and indicate areas for further study regarding violence against women, gender relations, and linkages with reproductive health.

Researchers need to be aware that controversial or contradictory findings will receive more scrutiny than those that affirm existing information. For example, Bolivian researchers report that Bolivian men support their wives' use of contraception, do not oppose their seeking family planning services, and have greater knowledge of contraceptive methods than do women. Barriers to contraceptive use are not men's attitudes per se, but the couple's lack of communication. These findings generated a great deal of skepticism and criticism of the research methods employed. Indeed, some survey items seem to be inappropriate measures of knowledge and attitudes, and this limitation is sufficient for some to dismiss the entire study. Dissemination strategies should anticipate close review, and researchers, in the spirit of peer review, should be prepared to defend research decisions and analysis.

2.5.5 U.S. and International Dissemination Strategies

As with the emphasis countries, a broader dissemination strategy has been developed for U.S.-based and international organizations. FHI is renowned for its dissemination capability. Drawing on an extensive FHI dissemination database, the WSP has the ability to distribute information through print bulletins, published articles, and other media, including the Internet. Budget limitations seem to be the main obstacle.

The dissemination strategy should clearly recognize the public relations objectives associated with these activities. The WSP needs to disseminate its achievements to audiences that are not necessarily receptive to WSP products, but share a common interest in women's reproductive health and access to services (see Section 2.4.1 above). The project needs to recognize and clearly differentiate the information needs and perceptions of an intended audience of women's advocates versus an intended audience of researchers.

The cooperative agreement anticipates a final report on the WSP; an international conference in Washington, D.C., is also planned. While costly, the long-term impact of such a conference may be significant. Expectations for the WSP are high, and it would benefit from a high-profile, quality dissemination vehicle directed at a wide audience. Invited participants should include representatives from the Center for Population, Health and Nutrition; the Office of Women in Development; the Bureau for Program and Policy Coordination; the USAID Regional Bureaus; cooperating agencies; international women's advocacy groups; and NGOs and donors that may be interested in related or follow-on activities. Interest could be generated by stressing the applicability of lessons learned from the WSP to the implementation of future projects, as well as special efforts made to recruit women's organizations, emphasis-country researchers, and IAC members.

Some informants outside Washington expressed an interest in an additional meeting in another venue, possibly New York City. It was suggested that this would allow the WSP to reach a broader audience of researchers, European donors, and other agencies. Although the costs associated with such a meeting may be prohibitive, the WSP might consider the possibility of abbreviated presentations in the New York area.

2.6 Conclusions and Recommendations

2.6.1 Conclusions

The WSP conceptual framework has not been used to its full potential, but it has helped increase understanding of the project and served as an organizing tool for documenting research strategies and disseminating results.

- The overall impact of the WSP research program may have been affected by a lack of clearly articulated research strategies at the country level.
- The integration of qualitative and quantitative research has generally been successful and valuable, and appears to have enhanced the validity of the research. As a result, the WSP is in a position to demonstrate the value of qualitative research to audiences that may be skeptical of nonquantitative data.
- The use of project resources on secondary analyses that were not in accord with WSP objectives may have been counterproductive.
- The WSP has achieved a notable level of diversity in both project focus and participation, including geographic and cultural diversity among the research studies, and diverse participation through IACs, selection of researchers, and research methods employed.
- Because the research is not yet completed, it is difficult to make a definitive assessment. However, the quality of the data and analysis observed in the field visits appears to be high; the methodologies used are both sound and often innovative; and the research is likely to contribute importantly to understanding both the impact of family planning and the process of bringing women's perspectives to bear.
- Assessments of WSP technical assistance to participating researchers and others involved in the studies are highly positive; the only criticism expressed was a desire for still more of such assistance, i.e., long-term, on-site backstopping. Lacking this capability because of budget constraints, the WSP used creative means to meet technical assistance needs.
- The original design of the WSP underestimated the importance and complexity of working with women's advocacy organizations, especially at the U.S. and international levels. This negatively affected start-up activities, caused delays, and could potentially affect dissemination and hence the ultimate impact of the project. It is important for the WSP to continue to reach out to disaffected groups and attempt to develop consensus on major issues.
- Considerable success has been achieved in working with women's organizations at the country level. The concerted effort to involve women's groups at this level has helped increase attention to gender issues.

- In a project meant to influence policies and programs, dissemination is as important as the research itself; the level of effort for dissemination in the WSP design (10 percent) is insufficient.
- Dissemination has been disproportionately affected by budget reductions. Dissemination requires assured funding and adequate time to allow for effective planning and implementation.
- Process lessons from the WSP are likely to have as great an impact as research results if the approaches taken, their strengths and weaknesses, and the way issues were resolved are effectively documented.
- Availability of WSP datasets, instruments, and codebooks, provided through electronic media when possible, would allow for further dissemination of WSP products and longer-term project impact.

2.6.2 Recommendations

- The WSP conceptual framework (Hardee et al., 1996) should be updated to reflect all the research conducted. It would be useful to dedicate all or part of a final IAC meeting in each emphasis country to reviewing the framework in light of country research findings. The WSP could use this input to reassess and revise the framework.
- The research strategy for each emphasis country should be documented, with input from researchers and IAC members, and disseminated to all WSP participants in each country. The strategy document should acknowledge any divergence between country and WSP priorities, explain WSP priorities, and, if applicable, note how countries' other research needs can be addressed.
- The WSP should strive to give qualitative and quantitative research findings equal weight to the extent that they are relevant to the research, and effectively communicate those findings both to policymakers and to program designers and implementers.
- Future research projects should ensure that all activities, including secondary analyses, advance the overall project objectives. Before secondary analyses are funded, the types of analyses that can be produced from a dataset should be determined and their value to the project objectives assessed; there should also be

some prospect for deriving practical recommendations from the analysis. Other criteria should include the interest of policymakers, donors, and other key country actors. Secondary analysis may be of limited value in investigating a very new topic or an old topic with a new perspective.

- For the remainder of the WSP, the WSP and USAID (particularly the Center for Population, Health and Nutrition; the Center's Gender Working Group; and the Office of Women in Development) should focus on promoting communication with women's advocacy groups, including those not now actively involved with the WSP and skeptical of it. The purpose of these efforts should be to discuss research and process results from the WSP, and promote collaboration in dissemination and policy/program advocacy. Proactive means will be necessary.
- Future projects with a research component should consider increasing the resources available for dissemination to 30 percent.
- For effective dissemination, research results should be accompanied by clear discussion of the implications for program design, service delivery, quality of care, and the like.
- It is important to document and disseminate process results as well as research results, including research innovations and participation, experience in integrating qualitative and quantitative research, and experience in integrating a women-centered or gender perspective into the research. The variables that affect successful participation of IAC members should also be documented. It might be particularly useful to develop a short but comprehensive "road map" of how the different elements of the WSP interrelate and what has been learned from each element.
- Dissemination strategies must ensure that consensus on messages is achieved and that messages are tailored to the intended audiences. Strategies also should try to foresee and minimize damage from possible misinterpretation or misuse of findings, particularly those related to sensitive topics. Researchers should be aware that controversial or unexpected findings will be closely scrutinized, and be prepared to defend their methodologies and analyses.
- A final dissemination conference in Washington, D.C., is recommended, with broad participation by USAID, cooperating agencies, women's organizations, and organizations actually or potentially interested in follow-on or related activities. If possible, presentations in New York should be considered.

3. DESIGN, STRUCTURE, AND MANAGEMENT OF THE WSP

3.1 Overview

3.1.1 Structural Overview of the WSP

The WSP is managed by FHI from its North Carolina headquarters under the Women's Studies Division. The project has a core full-time staff of five, with an additional group of five professionals based in the Women's Studies Division who spend the majority of their time on the WSP. Staff from other divisions (including six professionals, plus interns/consultants/reviewers) also spend significant time working with the WSP when needed. FHI's corporate contribution to the WSP covers the part-time participation of the Senior Vice President for Reproductive Health Programs and two information dissemination professionals.

Over the life of the project, there have been three subcontracts. The only one still active is with the Carolina Population Center, which manages two WSP subagreements in the Philippines for secondary data analysis and a follow-up study related to the Cebu longitudinal survey; the Office of Women in Development has contributed funds for this subcontract. In the past, the WSP also had subcontracts with the Department of Rural Sociology at Cornell University and with the John Snow Research and Training Institute. Both of these agreements were for secondary analyses, focused on Nigeria (plus some work on Malaysia) and Bangladesh, respectively. The analyses are complete, and the agreements have expired.

As noted in Chapter 2, FHI has formulated subagreements with a variety of in-country organizations to conduct research studies. These are funded by a combination of core WSP funds and field support funds from USAID Missions. Only the studies in the Philippines and Egypt rely solely on core funding (in Egypt, in addition to the two core WSP studies, FHI provides technical assistance to four related studies funded by the USAID Mission).

Subagreements are assigned to a headquarters-based FHI/WSP technical monitor, who is responsible for technical and managerial oversight; WSP secretariats or FHI offices in emphasis countries collaborate with the technical monitors in performing these functions. The overall Technical Advisory Group and IACs in each emphasis country review progress and provide advice to guide the WSP.

The project thus has a rather decentralized structure, with country specialists providing oversight for activities in their countries, aided by a small support staff and responsible to the project director.

3.1.2 Overview of Key Issues

While in general terms the WSP is functioning well, it has been affected by some issues stemming from ambiguities in the perceived purpose and objectives of the project, as well as from controversy surrounding its award to FHI. The WSP has been able to compensate for and mitigate the effects of these issues, but they have not been fully resolved. It is important to understand how such issues have affected the WSP in order to help avoid such problems in the future.

This chapter focuses first on the major design and implementation issues that have affected the project, including the circumstances surrounding its origin, design, and award; the effects of differing perceptions and expectations by key stakeholders; and the adequacy of human and financial resources and the project's timeframe in view of its complexity. Subsequent sections examine project accomplishments and issues with regard to a number of structural and managerial dimensions, including advisory and oversight mechanisms (country secretariats and offices, the Technical Advisory Group, and the IACs); administrative and technical communications and decision making; staffing; and reporting. Conclusions and recommendations are presented at the end of the chapter.

3.2 Major Design and Implementation Issues

3.2.1 Ambiguities Stemming from the Origin, Design, and Award of the WSP

The WSP is still suffering to some extent from having been conceived in one era and born in another. The original impetus for the project was reportedly a question by the then-Director of the Office of Population: "How many women have a job because of USAID family planning programs?" He expected a simple numerical answer to this question that would clearly demonstrate an additional benefit of family planning beyond fertility management and the attainment of demographic goals. The assumption was that family planning is beneficial, and there was simply a need for good evidence of the multifaceted benefits to women.

Discussions ensuing from the lack of a simple answer to the Director's question eventually led to the development of a draft conceptual framework (Hong and Seltzer, 1994) by the Office of Population. This framework became the basis for the design of an initiative to support new research on the impact of family planning on women's lives—the WSP—as a complement to the EVALUATION project, which focused on the effects of family planning on fertility. In line with the original question, the framework considered effects on the lives of two different groups of women: users of family planning and employees of family planning programs. It also tried to counteract the implied assumption of benefit by explicitly broadening the focus to impact, whether positive or negative (see Section 2.2.1 for further discussion).

While this original framework informed the design of the WSP, the project design also reflected a larger debate then under way. During this period, a major paradigm shift was gaining ground, culminating in the platforms developed by the international conferences on population and women held in Cairo and Beijing, respectively. In the larger health/population context, as well as within USAID, a shift was under way from a narrow family planning focus to a broader emphasis on reproductive health; from a concern primarily with demographics to a concern with effects on people (a “customer focus”); from a view of women as beneficiaries (or worse, as targets) to one focused on women’s empowerment as actors and decision makers; and from an approach focused primarily on women to one focused on gender roles/relations and their effects on both women and men in the development context.

The original concept for the WSP, to document the impact of family planning on women, represented the movement from a demographic focus on fertility to a concern with broader effects on women (though clearly the impetus was the need to gain greater support for family planning). However, both within USAID and in the larger context, there were considerable pressures to broaden the focus still further. The Office of Population was well aware of the concerns of women’s advocacy organizations about the lack of attention to women’s perspectives in many family planning programs. As the cooperative agreement specifically notes, they tended to view international population assistance as, at best, insensitive and, at worst, hostile to women’s interests with regard to reproductive rights and health. As a result, the WSP design tried to incorporate greater attention to women’s and gender issues and involvement of women’s organizations to ensure that women’s perspectives would be included. At the same time, true to its origins, the design remained focused on a specific intervention, family planning, rather than adopting a more integrated reproductive health approach or making women and gender issues rather than a program intervention the central focus.

The project was innovative in its research focus. Previous research had emphasized the impact of women’s status and roles on fertility and the effects of changes in reproductive patterns and contraception on health, but there had been little research on the influences of family planning on other aspects of women’s lives. The WSP was intended to help fill critical knowledge gaps using a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, guided by the conceptual framework and with the participation of women’s groups; it was also expected to strengthen in-country research skills and develop capacity for integrating women’s perspectives into family planning research. Such an approach was highly complex, involving multiple objectives and a wide array of both research variables and actors, and was entirely new for USAID’s Office of Population.

The design of the WSP was thus a response to divergent pressures and a dynamic context. It incorporated a mixed set of elements and objectives, the compatibility of which was essentially unknown and perhaps unknowable given the dynamics of the transitional process under way. On the one hand, the project retained an “intervention” focus—the basic purpose was to support research to document the impact of family planning on women’s lives (this component was predominant, 60 percent). On the other hand, it tried to address the growing concern with

women's empowerment and gender issues by mandating the involvement of women's organizations (with an estimated emphasis level of 10 percent), and to build local capacity for dealing with research involving these issues. Because the project took an innovative approach and incorporated elements that had previously received little attention from the Office of Population, expectations were high for a breakthrough effort in support of the emerging new paradigm.

A variety of groups submitted proposals in response to the Request for Abstract, including organizations with a women-centered or gender focus, as well as more traditional family planning research and technical assistance organizations. Award of the WSP to FHI, a long-time USAID partner identified primarily with contraceptive technology research, caused bitter disappointment among a number of women's advocacy organizations. They had expected that the innovation inherent in the design would also guide the selection process, that expertise in women's and gender issues would be central, and that bringing in women's organizations as USAID partners would be a priority for such a project.

The interviews conducted for this evaluation revealed that at the time the cooperative agreement was bid, women's groups perceived the element on women's organizations and centrality of gender as having much greater importance than was reflected in the actual project design as represented in the cooperative agreement document (10 percent). It was also noted that some organizations perceived the WSP to be more of an advocacy than a research project. Without access to the Request for Abstract and other bid documents, it is impossible to know the basis for these perceptions and how they may have affected other bids.

The award of the WSP to an established partner indicates some ambivalence toward the new paradigm, as well as the level of risk considered tolerable. While some within USAID wanted to bring in new partners, especially to help in addressing gender issues, the disconnect between development objectives and contracting and selection procedures made it difficult to make an award to untried groups. From the point of view of the Office of Population, FHI's track record and institutional strength in research were key assets for implementing such a complex project in which research was the predominant focus. The fact that FHI's experience with qualitative research, reproductive health advocacy, and gender issues was limited did not outweigh its advantages, clearly indicating that these considerations were subsidiary in importance to the research results.

As noted in Chapter 2, the selection of the cooperating agency has had consequences for the development of the WSP. The adverse reaction among some women's organizations, including what was characterized by FHI as a "boycott" of the initial Technical Advisory Group meeting, demoralized WSP staff and hampered the project's initial efforts at collaboration and coalition building. The WSP staff has tried to reach out to these groups and address their concerns, and has had some success in building bridges. The controversy has subsided, but it has not entirely disappeared and still has lingering effects. The most damaging effect is likely to be less credibility

of the project results in the eyes of these organizations, hence limiting their collaboration in dissemination and joint advocacy, and in turn limiting the potential overall impact of the WSP.

3.2.2 Effects of Differing Expectations on Implementation and Management

The ambiguities evident in the design and award of the WSP have continued to play out during the implementation period, and are manifest in the differing perceptions and expectations of key stakeholders.

Because it developed as a hybrid effort to address divergent issues, the WSP lacks a unified constituency. Those who are interested primarily in gathering evidence demonstrating the (positive) impact of family planning tend to see the focus on other issues, such as gender and capacity building, as distractions. Those who value process lessons and building of the capacity to do women-centered and gender-sensitive research fear that those elements will be overlooked in the focus on research results. These issues are regarded as peripheral to the WSP, rather than central, by those whose main interests are women's empowerment and gender issues. The fact that the WSP does not meet the full expectations of any of these stakeholders has affected to some degree their perceptions of and commitment to the project.

Within the Center for Population, Health and Nutrition and the Office of Population, there seems to be a certain wariness with regard to the WSP because of the controversy it has aroused—heated feelings were generated by the award to FHI, and people were understandably reluctant to make themselves vulnerable to criticism by giving the project a high profile. It was also noted during this evaluation that polarization stemming from the award issue has made people less willing to invest time and energy in reviewing WSP products, and has cost the WSP some valuable feedback it might otherwise have received. The recent changes in the U.S. political climate and in the Congress were also mentioned as factors that have helped keep the project's profile low. For whatever reason, while relations with and support by the various Cognizant Technical Officers (CTOs) and Technical Advisors have generally been good, the WSP is perceived (by both project staff and other respondents) as not having received a great deal of attention from the Office of Population or USAID in general. For example, WSP staff noted that in an Office of Population presentation on reproductive health, the WSP was not mentioned. WSP staff believe greater visibility within the Office of Population, the Center for Population, Health and Nutrition, and USAID in general is important if widespread dissemination of the project's results and attention to its policy implications are to be achieved. However, in fairness to USAID, it is important to recognize that senior staff of the Center for Population, Health and Nutrition have been increasingly constrained in the attention they can give to any of their projects; most of their attention has gone to defending the Center's program against attacks aimed at cutting or eliminating the program itself.

The number of USAID project officers who have worked with the WSP has also been a factor. In general, the WSP has had good, collaborative relations with its CTOs and Technical Advisors (with one exception that did not work out and was fairly quickly resolved). However, the fact that five different people, each with a different set of expectations, have held these positions during the three and a half years since the project began has affected the course of the project, though personnel turnover is not currently an issue. The person who was slated to be the first CTO, a coauthor of the original conceptual framework, left the agency at the time the project was awarded. Those whose main interest is in family planning impact saw this as a loss, because the project began to de-emphasize this aspect and give greater emphasis to other aspects, including capacity building and the development of a more comprehensive conceptual framework, under a different officer. This broader approach, reflected in the later project framework, has been continued under subsequent CTOs.

Another manifestation of ambivalence is the relationship between the WSP and the Gender Working Group. Some members of that group see the WSP staff as well-meaning, hard-working, and responsible, but lacking in a mastery of sophisticated gender concepts; they also criticized the WSP for lacking expertise in qualitative research. These individuals see WSP efforts to deal with these issues as add-ons and learning by experience, when in fact these capabilities should have been present within the project from the beginning. However, they also recognize these problems as being due to USAID's selection criteria, not as something for which FHI should be blamed. The original conceptual framework that formed the basis for the WSP was also criticized as naive, with its implicit assumption that family planning improves women's lives and its focus on women rather than gender.

Relationships with other cooperating agencies do not appear to have been very significant to date in the implementation of the WSP, but they are increasing, and the WSP is clearly willing to collaborate. There is some sharing through mutual attendance at Technical Advisory Group meetings by representatives of the WSP and the EVALUATION Project. Possible joint activities with the POLICY and BASICS projects have also been noted. Contacts with POLICY staff in the Philippines, Zimbabwe, Egypt, and Bolivia are proceeding. In Bolivia, the POLICY Project is supporting one of the small grants administered by the FHI office and wants to work with the WSP on information dissemination. Both PRIME and POLICY have approached the WSP as a potential collaborator on gender issues; a POLICY staff member plans to take the gender lens paper (Pfannenschmidt and McKay, 1997) to Kenya to see how useful it would be in a gender assessment.

The POLICY Project has also been identified by the WSP as a collaborator in dissemination; for example, in the Philippines, POLICY is willing to work with the WSP in disseminating results. However, collaboration with other cooperating agencies and projects in the Philippines is hampered by the fact that the WSP does not participate in regular monthly cooperating agency meetings at the USAID Mission, since FHI has no local representative. In contrast, Bolivia does

have an FHI representative whose proven ability to work with other cooperating agencies could easily be translated into future WSP collaboration.

The perspectives of women's organizations have already been discussed above and in Section 2.4. As noted, a major expectation of these groups, both U.S.-based and in country, was that gender would be a central focus of the WSP, and they are disappointed that attention to gender has, to some extent, had to be "retrofitted" into the WSP. This is obviously a design as well as an implementation issue, and FHI's efforts to incorporate gender have been substantive and are recognized. For example, respondents in the Philippines reported that increased efforts are being made to integrate gender; the WSP has brought in gender experts and is dealing with gender issues in workshops. However, the local gender consultant was not brought in until after the studies were already under way, and some of the efforts have come too late in the process to yield optimal results. The respondents noted it would have been far better to build in greater attention to gender from the beginning and provide gender training to the researchers early on to help them develop a clear framework for analysis.

Some countries have had an easier time integrating gender because of its increased emphasis in the project. In Bolivia, for example, many of the IAC members and observers are local gender experts, and the research projects incorporate a gender perspective, including using male informants to illuminate gender relations and the effects of family planning. A Bolivian respondent also advocated broadening the WSP focus to reproductive health, rather than family planning, in support of the Cairo and Beijing platforms.

3.2.3 Adequacy of Time and Resources

The complexity of the project design, the fact that it was a new approach for the Office of Population, and the effects of widely varying expectations and perceptions on implementation call into question the adequacy of the timeframe and the human and financial resources allocated to the WSP.

No one foresaw the difficulties some of these issues would cause or the time and skills it would take to address them. For example, trying to repair the damage caused by the controversy over the award of the WSP to FHI consumed energy and time that had not been anticipated. Effectiveness in dealing with these problems was hampered by the lack of emphasis on attention to gender issues in the project design (although, as suggested earlier, attention to gender vs. women in development was still an evolving concept in USAID at the time the WSP was designed), the relative lack of emphasis on gender expertise as a selection factor in the award, and the perceived lack of expertise of WSP staff in dealing with gender issues.

Similarly, the time it would take to integrate qualitative research approaches into the research studies, the technical assistance that would be required, and the time that would be needed to

analyze qualitative findings were all underestimated, as discussed in Chapter 2. Lack of time and money has also affected cross-country analysis of results, which was a suggested output in the cooperative agreement (although the WSP's decision to respect country priorities rather than impose a core questionnaire may be a more important limitation on cross-country comparisons).

The most serious underestimation involves dissemination, as has already been discussed in Chapter 2. Further, because the focus on dissemination necessarily comes toward the end of the project, recent budget tightening has disproportionately affected dissemination as most such activities have not yet been funded.

The shift within USAID from central funding and buy-in mechanisms to reliance on field support from Missions for Global Bureau projects has also had an effect, since not all Missions in emphasis countries have contributed field support, and in a time of cutbacks, research is rarely a high priority for funding in competition with other activities. While budget reductions have not yet seriously affected the functioning of the WSP, possible shortfalls and the general climate of uncertainty have raised concern that insufficient funds will be available for effective, widespread dissemination, thus endangering the policy and program impact of the WSP.

3.3 Structural and Management Issues and Status

3.3.1 Advisory and Oversight Mechanisms

Virtually everyone agrees that the IACs are a very useful mechanism, and have helped the WSP deal with some of the issues deriving from both a new approach to research and the varying expectations and perspectives of those involved. It is clear that the IACs have played a role in all facets of the WSP, not just the research component, in their respective countries.

An effort has been made to involve key stakeholders in the IACs, including policymakers, government and NGO family planning professionals, researchers, and women's groups, in a manner appropriate to the local context and project needs in each country. Observers are also invited, including representatives of the USAID Mission, other cooperating agencies, other donors, and NGOs. (The line between members and observers does not appear to be rigid; in Brazil, for example, the Ford and MacArthur foundations and the United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA] participate with interest and commitment.) IACs in most of the countries have been particularly effective in bringing diverse groups together (particularly women's groups and researchers) and ensuring input from a wide range of stakeholders. They have helped develop country research agendas and have provided technical advice to researchers. Because of their influential and diverse membership, the IACs are also key to the dissemination of research results.

While a few respondents mentioned varying quality and relevance of IAC input, most researchers stated that they have found that input valuable. The major complaint expressed in both Bolivia

and the Philippines was that the IACs did not meet frequently enough to facilitate a sustained relationship and maximize their benefit to the research studies. Most IACs meet annually or semiannually. The IAC in Indonesia is apparently the only one that has not met since holding an initial meeting to review proposals; it plans to meet again to review results. While most respondents indicated that the IACs had the right mix of people to be effective, mention was also made of members who did not attend, such as the Department of Health in the Philippines; this was noted as a problem, especially for dissemination. The only disadvantage noted was the expense and difficulty of bringing people together for meetings.

Comments on the Technical Advisory Group were similar. Some concern was expressed about the lack of qualitative research expertise on the group, as noted in Section 2.2.4. Yet the group was said to represent a good cross-section of organizations and backgrounds, and to have engaged in lively and constructive discussions. One respondent noted that the Technical Advisory Group is particularly useful because it promotes communication across countries; another echoed this view, remarking that the group's meetings provide a great opportunity to get together and discuss what has been going on in both the research and political arenas in different countries.

In-country oversight, management, and logistical functions are handled in various ways. In three of the emphasis countries, local organizations serve as secretariats for the WSP under subagreements with FHI (two are NGOs, for Indonesia and the Philippines; in Zimbabwe, a university department serves as the secretariat). In Bolivia, Brazil, and Egypt, local FHI offices (in place to manage other projects) manage the WSP. This arrangement is reported to work well, even though it is an "add-on" for offices set up for another purpose, and attention to the WSP competes with other duties. The personal commitment of the FHI representatives in these countries has compensated for these inherent disadvantages.

Having an in-country base appears to increase local ownership of the research, which is important for dissemination and policy/program impact. The Philippines appears to have the strongest and most active local secretariat, the Institute for Social Studies and Action (ISSA), a women's health NGO. It is an integral part of the women's health and reproductive rights movement and participates in a number of networks, as well as other donor-funded projects. ISSA has clearly contributed to the success of the WSP in that country: it has organized four workshops for participants, with two more planned; has prepared good briefing materials for the IAC and distributed minutes of IAC meetings to all participants; distributes a WSP newsletter and other informational materials, including pertinent bills and laws; and monitors activities and prepares thorough reports. Almost everyone interviewed in the Philippines noted ISSA's very effective role in the WSP.

The need for FHI oversight appears to be inversely related to the strength and effectiveness of the secretariat and, to some extent, the IAC. Oversight was not mentioned as an issue in the Philippines (apart from the need for on-site technical assistance), while the head of the secretariat

in Indonesia emphasized that he would like more FHI involvement, particularly in dealing with the national family planning agency, which has caused difficulties.

3.3.2 Communications and Decision Making

USAID respondents, in both Washington and the field, reported that communications with FHI and the WSP worked well, and that project staff were good about sharing drafts and soliciting USAID comments and were responsive to their concerns. For example, the project manager in Indonesia reported that FHI was making every effort to complete project activities by the end of 1997 because the Mission needed to limit the number of cooperative agreements to comply with its phase-out strategy for population, health, and nutrition activities in Indonesia.

Communication and coordination among WSP staff appear to work well, even though there is a rather decentralized structure; staff—especially country technical monitors—have a high degree of autonomy. While the first management review raised concern about the adequacy of technical oversight of the country studies, this does not appear to be a major problem, although, as noted in Chapter 2, some respondents did express a desire for more sustained FHI technical assistance.

FHI was highly praised by in-country respondents for its flexibility and responsiveness to issues and problems raised by the secretariats, IACs, local consultants, and researchers. The value of the informational materials provided by FHI was also frequently mentioned.

3.3.3 Staff and Consultants

Most respondents expressed a high opinion of the quality of WSP staff, as well as of the consultants involved with the project. The most significant issues raised with regard to staffing were the lack of gender expertise and qualitative research experience. These issues are obviously related to differences of perspective and expectation, stemming from the mix of project objectives and differing perceptions of their relative priority.

3.3.4 Reporting

No reporting issues or complaints were raised. In fact, the system for disbursing funds against expense reports received accolades from the field. It was characterized as simple and very rapid and efficient.

3.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

3.4.1 Conclusions

- The WSP has disparate, multiple objectives—such as getting credible research results vs. building research capacity, and assessing impacts on women vs. integrating women’s perspectives and empowering women—without a clear, functional definition of their relative importance and relationship.
- The WSP may be too complex, for example, in trying both to conduct research and to develop new models and strengthen capacity. It might have been more effective to limit the project objectives, especially for a project, such as the WSP, aiming for innovation.
- There was insufficient consensus on how innovative the WSP was really supposed to be—whether the fundamental purpose was to document family planning impact or to develop an innovative model for both assessing the impact on women and involving them in the assessment process; how innovative the means to accomplish that purpose needed to be; and what level of risk in implementing such a complex project (e.g., the risk of working with untried partner organizations) would be tolerable to USAID to achieve the desired results.
- The ambiguities in the project design and evolution contributed to divergent expectations and even conflicts that have negatively affected the WSP. While not all these issues were foreseeable, given the dynamic context at the time, some were; an example is the issues with women’s groups, given their well-known positions in the areas of gender and reproductive health. Greater consultation and transparency in the design and selection process could have avoided some of these problems.
- The distinctions between impact on women and women’s empowerment and between women and gender were never clearly articulated, and have been dealt with in various ways over the course of the project, creating problems. It is very difficult, and not very satisfactory, to incorporate these perspectives post hoc.
- Insufficient time and resources were allotted to deal with the complexities of the project. Innovative, complex approaches take a great deal of time and require a high level of experience, skill, and flexibility, both to foresee problems and to deal with the unforeseen.

- In spite of these issues, the WSP is functioning remarkably well, thanks to considerable flexibility, staff skill, and effective oversight and advisory mechanisms and management processes. The use of IACs has been particularly effective, and it has been found that local secretariats can also be an effective means of both oversight and capacity building.

3.4.2 Recommendations

Because the WSP is terminating, only a few of the following recommendations apply specifically to the WSP; most are geared toward future activities having similar objectives and incorporating innovative approaches toward gender and women's involvement in reproductive health activities.

Recommendations Specific to the WSP

- For the remainder of the WSP, the Office of Population, the Gender Working Group, the Office of Women in Development, and USAID Missions in the emphasis countries should focus on promoting attention to the WSP in presentations, seminars, and cooperating agency meetings and on encouraging collaboration in dissemination and use of the project results.
- Consideration should be given to extending the completion date for the WSP by at least 6 months and adding sufficient funds to ensure adequate dissemination of both research and process results. If possible, an additional period of time and an adequate budget should be allowed to develop cross-country analyses where these are possible and to make instruments and datasets available for use by other researchers.

Recommendations for Future Activities

- To the extent possible, clear, limited, and internally coherent objectives should be developed for innovative and/or complex activities to minimize divergence in perceptions and expectations.
- The means and skills needed to achieve the desired results should be carefully assessed, and accurately reflected in the Request for Abstract and selection criteria.
- Consensus should be gained among major stakeholders through extensive consultation from the earliest stages of project design, particularly for innovative activities.

- Women's empowerment and gender issues should be built into project objectives and implementation mechanisms, and the Request for Abstract and selection criteria should require appropriate expertise in these areas. If needed, gender training should be provided for project participants during the formative stages of the activity.
- For projects taking an innovative approach, adequate resources and time to deal with the unexpected should be allowed.
- An IAC mechanism should be considered for future projects, particularly those with innovative designs.

4. LESSONS LEARNED AND THEIR APPLICATIONS

Many of the conclusions and recommendations from Chapters 2 and 3 apply to future activities. This chapter synthesizes the principal lessons learned from the WSP and suggests how they might be applied in current and future activities of the Center for Population, Health and Nutrition.

4.1 Lessons Relevant to Activities of the Center for Population, Health and Nutrition

- Clear and coherent objectives developed in consultation with major stakeholders, selection criteria that ensure the means to achieve those objectives, and adequate time and budget are important to avoid misperceptions and delays, enhance credibility, and maximize impact. These issues are at the root of problems suffered by the WSP and are likely to detract from its overall impact despite its admirable achievements and compensatory efforts.
- A guiding conceptual framework is an important element for this type of project to ensure that the research addresses the right questions, and that there is a coherent structure to shape the project findings and enhance their impact on policy and programs. The impact of the WSP would probably have been enhanced if the initial framework had been developed in fuller consultation with advocacy organizations experienced in gender and reproductive health issues, thus avoiding the need to develop a new and quite different framework later. A more appropriate framework developed earlier in the project could have played a more significant role in guiding the research and giving overall coherence to the WSP results for purposes of dissemination. Sufficient time should be allowed early in a project to develop a conceptual framework, phased to fit the implementation schedule, and time should also be allowed to refine that framework based on project experience.
- Written research strategies, based firmly on the overall project objectives and the conceptual framework, are helpful to ensure the right mix of research, to help researchers understand the role of their studies in the overall context of the project, and to serve as an organizing principle for assessment of results. They are also useful tools for informing interested parties about the research undertaken and its significance. Unwritten strategies have helped guide the WSP research, but not all participants understand them clearly, and they are difficult to share and communicate to others. Clear, concrete research strategies, both overall and country-specific, can also help ensure that all activities advance project objectives, and help avoid the use of scarce resources for activities only loosely linked to project objectives, such as some of the WSP secondary analyses.

- A focus on qualitative methodologies or on a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods has proved effective and useful for this type of research. The innovative approaches developed by WSP studies and the many efforts to enhance broad participation should be used as models for future research activities.
- The in-country oversight and advisory mechanisms used by the WSP, particularly the IACs, have been highly effective. Local involvement and ownership have been emphasized, and this is likely to enhance utilization of both the research and process results.
- Bringing women's perspectives and gender issues to bear has been both crucial to credible results and more difficult than initially expected. Women's advocacy organizations (both international and in country) are core constituents for activities dealing with these issues, and should be fully involved in design, implementation, dissemination, and advocacy for policy and program changes based on project results. Involving these organizations and dealing effectively with gender issues requires a significant commitment; these issues must be addressed from the very beginning, and careful planning is necessary to ensure that adequate time, resources, and skills are available for the purpose.
- To achieve the desired impact on policy and programs, sufficient time and money must be allowed to analyze complex data, synthesize the findings, develop adequate dissemination strategies, and disseminate the results. The WSP has developed excellent strategies, but time and money may be inadequate to achieve optimal dissemination results.

4.2 Possible Linkages to Help Sustain WSP Accomplishments

- Other cooperating agencies and USAID-supported programs should be informed of the results of the WSP and encouraged to support policy and program modifications, appropriate to their functions, based on those results. In particular, the POLICY project should be encouraged to disseminate and support the WSP's policy recommendations.
- Other relevant USAID population, health, and nutrition projects and programs should be encouraged to establish or strengthen relationships with women's health advocacy organizations, both international and in country, in order to build on the relationships established by the WSP and strengthen USAID's transition to an integrated, gender-sensitive reproductive health focus. It is particularly important to strengthen dialogue with organizations that have been

skeptical or critical of the WSP or of USAID family planning activities in general in order to develop greater consensus and credibility for USAID efforts.

- The network of local researchers and IAC members developed by the WSP is a resource for current and future population, health, and nutrition activities, and can provide local expertise and enhance the credibility and impact of activities in those countries. The involvement of these local experts in future activities would also continue to build or enhance the local capacity developed by the WSP. The Center for Population, Health and Nutrition should try to maintain contact with these individuals, inform them of other relevant USAID-supported activities in their countries, and ensure that project implementers are encouraged to seek their involvement.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX B

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E. Bisgrove, L. Adair, C. Gultiano, J. Avila to Manila and Cebu City, January 2-15, 1994.

N. Williamson to Manila. June 1-18, 1994.

E. Bisgrove to Philippines. June 8-July 8, 1994.

N. Williamson, M. Lehmkhule to Manila. October 30-November 15, 1994.

E. Bisgrove, E. Wong to Manila and Cebu. February 14-March 4, 1995.

E. Bisgrove to Manila, Iloilo City and Cagayan de Oro. February 9-March 3, 1996.

N. Williamson to Manila. August 4-16, 1996.

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APPENDIX C

List Of Persons Contacted

(Note - Telephone interviews indicated by T in parentheses)

United States

USAID/Washington

Office of Population

Elizabeth Maguire, Director
Jennifer Adams, WSP CTO
Barbara Crane, former Technical Advisor
Ellen Starbird, former CTO
Mary Willis, former Technical Advisor
Erin McNeill, Gender Working Group
Estelle Quain, Gender Working Group

Office of Women in Development

Laurie Krieger, Gender Working Group

Family Health International, Research Triangle Park, NC

Theodore King, President, Chief Operating Officer
JoAnn Lewis, Sr. Vice President, Reproductive Health Programs

WSP Staff (full-time staff denoted by *)

Nancy Williamson, Director, Women's Studies Division (WSD)*
Priscilla Ulin, Deputy Director, WSD*
Cynthia Waszak, Principal Research Scientist, WSD
Patricia Bailey, MCH/FP Evaluation Specialist, WSD
Kathy Hinson, Contract Administrator, WSD*
Karen Hardee, Principal Research Scientist, WSD
Juan Carlos Reinoso, Secretary/Administrative Assistant, WSD*
Susan Pfannenschmidt, Research Analyst, WSD*
Arlene McKay, Senior Advisor to Women's Issues & Development Office
Eilene Bisgrove, Research Scientist, WSD
Donna McCarraher, Senior Research Analyst, Contraceptive Use & Epidemiology Division
Beth Robinson, Associate Director, Information Programs, Policy & Research Utilization Division

Barbara Barnett, Science Writer and Editor, Policy & Research Utilization Division
Elizabeth Eggleston, Senior Research Analyst, WSD

Cindy Visness, Research Associate, Contraceptive Use & Epidemiology Division
Emily Wong, Senior Biostatistician, Biostatistics Division
Bill Conn, Senior Program Officer, Field Operations Division
Cynthia Kay, Development Administrator, Development Office
Marcia Elliker, Contracts and Grants Manager

WSP TAG Members

Jane Menken, TAG Chair (T)
Director, Population Studies Center
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, PA

Lawrence Severy (T)
Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL

WSP Researchers

Carolina Population Center, Chapel Hill, NC

Amy Tsui, Director, EVALUATION Project
Linda Adair, Principal Investigator, Cebu secondary analyses & longitudinal follow-up study
David Guilkey, Deputy Director, EVALUATION Project; Researcher, Cebu data
Socorro Gultiano, WSP Cebu survey
Judith Borja, Researcher, Cebu data
Barbara Polhamus, Researcher, Cebu data

Sidney Schuler (Bangladesh secondary analyses)
Director, Empowerment of Women Program
John Snow, Inc.
Arlington, VA

Mary Kritz (Nigeria and Malaysia secondary analyses) (T)
Assoc. Professor, Population and Development Program
Department of Rural Sociology
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY

Other Informants

Sawon Hong (Co-author, initial conceptual framework) (T)
Evaluation Officer
UNICEF
New York, NY

Judith Seltzer (Co-author, initial conceptual framework) (T)
Consultant
Santa Fe, NM

Sara Seims (Funded China research) (T)
Rockefeller Foundation
New York, NY

Jodi Jacobson (Attended TAG, other interactions) (T)
Director, Health and Development Policy Project
Takoma Park, MD

Lori L. Heise (Visited FHI, discussed WSP) (T)
Health and Development Policy Project
Takoma Park, MD

Peggy Curlin (T)
President, Centre for Development & Population Activities
Washington, DC

Bolivia

USAID/Bolivia, La Paz

Deborah Caro, CTO for WSP
Office of Population

WSP IAC Members

Ivonne Farah, Directora
Subsecretaria de Asuntos de Genero
La Paz

Virginia Camacho, Jefa
Programa de Salud Integral, Direccion Nacional de Salud y
Nutricion Mujer y el Nino
La Paz

Zulema Alanes
Periodista
La Paz

Bertha Pooley
Secretaria Ejecutiva
Programa de Coordinacion en Salud Integral (PROCOSI)
La Paz

Carmen Ledo (also consultant to research study on males)
Centro de Estudios Superiores Universitarios
Universidad Mayor de San Simon
Cochabamba

Susana Rance
Consultora
La Paz

WSP Researchers

Carmen Velasco (PI for study on access/use of reproductive
health services; also member of IAC)
Directora
Programas para la Mujer (PROMUJER)
La Paz

Amparo Camacho (PI, psychosocial impact of fertility
regulation on women)
Directora Ejecutiva
Proyecto Integral en Salud (PROISA)
La Paz

Emilio Zambrana (PI, men's knowledge/attitudes/behavior
regarding fertility regulation)
Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI)
Cochabamba

Claudia de la Quintana (PI, reproductive health in migrant populations, El Alto and Sucre)

PROMUJER

La Paz

Mario Gutierrez (PI for DHS follow-up study on women's economic participation; technical advisor to COOPI study on men's knowledge/attitudes/behavior)

Consultor

La Paz

Teresa Polo

Researcher (DHS/women's economic participation)

La Paz

Other Informants

Franklin Garcia

Unidad de Politicas de Poblacion (UPP)

Ministerio de Desarrollo Humano

La Paz

Ximena Machicao (CIDEM was subject of WSP case study)

Directora Ejecutiva

Centro de Informacion y Desarrollo de la Mujer (CIDEM)

La Paz

Susan Paulson (Headed WSP case study team)

Consultora

Cochabamba

Maria Esther Pozo

Consultora

Cochabamba

Rene Pereira (FHI office acts as secretariat for WSP)

FHI Representative (Contraceptive Technology Project)

La Paz

Brazil

Maria Jose Duarte Osis (PI for female sterilization study) (T)
CEMICAMP
Campinas

Indonesia

Lana Dakan (questionnaire and reply by fax)
HIRD/P
USAID/Indonesia
Jakarta

Saparinah Sadli (TAG and IAC member) (T)
University of Indonesia
Jakarta

Ninuk Widyantoro (IAC member and consultant) (T)
Director, Fenomena
Jakarta

Firman Lubis (Director of WSP secretariat) (T)
Executive Director
Yayasan Kusuma Buana (YKB)
Jakarta

Sri Adioetomo (PI, study on FP impact on women's economic activity and household autonomy) (T)
University of Indonesia
Jakarta

Philippines

USAID/Philippines, Manila

Carol Carpenter Yaman, Chief
Office of Population, Health and Nutrition

Ephraim Despabiladeras, Project Officer for WSP
Office of PHN

WSP TAG/IAC Members

Florence Tadiar, Chair of IAC; TAG member
Executive Director
Women's Health Care Foundation, Inc.
Quezon City

Benjamin de Leon
Undersecretary for Social Development
Office of the President
Malacanang, Manila

Cecille Joaquin-Yasay
Executive Director
Commission on Population (POPCOM)
Mandaluyong, Metro Manila

Lolita Cantorna-Layser (attends IAC meetings for PopCom)
POPCOM
Mandaluyong, Metro Manila

Aida Santos (T)
WEDPRO
Quezon City

Carol Sobritchea (also serves as gender consultant for WSP)
Women's Studies Department
University of the Philippines, Diliman Campus
Quezon City

Mercedes B. Concepcion (T)
Consultant
Manila
Ofelia Sanie
College of Public Health
University of the Philippines
Manila

Julieta de la Cruz (coming on IAC in 1997; WSP consultant)(T)
Executive Director
Institute of Maternal and Child Health
Quezon City

WSP Secretariat, Institute for Social Studies and Action (ISSA), Quezon City

Rowena Alvarez, Executive Director (also IAC member)

Mariel Diaz, Program Officer for WSP

Margaret Onasan

WSP Researchers

Josephine Avila (Responsible for qualitative component, Cebu/
OPS project)

Office of Population Studies (OPS)

University of San Carlos

Cebu City

Wilhelm Flieger (Responsible for Cebu longitudinal survey)

Director, OPS

University of San Carlos

Cebu City

Fely P. David (PI, economic & psychosocial influence of FP)

Director

Social Science Research Institute (SSRI)

Central Philippine University

Iloilo City (interviewed in Cebu City)

Magdalena Cabaraban (PI, social & economic consequences of FP)

Research Institute for Mindanao Culture (RIMCU)

Xavier University

Cagayan de Oro (interviewed in Cebu City)

Other Informants

Mark Sherman

POLICY Project (USAID)

POPCOM

Mandaluyong, Metro Manila

Brigida Jayme

Program Officer

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Makati, Manila

Marilou Palabrica-Costello (attends IAC meetings) (T)
Host Country Advisor
The Population Council
Manila

Purita Sanchez (WSP consultant for local dissemination)
Kauswagan Community Health & Social Development Center
Cebu City

Zimbabwe

Roxana Rogers (Principal USAID contact for WSP) (T)
USAID/Zimbabwe

Marvellous Mhloyi (Head of WSP secretariat; TAG member; PI,
impact of FP on women's participation in development) (T)
Department of Sociology
University of Zimbabwe
Harare

APPENDIX D

Interview Guides

Key Questions for USAID/W and USAID Missions

1. What is your relationship to the WSP, and for how long?
2. How do the activities and accomplishments of the project compare with what was planned (both originally and with the changes approved as a result of the 1996 management review)?
3. How important has the conceptual framework been to the WSP? Is it being effectively used? Are there any issues around the timing of its development, i.e. was it developed early enough in the process?
4. What aspect of the project's work do you consider the most valuable? least valuable? (Why?)
5. (For G/PHN/POP and Gender Working Group) What has the WSP contributed to the Gender Working Group, and vice versa?
6. Has the WSP established any links or collaborated with other CAs or projects?
7. How responsive has the project been to your concerns? (note issues)
8. Have the skills and experience of project staff and consultants been appropriate? (note issues)
9. How well have the Secretariats, TAG, and IACs functioned? (note issues)
10. How has the project responded to changes in G/PHN/POP priorities and mandate? How have these changes affected the project?
11. How have budget cuts affected the project? Can the objectives (as modified in 1996) still be achieved?
12. What are the most important project results, or what would you expect the most important results to be? What would be the most effective means of disseminating the project's research results, tools/methodologies, and lessons learned, given resource constraints? Are any changes in current dissemination plans and mechanisms needed?

13. How can the accomplishments/lessons learned from the project be used in current and future G/PHN/POP or Mission-supported family planning and reproductive health projects? What changes are most feasible/most likely to be adopted? Which/what types of projects are the best candidates to use findings from the WSP? Have any changes already been made/planned in other programs or projects based on the WSP (including non-USAID programs)?
14. Has the project influenced attention to gender in other G/PHN/POP or Mission activities? How?

Key Questions for Project Staff/Country Secretariats/TAG and IACs

1. What is your relationship to the WSP, and for how long?
2. How do the activities and accomplishments of the project compare with what was planned (both originally and with the changes approved as a result of the 1996 management review)?
3. How important has the conceptual framework been to the WSP? Is it being effectively used? Are there any issues around the timing of its development, i.e., was it developed early enough in the process?
4. How are the research proposals selected?
5. What aspect of the project's work do you consider the most valuable? least valuable? (Why?)
6. (Primarily for project staff, TAG) What has the WSP contributed to the USAID Gender Working Group, and vice versa?
7. Has the WSP established any links or collaborated with other CAs or projects?
8. How well have the Secretariats, TAG, and IACs functioned? (note issues)
9. Have the skills and experience of project staff and consultants been appropriate? (note issues)
10. How have changes in G/PHN/POP priorities and mandate affected the project?
11. How have budget cuts affected the project? Can the objectives (as modified in 1996) still be achieved?

12. To what extent will the research program (including both research studies and publications supported by WSP) allow the project to answer the initial questions stated in the project purpose (the program objectives stated in the CA)?
13. What has been the level of technical soundness of the research studies, both primary research and secondary analyses?
14. How are methodologies chosen (use of qualitative/quantitative)? What methodological issues/lessons can be identified in the research program? What lessons have been learned about psycho-social research in other linguistic and cultural contexts?
15. What has the WSP accomplished under the technical assistance component?
16. What has the WSP accomplished vis a vis links with women's advocacy groups? Are there likely to be lasting results from these contacts and relationships? How are they likely to affect future family planning/reproductive health activities?
17. What has the WSP contributed to capacity building with host-country researchers and research organizations?
18. What are the most important project results, or what would you expect the most important results to be? What would be the most effective means of disseminating the project's research results, tools/methodologies, and lessons learned, given resource constraints? Are any changes in current dissemination plans and mechanisms needed?
19. How successful has the WSP been to date in reflecting women's perspectives to country and USAID policy makers and program managers, and in helping to change policies and programs? Have any changes been made/planned in other programs or projects based on WSP findings and experience? (including non-USAID programs)
20. Has the project influenced attention to gender in other G/PHN/POP or Mission activities? How?

Key Questions for Researchers/Technical Reviewers/Women's Advocacy Groups

1. What is your relationship to the WSP, and for how long?
2. How do activities and accomplishments under the WSP compare with what was planned?

3. How important has the conceptual framework been to the WSP? Is it being effectively used? Are there any issues around the timing of its development, i.e., was it developed early enough in the process?
4. How are the research proposals selected?
5. What aspect of the project's work do you consider the most valuable? least valuable? (Why?)
6. How responsive has the project been to your concerns? (note issues)
7. How well have the Secretariats, TAG, and IACs functioned? (note issues)
8. Have project staff and consultants provided appropriate assistance? Have they had the right skills and experience to help achieve project objectives? (note issues)
9. Has your work been affected by budget cuts or delays in funding? (note issues)
10. What are the major research questions addressed and the most important findings?
11. What has been the level of technical soundness of the research studies, both primary research and secondary analyses?
12. How are methodologies chosen (use of qualitative/quantitative)? What methodological issues/lessons can be identified in the research program? Has psychosocial research been used to help illuminate differing linguistic and cultural contexts? What lessons have been learned about psychosocial research?
13. What has the WSP accomplished under the technical assistance component? How useful has project technical assistance been in your work? Have documents distributed been helpful (which ones, how)? Have meetings/seminars been useful (which ones, how)?
14. What has the WSP accomplished vis a vis links with women's advocacy groups? Are there likely to be lasting results from these contacts and relationships? How are they likely to affect future family planning/reproductive health activities?
15. What has the WSP contributed to capacity building with host-country researchers and research organizations?

16. What are the most important project results, or what would you expect the most important results to be? What would be the most effective means of disseminating the project's research results, tools/methodologies, and lessons learned, given resource constraints? How can the project best ensure that the results are used? Are any changes in current dissemination plans and mechanisms needed?
17. How successful has the WSP been to date in reflecting women's perspectives to country and USAID policy makers and program managers, and in helping to change policies and programs? Have any changes been made/planned in other programs or projects based on WSP findings and experience? (including non-USAID programs)