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PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

A Background Paper on the New Foreign
Assistance Act Provision (Percy Amendment)

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PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT
THE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT PROVISION

A recent amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961

says that development assistance programs supported by the United States should be administered with particular attention to the integration of women into the economies of foreign countries.

The amendment creates a new section in the law--section 113. It was put forward on the floor of the Senate by Senator Percy, of Illinois, and it was subsequently accepted by both houses of the Congress.^{1/}

Section 113 is directed to the manner in which officers of the Agency for International Development obligate Federal funds and conduct their business. It does not change the priorities, policies, or requirements stated elsewhere in the law. These include the concentration of U.S. bilateral economic assistance on critical development problems, especially in functional sectors that affect the lives of the majority of the people--food production, rural development and nutrition; population planning and health; and education, public administration, and human resource development.

^{1/} See Cong. Record, 2 October 1973, pp. 18422 - 18423 (daily ed.); House Rpt. 93-669, at p. 30 (27 Nov. 1973). When he introduced it, Senator Percy said his intent was to put into law a policy which had been set out in the report of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the 1973 foreign assistance authorizing legislation. See Sen. Ex. No. 93-377, at page 13 (2 Aug. 1973). The idea was a subject of testimony in October 1973 before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements.

Section 113 also applies to AID's administration of activities that are meant to help solve economic and social development problems in fields such as transportation, power, industry, urban development, and export development. In addition, it covers assistance made available in support of the general economy of recipient countries and to AID support given for development programs conducted by private or international organizations.

Section 113 is to be applied in the context of a number of other policy directives that Congress has given to the Executive Branch. Two of these deserve special notice in connection with this provision. They both say that AID officers should not impose foreign ideas and inappropriate institutions on other countries.

Specifically, the first requires that bilateral development assistance activities support the development goals of recipient countries and give highest priority to undertakings they propose which directly improve the lives of the poorest people and the capacity of these people to participate in the countries' development.^{2/}

The second directs that development assistance programs be conducted in such a way as to recognize the differing needs, desires,

^{2/} Section 103(u).

and capacities of the people of the developing countries. Development assistance programs are supposed to encourage the use of local intellectual resources and the development of indigenous institutions that meet local requirements for sustained economic and social progress.^{3/}

At the same time that section 113 became law, another provision came into effect which relates to women and must be considered. That is section 114, which prohibits the use of economic aid funds to perform abortions for family planning purposes or to motivate or coerce anyone to practice abortion.

Section 113 therefore does not set up the problems of women as a separate functional sector for AID, or the advancement of women in other countries as an independent U.S. foreign assistance objective.

What it does do is to insist that American officials pay attention to the effects which U.S. supported programs have on the integration of women into national economies. And, within the framework of the foreign aid legislation, that they support improvements in women's status and in the efficiency of development efforts through the participation of women.

^{3/} Section 281.

An International Effort

This is not strictly a unilateral initiative of the United States. It is consistent with and supports international law and the domestic law and policy of many developing countries.

The International Development Strategy for the Second Development Decade was adopted by the United National General Assembly in 1970 after lengthy and detailed drafting procedures and discussion in a number of international forums by representatives of the industrially advanced market economies, the developing countries, and the states that engage in central planning.^{4/}

It says: "The full integration of women in the total development effort should be encouraged."

Much international attention has been given to the status of women and programs to protect and enhance their rights. But specific international concern with women's status and roles in connection with economic development is relatively new.

The first international meeting between experts on the status of women and economic development experts occurred in June 1972 under UN auspices. That session focussed primarily on women in rural, small business, and industrial development, and on education related to

^{4/} United Nations Publication Sales No. E.71.II.A.2.

active participation in economic life.^{5/}

The United Nations Population Fund recently put up money for a program to encourage studies of the integration of women in development. The object is to discover and to make known how women's work affects child bearing and migration.

The Economic Commission for Africa has a five-year program (1972-1976) which calls for studies on the impact of modernization on women in rural areas; on women in wage employment; on self-employed women in marketing, industry, and services; on vocational training for female school leavers; and on planning for participation of women in national development. This study program will focus specifically on conditions in that region. According to the ECA, African women produce more than one-half the continent's food, but do not get training or technical assistance, and, at the same time, do not have access to cash for farm investment or for labor-saving equipment for farm or household. Participation of African women in wage employment appears to be dropping in many countries, and independent women entrepreneurs and traders are being displaced without alternative opportunities, according to ECA, which also noted that ten per cent of the girls who start primary school go on to secondary school, and

^{5/} For a discussion of UN activities following up the International Development Strategy in this regard, see the Report of the Secretary-General on a Program of Concerted International Action to Promote the Advancement of Women and Their Integration in Development, 7 Dec. 1973 (Doc. No. E/CN.6/477).

90% of this small group of survivors drop out before graduation. But those who finally graduate are generally not prepared for economic participation.

The Economic Commission for Latin America recently noted that there have been no studies of the role of women in the development of that region. It has recommended that antidiscrimination measures and the lack of educational, employment, and economic opportunities be looked into.

The Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East proposes to hold a seminar in May 1974 on the integration of women in the development process.

A member of the Egyptian cabinet chaired a conference called by the Arab League and the United Nations in Cairo in 1972 on "The Role of Arab Women in Development". A six-point platform was adopted. It calls for increased employment and better vocational training; encouragement of girls' enrollment in schools and intensive programs to train women teachers; enactment of laws to protect working women and to provide health benefits for farm workers; marriage law reforms, including enactment of minimum age requirements; encouragement of day care nurseries and environmental health programs; and reforms which would bring family planning activities closer together with maternal

and child health centers.^{6/}

Although the International Monetary Fund and World Bank Group have refrained from speaking officially on the matter, they published an article in 1971 on "Women, Jobs, and Development" (Finance and Development, December 1971). The author, Margaret de Vries, is an American economist. She points out the tendency of various kinds of changes in production technology to force women into greater dependence on men and to reduce sharply their participation in the labor force, consequences which developing countries cannot afford. This deterioration is also self-defeating from the standpoint of population programs, she notes.

Gaps and Biases in Data

Any attempt to consider the participation of women in national economies, at least so far as development is concerned, is hampered by the economic accounting conventions now in international use to measure development and economic participation and to guide or justify policy.

Standard measures of labor force participation frequently exclude women who are outside modern or industrial employment.

^{6/} Donald Allan, "Arab Women Speak Out", UNICEF News, July 1973, p. 8.

The standard methods for measuring economic development are based primarily on transactions occurring and valued in modern markets. Work and services performed and consumed within households and subjects of gift, barter or traditional, informal markets, are generally excluded or substantially undervalued.

These measures have the virtue of administrative convenience and understandability for Western-trained economists and bureaucrats. Whatever the rationale behind them, however, they leave out, in practice, the bulk of women's contribution to an economy. Production, gathering, and preparation of food, child rearing, household maintenance, and production and exchange of domestic goods are overlooked, as are some other kinds of activity, which are the subject of such market transactions but are nevertheless arbitrarily excluded.^{1/}

This means that we have little data on the actual participation of women in national economic development for most countries, and we are hard pressed to show actual increases or decreases in their contribution to the total development effort, if by development we include actual economic production and increases in its real value.

The economic accounting conventions which define what is to be included in the national product may have significant effects on policies and programs and on the existence of people living in a real world outside academicians' and administrators' models.

^{1/} See the discussion of "Development Measures" in Development Digest, vol. XI, No. 2 (April 1973), especially at pages 113-115; 120-124. See also Helvi Sipilä, "Third World Woman: Master of Her Own Destiny", UNICEF News 4 (July 1973).

For one thing, the conventions make invisible people out of those whose product is left out. Invisible, at least, when it comes to policies and programs designed to enhance economic development. Thus, women whose economic contribution is ⁱⁿexcluded or undervalued agricultural, domestic, or trade activities are not recognized or recognizable in models which use these statistics. And where the people allocating external assistance look for a direct connection between assistance inputs and increased production, they overlook essential functioning parts of the economy.

Another problem follows from this measurement technique. The measure may indicate an increase in production--and therefore development progress--when production has, in fact, declined.

Assume, for example, a family migrates from the countryside to the city, where the husband gets a job and the wife does not. Assume the work of neither had previously entered into the national product account. The husband's production on the new job will show up as an increase in total national product, and, indeed, his contribution to the economy may in fact be greater than his previous work. On the other hand, because they are now in the city, the wife is no longer able to fill subsistence needs for the household--including, perhaps, production, gathering and preparation of food, gathering fuel, and manufacture of clothes and household artifacts. She may even be idle

for substantial portions of the day that had previously been devoted to economic activities. It is possible, in these circumstances, that there is a net loss in the actual national product, while the internationally recognized figures say something else.^{8/}

The international economic accounting conventions serve useful purposes. But it should be noted that they come from the industrial countries and are not sufficiently sensitive to tell what is happening to the people who are left out and what their exclusion means for the economic and social health of developing countries. If the work women do is not recognized, then they may suffer.

Women are not, of course, being entirely ignored by development planners.

Economic performance is being thought of more and more in terms of per capita product, that is total economic product divided by total population; and economic progress, in terms of the rate of production growth divided by the rate of population growth. Whatever roles women are assumed to have in production growth, they are seen to play a strategic part in population growth. Economic planners and development assistance agencies view their acquiescence in bearing children as a menace to economic progress and security for the countries where they

^{8/} Escher
See/Boserup, Woman's Role in Economic Development, pp. 167-173
(St. Martin's Press, New York, 1970)

live, and for others as well.

Concern for the population denominator and worldwide overcrowding has drawn attention to women. As noted in connection with United Nations activities, this concern is an important basis for funding studies related to women's roles in economic development. But it is possible that such a perspective, if it is the exclusive or dominant view of female participation, could badly distort the picture.

Cultural and Technological Imperialism

The economic roles which women perform vary widely throughout the world. It is normal, however, for each of us to view other cultures in terms of our own, or some one or two others we have observed or heard about. Thus, we often think of a "modern" culture, which has certain characteristics, and a "traditional" culture, which has different features. While most of us know better than that, as a practical matter this is how our perceptions and assumptions work in the absence of conscious and conscientious effort to do otherwise.

For example, an argument offered in support of the Percy Amendment suggests that in developing countries traditional culture blocks women and girls from access to educational and economic opportunities; whereas modern societies are more enlightened.^{9/}

^{9/} Cong. Record, 2 Oct. 1973, pp. 18422-18423 (daily ed.)

But many scientific observers have observed that the economic position of women has been harmed in some developing countries because of the customs of colonial and aid administrators from modern societies and because of the prestige of Western ways.

One report notes complaints from Thailand that "Western influence adversely affects the position of women there by making sharper distinctions between sexes than has traditionally existed in that country. The people from the West have brought scouting for the boys, needlework for girls, special hospitals for women, public toilets separated by sex."^{10/} Another argues that Western administrators in Burma failed to take into account the self-dependent role of women there, "which differed both from European and from most Asiatic patterns."^{11/}

Woman's Role in Economic Development, by Ester Boserup, a Danish author, appears to be the major and perhaps the only general survey of this subject available in English. It was published in 1970.^{12/}

^{10/} Ester Boserup, Woman's Role in Economic Development, p. 219 (St. Martin's Press, New York, 1970).

^{11/} Margaret Mead, Cultural Patterns and Technical Change, p. 43 (Mentor Books, New York, 1955).

^{12/} Much of the discussion in this paper is based on the Boserup book. It is summarized in Development Digest, vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 97-122 (April 1971). See also Barbara Ward (ed.), Women in the New Asia (UNESCO, 1963).

In summarizing a large number of studies, she observes that "European settlers, colonial administrators, and technical advisors are responsible for the deterioration of the status of women in the agricultural sectors of developing countries. It was they who neglected the female labor force when they helped to introduce modern commercial agriculture to the overseas world and promoted the productivity of male labour." Regardless of the extent and nature of female participation in agriculture, it has been customary for foreign technical advisors and programs to teach men, only, to apply modern methods in the cultivation of a given crop, while women continue to use the traditional methods for the same crop, thus getting much less out of their efforts than the men. Moreover, by virtue of this training for men with respect to cash crops which are the object of substantial international and national research, development, and investment efforts, men have access to cash and therefore investment opportunities, including farm improvements, that are denied to women who produce noncash food crops. This is a significant problem in societies, such as some in Africa, where wives have the burden of sustaining themselves and, to a large degree, their children, through their own economic efforts, in addition to providing service and some support for their husbands.

The provision of Western training and the introduction of new technology enhances the prestige and earning capacity of men vis a vis

women. Men handle the industrial inputs, while women do degrading manual jobs. Men spread fertilizer, while women spread manure. Men ride the bicycles and drive the lorries, while women carry headloads. "In short, men represent modern farming in the village and women, the old drudgery."

Where illiteracy, traditional behavior, and superstition had once been common among all the villagers, Ms. Boserup argues, these signs of backwardness gradually become more characteristic of rural women than of men. The reason is that modern primary education creates a major technical and cultural gap between men and women. The gap widens when modern agricultural methods are taught to the men, who, because of the primary school training, can better absorb that technology.

Added to these discriminatory effects of Western colonial and Western inspired development programs in non-Mediterranean rural Africa south of the Sahara, Ms. Boserup suggests there is evidence that the introduction of Western land tenure reforms, which provide for individual ownership and the marketability of land, has also undermined the economic and social position of women.

Whether or not they are the final word or the only possible interpretation of the events to which they refer, the studies cited by Ms. Boserup suggest the possibility that well intentioned development programs and projects may undermine the status of women, encour-

disintegration of cooperative relationships between men and women, and at the same time, perhaps, reduce the efficiency of development efforts, no matter how one measures economic development. This is not a matter of intent, let alone evil design. It reasonably flows from a failure to see what goes on in an economy and a tendency to think in terms of abstractions that are distorted.

Jobs and Economic Responsibilities

The roles of women in agriculture and other aspects of an economy range from control--through active labor participation--through complete non-participation. The kinds of jobs that women do exclusively and the kind of jobs that women stay out of are often different in different places and at different times.

In Muslim and Hindu societies, or so-called plough agriculture societies, the tendency is for women to be secluded, to the extent they can afford it. The facts and ideology related to seclusion may, as a practical matter, result in better wages for women who are in the work force and may support better opportunities for women in certain professions--including teaching and medicine--than might otherwise be the case. Ms. Boserup noted that two such countries have prime ministers who are women, and she thinks this is so, in part, because "men have not become accustomed to viewing the role of educated women

as that of a less qualified assistant to a male supervisor."

Contrasted with these societies are the areas, including those in Southeast Asia and Africa referred to, where women are active in agriculture, business, and labor generally.

The active role of women as traders, financiers, and controllers of transport in some African countries is frequently commented upon.^{13/} In Ghana, scholars have noted that women control trade in fish and staple foods by acting as financiers for these industries.^{14/}

Vietnamese women traditionally act as the professional organizers and managers of fairly substantial credit organizations.^{15/}

In Latin America, women migrate to cities in greater numbers than men and are actively employed in clerical occupations. This is not so in India and much of Africa. In North Africa, men are replacing French women in clerical jobs. But in Kenya, the government is encouraging African women to fill job vacancies left by departing Europeans and Asians.^{16/}

^{13/} See, for example, Brendan Jones, "Togo's Businesswomen", Development Digest, vol. 9, No. 2, p. 123 (April 1971)

^{14/} See L. Grayson, "The Promotion of Indigenous Enterprise in Ghana", African Studies Assn. 1972 (INR-FAR 1735) and studies cited there.

^{15/} See Clifton G. Barton, "Credit and Commercial Control in South Vietnam", Report for AID East Asia Research Program (1973).

^{16/} The actual roles of Latin American women in rural life and in small towns are often overlooked because of the failure of scholars and administrators to consider the economics of Indian communities. But see Margaret Thomas, "Notes on the Public Market System and Distribution Network of Managua, Nicaragua" (INCAE, Managua, June 1972). Barry Hyslop, of AID's Latin America Bureau, is preparing another study on this subject.

We have noted varying patterns of economic functions which women perform in regard to production, trade, finance, and services. There is also a wide variation in the responsibilities they have to run and support families. The traditional position of women as breadwinners in parts of Africa was mentioned. With economic change, moreover, there is a growing trend in some places for women to assume or be forced to assume the full financial responsibility for family support.^{17/} There are many reasons, ranging from custom through migration and the disintegration of traditional institutions, as well as the effects of war, employment availability, and domestic relations and property law.

When we single out women as a specific object of study in the context of development, we run the risk of seeing life as being dominated by a war between the sexes, where one's loss is another's gain. Such a picture is not a helpful one, although there may be signs that current patterns of development in some places are transforming life in this way.

As participants in production who often bear the major burden for family support, women may require assistance as much, if not more than, men to perform higher productivity, higher income jobs to the extent that is possible. In any case, it is neither fair nor good economic development sense to base development assistance strategy and

^{17/} There is often a gap between what the law says and assumes in this regard and what is actually happening. Legal fictions about the head of the household may obscure the truth and create obstacles for the growing number of women who actually have the responsibility.

operations on the assumption that man is the universal breadwinner.

It would also be misleading to think that all the women in a society necessarily share common economic and social interests, so that what helps one will help, or will not harm, the others. Women are, of course, members of castes and clans and classes and ethnic groups, and it is reasonable to believe that they will generally share the animosities, conflicting interests, and hierarchical arrangements that govern the relationships among these groupings.

We have seen that the current measures of production and development exclude much of what women do in the economy. The result is not only that we do not know what the role of women is, or is becoming, but the measures themselves may lead to policies that have bad consequences for women and development.

There is evidence that some policies, programs, projects, and techniques supported by Western administrators, entrepreneurs, and advisors may have undermined the position of women and may also have been economically inefficient because of a failure to understand and take into account the roles of women in particular societies.

There is a wide variety of roles and responsibilities in different places. If there is some understanding of these and if the knowledge is applied to development programs, it may be possible to avoid

repeating and compounding past errors.

Clearly, the pattern has not been set by AID or the U.S. Government. One critic at least, Ms. Boscrup, suggests that the record of the United States overseas has had better consequences for women's status than that of other Western powers.

What AID Can Do.

AID can make important contributions, however, in working with others and supporting the efforts of countries and international groups to deal with the problem. We can encourage study and the application of understanding in this area to our own operations and those of others.

Two types of information are needed immediately by people who are making program and budget decisions in AID and who are responsible for implementing section 113.

First, they need to know about the economic roles of women in the specific countries with which they are dealing, the effect of economic change on these roles, and the position of the governments and others within the countries on the integration of women in economic development.

AID commissioned a study along that line for China, a country in which AID has no direct interest and contemplates none. Given the scarcity of direct evidence, experience, and country cooperation--all of which should be more available for most countries with which AID deals--that report (Joyce K. Kallgren, "Enhancing the Role of Women in Developing Countries", available from AID's Office of Education and Human Resources) might provide a model for other country studies. ^{18/}

The second type of information AID needs is on the actual and potential role of women with respect to the critical development problems and the functional sectors with which it must be concerned; and the consequences for women of activities in these sectors.

A quick and by no means close consideration of possible issues on which critical studies might be of use provides these examples:

Food and Nutrition: (1) The role of women in agricultural production, their participation in the introduction of new technologies; the consequences of strategies that have been followed; and the possibilities for new strategies and approaches; (2) The role of women in family nutrition, the division of food among household members on the basis of sex and age, the effect of women's economic participation on child nutrition, and possible roles of women in programs which have better nutrition, as their objectives; (3) The effect of changes in land tenure on women; and (4) The roles of women in rural development.

^{18/} See also Marilyn W. Hoskins, "Vietnamese Women in a Changing Society", IXth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Chicago, Ill., 1973.

Population and Health: (1) The relationship of economic participation and childbearing; (2) The economic benefits and the economic disabilities for mothers and families of childbearing; (3) Status and rewards that substitute for childbearing; (4) The allocation of food, health support, and other resources within households on the basis of age, sex, and motherhood; (5) The role of women in relation to health objectives and problems, including family and child health; (6) The health consequences of family disorganization and male-female competition caused by modernization; (7) The use of female communication and health service systems in connection with health and population objectives; and (8) The effects of health, population, and other programs on women's professional and informal roles in the health sector.

Education, Public Administration, and Human Resources:

(1) The relationship of education programs to women's actual and potential roles in the economy and in child rearing; (2) The availability and need for education by women at different age levels; (3) The traditional roles of women in education and the roles of women in formal education systems and nonformal education, with particular regard for possible unintended displacement of women through the introduction of "new technologies" and innovations; (4) The possible displacement of women by expansion of public services and new service institutions, including

government promotion and regulation of credit, transport, markets, and industry; (5) Access of women to public services; (6) Participation of women in public services; (7) The effect of development programs on family life and the family as a unit of participation in development programs; and (8) The evolution of voluntary institutions, such as small cooperatives and childcare centers, which can help with some responsibilities that changed conditions make families less able to perform alone.^{19/}

Beyond the specific functional areas mentioned and the others with which AID is concerned under its governing legislation, there are general questions as to the effects of assumptions about male and female roles that are built into the design of technology and into the organizational concepts offered to developing countries. Technology and organizational concepts are made available through advice, demonstration, and instruction. And also by example. Examples may include the staffing patterns of international and national and public and private assistance agencies, educational institutions, voluntary organizations, and business enterprises. The relationships between their representatives and local people also may have demonstration effects. It would be wrong to assume the answers to questions of this kind one way or the other, and they may deserve study, discussion, and, where appropriate, action.

^{19/} The listing is suggestive only. On further reflection, some of the issues may not be found important. Others, which have been omitted, may be more material and relevant. The three major topics, moreover, do not exhaust the extent of development assistance or AID interest. A subject which requires attention and does not fit under any one of those headings is the role of women in small business and the design of programs that take it into account.

Expertise is required to make available the existing knowledge to operating and policy making officers and to perform new research, but these are matters which cannot be left entirely to academicians and outside researchers. Much of the information and most of the conclusions to be drawn from it will have to come from the AID and other people who are working on development assistance. They must also make a substantial contribution to the framing of initial questions.

A close and continuing interchange is needed between outside experts and AID practitioners on these matters. This interchange must recognize the limited role which AID and the U.S. Government play in international economic development efforts and the interests of other assistance agencies, countries, international bodies, and private business and non-profit organizations in the relationship of women to economic development.

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