
Family and Development

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the U.S. Agency for International Development:

The Democracy Initiative

The Partnership for Business and Development

Family and Development

plus

Toward Strategic Management

Family and Development: An A.I.D. Initiative

Executive Summary

A.I.D.'s challenge is to identify and support programs that stimulate development and improve the lives of people. A focus on the family, including the dynamics within the family, is critical to the success or failure of A.I.D.'s development objectives. It is within the family that human and economic investments come together.

Traditionally, many development programs have been designed and their impact measured with emphasis either on the individual level or on the national level. To focus on individual achievements alone is to distort the picture. To focus on national statistics causes us to miss major undeveloped pockets.

Each society has its own family structures, and the diversity in family structures and functions across and within societies needs to be respected. Viewing the family as a critical dynamic within society and taking into account the way in which families allocate resources and make decisions fine-tune development input and increase the chances that the benefits of the intervention will flow to the intended beneficiaries and be sustained.

The purpose of the initiative is to use the family, a sometimes forgotten unit, as a starting point for analysis of what people need, how they use the resources they have, and as an organizing principle for mobilizing the energy of people to create progress.

The objectives of the initiative are to:

- 1. Strengthen and increase the participation of families in the development process;***
- 2. Identify innovative ways to increase the mobilization of family resources to stimulate economic growth and social development;***
- 3. Build on successful programs that have focused on the family as the key to the achievement of development objectives;***
- 4. Expand the use of the family as a critical unit of analysis in understanding people's needs, aspirations and patterns of resource use; and,***
- 5. Use the family concept and analytical framework to improve and enrich the results of monitoring, research and evaluation of development impacts.***

Introduction

A.I.D.'s challenge is to identify and support programs that stimulate development and improve the lives of people. A focus on the family, including the dynamics within the family, is critical to the success or failure of A.I.D.'s development objectives. It is within the family that human and economic investments come together. Food production is a family enterprise. Health and childbearing decisions are family-based. Educational achievement is dependent upon family support. The family plays a principal role in shaping the abilities and desires of individuals to participate in and take advantage of opportunities in society.

Each society has its own family structures, and the diversity in family structures and functions across and within societies needs to be respected. Those structures are an integral part of the resilience of a society to deal with hardship, with change and with development. In some instances its members' perception of their "family" may mean those living in the same household; in others it may be more extended. A great many family units, particularly in the poorest segments of developing countries, are headed by women, and these female-headed households must be given equal attention. The concept of family must encompass not only factors such as income, nutrition and living conditions that are associated with households, but also the intangible aspects of a family, including care and nurturing of younger members, support of older members and motivation for the success of the next generation.

Today, many families in the developing world still lack access to the resources necessary to improve their own lives and enhance their productivity and, in some cases, to ensure their own survival. There is no way A.I.D. or even developing country governments can meet the critical needs of individuals and increase the productivity of nations on a sustained basis without attention to this basic unit. Failure to understand and include the family dynamic in the analysis, implementation and monitoring of development programs is to handicap our efforts. Failure to support and build on families' motivation to improve their own circumstances is to squander a unique and critical source of energy for development. Just as family poverty tends to repeat itself generation after generation, so too, improvements in family income levels, living conditions, education and health and new norms tend to be passed on to succeeding generations. By strengthening our perspective on human development through greater focus on the family, we can bring about significant and lasting results.

The Family: The Foundation of Development

The Family's Role in Development

A.I.D.'s experience worldwide has shown that the economic and social role of the family is a critical variable in development. The family provides the environment within which the next generation is born, sheltered, nourished and educated. It is the mother or father who must take a child to be immunized or know about and use oral rehydration therapy. It is the parent(s) who must facilitate a child's early non-formal and formal education. Family income and the way in which it is allocated within the household govern the consumption patterns of members and thus the children's nutritional status. Family land and labor determine agricultural productivity, and the way in which the land and labor are used affects the natural resource base. Financial and physical security of older family members, of which there are a growing number, is often the responsibility of adult children.

Understanding and appreciating the contribution that families make to a farm-system agricultural approach; to encouraging the use of safe, clean water; to income generated through informal productive enterprises; and to decisions about child health, nutrition and education can be the factor that spells success for a development project or program. Viewing the family as a critical dynamic within society and taking into account the way in which families allocate resources and make decisions fine-tune development input and increase the chances that the benefits of the intervention will flow to the intended beneficiaries and be sustained.

In one advanced developing country, attempts to get organized units of farmers to adopt processing and production technologies were unsuccessful. When the focus was shifted to using family-owned microbusinesses, significant technology transfer began to occur. The energy and single-minded dedication of the family production unit had been tapped. The family unit was willing and able to invest the many hours of front-end labor required. However, these same farm families had not been willing to commit this level of energy when the transfer agent was the organized farmer units.

In several African countries, attempts to change farmgate prices to increase production were found to have little or no effect on production. Analysis of the family as a production unit revealed that a large number of rural households are net deficit food producers and do not respond in predictable ways to increased market prices. Establishing links between prices and production was not possible without a focus on the family.

In another African country, support for parent-teacher associations and increased local-level management of schools has been one means of assuring that education is responsive to community and parental standards and of enhancing community contributions to schools. Increased parental and community involvement is also a strategy for improving the enrollment and retention rates of girls and other traditionally marginalized student populations.

The Impact of Change on Families

While families play a major role in development, development changes, in turn, affect the family, sometimes weakening rather than strengthening it. Urbanization, environmental changes, new technology and changing age structures resulting from declining fertility and longer life expectancies are examples of changes that may actually add stress to the family. More obvious, but no less important, is the impact on families of economic hardship, AIDS, war and natural disasters. All of these can place severe stress on the family unit, sometimes separating its members temporarily or permanently.

Intrafamily Dynamics

It is essential to understand how and why decisions within families are made, in order to predict who within the family is likely to gain or lose as a result of an intervention. One's position in the family, gender and age are among the more important factors that determine task allocation decisions, a household member's access to and control over productive resources, food consumption levels and the types of technologies adopted by families. Development interventions that do not recognize the interplay of intrafamily dynamics are less likely to succeed. At the same time, development projects themselves can alter intrahousehold dynamics. Increasing the chances that children will survive often affects decisions concerning the practice of family planning. Road projects that open up employment opportunities off-farm have important implications for limiting a household's access to farm labor on the one hand, and to increasing household incomes on the other.

A.I.D.'s Family and Development Initiative

Purpose

The purpose of the initiative is to use the family, a sometimes forgotten unit, as a starting point for analysis of what people need, how they use the resources they have, and as an organizing principle for mobilizing the energy of people to create progress.

Objectives

A.I.D. objectives in the Family and Development Initiative are to:

1. Strengthen and increase the participation of families in the development process;
2. Identify innovative ways to increase the mobilization of family resources to stimulate economic growth and social development;
3. Build on successful programs that have focused on the family as the key to the achievement of development objectives;
4. Expand the use of the family as a critical unit of analysis in understanding people's needs, aspirations and patterns of resource use; and,
5. Use the family concept and analytical framework to improve and enrich the results of monitoring, research and evaluation of development impacts.

Programmatic Approaches

Focusing more attention on the family should be done broadly and openly to allow innovative ideas and actions to flow from a wide range of organizations. This must be an initiative to which all can contribute and from which all can learn and benefit. Two important international conferences in 1990, the World Summit for Children and the World Conference on Education for All, emphasized the importance of the family in improving the health and educational status of children in both developing and developed societies. The family as a focus for human resource development provides a greatly strengthened framework for A.I.D.'s follow-up to these international commitments in countries where A.I.D. has programs in the health and education sectors.

Implementation of the initiative will draw upon activities already going on in all areas of A.I.D.'s portfolio, enhancing their effectiveness through the emphasis on the family concept. The following illustrative list represents the types of activities that A.I.D. will emphasize in support of economic and social development goals.

Education

- support policy reform that strengthens the role of parents and the family in the provision and local-level management of educational resources;
- empower the family by increasing education opportunities, especially for girls and women, and encourage families to educate their female children;
- encourage the development of parent-teacher associations and increase family investment in local schools;
- support early childhood care and development and related opportunities for family and community participation; and,
- encourage the use of schools and educational resources as the focus of local community and family development.

Health

- promote decentralization of health services to the community level;
- expand social marketing of commodities and practices that can be used by the family in caring for children's health;
- increase employer-provided family health benefits; and,
- emphasize male participation in child care and family planning.

Economic Productivity

- support formal and informal family-based enterprises through policy and regulatory reforms and increased access to information, markets and financing for both male and female family members;
- encourage media communication and development messages directed to families;
- increase the availability of day-care facilities to provide families with greater flexibility to pursue economic endeavors; and,

- consider the food security goals, strategies and constraints of families in formulating development policies.

Environment and Sustainable Resource Management

- support the family's role in coping with or balancing the often competing needs for economic productivity and sound management of natural resources.

Separated Families

- articulate policies and programs to help reunite families separated by natural disasters, economic difficulties and war; and,
- promote care for children orphaned by AIDS, war or other disasters.

Status of Women

- expand efforts to improve the legal, economic and social status of women in order to enhance the effectiveness of women's contribution to their own families and to national productivity and the benefits they derive therefrom.

Social and Political Participation

- promote and support participation of families and their members in community affairs.

Research and Evaluation

- design and carry out studies and surveys on the needs of families and of individuals in the context of their family relationships and responsibilities, e.g., remittances earned by individuals in one country may support families in another country; individuals forced by economic circumstances to spend time away from home may play a role in the transmission of AIDS and in the break-up of families;
- conduct studies on the impact of structural adjustment and economic reform on the stability and prospects of families;
- design development activities based on findings from studies of the allocation of resources within families and the impact on individual members, e.g., the impact of cash cropping on the nutritional status of various family members;

- research the relationship between environmental problems and family stability and future prospects, including the short-term potentially negative impact on families' access to food and fuel resulting from long-term measures to protect the environment;
- research the impact of certain diseases on family relationships and stability, e.g., AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, drug and alcohol abuse, etc.; and,
- design impact evaluation and monitoring methodologies that focus on the role of the family, including household-level data where it is useful and feasible to collect; investigate intrahousehold dynamics and allocation of resources where appropriate.

Measuring Development Impact

Traditionally, many development programs have been designed and their impact measured with emphasis either on the individual level or on the national level. To focus on individual achievements alone is to distort the picture. To focus on national statistics causes us to miss major undeveloped pockets. Measurement of development impact has always been a difficult task. Developing indicators for measuring change in family conditions will not be easy. However, household-level indicators and studies of intrahousehold allocation of resources will give us a more complete picture of the real impact of development assistance and of the reasons why it succeeds or fails than will reliance only on national-level indicators.