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**WOMEN'S ISSUES IN
SHELTER, AGRICULTURE, TRAINING AND
INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT:**

Assessment for USAID/Costa Rica

by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This assessment provides information to USAID/Costa Rica on the nature and extent of women's participation in the economy and suggests possible interventions in the context of the Mission's program strategy. Since women's access to resources and their participation in economic activity is relevant across all sectors, this report does not refer to "women-in-development" activities per se, but rather to specific sectors where women's current or potential contribution is significant and where interventions are appropriate. The assessment calls for integrated projects rather than women-specific project work. It also calls, however, for the strengthening of women-specific institutional mechanisms that can offer policy guidance to the COCR and monitor progress in reaching the goals of greater economic and social opportunities for women in Costa Rica.

The report first discusses the rationale for USAID/Costa Rica's attention to women in economic and institutional terms. An analysis of issues that are relevant to women's participation in specific sectors follows, along with recommendations for the Mission in the context of the current and planned program strategy.

Rationale

There are reasonable and timely arguments to justify particular attention to women in AID's development strategies for Costa Rica. These arguments are based on an analysis of women's participation in the economy and the institutional responses on behalf of women in the last decade. Women have been joining the market economy in ever increasing numbers and the difficult economic situation of the last five years has done little to stem this movement; on the contrary, the indicators reveal that the economic crisis stimulated rather than discouraged women's integration into the economy.

But women's participation in the Costa Rican economy is troublesome. Occupational and wage discrimination by sex have coexisted with women's increased participation in the labor force as well as with women's higher educational attainments, and they seem to have worsened rather than improved over time. Women's notable educational improvements in Costa Rica have not resulted in improved economic opportunities in the market place. Domestic service seems to be by far the main occupation for urban women workers followed by commerce, particularly through the extension of the informal sector. In rural areas, women work the longest hours and make the lowest salaries.

Despite low level occupations, the supply of women workers has expanded as a result of, on the one hand, women's educational attainments and consequent changes in social attitudes, and, on the other hand, declining economic standards and the increased poverty of women and families that have pushed women into the work force. In 1982, the peak year of the economic crisis, the activity rate for women in low income households in San Jose (60.6 percent), was the highest when compared with the activity rates of all urban women in San Jose and four other major Latin American cities. Another factor

affecting the supply of women workers is the rise of households headed by women, particularly among the poor. According to July 1982 national household survey figures, 17 percent of all households and 20.6 percent of the households in the lowest 20 percent of the income distribution in San Jose were headed by women.

In the past ten years, there has been a sizeable growth of women's institutions and women's groups in Costa Rica. There are currently 62 institutions that work with women's groups. These institutions have formed, and/or provide technical assistance to, at least 305 women-only groups. The majority of groups experience financial failure in their income generating activities, in part because of their welfare oriented methodologies that are inadequate for productive oriented tasks. Private voluntary and public sector agencies that implement women's projects have inadequate financial and technical resources to undertake income generating activities. Male oriented agencies that are working in the productive area may seem interested in gender issues but have done little to integrate women into their productive programs.

Women's economic need and the institutional response to date help define the following choices for AID and other donors:

1. Economic oriented interventions are more urgent than social or service oriented ones. Women need access to modern productive resources, that is, land credit, training and technological know-how;
2. Interventions to increase women's economic opportunities in rural areas should take precedence over similar action in urban areas, and actions designed to reach low income women take priority over those designed to reach women in other categories;
3. Women heads of household in rural and urban areas should receive priority over other women in access to productive resources and services;
4. Productive interventions should concentrate on women in the informal rather than the formal sector;
5. The lack of interest from the government and other mainstream institutions is reflected in the absence of a development policy that integrates women and is a major hindrance to implementing significant action for women. Encouraging the government to devise a comprehensive policy for women has priority over continuing to support isolated projects for women;
6. The institutional upgrading of women-based agencies in the private sector takes priority over project funding for these agencies.

Analysis and Recommendations

The economic and institutional needs of women in Costa Rica and AID's current and planned program strategy intersect in three main sectors: agricultural development and agribusiness, training and institutional development, and housing. The selection of the first two sectors responds to USAID/CR program priorities and the need to expand and upgrade women's

employment opportunities. Shelter, the third sector selected, is a priority for the Mission that can meet the housing needs of the growing number of women heads of households as well as provide new options for women.

Housing

The rapidly escalating costs of housing are making homeownership difficult for a large proportion of Costa Rican households. A large number of female-headed households may face particular constraints in this regard since they tend to be concentrated on the lower end of the income scale. Given AID's emphasis on expanding the availability of housing to lower income families, there are a number of issues that can be addressed in the design and implementation of USAID/CR housing projects in order to improve women's access to and benefit from housing.

- o An assessment of the demand for housing from women-headed households and the nature of financial opportunities (including transfer payments) and constraints in assuring women's access to housing is a critical first step.

- o If the down payment is the constraining factor, then the establishment of a guarantee fund set up for women who are otherwise able to meet income criteria but do not always have enough capital or savings for a down payment could increase women's access to housing significantly.

- o If income is the constraint, in the short run it may be necessary to provide credit for upgrading existing units rather than providing new housing. Within the context of the Northern Zone project, there is an opportunity to assess the impact of providing funds for upgrading low-cost housing units on women's access to housing. In the long run, it will be necessary to devise new employment opportunities for women in housing projects and provide requisite training.

- o If the demand for housing by women-headed households is sizeable, housing projects may need to consider provisions for community childcare arrangements and/or employment opportunities for women close to, or inside, the housing project.

Agricultural Development and Agribusiness

Agriculture continues to be the mainstay of the Costa Rican economy, generating 20 percent of GDP and two third of export earnings, and employing 30 percent of the labor force. Women play an important role in this sector, although official statistics underestimate their participation. By and large, women have not had the access to resources that would enable them to be more productive. USAID/Costa Rica's emphasis on agribusiness has the potential of opening up employment and income generating opportunities in rural areas. Its impact will depend on a number of factors including the type of agribusiness operation, the choice of crop and production process, the tenure situation, prevailing market conditions, and the specific socio-cultural context. These issues can be addressed in the context of AID's program.

o The role of women in agricultural production, paid and unpaid, needs to be assessed more reliably for policy purposes and better understood on a regional basis in order to design project interventions. On the basis of a time use and activity survey, it might be appropriate to introduce specific measures to improve the productivity of women farmers in the Northern Zone. In connection with the Agrarian Settlement and Productivity project, a survey needs to measure women's access to extension, training and credit.

o More generally, pilot training and credit programs for rural women can be set up after assessments of women's agricultural activities in rural areas, and their demand for resources and services. This is one case where women-specific interventions are needed to prevent unfair competition with men and to upgrade women to a level where they can more equally share in project resources.

o In preparing more detailed assessments of specific agribusiness operations and in designing agribusiness projects, attention should be paid to the employment and income effects of alternative crop production/processing possibilities and their link with project goals and purposes, as well to available producers/employers and their technical and credit needs. The data needs to be disaggregated by sex.

o Satellite or contract farming can provide opportunities for a large number of small-scale farmers to receive technical assistance and have a secure market for their produce. Processing plants, depending on the commodity in question, can also provide employment opportunities. Women can benefit from both aspects of the agribusiness operations. However, for them to benefit, they need to be organized, given access to land, credit and technical assistance. PVOs and IDA could be used to organize women and to function as intermediaries between processing facilities and women's groups.

Training and Institutional Development

USAID/Costa Rica has an opportunity to intervene in a number of areas to promote women's access to training and to provide more broader-based support for institutional development. The latter could take the form of up-grading women-based organizations in the private sector through CINDE and/or INCAE, and supporting a policy-oriented institution which would produce, "translate," and disseminate relevant information on women.

a. Training

o USAID/Costa Rica should support a manpower assessment, including vocational training preferences, options and obstacles for women particularly in those sectors that are identified for expansion; a plan to utilize the CAPS program to train women should be derived from this assessment.

o The target group of Training for Private Sector Development project should be broadened to include various skill levels; this should respond to the needs of industry and should also allow a greater participation of women.

b. Institutional upgrading of women's based PVOs

o Technical assistance on project planning, management and supervision and particularly project implementation, can be structured through two mechanisms. First, since INCAE has branched into providing assistance to small and medium size enterprises and training PVOs in project management and implementation, INCAE could be hired to develop a training module for women-based PVOs. Tentatively, INCAE would do a project oriented diagnosis with the participation of institutions and beneficiaries, and on the basis of the results, it would structure the course and materials needed to train women-based PVOs.

o Second, training on women's integration into economic development could be structured for CINDE and the staff of selected PVOs. This could fit in with the technical assistance that CINDE expects to receive from PACT. If it had the institutional capacity, CINDE could then take a leading role in guiding agencies in the design, implementation and monitoring of productive projects for women.

c. The establishment of a policy-oriented research institute on women

o Primary research as well as analysis of census and survey data need to be framed in terms of policy questions and alternatives. An autonomous agency needs to bridge the gap between research and action, between women's interests and government priorities, and be able to phrase research questions in a language that would be useful for policy making. Costa Rica has qualified professionals who could staff a high level policy-based research institute on women. The institute could either be restricted to Costa Rica or take a regional lead; it could develop research, public education and/or technical assistance functions. The institute should, however, have a strong development orientation to meet the needs of low income women in Costa Rica.

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**WOMEN'S ISSUES
IN
SHELTER, AGRICULTURE, TRAINING AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT:
AN ASSESSMENT FOR USAID/COSTA RICA**

I. PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT

This assessment provides information to USAID/Costa Rica on the nature and extent of women's participation in the economy and suggests possible interventions in the context of the Mission's program strategy.

One of the first challenges in identifying issues and potential areas of intervention with regard to women is understanding the cross- or multi-sectoral nature of these issues. Since women's access to resources and their participation in economic activity can be equally relevant in agriculture or in small enterprise development, this report analyzes specific sectors where women's current or potential contribution is significant and where interventions are appropriate. Rather than suggesting discrete "women in development" or women-specific activities, it identifies activities which are relevant to, and part of, the Mission's overall program strategy. The assessment calls for integrated projects rather than women-specific project work. It also calls, however, for the strengthening of women-specific institutional mechanisms that can offer policy guidance to the new government and that can monitor progress in reaching the goals of greater economic and social opportunities for women in Costa Rica.

II. RATIONALE

There are reasonable and timely economic arguments to justify particular attention to women in AID's development strategies for Costa Rica. These arguments are based on an analysis of women's participation in the economy and the institutional responses on behalf of women in the last decade. The recent economic crisis in Costa Rica adds urgency to the identification of economic

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measures for women at the same time that it displaces the importance of actions based solely on equity arguments. Development policy needs to tackle issues relevant to women's economic participation for the following reasons: women's economic participation is significant and it is increasing; it is more than meets the eye; it is inefficient in terms of productivity and human resource utilization; and it is critical to family welfare.

A. Economic Participation

1. Pattern of Steady Growth

Official economic statistics do not accurately portray women's increasing participation in the Costa Rican economy. Costa Rica shares in the subtle and silent revolution that, the Inter-American Development Bank recently reported (1980-81) is taking place in Latin America. Women have been joining the market economy in ever greater numbers; and this movement appears to be a permanent one in Costa Rica as well as in other countries in the region.

As shown in Table 1, female labor force participation rates increased from 15 percent in 1960 to 20.7 percent in 1980, while rates for men slightly decreased from 79.3 percent to 72.8 percent during the same period.¹ The difficult economic situation of the last five years has done little to stem this movement; on the contrary, the indicators reveal that the economic crisis stimulated rather than discouraged women's integration into the market economy as well as that of male secondary workers. Refined female labor force participation rates (using the population of females 12 years and over as the basis) rose to 26.3 percent at the height of the crisis in 1982, and only slightly decreased to 25 percent in 1983. Male participation rates underwent a similar but less pronounced change (Moritz, 1984).

¹These are refined participation rates for the economically active population age 10 years and over as a percentage of the total population age 10 years and over.

TABLE 1
Costa Rica: Participation in Economic Activity by Sex
(Refined rates)^a

	1950	1960	1970	1980
<u>Total</u>	<u>50.2</u>	<u>46.9</u>	<u>44.9</u>	<u>46.7</u>
Male	85.5	79.3	73.7	72.8
Female	15.6	15.0	16.4	20.7

Source: United Nations, ECLAC, Statistical Year Book for Latin America, 1984 Edition June 1985, Table 12.

a = Economically active population aged 10 years and over as percentage of the total population aged 10 years and over.

Between 1973 and 1983, the female labor force grew at an annual average rate of 6.6 percent while the annual average growth rate for the male labor force was 2.9 percent. That is, the female labor force participation rate almost doubled within 10 years; women went from representing one-fifth of the labor force in 1973 to representing one-fourth of the labor force in 1983.

2. Invisible Urban and Rural Work

While these data are impressive, they only partially reveal the extent of women's participation in the market economy. In fact, they hide a significant and troublesome component of women's integration into the market place. These data underestimate women's participation because they fail to capture work in the informal sectors of the urban and rural economy as well as in the traditional agricultural sector. The scant information that exists suggests that the urban informal sector, alongside with women's participation,

has expanded with the economic crisis in the eighties. PREALC estimates that the urban informal sector grew from 27.7 percent of the urban sector to 29.2 percent and the rural traditional sector grew from 14.5 of the rural sector to 15.2 percent between 1979 and 1982 (PREALC, 1985). An analysis of informal sector microenterprises before the crisis in 1979 showed that these microenterprises provided employment to 20 percent of the urban labor force; it also revealed that one-third of the microenterprise owners in the sector were women, which indicates that women's representation in the urban informal sector is higher than in the urban labor market as a whole. It also suggests that their participation in the sector is much larger since a majority probably work in the sector as employees rather than as owners (PREALC, 1984).

Perhaps more significant in the case of Costa Rica is the underestimation of women's participation in the rural sector. The census states that rural women represent only 5 percent of the agricultural labor force and 35 percent of the non-agricultural labor force. But the census as well as other agricultural labor force participation statistics undercount women workers in part because they use the concept of principal activity (and women tend to define themselves as housewives rather than workers); in part because they miss counting seasonal workers; and in part because they do not record activities in the informal sector that constitute a significant source of women's rural employment and household income. Rural women in Costa Rica work alongside men in the farm, are contracted more often than men on a seasonal basis for the coffee and sugar harvests, and undertake off-farm work that seems to provide a significant source of farm household income.

In a study that is unique in the region (and perhaps in the Third World), a module was inserted in the experimental population census carried out in May of 1983 in the district of San Juan in San Ramon de Alajuela, to assess the extent to which the 1973 population census and the national household surveys underestimated women's participation in the economy. The exercise reveals the extent to which urban, and particularly rural, women participate regularly but inconspicuously in the market economy. All women twelve years and older that had been categorized as economically inactive in the experimental population census were re-interviewed. The module found that one fourth of the inactive women had actually worked for pay

during the reference week and almost three fifths of the women had worked seasonally during the coffee harvest. More than two fifths of the inactive women reported working six months of the year or more and, overall, rural women reported more often working the whole year than urban women. Using this information, women's labor force participation rate in the area jumps from 31 percent recorded in the 1983 national household survey to 48.3 percent, and the participation rate of rural women jumps from 22.5 percent to 45.3 percent (Pisoni, 1983). Table 2 shows the results of the module and Table 3 lists the paid work that "inactive" women were involved in.

TABLE 2

San Ramon: Distribution of Women Classified as Economically Inactive who Work in District of San Juan, by Region and Reference Period

	Total			Urban			Rural		
	Week	Year	N	Week	Year	N	Week	Year	N
	N	%		N	%		N	%	
Total Inactive Women	1,476	100		714	100		762	100	
Inactive Women Who did not Work	1,033	70		534	75		499	65	
Inactive Women Who Worked	370	25	659	146	20	269	224	29	390
No Answer	73	5	73	34	5	34	39	9	39

Source: Rodolfo Pisoni L. "El Trabajo de las Mujeres Usualmente Consideradas como Economicamente Inactivas," San Jose, Costa Rica, Septiembre 1983, P.I., Table No.1.

TABLE 3

San Ramon: Occupations of the Women Classified as Inactive in
District of San Juan by Region for Reference Year

(Percentage)

Occupation	Urban	Rural
Total Activities	<u>N = 359</u>	<u>N = 570</u>
	%	%
Within household and farm	<u>42</u>	<u>49</u>
o Agricultural	26	51
o Manufacturing	28	25
o Commerce	28	11
o Services	17	10
o Others	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
	100	100
	%	%
Outside the household	<u>58</u>	<u>51</u>
o Wage labor in coffee and Tobacco	69	88
o Commerce	9	2
o Services	15	7
o Others	<u>7</u>	<u>3</u>
	100	100

Source: The same as Table 2, P.II, Table No.2.

3. Inefficient and Low Wage Work

Table 4 shows enrollment rates by sex and region (rural-urban) for the first, second and higher levels of schooling, for the period 1979-1984. Given that there are slightly more boys than girls in the population (in 1984 there were about 4 percent more boys than girls in the population 5 to 19 years of age), enrollment rates are remarkably high and similar for both sexes in the first and second educational levels, and slightly higher for women than for men in the third level.

Women's notable educational attainments in Costa Rica have not, however, resulted in improved economic opportunities for women in the market place. Occupational and wage discrimination by sex have coexisted with women's increased participation in the labor force as well as with women's higher educational attainments, and they seem to have worsened rather than improved over time. In 1978, men received wages 14 percent higher than those of women; by 1980, their wages were 18.5 percent higher (ILO, 1984). Table 5 shows the gap in wages for full time workers according to sex for 1982 and 1983. While the earnings of both men and women improved between 1982 and 1983, the gap between male and female earnings got slightly better in urban areas but slightly worse in rural areas during this period. Recent data shows that wage differentials between men and women persist even within low level occupations. Data from March of 1984 shows that, within the occupational category of low level employees in the services, only 9.8 percent of the men earned 4,000 colones or less a month while a full 44.3 percent of the women earned this amount or less per month (Araya, 1985).

4. Female Occupations

In March of 1985, women constituted 33.5 percent of the urban labor force; they showed an open unemployment rate slightly lower than that of men in the urban labor force (6.5 compared to 6.7 percent) which reversed the pattern observed at the height of the economic crisis when the unemployment rate for women was slightly higher than that for men in the urban sector.

TABLE 4

Costa Rica: School Enrollment for First and Second and
Higher Levels by Years, Region and Sex

(Percentage)

	First and Second Level						Higher Education					
	Total	Urban		Total	Rural		Total	Urban		Total	Rural	
		M %	F %		M %	F %		M %	F %		M %	F %
1979	134,192 ^a	51	49	221,396	52	48	93,013	43	57	34,553	49	51
1980	137,053	50	50	211,778	52	48	107,718	47	53	27,756	49	51
1981	128,872	48	52	211,686	52	48	103,528	47	53	30,064	49	51
1982	131,416	51	49	210,957	52	48	100,830	47	53	29,552	49	51
1983	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
1984	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND

Source: The same as Table 2 pp. 25-26

ND = No Data
A = Estimate
M = Male
F = Female

TABLE 5

Costa Rica: Distribution of Monthly Salaries of Fulltime^a
Employed and Salaried Population for Urban
and Rural Areas by Sex

1982 - 1983

(Cumulative Percentage)

U r b a n				
Colones	Male		Female	
	1982	1983	1982	1983
Less than 2000	10	3	27	14
2000 - 2999	29	9	49	23
3000 - 3999	52	18	63	38
4000 - 4999	67	33	74	50
5000 - 5999	79	46	83	61
	100	100	100	100

R u r a l				
Colones	Male		Female	
	1982	1983	1982	1983
Less than 2000	25	7	53	34
2000 - 2999	60	18	74	46
3000 - 3999	80	43	84	61
4000 - 4999	90	59	91	73
5000 - 5999	94	70	96	82
	100	100	100	100

Sources: Nancy, Moritz "Situación Laboral de la Mujer en el Area Rural de Costa Rica." Presentado en el Taller Nacional sobre la Participación de la Mujer Campesina en Actividades Productivas del Sector Primario, La Catalina, Costa Rica, 16-20 Octubre 1984. Table No. 22

Mónica Jiménez de Barros, con Lidieth Madden y Ana Lucía Moreno. "Programa Integral para la Mujer Campesina dentro del Desarrollo Rural Constarricense." San José, Costa Rica: Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Agricultura y la Alimentación. 1985. Table No.4.

a = 40 hours or more per week.

There is clear sex segmentation of occupations in the urban labor market in Costa Rica. Domestic service seems to be still by far the main occupation for urban women workers followed by commerce, particularly through the expansion of informal sector work. In the informal sector, women working as seamstresses come next, and it is possible that part of the attraction of sewing is generated by the potential of contract work for the drawback industries. It is generally believed that maquilas or drawback industries are significantly expanding the employment opportunities for women in the urban sector. Up until now, however, a rough calculation indicates that the maquila industry has only generated employment for around 6.6 percent of the female population in the urban labor force.²

A similar sex segmentation of occupations is observed in the statistics for rural women. However, these data are more suspect given underreporting of work and, as the recent experimental module reveals, there may be less sex segregation in occupations in the rural sector. The little data that is both available and reliable to characterize women's economic participation in the rural sector of Costa Rica reveals that rural women workers work the longest hours and make the lowest salaries. While men in rural areas seem to be affected by finding too little work to do, rural women appear to be working too many hours for too little pay. In July of 1982, 25.4 percent of men in the rural labor force were underemployed as a result of working fewer than 47 hours a week, while 31.7 percent of women in the rural labor force were underemployed because they earned less than the minimum wage and worked more than 47 hours per week (Jimenez, 1985). The underutilization of women workers in rural areas of Costa Rica is particularly striking since there are no differences in education between men and women in rural Costa Rica and women wage earners in agriculture seem to have a higher educational level than male wage earners (Jimenez 1985).

²In December of 1984, the maquila generated 12,211 jobs and it is estimated that about 80 percent of these jobs go to women, while women in the urban labor force totaled 147,987 women in March of 1985.

5. Demand and Supply Factors

What are the factors that explain women's increased participation in the Costa Rican economy despite the restricted opportunities that they face? The demand for women workers has increased over time with modernization and the expansion of the service sector in the urban economy, the need for workers in the maquila industry, and the seasonal demand for wage labor in agriculture. Steady increases in the supply of women workers appear to be a combination of contrasting factors; on the one hand, women's educational attainments and consequent changes in social attitudes, and on the other hand, declining economic standards and the increased poverty of women and families that push women into the work force. A third factor that has historical roots in the region and is linked to declining economic standards is the rise of households headed by women that, again, affects the supply of women workers because of their need to support the family.

The supply of women workers and the high numbers of women headed households in the cities have been linked in Latin America to substantial streams of women migrants into the large urban centers since the mid-1960s. In the case of Costa Rica, the available information shows that female rural to urban migration is an important phenomenon in the 1980s. More revealing is the fact that this migration was significantly higher among women in low-income households (table 6). While the proportion of women migrants into San Jose between the ages of 15 and 24 years of age for all income groups is 17 percent, this proportion reaches a high of 25.6 percent for young women in the lowest income categories. It is likely that this rural to urban migration of young women contributes to the formation of women headed households in San Jose and other cities in Costa Rica.

6. Women Headed Households and Poverty

According to July 1982 national survey figures, 17 percent of all households and 20.6 percent of the households in the lowest 20 percent of the income distribution in San Jose were headed by women (CEPAL, 1984). The link between women headed households and poverty in Costa Rica should not be surprising since household income is largely dependent on the earnings

TABLE 6

Migrant Women in Five L.A. Cities 1980-1982

(Percentage)

	Women age 15 years and over		Women age 15-24 years	
	All Income Levels	Low Income Level*	All Income Levels	Low Income Level*
San Jose ^a	12.4	18.0	17.0	25.6
Panama ^b	1.5	2.8	3.3	7.3
Lima-Callao ^c	10.5	16.1	19.0	27.9
Caracas ^d	9.6	12.2	12.7	15.7

Source: CEPAL, Naciones Unidas, La Mujer en el Sector Urbano; America Latina y el Caribe, Santiago de Chile, 1985, p. 243.

- a = Reside in San Jose metropolitan area less than 2 years.
b = Reside in the Panama metropolitan area less than 1 year.
c = Reside in the Lima-Callao metropolitan area less than 6 years.
d = Reside in the Caracas metropolitan area less than 5 years.

* Women living in households that have lowest 20 percent household income per capita.

capacity of the head, and women in Costa Rica encounter restricted economic opportunities. It is a link, however, that has important implications for development policy since these households have the propensity of being caught in the vicious circle of long working hours for women, low productivity and low earnings, and reduced family and child welfare. It is likely that the number of women headed households in urban Costa Rica has been underestimated by the household sample survey. The cultural tradition that men are the heads of household is difficult to erase as the ideal and it is, therefore, often reported even if women are economically responsible for household income.

7. Women's Economic Participation, Poverty and the Economic Crisis

Comparative analyses to understand the situation of low income women with respect to other women and, in particular, with respect to low income men are lacking in Costa Rica research efforts. The CEPAL study (1984) is an exception and reveals that households in the lowest 20 percent of the urban income distribution (according to per capita income) have more women headed households, more young women migrants in the ages of 15 to 24, more women who are employed 49 hours or more, and many more women who are economically active. The activity rate for women in low income households in San Jose (60.6 percent) was the highest when compared with the 1982 activity rates of all urban women in San Jose and four other major Latin American cities (table 7). This data reveals that the supply of women laborers in urban Costa Rica is closely linked with economic need. Women seem to join the work force because of the economic need to work rather than because of the incentive of an economic return.

Not coincidentally, 1982 was the peak year for the economic crisis in Costa Rica. There is some evidence that ties the economic crisis both with increasing poverty and increasing participation of women and other secondary workers into low productivity occupations in the private sector, both the urban informal and rural traditional markets. Some of the economic adjustments to the high rates of inflation and the significant devaluation of the colon between 1979 and 1982 included high levels of unemployment (the open unemployment rate increased from around 5 to almost 10 percent in 1982), a 30

TABLE 7

Activity Rates of Women by Household Income and
Age in Five Latin American Countries

(Percentage)

Household Income		Total Women Age 15 Years and Over	Women Age 15-24 Years
San Jose	All Income	41.5	41.9
	Low Income	60.6	63.9
Bogota	All Income	37.4	32.3
	Low Income	40.7	41.2
Panama	All Income	39.2	34.5
	Low Income	44.0	60.4
Lima-Callao	All Income	37.2	35.5
	Low Income	37.1	46.5
Caracas	All Income	37.2	29.3
	Low Income	31.0	26.1

Source: The same as Table 8, P 251, Table No. 13.

percent reduction in real wages, and a slight increase in the labor force that was absorbed into the urban informal and rural traditional sectors.

A recent study from PREALC (1985) presents data on the impoverishment of households between 1979 and 1982. The percentage of head of households earning the minimum wage or less increased from 24.4 percent in 1979 to 30.8 percent in 1982. On the other hand, the percentage of heads of households earning the equivalent of 20 and more minimum wages increased from 0.2 percent in 1979 to 9.4 in 1982 (table 8). Further, this study shows that, in response to household impoverishment and the real wage reduction of the head of household, family members and women headed households joined the labor force in greater numbers and into available positions male heads of household did not want. The increase in the overall labor force participation rates was due to higher participation by household members that were non-head of household as well as higher participation rates of women heads of households. Small rather than large establishments, and agriculture and commerce, rather than industry and construction, dominated the employment profile of workers in 1982 as compared with 1979.

B. Institutional Response

A brief visit to three projects in the field depicted quite well the state of progress (or lack thereof) in responding to the economic needs of women in Costa Rica. Appropriately, the three interventions were economic oriented and attempting to generate income for poor women; it was evident, however, that none of the three was succeeding. In the outskirts of the city of Limon, an income generation project with a group of rural women was having the typical sad outcome: sacks of medicinal plants the women had picked were lying on the kitchen floor unsold. The women had been organized to grow medicinal plants for sale; they had invested substantial unpaid labor in growing, harvesting, and drying the plants (about 4 hours a day for around six months of continuous work); and had found out only too late that they had no easy access to markets. In the city of Limon, a second group of women were not that badly off since they were getting paid a wage for producing ice cream. However, the ice cream enterprise in itself seemed to be in dire straits. Lack of competent technical assistance in setting up and running

TABLE 8

Costa Rica: Income Distribution of Heads of Households
by Year in Equivalent Number of Minimum Wages
(Percentage)

Number of Minimum Wages	1979	1982
0-1	24.4	30.8
1-2	35.4	35.6
2-5	27.7	21.8
5-10	6.9	1.7
10-20	1.8	0.6
20 and More	0.2	9.4
Not Specified	3.6	0.1

Source: PREALC , Oficina Internacional del Trabajo, "Household Behavior and Economic Crisis. Costa Rica 1979-1982," P. 8 Table No. 3.

the woman owned and managed enterprise (that translated, among other things, into the purchase of an expensive freezer that stopped working within the first two years of operation) seemed to be main culprit in the current indebtedness of the firm.

The third instance shows quite well what little is happening at the action level in terms of improving women's roles in agricultural production. At the asentamiento El Indio, that reaches 456 farm families who have received land titles from IDA, women--according to both the technicians and the women themselves--work alongside men in agricultural production (it is unclear if there is a division of labor by sex in small farm agriculture or if women share with men the different agricultural tasks). But the land settlement project seems to have bypassed women as agricultural producers despite the fact that the AID project paper called explicitly for women in development activities. The only project intervention directed to women farmers was a recent effort to organize women who, with the help of their husbands and families, had planted two tiny garden plots to grow vegetables for sale. The plot we saw was less than half a manzana in size and it was obvious that in its current scale this incipient effort cannot begin to respond to women's economic needs. Out of 1,500 beneficiaries at El Indio who have received credit from the Caja Agraria, only 25 are women. Recent assessments indicate that El Indio is only one example of ignoring rural women in project implementation.

Three recent evaluations of projects for women in the country confirm and generalize the validity of the above observations. In the past ten years there has been a sizeable growth of women's institutions and women's groups in Costa Rica. There are currently 62 institutions that work with women's groups; at least half of the agencies have international rather than national funds. These institutions have formed and/or provide technical assistance to at least 305 women-only groups that were set up for productive purposes. Only 8 percent of the groups undertake productive activities in the agricultural sector; the majority (87 percent of the groups) either sew clothes for sale or do a variety of small crafts or manualidades (see evaluation in progress by COF, forthcoming). The COF evaluation add to the majority of the groups experience financial failure in their income generating

activities, in part because they use welfare oriented methodologies that are inadequate for production oriented tasks. It also identifies the problems of lack of coordination between different implementing institutions; inefficient utilization of scarce human and financial resources; high level of frustration in the women's groups when production oriented activities do not succeed, and the lack of attempts to evaluate women's projects.

A FAO/ILO/UNESCO sponsored evaluation (April 1985) and an assessment of women's projects for the UN Voluntary Fund (Rodriguez, 1985) share in the findings of the COF evaluation and offer the following insights: the majority of the productive projects for women in Costa Rica take place in urban areas; they have been developed from stereotypes about women's work; have had a "home-bound" orientation that has negatively affected the project's economic goals; have utilized staff that has expertise in the social but not in the productive sectors; and, most importantly, have lacked sufficient financial support and technical assistance in organization, production, and marketing. Given the lack of financial resources and technical competence of women-based implementing institutions, and the complete isolation of women's projects from mainstream development institutions and interventions, it is not surprising to find that so few women's projects have succeeded economically.

Private voluntary agencies that implement women's projects have few financial and technical resources to undertake income generation activities, and this is in part the result of their history and institutional growth in the welfare rather than the productive sector. Private (male oriented) agencies that are working in the productive area may seem interested in the question of women but have done little to integrate women into their productive programs. For instance, while FUCODES is aware of women's importance in microenterprises, only 12 to 15 percent of the clients of FUCODES' credit to microentrepreneurs have been women. CINDE believes that many of the PVOs it works with benefit women but has no data to support the fact. PROCAP/CINDE training courses have benefitted women participants largely in the banking sector. In a cursory review of courses and trainees that have been offered by PROCAP, we found out that 7 out of 16 participants in a course for maquila supervisors were women; one out of 21 participants

were women in a course of project planning and supervision; and 4 out of 20 participants were women in a course on marketing of horticultural products.

Public sector agencies do not have a better record. The Women's Office, set up at the beginning of the UN Women's Decade, seems to have been created mostly to fulfill a UN mandate; it has operated with few financial and technical resources, in isolation from mainstream development operations and is closing down as the Decade has ended. Women's divisions have recently been established at INA, the training agency, IDA, the agrarian reform agency, and MIDEPLAN the planning agency, but they are understaffed, underfinanced and, therefore, under high risk of becoming isolated and ineffective. It is clear in the public sector that the effectiveness of women's divisions is jeopardized by the lack of government or institutional policies that would give priority to the incorporation of women into the productive sector. There is an atmosphere of benign indifference to women's concerns in Costa Rica that is partly the result of the lack of facts about, and therefore awareness of, women's economic participation. Reliable evidence regarding women's participation in production and their central role in family welfare should have a positive impact in changing this state of affairs if disseminated to policymakers and development technicians.

C. Summary and Priorities for AID

The nature of women's integration in the Costa Rican economy and the inadequacy of the efforts to date to expand women's economic opportunities, highlight target groups of women and critical voids (and needs) in terms of policies and institutions. These facts help define choices for AID and other donors:

1. Economic oriented interventions are more urgent than social or service oriented ones. Women need access to modern productive resources, that is, land, credit, training and technological know-how;
2. Interventions to increase women's economic opportunities in rural areas take priority over similar action in urban areas,

and action designed to reach low income women take priority over those designed to reach women in other income categories;

3. Women heads of households in urban and rural areas receive priority over other women in both access to productive resources and services;
4. Productive interventions should concentrate on women in the informal over the formal sector of the urban economy;
5. The lack of interest from the government and other mainstream institutions is reflected in the absence of a development policy that integrates women and is a major hindrance to implementing significant action for women. Encouraging the government to devise a comprehensive policy for women has priority over continuing to support isolated productive-oriented projects for women;
6. The institutional upgrading (technical and financial) of women-based agencies in the private sector takes priority over project funding for those agencies.

AID is urged to consider supporting some of the above priorities designed to improve women's productivity and income because: (a) it is highly unlikely that women in Costa Rica will revert back to the home once the economic crisis is over; (b) it is highly likely that improving women's economic status will result in direct improvements in the welfare of low income families; (c) increasing women's productivity and income will most likely benefit those most affected by the economic crisis and may ameliorate regressive effects of austerity policies on the poor; (4) these measures will substantially improve the utilization of human resources for economic development; and (5) by increasing the productivity of a large category workers (women) and occupations (female) that still operate largely outside the modern economy, these measures will promote balanced economic growth.

AID's choices need to be guided by the assessment of women's situation and institutional capacity in Costa Rica as well as by the Agency's program priorities. A useful strategy for the Mission can emerge from analyzing those areas where women and institutional needs merge or intersect with the Mission's priorities. The next section in the report undertakes this analysis and derives recommendations for the Mission.

III. SECTORAL PRIORITIES AND OPTIONS FOR AID

AID's program in Costa Rica seeks to assist the Government of Costa Rica (GOCR) consolidate the process of stabilization, restore rapid and sustained growth, and spread the benefits of growth. As such, the program stresses broad structural and policy changes which deal with a range of macro-level concerns including reducing the role of the public sector, expanding exports and strengthening the financial system. The link between macro- and micro-level concerns can be seen most clearly in the third layer of the Mission's strategy "Spreading the Benefits of Growth." Although AID does not play a central role in agricultural and social development in terms of the number of actual projects, the Mission's emphasis areas provide a framework, and the availability of local currency the means, to modify current activities and implement new projects that respond to women's economic needs and are compatible with both AID policies and resources.

The economic and institutional needs of women in Costa Rica and AID's current and planned program strategy intersect in (at least) three major sectors: agriculture and agribusiness, training and institutional development, and housing. The selection of the first two sectors responds to USAID/CR program priorities and the need to expand and upgrade women's employment opportunities. Shelter, the third sector selected, is a priority for the Mission that can meet the housing needs of the growing number of women heads of households as well as provide new options for women. The analysis is presented below for each sector includes a statement of USAID/CR's policy, a discussion of issues that are relevant to women, and a presentation of priority recommendations for the Mission.

A. Housing

1. USAID/Costa Rica's Policy and Strategy

AID has been the major donor in Costa Rica's shelter sector, contributing \$ 67.0 million to date under five Housing Guarantee Loans and a number of other loans and grants to housing and savings and loans institutions. Through these projects, AID seeks the rapid expansion of housing for low and moderate income families by promoting progressive housing solutions characterized by lower design standards and smaller lots. AID also supports reform of the national housing and financial systems in order to achieve better coordination among the numerous ministries and semi-autonomous agencies active in the shelter sector. A recently completed assessment provides detailed information on the housing sector and includes recommendations for a Central Mortgage Bank.

2. Issues Relevant to Women's Access to Housing

Findings from the Shelter Sector Assessment suggest that the housing market is currently much more restrictive than it was in the 1970s, and that types of solutions being promoted in Costa Rica are beyond the affordability of a large segment of the country's population. Using estimates for median household salaried income, assumptions of households' expenditures on housing, and calculations of maximum affordable mortgages, the assessment found that the least expensive shelter solutions would be unaffordable for households with earnings even at the higher end of the median income scale.

The problem of affordability is compounded for poor women. There is now ample evidence in the region of the overall disadvantaged situation of women relative to men in comparably poor population groups with regard to access to housing. Common problems include lack of information about credit for housing, insecurity in dealing with bureaucratic procedures, and inability to afford housing. Women who are heads of households find themselves in a particularly precarious position because they generally have lower incomes than male heads or joint heads of household but typically bear greater economic responsibilities because they have more dependents and fewer

adults to contribute to household income (Lycette and Jaramillo, 1984). This is of particular concern in Costa Rica because of the high proportion of these households in urban areas, their poverty, and the increasing numbers of women heads who are in the labor market in response to the economic crisis. Among the issues relevant to providing housing for low-income women are selection and affordability criteria, type of participation required, and lack of access to information.

a. Selection and Affordability Criteria

Selection and affordability criteria for urban housing projects are generally developed to ensure that project housing is allocated to low-income families rather than speculators, and to those families that will be able to maintain housing payments without foregoing other necessities such as food and clothing. Cost recovery is also a major concern and important in demonstrating the replicability of projects. Minimum income requirements generally state that a certain proportion (usually 25 percent) of household income be allocated to housing payments. To secure housing finance and keep monthly payments low, down payments of 5 to 15 percent of total housing costs are generally required.

As the data show, women who head households predominate in low-income groups and thus are less likely to meet minimum income requirements. There is growing evidence, however, that more women headed households would meet the income eligibility requirements if transfer as well as earned income were included in calculations of household income. Lessons from low-income shelter projects suggest that transfers tend to be larger and more frequent in households headed by women. Low-income women may also face difficulties in meeting down payment requirements. Results from a survey of women heads of household applying for housing in Quito, Ecuador, for example, reveal that only 15 percent of the women surveyed who were eligible in terms of income had enough savings to make down payments on the minimum cost housing unit.

It seems important to assess the demand for housing from women-headed households and the proportion of these women that can

realistically afford housing (considering transfer and earned income) as well as the down payment versus income constraints. Down payment constraints can be minimized by guarantee mechanisms and/or flexible schemes for downpayments. Flexible down payment schemes may be required to increase women's access to housing although it will be important to assess the trade-offs between lower down payments and higher monthly payments. Given the position of women in the income distribution it is possible that the number of women who become eligible for housing with reduced down payments will be exceeded by the number who become ineligible for failure to meet the higher minimum income requirement. Income constraints require expanding women's employment opportunities, and may require employment oriented interventions before satisfying women's housing demands.

b. Type of Participation Required, Physical Design, and Location

The physical design and type of participation required in low-income housing projects can be critical factors in determining whether or not women have access to the housing facilities and how they will benefit from them. Lack of income is often a limiting factor for women's access to a completed shelter unit so that reduced cost options with serviced lots and core units might seem more appropriate. Skills training in building and construction, repair and maintenance, can enable women to participate in building their own homes on sites and services lots and therefore open up less expensive home-ownership options.

The form and extent of self-help or mutual help required, however, can be of particular concern to women heads of households. Lacking time and skills, women might contract labor, but they are less likely than men to afford to do so. In El Salvador, women heads of household in a World Bank project preferred completed housing that was more expensive than core units, even if they could not afford the former. By buying a unit ready for occupancy, the feasibility of carrying out income-earning and household-management activities can be improved. However, if serviced lot and core unit schemes are designed without reference to the heavy demands placed on women's time, the self-help or mutual help requirements of such schemes can be so

burdensome as to place women-headed households in the untenable position of being ineligible for lower-cost options which require self-help while at the same time being unable to afford the fully serviced shelter units available.

Options for upgrading available housing rather than constructing new houses can be particularly helpful for low-income women. In such cases, credit for the purchase of new materials or for construction will be necessary.

The physical design of the units can also be important in ensuring that women benefit from new or upgraded housing. If units are developed in such a way to permit use of part of the dwelling for commercial purposes, women could more easily combine their household and economic responsibilities. Rental income, for example, can be a very important source of income in low-income housing projects, particularly for women-headed households.

Finally, the actual location of housing projects in relation to sources of employment and the availability of community-based child-care facilities are important considerations for women, particularly those who need to combine work and motherhood roles.

3. Recommendations to USAID/Costa Rica

The rapidly escalating costs of housing are making homeownership difficult for a large proportion of Costa Rican households. A large number of female-headed households may face particular constraints in this regard since they tend to be concentrated on the lower end of the income scale. Given AID's emphasis on expanding the availability of housing to lower income families, there are a number of issues that can be addressed in the design and implementation of USAID/CR housing projects in order to improve women's access to and benefit from housing.

- An assessment of the demand for housing from women headed households and the nature of financial opportunities

(including transfer payments) and constraints in assuring women's access to housing is a critical first step.

- If the down payment is the constraining factor, then the establishment of a guarantee fund set up for women who are otherwise able to meet income criteria but do not always have enough capital or savings for a down payment could increase women's access to housing significantly. The guarantee fund, deposited in a major bank could be invested at a high long-term rate of return; returns would be used to: 1) defray the bank's administrative costs of the guarantee fund; 2) defray the cost to the bank of foregoing an up-front down payment; and 3) further capitalizing the fund.
- If income is the constraint, in the short run it may be necessary to provide credit for upgrading existing units rather than providing new housing. Within the context of the Northern Zone project, there is an opportunity to assess the impact of providing funds for upgrading low-cost housing units on women's access to housing. In the long run, it will be necessary to devise new employment opportunities for women in housing projects and provide requisite training.
- If the demand for housing by women-headed households is sizeable, housing projects may need to consider provisions for community childcare arrangements and/or employment opportunities for women close to, or inside, the housing project.

B. Agricultural Development and Agribusiness

1. USAID/Costa Rica's Policy and Strategy

USAID/CR's current Action Plan places a major emphasis on expanding non-traditional agricultural exports. The newly established Private

Agricultural and Agro-industrial Council (PAAC) within CINDE represents an important new initiative in this regard. USAID/CR through the PAAC, will promote selected agribusiness export and investment projects, and design and implement a strategy for the sector. Among those products expected to receive emphasis are fresh and frozen vegetables, ornamental plants and flowers, strawberries and citrus fruits.

In addition to export promotion activities, USAID/CR is involved in agricultural and rural development activities, principally through the Agrarian Settlement and Productivity project and the Northern Zone Infrastructure project. Both projects are winding down and it is clear that the small farmer focus which was an important theme at the time these projects were designed, is no longer a priority area. While the projects are due to end in late 1986, undisbursed project funds and local currency generations are continuing to finance a variety of activities related to rural infrastructure, agricultural credit and cooperatives.

2. Issues Relevant to Women's Participation In and Benefit from Activities in the Agriculture/Agribusiness Sectors

a. Agricultural Production

Women's official participation rates in agriculture as reflected in the national census tend to be significantly lower than what is actually observed in rural areas. As noted in the previous section, underestimation and invisibility of women's activities continues to be prevalent because women are often unpaid family workers, they are involved in seasonal work in cash crops and they predominate in traditional agricultural or informal sector activities off the farm. Recent attempts to better identify and quantify the role of women in agriculture, such as the experimental module in the census discussed above, may focus attention more clearly on the needs and constraints of rural women (see Tables 2 and 3).

Access to resources is a major determining factor with regard to participation in, and benefit from, agricultural development activities. Agricultural credit and extension are often critical services

which enable farmers to use new cultivation techniques and improved seeds, and to increase crop yields, thereby increasing the output available for consumption or sale. And yet, by and large, women in Costa Rica have not had the access that would enable them to be more productive. The result has been that women in rural areas work the longest hours and make the lowest salaries. Rural women have not benefitted from the agrarian reform law, in part because they are clearly discriminated against in the regulations that IDA has devised. The selection criteria gives priority to men heads of household, and recognizes, but weighs unfavorably against the selection of women heads of household to receive land. Rural women also have little access to credit (credit from the Caja Agraria set up with a USAID loan, benefitted only 16 women as of October 1984) and their participation in agricultural cooperatives is minimal (Jimenez, 1985).

Women, both within male- or joint-headed households and female-headed households, may need access to resources on their own account. This is particularly true where they have primary responsibility for the farm operations, but may be equally relevant if they are "helping" their husbands or pursuing a separate activity such as growing spices or vegetables for market.³

b. Agribusiness

USAID/CR's emphasis on the development of agribusiness enterprises has the potential of opening up employment and income-earning opportunities in rural areas. The impact of agribusiness on employment and income will depend on a number of factors including the type of agribusiness operation, the choice of crop and production process, the tenure situation, prevailing market conditions, and the specific socio-cultural context.

³ An example from a recent evaluation of the Agrarian Settlement and Productivity project notes that even in situations of a household with man and women present, the woman may make the decisions and do the farming of the parcel. This would be a clear case where the woman should be receiving agricultural services.

Agribusiness and land tenure. The type of agribusiness system determines to a large extent the relationship with, and impact on, small farmers. Contract or satellite farming in which a processing facility forms the core and small farmers the satellites, seems to be most promising in terms of involvement of small farmers. Advocates of this concept state that it offers many advantages to small producers enabling them to increase their income and security, as well as to diffuse improved technology in rural areas (Goldsmith, 1985). Examples of these types of operations exist in Guatemala and the Dominican Republic. ALCOSA in Guatemala contracts with some 2,400 small-scale farmers and employs an additional 400 people in the processing plant. In the Dominican Republic, the Agro Inversiones Compania por Acciones - a fresh fruit and vegetable enterprise - purchases all its produce from small-scale farmers. For socio-political as well as production reasons, the company's strategy is to not own any land (Karen, 1985).

However, there are a number of factors which influence both the agribusiness' interest in setting up a satellite farming project, and the impact that the project has on the population in a given area. The pattern of landownership is one such factor. In Costa Rica, the distribution of land ownership is quite skewed with a relatively small proportion of farm owners controlling a significant proportion of the land area. According to the 1973 census, 1.3 percent of the farms had 500 hectares or more and 36 percent of the arable land. Conversely, one third of the farms had five hectares or less, representing only 1.7 percent of the arable land area. Land reform measures, including various settlement schemes, are attempting to change the distribution pattern. However, the number of landless remains significant.

On the one hand, this pattern of land tenure could result in the agribusiness enterprise contracting out to a limited number of larger farm owners which would reinforce existing inequalities; on the other hand it could offer the landless or near-landless (many of whom are women) new employment prospects as wage laborers both in the fields or in the processing plants. Even in areas where land distribution patterns are relatively equal, satellite farming does have a tendency to increase social stratification as less progressive farmers sell their land in response to rising land values (Goldsmith, 1985).

Agribusiness and employment. Prevailing employment patterns and wage structures for men and women will also affect the impact of an agribusiness enterprise in a particular area. Examples from other Central American and Caribbean countries point to the importance of contextual conditions in determining the socio-economic impact of agribusiness enterprises. In the case of the ALCOSA enterprise in Guatemala, there was a general absence of full-time female employment in the area which meant that ALCOSA offered an income-earning opportunity where it had not previously existed (Kusterer et al, 1981). This may also be the case in parts of rural Costa Rica, where women are only employed on a seasonal basis.

In general, the sexual division of labor in agribusiness enterprises depends very much on the specific crop, the nature of the activity and the particular country context. To the extent that the agribusiness enterprise introduces new crops which are not yet associated with a particular division of labor, women might have a better chance at starting out without biases against them.

The technical characteristics of crops (such as their perishability or need for processing) are important in determining whether an enterprise will set up a satellite farming project. The type of crop that is to be grown may also be a factor in whether the process is labor or capital intensive. Certain crops such as fruits and vegetables can be suitable for smallholder production since they are relatively labor intensive and they provide high incomes per hectare.

The preference for employing women in agricultural processing activities appears to reflect a combination of factors including women's traditional dominance in food processing due to their low wages and male labor shortages caused by outmigration, and from the image of women as harder working.

While there is some evidence to support the fact that as an activity becomes more commercialized it becomes the domain of men, there is also evidence to the contrary. In an evaluation of an asparagus canning

enterprise in Peru, for example, it was found that women were hired as farm laborers and as workers in the processing plant (they comprised 90 percent of the latter) while at the same time there was a high level of male un- or under-employment (Kusterer, 1981).

The small farmer satellite approach can have a significant impact on rural incomes. For women, however, employment in agribusiness can have varying income effects. On the one hand, wage earned by women in their own right (as workers in processing plants for example) can free women from economic dependence on husbands or brothers, give them greater control over the income and a greater say in decision-making. On the other hand, women may find themselves contributing labor to production with no direct remuneration and, at the same time, having to cut back on activities which resulted in independent sources of income.

Agribusiness, particularly of the satellite farming variety, could play an important role in Costa Rica's Northern Zone; the processing plants could serve as a source of employment in addition to serving as a catalyst for increasing production in the area. In this area there is said to be high un- and under-employment for women, and a high incidence of female-headed households. Women could, therefore, find employment in an agribusiness enterprise an attractive option. Attention would need to be paid to factors which impeded or encouraged their participation such as their increased workload, the availability of childcare facilities, and their membership in agricultural cooperatives.

3. Recommendations for USAID/Costa Rica

Agriculture continues to be the mainstay of the Costa Rican economy, generating 20 percent of GDP and two thirds of export earnings, and employing 30 percent of the labor force. While the sector offers opportunities for growth, agricultural development has suffered in recent years. The production of basic grains, for example, is characterized by low yields, a result in part of the failure to provide essential extension services. Furthermore, export crops have been discriminated against in government pricing and trade policies. USAID/CR can play an important role

overall in the context of its current and planned program. USAID can also undertake a number of activities to better identify and address women's role in agriculture.

- The role of women in agricultural production, paid and unpaid, needs to be assessed more reliably for policy purposes and better understood on a regional basis in order to design project interventions. A modified time-use and activity survey to assess women's participation in agricultural production, their task productivity and economic returns would be useful in connection with the Northern Zone project. On the basis of this survey, it might be appropriate to introduce specific measures to improve the productivity of women farmers.
- In connection with the Agrarian Settlement and Productivity project, a survey needs to measure women's access to extension, training and credit. Although the original Project Paper called for a women's training unit which would offer traditional and innovative non-formal education in such areas as health and nutrition, domestic and farm management and productive enterprises, no mention was made of progress in this area in the recent evaluation.
- More generally, pilot training and credit programs for rural women can be set up after assessments of women's agricultural activities in rural areas, and their demand for resources and services. This is one case where women-specific interventions are needed to prevent unfair competition with men and to upgrade women to a level where they can more equally share in project resources.
- In preparing more detailed assessments of specific agribusiness operations and in designing agribusiness projects, attention should be paid to the employment and income effects of alternative crop production/processing

possibilities and their link with project goals and purposes, as well to available producers/employers and their technical and credit needs. The data needs to be disaggregated by sex.

- Satellite or contract farming can provide opportunities for a large number of small-scale farmers to receive technical assistance and have a secure market for their produce. Processing plants, depending on the commodity in question, can also provide employment opportunities. Women can benefit from both aspects of the agribusiness operations. However, for them to benefit, they need to be organized, given access to land, credit and technical assistance. PVOs and IDA could be used to organize women and to function as intermediaries between processing facilities and women's groups.
- The land distribution pattern will need to be examined in a given area in order to ascertain the extent to which contract farming could lead to increased social stratification.

C. Training and Institutional Development

1. USAID/Costa Rica's Policy and Strategy

USAID/CR's priorities in the training and institutional development areas call for strengthening private sector initiatives as well as providing training to individuals. Institutional development of PVOs is channelled through CINDE; individual based training efforts are focused on the Central American Peace Scholarships (CAPS) program and to a lesser extent on the Training for Private Sector Development project. The education and training sector assessments recently prepared for the Mission provide information on training needs and constraints, and offer program options for USAID/CR and the organizations through which AID is working.

2. Issues Relevant to Women: Training and Institutional Development

a. Women's Access to Training for Employment

In the context of USAID/CR's program in the training sector, it is important to look at issues related to women's access to, and benefit from training from the perspective of individuals receiving and organizations providing training. From the individual perspective, since vocational/technical training is an important tool for improving employment opportunities, it is essential that women have access to a variety of training programs and that their training be relevant to future employment needs. Up until now, technical training for women has been sex-stereotyped and generally irrelevant to their economic needs.

As is pointed out in the education sector assessment, although female educational attainment is high and female enrollment is increasing rapidly in technical fields overall, the distribution by field tends to be uneven, with women self-selecting more socially acceptable professional vocations. Data from INA show that only 26.5 percent of the graduating trainees in 1984 were women. Almost half the women were from the San Jose region and the overwhelming majority received training in low productivity "female" occupations in the commerce and service sectors (Araya, 1985). According to statistics from the Ministry of Education, 98.5 percent of those enrolled in agricultural related training were men in 1984, and 99.9 percent of those enrolled in home economics related training were women. At issue is whether a more formalized effort needs to be made to bolster the representation of women where self-selection and/or sex stereotyping of occupations is operating.

Given USAID/CR's emphasis on the expansion of private sector employment opportunities, it will be critical to link private sector needs and the specification of skills required for key occupations. (A study of the maquila industry, for example, found that insufficient training at the entry-level was a major barrier to employee performance.) In general, a more detailed manpower analysis disaggregated by sex seems necessary in order to determine the number and type of qualified personnel to fill future job

requirements. This determination may be particularly important for women since employment opportunities in non-traditional sectors may be expanding at a much faster rate than in more traditional occupations. Changes in perceptions of which jobs are "appropriate" for them (by women themselves as well as by men) may be a corollary to changing their training preferences and opportunities.

One of the objectives of AID's CAPS program is "to respond to the training needs of Costa Rica's reorientation toward an export-led economy while improving the production and marketing capabilities of the agriculture and other natural resource sectors." Since the program has a target of 40 percent participation by women, this could be an excellent opportunity to encourage women in new and expanding fields identified in the manpower assessment. A plan to utilize the CAPS as a vehicle to train women should be attached to the manpower analysis. This plan needs to match needs with training opportunities in the U.S.

An issue that appears relevant in relation to USAID/CR's Training for Private Sector Development project is the number of women in the pool of eligible candidates. Although the project is aimed at strengthening the human resources needed for the expansion of the production and export of non-traditional goods, the primary beneficiaries are middle-level managers and executives. While sex-disaggregated data on project beneficiaries has not been collected in a systematic manner, available information suggests that the proportion of women is very low. Given the growing need for short-term practical courses related to export-related industries at various technical levels, broadening the target population might allow women greater representation among the potential beneficiaries as well as providing the needed skilled personnel.

b. Institutional development

From the organizational perspective, training and technical assistance provide the wherewithal for organizations to work more effectively with individuals. Costa Rica has a large number of private organizations (up

to 2,000 according to a recent count) addressing the employment and income-earning needs of the poor. Some of them, as we have seen, are women-based and attempt to address the economic needs of women; others should be similarly addressing women's economic plight through their mandates to work with the poor. Overall, the analysis of the agencies has shown that they are inadequate at present to improve women's economic roles. More effective economic programs for women will require the technical upgrading of women-based agencies, particularly in the private sector, and the willingness of private and public sector mainstream development institutions to integrate women's issues into their regular programs. Both women-based and integrated organizations in the productive sector could benefit from a variety of training programs in management, project design, implementation and evaluation, technical skills and non-formal management and coordination.

Despite the inadequacy of the institutional response to women's concerns in Costa Rica, there is nevertheless a bright side to the institutional picture. The growth of women-based agencies in the public and private sectors in the last ten years, while ineffective in terms of solving the economic problems of poor women, has developed leadership skills among women implementors and beneficiaries. Further, the productive orientation of the majority of projects indicates that the women-based organizations are on the right track in terms of objectives for women in the country. These facts, and the recent evaluation exercises that the agencies have undertaken show a measure of institutional growth and maturity. INA, IDA, and MIDEPLAN, in the public sector, have used the evaluation results to design new plans that attempt to tackle past inadequacies in the implementation of action projects for women. These signs of institutional progress and the upcoming elections open a window of opportunity for AID and other donors to support efforts that can result in more effective interventions for women in the economic sphere.

3. Recommendations to USAID/Costa Rica

USAID/Costa Rica has an opportunity to intervene in a number of areas to promote women's access to training and to provide more broader-based

support for institutional development. The latter could take the form of upgrading women-based organizations in the private sector through CINDE and/or INCAE, and supporting a policy-oriented institution which would produce, "translate," and disseminate relevant information on women.

a. Training

- USAID/Costa Rica should support a manpower assessment, including vocational training preferences, options and obstacles for women particularly in those sectors that are identified for expansion; a plan to utilize the CAPS to train women should be derived from this assessment;
- USAID/Costa Rica could support the role of INA in conducting diagnostic studies leading to better specification of skill requirements and in analyzing training projects in relation to skill requirements;
- The target group of Training for Private Sector Development project should be broadened to include various skill levels; this should respond to the needs of industry and should also allow a greater participation of women;

b. Institutional upgrading of women's based PVOs

- Technical assistance on project planning, management and supervision and, particularly, project implementation, is key to change the failure rate of productive oriented projects managed by women-based PVOs. Technical assistance can be structured through two mechanisms. First, since INCAE has branched into providing assistance to small and medium size enterprises and training PVOs in project management and implementation, INCAE could be hired to develop a training module for women-based PVOs. Tentatively, INCAE would do a project

oriented diagnosis with the participation of institutions and beneficiaries, and on the basis of the results, it would structure the course and materials needed to train women-based PVOs. INCAE expressed considerable interest in developing this program. (One of the secondary benefits of such an exercise would be to raise INCAE's own awareness of women's participation in economy.)

- Second, training on women's integration into economic development could be structured for CINDE and the staff of selected PVOs. This could fit in with the technical assistance that CINDE expects to receive from PACT. If it had the institutional capacity, CINDE could then take a leading role in guiding agencies in the design, implementation and monitoring of productive projects for women. CINDE could use a variety of mechanisms, such as competitive awards for project designs and the development of criteria to fund projects, to foster effective economic action for women.

- Training could include management training for middle-level personnel in such areas as administration, financial planning, and management of cooperatives and credit associations; training in the design, monitoring and evaluation of projects to help organizations identify, plan and carry through new project activities more effectively; technical skills training to help organizations implement productive projects for women which include employment and income-generation goals; and training to reorient organizations with a social welfare approach to women, to a more developmental approach which takes into account women's economic needs and roles.

c. The establishment of a policy-oriented research institute on women

- The University of Costa Rica, COF, IDA, and MIDEPLAN and the Women's Office have done research on women in Costa Rica. Most of the studies have investigated women's attitudes, roles and values (Jimenez, 1985). Studies that have looked at women's economic participation have used descriptive statistics and absolute rather than comparative measures. The results, therefore, have had limited value to explain events and to decide on program priorities. Key indicators about women's participation are used in the different studies and updated regularly but they do not offer much for planning purposes. The national household survey that is applied three times a year is a rich source of information on the economic participation of urban women but the data is underutilized.
- The right questions need to be asked from the national household survey data as well as the new population census to establish priorities for urban development policy that will integrate women.⁴ These include questions about the poverty and dependency burden of women headed households in urban areas; the composition of such households; the fertility rates of low income urban women when compared to total fertility rates of urban women; and rural-urban migration patterns by sex and age. Primary research needs to be undertaken in rural areas to establish the nature and extent of

⁴ It is worth noting that there are sometimes significant discrepancies in the existing data presented in different reports. It is quite likely that different factors used to generalize from the national household sample surveys to the country population help explain these discrepancies. The analysis of the 1984 population census should clear the inconsistencies in the data but will still underestimate women's participation in the rural economy.

women's participation in rural markets and agricultural production.

- Primary research as well as analysis of census and survey data need to be framed in terms of policy questions and policy alternatives; it is generally difficult to house or generate policy-oriented research at either universities, that tend to undertake more basic research, or implementing agencies, that are directed by the need to act. It seems that only a new agency that is autonomous from both the university and action communities can bridge the gap between research and action, between women's interests and government priorities, and phrase research questions in a language that would be useful for policy making.
- Costa Rica has qualified professionals who could staff a high level policy-based research institute on women. The institute could either be restricted to Costa Rica or take a regional lead; it could develop research, public education and/or technical assistance functions. The institute should, however, have a strong development orientation to meet the needs of low income women in Costa Rica.
- ICRW could provide technical assistance to CINDE to work with women's issues, to set up the training program for PVOs with INCAE, and to develop alternative plans for an institute on policy oriented research on women.

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