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Employment and Income Generation
for Rural Women:
A Report to USAID Thailand

by

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Executive Summary

Rural Thailand is shifting from a subsistence to mixed economy increasingly oriented to wage labor and market production. This shift has affected the economic role of women considerably. Though the importance of rural women in on- and off-farm activities has been widely acknowledged, AID rural development programs aimed at increasing productivity and raising incomes have neglected to target resources to Thai women in a manner that takes into consideration the impact that overall changes in the economy have had upon their productivity functions and economic needs. Technically, AID programming does not explicitly include or exclude women; project experience, however, reflects the fact that women's productive needs have not been adequately accounted for in planning and project development. Women's limited access to resources within the context of the changing rural economy, undermines both the income-generating prospects available to women and the survival of the rural household.

The thrust of this report centers around the issue of access to resources emphasizing: (1) the difficulties of developing projects that provide access to resources that reach rural women as well as men, and (2) the possible course of action open to the Mission to bring attention to rural women in their program activities. Following a brief background section on women in the rural economy of Thailand, this report deals more explicitly with the subject of women and AID project planning. A brief examination of five AID projects is pursued for the purpose of demonstrating how the economic role and concerns of rural women might be better incorporated into the AID project concept, design, and implementation process. Each project type is discussed briefly in terms of access, expected impact, and monitoring/evaluation.

The third and final section suggests a plan of action that might be adopted by the Mission to incorporate women more easily into AID programming concerns. The recommendations outlined are premised on the recognition that rural households can no longer be assumed to function economically as homogeneous units; that rural women are increasingly becoming individual producers; and that their economic/productive needs have to be differentiated from 'household' needs. Along these lines a number of measures are recommended to sharpen awareness of and concern for women's productivity and employment generation needs within existent Mission activities related to the enhancement of available information on women, project strategy, project design and experimentation, and the utilization of Mission resources.

Among the recommendations made the following are included:

Information Base

1. Generation of socioeconomic background information on women
- in relation to:
 - The particular phases of on-farm and off-farm production processes in which women are engaged.
 - The kinds of technologies and other productive resources such as training, etc., that are utilized by women, and how these compare to those utilized by men.
 - The major constraints faced by women in increasing their productivity.
2. Disaggregation by sex of all baseline information on the economic activities and contributions of household members.
3. Inclusion of data on women's utilization of resources, the manner in which they obtain such resources, how they use them and the problems they report about them into the monitoring and evaluation of projects that introduce resources into rural areas (whether or not they are specifically intended for women).

Project Strategies

1. Explicit incorporation of women's access and participation as a criteria of success in the development and testing of models for delivery of productive resources to the rural poor.
2. Inclusion of the 'actual' rather than the 'assumed' role of women in the productive process into project design and implementation.

Project Design and Experimentation

1. Experimentation with, and modification of project mechanisms utilized to contact local target groups in order to ensure their effectiveness in reaching women.
2. Utilization of policy and planning components within projects and AID sponsored research to investigate specific policy implications for women, and promote new directions in policy formulation.

Mission Resources

1. Selection of appropriate consultants with expertise on women's economic roles and inclusion of issues related to women's employment as integral components of the defined scope of work throughout all project phases.

2. Promotion of research among nationals that deals explicitly with issues related to women's economic condition and productive needs.
3. Establishment of linkages between the Mission portfolio and employment/income generation concerns of rural women through outside technical expertise.

Introduction

At the request of the US/AID Mission in Thailand, the ICRW undertook to do a portfolio review of the Mission's strategy and projects with the intention of enhancing employment and income-generating prospects for women. This request was made by the Office of Human Resources and the Program Office of the USAID Mission in Thailand. The work was undertaken by the ICRW under their program "Women's Socioeconomic Participation," a centrally-funded contract (#DSAN-0269) through the Office of Rural and Administrative Development of the Bureau of Science and Technology. Dr. Sondra Zeidenstein, ICRW consultant, was in Thailand March 9-20, 1981, during which time she reviewed current and upcoming AID projects, interviewed senior Mission staff, and visited WID/PVO projects in northeast Thailand. She also spoke with Thai nationals in various government ministries and private organizations. The objective of this visit was to clearly identify women's economic concerns and to integrate these concerns into the design, implementation, and evaluation of projects related to employment and income generation.

This portfolio review represents the first major effort on the Mission program level to focus explicitly on the economic role of women. In this respect, the report emphasizes issues of two types--(1) the difficulties of developing projects that provide access to resources that reach rural women as well as men, and (2) the possible course of action open to the Mission to bring attention to rural women in their program activities. Because lack of access by the poor to critically-needed productive resources has been identified as a fundamental obstruction to development in Thailand, the following discussion is centered upon the issue of access to resources, or, alternatively, the delivery of resources.

The discussion is divided into three sections: first, a brief background section on women in the economy in Thailand, particularly the rural economy; then, second, a section which deals with the subject of women and project planning. In this discussion a number of assumptions regarding the institutional position of women in Thailand are examined to the degree that they may influence project design and implementation. This is followed by a case study of five AID projects for the purpose of demonstrating how the economic role and concerns of rural women might be better incorporated into the AID project concept, design, and implementation process. Each project type is discussed briefly in terms of access, expected impact, and monitoring/evaluation.

The third and final section suggests a plan of action that might be adopted by the Mission to incorporate women more easily into AID programming concerns. Specific recommendations are made relative to the enhancement of available information on women, project strategy, project design and experimentation, and the utilization of Mission resources.

I. Women in the Economy

Rural Thailand is in the process of shifting from a traditional "rice culture" subsistence economy to a wage labor and market-based society. The shift entails specific changes at the household level. Whereas under subsistence-type production the family functioned as the economic unit of production, under the wage system of labor, as new income-earning alternatives are introduced, each individual household member becomes a separate unit of production. The extent of the shift as it is now taking place can be witnessed in two trends: one is in the decline of unpaid labor in agricultural production, which was so characteristic of the typical Thai family unit. Today, for example, only slightly over one half (57 percent) of all agricultural workers are unpaid laborers; another trend is the increasing number of workers in non-agricultural employment. One World Bank (1980) study of agricultural pricing indicates that non-agricultural activities account for nearly 35 percent of labor time in the rainy season and two-thirds of the time in the dry season. Income from non-agricultural activities accounts for one-fourth to one half of total household income. These shifts have affected women considerably.

According to the most recent labor force statistics, women in Thailand comprise nearly one half of the active work force. They represent 49 percent of all agricultural workers, 45 percent of all workers in the manufacturing branches, and 46 percent of all workers in the service sector. The majority of women are concentrated in the agricultural labor force. But even there a certain shift is beginning to occur. Between 1970 and 1973, for example, the proportion of women workers who were in agriculture declined from 84 percent to 75 percent, as compared to 76 percent of the men. In industry, women comprise between one half to two-thirds of all workers in the textile, tobacco, and food and beverage industries. Their positions are mostly in unskilled, and to a lesser extent, semi-skilled jobs. The median factory wage earned by women in 1978 was 75 percent of what men earned, which could reflect work status differentials.

Despite their visible participation in Thailand's economy, women occupy a marginal position in the work force for the most part. This is reflected in the fact that most women work in unpaid family labor. In the labor force as a whole (1970 data) 66 percent of all women workers were in the category of "unpaid"; this is largely because of the magnitude of family labor in the agricultural sector. Among rural workers the proportion in unpaid labor is 80 percent for the women and 33 percent among the men. Among both sexes the proportion who are salaried is only 5 percent; the difference between the sexes lies in the proportion who are "self-employed"--15 percent in the case of women, 61 percent in the case of men. In the non-agricultural sectors of the economy, the position of women is less marginal; only 24 percent are unpaid workers, 33 percent work on their own account, and almost 43 percent are wage earners.

The reported statistics show that the majority of rural women workers are in agriculture--75 percent in the country as a whole, over 90 per-

cent in the northeast region--and among these, almost all are unpaid family workers. Yet there have been some indications recently that rural women do perform a variety of economic functions in off-farm employment activities. For example, during the past five years in the northeast region, economic alternatives in off-farm work particularly in the development of home industries are emerging. These mostly involve women and in some cases provide for wage employment.

Wage employment for women is becoming increasingly critical. Typically the poor farm/unit/household is headed by a man, thirty-four years of age with fewer than three years of education. The average rural household reports six family members, and between one and two wage earners. It is clear that the economic survival of rural households will increasingly depend upon the earnings of several family members from both farm and non-farm sources.

The question of women's economic needs is most acute in households where women function as the primary or sole income earners. The northeast region baseline survey reports that more than 10 percent of all households are headed by women, and that such households face serious constraints in gaining access to productive resources and finding income-earning opportunities in both on and off-farm employment, when compared to households headed by men. More national-level data are needed to assess the magnitude and economic condition of households in which women assume primary economic responsibility.

II. Women and Project Planning

A. Assumptions about Women

Understanding the economic participation of women in Thailand--what rural women do, how their activities fit into the rural sector, and what the relationship is between women's productive role and those of other household members--is the first step towards: (1) identifying and designing strategies for reaching rural women as well as men; and (2) developing models of delivery systems that are successful in providing rural women as well as men with effective access to productive resources.

More so than in other countries, development planners in Thailand appear to be influenced by a number of assumptions about the institutional position of women in Thai society. Much of what is "normatively" stated falls in line as an assumed correlate of the role women play in the household economy. Some of these assumptions are:

- The work of rural men and women is interchangeable.
- Women have adequate access to resources if men do.
- Men and women share equally in family assets.

- Women have a strong decision-making role in the family.
- Women manage the family purse.
- Women benefit when the family benefits.

It is difficult to ascertain if these assumptions are based on the supposed condition of women under the traditional structure. What is critical today is that such beliefs persist without being tested and they obscure redefinitions which have taken place among household members as a result of the overall shift from a subsistence to a wage economy.

In the particular context of project identification and design, such assumptions prove to be detrimental to women. Taken at face value, they coalesce to reaffirm the notion of a balanced partnership between the sexes and serve to justify the household model approach in policy planning. Assuming homogeneity to prevail in all households, this approach targets the household and not the individual as the unit of access. The basic premise of the model is that by improving the household's access to essential resources, the productivity of the family is raised and the position of women is improved.

An examination of the 'actual' division of labor between the sexes at different stages in the production process points to the inadequacy of the household model insofar as access to production resources is concerned. Thai men and women perform distinct roles in the production process; therefore, they need different productive resources. Anything less than a strategy that recognizes differences in these productive needs on an individual basis falls short of: (a) guaranteeing each member the resources he or she needs; and (b) maximizing the productive capacity of each member through improved access to resources.

A brief enquiry into the rural production process for purposes of illustration identifies a clear sexual division of labor.

Rice production: men clear the land, plow, thresh, etc. Women are heavily involved in uprooting, transplanting, harvesting, post-harvest transportation, preparation, and storage.

Fish production: men are most active in the construction and maintenance of the pond, and in the in-pond production of fish. Women are vital in fish processing and marketing activities.

Off-farm small enterprises: both men and women sell home-produced merchandise; women, however, sell lighter goods--clothes, silk, and food-stuffs. Men engage in the sale of animals and heavy articles, such as large earthen containers.

Food processing, poultry raising, swine herding, and gardening. All these are almost entirely the responsibility of women.

When access to resources is directed to the household, it is, in fact targeted to older males as household heads. Other members--both men and women--can be placed at a clear disadvantage with respect to direct access to or control over new resources. In certain instances the consequences of such a selective approach could undermine the household's economic viability, since rural families have become increasingly dependent upon income contributed by several household members from a variety of on- and off-farm sources.

Recognition of the fact that the household is no longer a homogeneous unit is critical if the productive/income needs of women are to be identified as distinct from those of the male household head. As it now stands, the household approach makes information and access to productive resources available to women only indirectly, i.e., through their men; the assumption being that women's needs are similar to men's needs, and that men will voice women's interests and speak for them, if in fact their productive needs are different.

Currently, the manner in which new production/income-generating alternatives are distributed between the sexes is determined by the assumed division of labor. The continuing introduction of new alternatives is expected to generate changes and effect redefinitions in task allocation by sex. Until then, however, women's chances of inclusion in or exclusion from new and innovative projects will be determined by factors related to access, such as:

- Designation of the recipients of information on the new opportunity/alternative to be introduced.
- The choice of channels through which such information will be disseminated.
- The particular vehicle utilized to deliver the service or resource.

Technically, new resources for income generation can be open to women and men alike. Yet, women may be effectively excluded from direct access to such resources because of the following:

- (a) Information about new alternatives to be introduced may be made available through organizations with exclusive or predominant male membership who may or may not pass on such information to other household members, or through farm extension agents, whose contacts are selective and limited to special groups of male farmers.
- (b) The delivery of a service or resource may be through a training course taking place outside the local area. Women who combine both household and productive activities, may be

prevented from traveling considerable distances on a daily basis. Social restrictions may also impede women from daily travel to and fro and centers do not typically provide women with sleeping facilities.

Constraints such as these may operate independently of the actual availability of women to engage in alternative income-earning opportunities. The special circumstances that surround women can be taken into account in the planning and design stages of development programs. In order to ensure that women will have direct access to whatever alternative or innovation is being introduced into the rural economy, arrangements can be made, for example, to have information disseminated through a women's community association. Training programs can be set up in mobile units within the local area and areas of emphasis can be included that focus on the particular aspects of production that women engage in.

B. Women in AID Projects

In Thailand, AID project activities are generally undertaken as "experiments" designed to test, develop, and refine replicable models for the delivery of productive resources and services to rural areas that can be undertaken by the Thai government or other development donors. They are intended to generate new information about and understanding of the dynamics of the rural economy and of local farming units.

In this section, five AID rural projects have been selected for discussion for the purpose of examining the manner in which the project concept and design address themselves to women's productive needs. The discussion implicitly questions whether project conceptualization has been guided by "assumptions" rather than by "facts" concerning women's productive roles.

The five projects selected are Village Fish Pond Development Project, Small-Scale Irrigation Project, Seed Development Project, Mae Chaem Watershed Project, and Northeast Rainfed Agricultural Development Project. All are at least partially aimed at improving productivity levels of rural households by changing and improving access to and use of resources by targeted rural communities and household units. The resources include technology, water, training, agricultural extension, modern inputs, marketing channels, and management techniques. In varying degrees all projects have incorporated into the design components for the monitoring and generation of new project information about resource access among the poor.

(1) Village fish pond projects aim to provide villages with year-round supplemental water and protein sources through the development and improved use of multi-purpose ponds. Projects typically finance the construction and/or upgrading of ponds as well as ancillary inputs--materials, services, and training. Villagers are trained in pond management so that

they can use the ponds for raising fish and as a source of domestic and irrigation water.

The projects operate on the assumption that all those who live in a target area will be beneficiaries of the project. Indicators of project success include increased per capita income, decline in nutrition-related diseases, and decline in out-migration due to unemployment and under-employment. The project focuses on stocking, harvesting, and maintenance of the fish pond. It provides management training, improved technology for fish production, and year-round water. Additionally, the project encourages the participation of villagers in decision-making and in pond management.

Along with increased production of fish, other production alternatives will be made possible due to the increased availability of water, such as gardens and orchards, livestock production, rice cultivation, and other productive uses of previously marginal lands. These activities, combined with increased production of fish, are expected to result in a number of socioeconomic benefits:

- (a) Increase in employment levels. As a pond apparently demands little time from the head of household, underemployed family members can easily contribute the management inputs required.
- (b) Decrease in out-migration due to better supply of water and available jobs in the region.

Problematic areas: Traditionally, there is a degree of sex-specific task allocation in the village fish production system; men are primarily involved in activities leading to the harvesting stage; women are responsible for post-harvest processing and marketing. The project design, however, does not include resources to address the processing and marketing aspects of production in which women are key producers. One does not know whether this neglect stems from an assumption that the processing and marketing of the additional produce could be adequately provided for within existing technology and market channels. The fact remains, however, that such an oversight may well have negative consequences for productivity in general, and for women, in particular. Processing and marketing of the additional fish produce could become an impediment to increasing income; the additional time required for women's input may conflict with other productive/income-earning activities which women rely upon for their income.

Secondly, one needs to ask who precisely are the underemployed family members referred to as "easily contributing to the management of required inputs" and who is it that will be released for outside employment? Are the women and children the "underemployed"; will the underemployed gain access to appropriate training and other resources related to management inputs or are they to be considered an unskilled source of free labor? In the particular case of women, activities related to "management inputs", might compete for time with some of their productive

sources of income.

Thirdly is the fact that one of the expected benefits derived from this project is the provision of new employment opportunities. One needs to ask whether serious consideration has been given to the inclusion of women as beneficiaries of the newly generated jobs. If so, what kinds of resources in the form of technology will be made available to women to enhance their productivity in the new areas?

The status of this project is such that it is still possible to build concerns for women into the monitoring process. A Thai social scientist and site team will be designing a monitoring and reporting system on the effectiveness of pond management and assisting in the evaluation of local management techniques. Identifying the precise function of women in fish pond production and their need to have direct access to related resources should become an integral component of the monitoring process. In monitoring both resource access and project impact, it is crucial that explicit reference be made to men and women separately. If the singling out of women along these lines is not defined as a priority, it is most likely that women's needs and concerns will be lost and only those of the household unit will be emphasized.

(2) A Small-scale irrigation project aims to establish a sustainable system for increasing the agricultural productivity and incomes of the rural poor within the project areas in northeast Thailand. The project introduces a package of consultant assistance, demonstrations, and training and instruction that provide (1) a basic infrastructure for reliable delivery of water to farmers' fields; (2) improved arrangements for key RTG agricultural service organizations to deliver their services to farmers; (3) adequate procedures to help link farmers up with necessary agricultural inputs and markets; (4) a strengthened farmer organization structure for managing and maintaining on-farm water delivery; (5) a system of training/motivating farmers to utilize inputs properly to increase yields and market their crops.

The project will test and refine the approach for accomplishing these objectives during a six-year period. AID intends this project to result in the development of a replicable approach and the provision of trained manpower necessary to continue at other sites. The project provides access to water, agricultural inputs, markets, and training. It builds on existing local organizations and channels of service access.

Problematic aspects: The intended impact of the project on women is reported as follows:

"Effects on women, migration, fertility and population are in the main desirable. Women will benefit on a roughly equal basis with men, but special efforts should be made to promote their participation in irrigation associations".

The text makes explicit reference to the extension of special efforts to include women in the irrigation associations and implicitly suggests that women have direct access to resources. Despite this, the project design includes no mechanisms or strategies to undertake such efforts. The participation of women in the local irrigation associations is not defined as a project output nor as an indicator of project success.

Two in-depth evaluations are planned during the life of the project to examine the non-construction related aspects of the endeavor. Some of the ongoing concerns on which the monitoring process should focus are related to women's effective participation in the project. Specific areas of enquiry could include women's participation in irrigation associations, identification of efforts undertaken to include women, women's access to new productive opportunities as a result of the secondary effects of water supply and management, women's inclusion in training programs, and incentives provided to women to undertake new crop alternatives.

(3) The Seed Development project is designed to establish a production and distribution system for high-yield variety seeds, thereby contributing to increased productivity and incomes of local farmers. The project is also expected to affect employment favorably; about 3,000 to 3,500 farmers will be engaged in specialized seed production and numbers of people will be employed in production supervision management, processing, and marketing. Farmers belonging to cooperatives and farmers' associations (approximately 200,000) will also benefit from improved access to high-yield seeds and other related inputs.

Problematic aspects: Although the project is expected to have "substantial direct and indirect benefits to Thai female farm workers" the exact ways in which women are deriving benefit from this project are not clear. The documents do refer to the fact that some women have contracts for seed production, although the actual number is not available. Not much is known about the success of the project in reaching women in other ways. With respect to the women contractors it is important to know in what situations and under what conditions these women have obtained contracts for seed production; specifically, in what way is the ability to obtain a contract influenced by women's access to land, credit, and extension services. Given that 25 percent of the extension officers in the project are women, it would be valuable to know whether their presence has made any difference to women's participation. Also, if women have benefited from the anticipated employment expansion, in what way do they benefit in absolute terms and in relation to men?

(4) The Watershed Management Project in northern Thailand is designed to provide access to minimal essential resources for initiating and sustaining the economic development process in the area. The purpose of the project is to establish both a self-sustaining upward trend in real incomes and access to socioeconomic services for rural households, with emphasis on the landless poor. It focuses on a number of key productive

activities and resources--agricultural production, forestry (including woodlots), credit, market assistance, agricultural extension, distribution of land, and small-scale irrigation.

The unique feature of this project is the outreach mechanism-- groups known as Interface Teams, who have intensive direct contact with local communities. These teams extend access to resources while emphasizing self-help, community participation, and decision-making. Interface Teams consist of three members, one of whom is generally a woman. A woman's inclusion on the team is seen as essential for reaching women engaged in productive activities in this region. Interface teams are in fact trained to encourage women's participation.

In this instance, the team approach should become the subject of evaluation. What success do team members have in actually reaching men and women producers, and what is their impact on them? What are some of the obstacles local men and women face in interacting with the team? Does the presence of a woman on the team make a significant difference in reaching local women? Finally, what was the initial expectation of the project in setting up interface teams, insofar as women's participation is concerned?

(5) The Northwest Rainfed Agricultural Development Scheme (NERAD) --the cornerstone for the USAID rural program over the next years-- is a pilot farm systems management project designed to test various approaches and identify constraints to the improvement of the farm system.

The goal of the project is the improvement of agricultural productivity and the increase in the level of household income. As a pilot project, the purpose is to (a) create a replicable model for providing resource access to the poor; (b) improve the coordination of different agencies with relevant activities and programs; and (c) develop a package of technologies and resources which specifically addresses the problems of northeast rainfed agriculture.

Specific area objectives are to stabilize rice production and diversify crops and other income sources. This will be accomplished by (a) strengthened extension services; (b) improved field research and demonstration activities; and (c) increased awareness and access to economic alternatives by local farmers. The project will use existing local organizations, especially village community meetings and farmers' associations. The "household" will be the unit of access.

Community level outputs are expected to include increased local participation in development; adaptation and delivery of appropriate technologies; improved fish pond production; improved access to credit, marketing, processing, and storage alternatives; new and/or enhanced production in livestock, horticulture, and sericulture; and better use of household labor.

Problematic aspect: The social impact statement in this project refers to women and illustrates the dilemma of their productive roles:

Project emphasis on increasing the utilization of household labor should promote greater involvement of women in farm economic activity including field tasks at peak periods of labor requirements, supplemental on-farm activities such as horticulture and animal care, basic food processing, and preparation and marketing.

The reference acknowledges women's labor and expects that they will provide more input to productive activities in the household. The productivity of women's labor is not addressed. Though none of the project components specifically designate men or women as recipients, special efforts are needed to target women as producers rather than merely as a source of free labor. In this respect, it is important for the field staff to recognize the existing division of labor between the sexes in different aspects of production, not only to maximize productivity, but also to ensure that access to technology is differentially targeted in accordance with the productive functions men and women perform.

III. Conclusions and Recommendations

A review of the AID portfolio identifies woman's access to resources as a key element to be incorporated into programmatic emphasis if Mission strategy is to seriously address the issue of women's employment and income generation prospects. This concern needs to be incorporated into four basic areas of Mission activity: collection of information base, formulation of project strategy, project design and experimentation, and utilization of Mission resources.

In line with the Agency's goal to improve access to productive resources for the rural poor, the portfolio reflects an emphasis upon:

- a) the demonstration of effective approaches to resource delivery; and
- b) the strengthening of local and national capabilities to undertake rural development programs. Technically, the program does not explicitly include or exclude women; project experience, however, reflects the fact that women's productive needs have not been adequately accounted for. Assumptions about women's productive roles often take the place of empirical reality; women's limited access to resources within the context of the changing rural economy further undermines the income-generating prospects available to women.

Access to resources by rural women producers is not currently an explicit dimension of rural program planning in Thailand. Some development activities do target women as the primary beneficiaries but these are welfare rather than production oriented, focusing on women's reproductive/domestic roles. Where productivity and income generation for women are a major focus, the projects tend to be small-scale and removed from the mainstream of rural development planning.

For example, training for rural women sponsored by private and public agencies provide "family life skills"--health, nutrition, family planning, child care, and sewing. Handicrafts production, including sericulture are often promoted as a source of "income for women" although productivity is low, marketing is difficult and the economic returns for poor women are negligible. This despite the fact that rural women voice overwhelming demand for agricultural skills, not handicrafts.

The following pages outline a number of steps to be taken to sharpen awareness of and concern for women's productive activity and employment/income generation needs within existent Mission activities.

A. Information Base

The incorporation of women's employment/income generation prospects as an integral component of project strategy, design and implementation necessitates the collection, generation and integration of specific sets of data on an ongoing basis. Specifically, there is need for socioeconomic differentiation of information on women to be able to address the following categories of data:

- The particular phases of on-farm and off-farm production processes in which women are engaged, i.e., rice production, cash crop production, livestock production, artisan production, etc.
- The kinds of technologies and other productive resources such as training, etc., that are utilized by women, and how these compare to those utilized by men. The channels of access to such resources that women have and how these differ from channels available to men.
- The major constraints faced by women in increasing their productivity, e.g., lack of information/training; lack of land or water; limited access to credit; lack of improved inputs such as seeds/fertilizers; poor access to markets; competing claims on time; inefficient labor utilization, etc.

Information on rural women can, for the most part, be obtained through existing procedures at the Mission for data generation and data incorporation into project design and modification. Available data on sex differentials in task allocation can guide the identification of project-related areas for investigation. Some of the procedures in handling data that might sharpen awareness of women's needs are as follows:

- (1) In the process of gathering information for project identification, design, implementation, and evaluation, the terms "men and women" should be substituted for "families", "households", and "farming units".

- (a) Target objectives defined with specific reference to the access of men and women to productive resources ensure that the link to the actual producer is explored and clarified.
 - (b) Reference to subcategories within the target population, i.e., adolescent women, women heads of household, older women, etc., will identify further the particular status of the household member responsible for different stages of production and who is to be targeted for the provision of specific resources or assistance.
- (2) In collecting baseline information on household members all data should be disaggregated by sex. Additional questions can be asked to specify differences between women's and men's productive roles and contributions, to provide the basis for the development of appropriate strategies and to monitor possible changes in the sex distribution of labor over time.
 - (3) Through in-depth case studies qualitative data on women's economic role in the rural household can be obtained. Since project-specific information about rural women is limited, in-depth studies will provide guidelines and define important areas of inquiry to be pursued in the collection of project data and in the design and testing of delivery models. In-depth field studies can also yield information about women's response to project strategies and project outcomes, such as in the case of the NERAD project in the implementation stages.
 - (4) Projects such as the Fish Pond projects and the NERAD have built-in components for on-going analysis of project implementation and impact. Collection of data on women's access can be incorporated as a criterion to evaluate the success of "models" of resource delivery.
 - (5) The informal monitoring and evaluation of all projects that introduce resources into rural areas (whether or not they are specifically intended for women) should include data gathering on the number of women utilizing the resources, the manner through which they obtained these resources, how they use them, and the problems they report about them. Understanding how women adapt new inputs to their productive needs will further the development of practical strategies to support them.

The following AID projects offer a number of built-in opportunities to obtain data on women and increase the base of project-relevant information:

- (a) NERAD--the Northeast Rainfed Agriculture Development Project--offers opportunities for collecting information

related to women's economic roles through the baseline survey instrument, the special studies to be undertaken throughout its duration, and the monitoring phases to be conducted by national rural sociologists and anthropologists.

- (b) The informal education component of the Land Settlement Project which includes a "women's agriculture" training module, collects baseline information to assess knowledge levels among the targeted population. Additional sets of questions could be included to tap knowledge of, and participation in those aspects of production which are not typically considered to be a "women's sphere".
- (c) The mini-study on poor urban women migrating to Bangkok can be expanded to include open-ended interviews with young women migrants. Questions can be added to highlight details about the economic condition of women in rural areas which may identify in more depth critical factors underlying women's motivation to migrate.
- (d) The Rural Off-Farm Employment Assessment project is currently generating data which, if disaggregated by sex, could provide indications of women's participation in this sector. Sex disaggregated data will be useful to identify women's productive contributions and ensure their incorporation in policy intended to generate off-farm employment.
- (e) Experience obtained from "welfare" oriented projects, i.e., family planning, primary health care, and certain other PVO projects, may be a hidden source of information about women's productive roles and needs. Once a framework for incorporating women's economic needs is developed by the Mission, such projects can be tapped to provide additional information particularly in identifying mechanisms that have been successful in reaching rural women.

B. Project Strategies

A major objective of several AID projects is the development and testing of replicable and effective models of delivery to enable the rural population to perform a variety of economic activities and to utilize inputs intended to increase production and raise income. To what extent are the strategies adopted in these projects able to provide women with the kind of direct access to new inputs made available to men?

The opportunities outlined in the NERAD project, for example, indicate that the local population will participate in the choice and development of productive alternatives. In this respect efforts should be extended

to ensure that women be actively included in this decision process and that models be refined to incorporate in an explicit manner the factor of women's access and participation. Some of the points that underly such a strategy include:

- recognition that the household is no longer a homogeneous unit;
- recognition of the actual division of labor between the sexes within the household;
- recognition that the manner in which new production and income-generating alternatives are distributed is determined to a large degree by the assumed division of labor between men and women.

Assumptions about the productive role of women should be empirically established. Recommendations made earlier for building the information base will be useful to test key assumptions against facts and obtain a more realistic view on the interchangeability of productive roles, on patterns of control of household resources, on sex differentials in time availability and allocation among household members and on distribution of benefit patterns within the household.

C. Project Design and Experimentation

Most of the ongoing projects incorporate several mechanisms to reach local target groups, provide access to resources and promote village participation. Further experimentation and probable modification of such approaches are needed so that women's production concerns and employment/income generation needs are as effectively addressed as are those of men. A few suggestions along these lines are listed below.

- (1) In promoting direct interaction with producers to elicit their participation in strategy selection and problem identification related to production alternatives, the following are distinct possibilities:
 - (a) Contact Farmers - The identification of women as contact farmers in the NERAD and other projects in order to:
 - (i) Learn from them what strategies might be the most successful in mobilizing local women and whether or not there may be differences in priorities between the sexes.
 - (ii) Provide an easily accessible source of information for women about new production alternatives while simultaneously raising awareness among extension agents of the increasingly important and diversified role women assume in the economy.

- (b) Special Training - Women will most probably receive special training courses under the NERAD project in those aspects of production for which they are responsible. Some women from woman-headed households and perhaps other households may be included in most other courses. Women trainees in a village might be organized as a channel for follow-up support and feedback.
 - (c) Subsidies - The subsidy provisions in the NERAD project to enable poor farmers to experiment with new resources may be extended to explicitly support certain groups of women.
 - (d) Interface Teams - Experiences gained from the interface teams linked to the Mae Chaem project can provide insights into processes involved in gaining direct access to women when female team members are trained to work directly with women farmers. The outcome may be particularly useful to projects in the northeast region.
 - (e) Formation and Motivation of Women's Groups - The outcome of the WID/PVO/OEF project may be extended further in order to have the experience gained in organizing women under this project bear upon project resources and existing extension services.
- (2) Certain projects incorporate policy and planning components - the Off-Farm Employment Study is a prime example. Maximum advantage should be drawn from such projects to investigate specific policy implications for women. Some of the mechanisms through which this can be done include the following:
- Conferences and research efforts sponsored under such projects should cover topics such as women's work participation patterns, women's role in the informal sector, unpaid women workers, etc.
 - Seminars and other high/mid-level training programs sponsored by AID should become forums for introducing the issue of women's productive contribution and its policy implications in development planning.
 - Influencing national policy on behalf of women by extending AID support selectively to those components related to women's economic needs. For example:
 - training extension workers to respond to priorities of women in rural areas.

developing employment skills training programs for women that take into account labor market demands and long term marketability factors.

D. Mission Resources

Certain efforts can be undertaken by the Mission to encourage the growth of expertise in areas related to women's employment and income generation needs. Along these lines the following factors are of critical importance:

- (1) Selecting Appropriate Consultants - Teams contracted to undertake project work during the identification, design, implementation, or evaluation phases can be expected to generate data about rural women and to address the issue of women's employment and income generation needs as an integral component of the defined scope of work. The presence of a consultant who is sensitive to and knowledgeable about this issue is critical. Such a person need not be a "woman in development" specialist, nor a woman. Given AID's leverage in selecting experts to be hired, the Mission can request expertise on "women's economic role" as a desirable skill to be included in the team composition.
- (2) Channelling Thai Resources and Expertise - Thai nationals with expertise in issues related to women's productive roles should be identified and called upon to assist Mission staff in project identification, design, and evaluation phases. Efforts should be extended to encourage Thai social scientists and economists to address research issues related to women's economic condition, productive needs, employment/income generation prospects. Some such efforts can indeed be supported by the Agency such as in the case of the Rural Off-Farm Employment Assessment which involves research experts from several Thai universities and includes a training component for graduate students.
- (3) Exchanging Information within the Mission - Data or experience obtained through AID projects that bear relevancy to women should be shared with and by project staff on a continuing basis, and be fed back into the design of new projects or modification of existing projects. Mission staff generally recognize the significant role of Thai women in the rural economy. This awareness, however, has not been translated into project design. Once the Mission adopts an explicit program strategy to incorporate women's concerns, appropriate mechanisms for a systematic exchange of project-related experience and of project-related data on women should be developed.

- (4) Project Review - The formal review mechanisms within the Mission can incorporate the discussion of projects within a framework that includes emphasis on women's productivity and access to resources. Other more informal mechanisms such as occasional seminars and circulation of "critical issues papers" will further increase knowledge about women's condition among Mission staff.
- (5) Short Term Technical Assistance - Investment in short term technical assistance may be considered to initiate and coordinate the building of linkages between women's employment/income generation concerns and the Mission's ongoing operations. If such assistance is to be requested, it should not be constrained by resistance on the part of project staff. For this reason, it is crucial that the technical assistance to be recruited receive full support of the Mission personnel, most particularly of the Program Office.

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