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PHASE TWO REPORT

CONSULTATION ON PROGRAM CONCERNS

For the Office of Women in Development
Agency for International Development

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The purpose of this report is to record the reactions of AID/W personnel outside the Africa region on the recommendations made at the Workshop on Women in Development Program Concerns in Francophone Sahel in Bobo-Dioulasso, Upper Volta, on July 5-7, 1979.

In addition, two other areas were covered in interviews with them, their perception of the state of WID concerns in their bureau/office and of the role and function of the Office of Women in Development. The following is a composite response.

THE BOBO RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations, it was noted, go against the current trend of AID to do more with less. They are personnel-intensive, calling for more staff work and more data collection and smaller amounts of funding for women's groups. However, WID may be an acceptable exception to the general rule to streamline operations as long as the issue is faced, and a case is made for the importance of WID and the feasibility of this approach.

Participation, it was agreed, is important. The recommendations might have gone further, to say how participation can be

achieved. In spite of our earnest desire to get greater participation, it just hasn't happened; we haven't found good ways to facilitate it. We must also be on guard about how we view participation, as it is often parochial. We also may be needlessly threatening to governments; often we can state it in terms of getting a response from the people so that we know if a project suits them. We need to find other ways to participation of rural women, especially when populations are dispersed, perhaps involving them as paraprofessionals (see Concept Paper, Paraprofessionals in Rural Development, Cornell University, March, 1979).

Project process recommendations sound good, especially those on the design and evaluation phases. We need to know how to have an impact on the project process. Do we need special WID officers or should we be looking to integrate women into the mainstream of development? Is it not running against the Percy Amendment mandate to integrate women to view WID as a separate class of projects?

Recommendations to work in closer collaboration with Peace Corps and PVOs were agreed to in principle, with the notation that this limits WID to smaller projects. Some bureaus spoke of good collaboration with Peace Corps, even the funding of projects (Asia), while others noted the outstanding work that PVOs were doing in WID (Latin America, Near East). Peace Corps has been standing ready to collaborate with AID, and expressed interest in pursuing this recommendation. One possible area of collaboration might be on Peace Corps experience with income-generating projects for women, perhaps in preparation for Copenhagen. (Note: see Peace Corps Source Book, Women in Development.)

Various points of view were expressed about the capability of

host country women's organizations to participate in development projects. The political role of many such organizations was noted as a constraint on one hand, and possibly as the only effective means of reaching women, especially in rural areas, on the other. It was also noted that women's organizations tend to have a history of operating as welfare rather than development agencies; the possibility of their changing their attitudes was questioned. The consideration of women's organizations as possible vehicles of development is recent, and it should be remembered that one of the reasons we have changed our thinking is that we find it is one of the few ways of communicating with women in many developing countries. No one interviewed is aware of AID's seeking the advice and involvement of these organizations in projects, except where they may be directly involved in a project.

Strong approval was expressed for the integration of women into development projects while noting that it may be valid to design projects or project components principally for women when "without particular emphasis on their needs, women in all likelihood (would) be excluded as beneficiaries/participants."

Credit projects for women have been undertaken in other regions, although no particular programs were mentioned. The Bobo recommendations did not take into account host country responsibility in project design, especially the identification of in-country resources. It was noted that AID is to assure that the design provides for the generation of revenue sufficient to sustain the project, but that this is not always done well. The viability of small industry is as important as the technology used; projects must be cost/effective. In agro-industry this often means limited transformation, such as

reducing bulk to lower transportation costs.

Training, especially field-based training in project design and management was seen to be important. It would have to be the field's initiative however, with Washington assisting with resources as needed. Also mentioned was the possibility of briefing teams of experts going out to do design or evaluation work. This would have to be done by persons who are familiar with the field situation and with the technical aspects of the project to be useful.

WID OVERVIEW

What is the state of women in development throughout the agency? All respondents felt that more could be done, but that some modest progress had occurred. The recently developed staff paper on PPC/WID Impact (11/21/79) was noted by one respondent, in making the point that only a very small portion of funds are going to WID projects or components (.3% of the Asia Bureau, 4.3% of the Africa Bureau, 5% of the Near East Bureau, and 5.5% of the Latin America Bureau, for an overall 3% for FY '79.) Some of the respondents felt the "percentage approach" of the Tracking System was not only useless, but misleading, in gauging the effect of project monies on "integrating women..., improving their status..., and assisting the total development effort." Some thought that the WID Special Concern Codes Definition tended to exclude projects which integrate women into and give undue emphasis to "women only" approaches, which are recognized by the Office of Women in Development as of short-term, limited means toward full participation.

A number of people called for heavy attention to the role of women at the early stages of project investigation and design, especially

in the Country Development Strategy Statements. There is an increasing number of anthropologists on regional and headquarters staffs, and an improved representation of social scientists on AID design teams. Social scientists are expected to insure that women are integrated into project activities, especially through attention to Social Soundness Analysis portions of project design. A study commissioned by the Office of Evaluation found that "social analyses are often too unfocused and descriptive to be useful for planning and implementing development. The analyses are frequently undertaken too late in the design of a project to be used, and serve more as a justification for decisions already made than a tool for making these decisions. ("Social Analysis and Project Design in AID" by Heli Perrett, July 7, 1978, quoted in An Investigation Into Evaluations of Projects Designed to Benefit Women, by Elliott and Sorsby, pp. 11-27. There was some mention of the need to do more in evaluation[1], and one Bureau has decided to use the person with WID responsibility primarily on design and evaluation teams. All of these efforts are recognized as beginnings, with much more remaining to be done.

ROLE OF THE WID OFFICE

A recurrent reaction from respondents centered on the Office's policy of interacting with a number of constituencies, outside the agency as well as within. Everyone has expectations that AID is WID's primary constituency; numerous comments were made to the effect that "the WID office is still not part of AID", that "few people in WID know

[1]See PPC/WID Impact, 11/21/79 paper, Memo on 11/7/79, "Socio-economic Evaluations of the Asia Bureau" from Gerry Hickey to Thomas Arndt, and An Investigation Into Evaluations of Projects Designed to Benefit Women, Elliott and Sorsby, May 11, 1979.

AID", that "WID is not making a mark on the Bureau (PPC)". They do not seem to be aware of the intentions of the WID office to work with women's organizations both in developing and in developed countries, as well as with other donor organizations. (See ABS FY '80.) Perceptions of what WID should do include:

-- Should concentrate on the program and budget strategy of large projects and not spend time on small projects;

-- Should get the system to work and work within the system;

-- Should have set aside funds for WID projects that the rest of the agency can tap;

-- Should not have project funds;

-- Should be less confrontational; use of the term "women in development" should be changed; effect of raising hackles rather than consciousness; (female respondent)

-- Should not be so amenable; should get mad and pound the table; (male respondent)

-- Should communicate better with regional bureaus; should work more closely with them;

-- Should help missions with CDSS attention to women;

-- Should not be so far removed from the field;

-- Should not do regional bureaus' work in WID;

-- Should help regional bureaus to find resources, both personnel and funds, to apply to planning and implementing projects that address women's roles and needs;

-- Should set up an agency coordinating committee for women's concerns in development;

-- Should see that projects are evaluated at regular intervals, including impact on women;

-- Should be better informed and better prepared when attending project review meetings;

-- Should help to provide technical assistance, but in practice rather than theory;

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-- Should help missions and regional bureaus identify and review research;

-- Should work toward the employment of more women in AID;

-- Should continue to supply materials, and more in languages other than English;

-- Should reinstate the "brown bag meetings" held on WID topics for agency staff;

-- Should facilitate staff dialogues with Third World women.