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THE CONTINUUM IN THE
SOCIAL DIVISION OF LABOUR BASED ON SEX
AND THE MATERIAL REPRDUCTION OF LABOUR
IN EGYPT

Trip Report

Review of USAID WID Strategy and

Portfolio of Projects:

Findings, Considerations and Recommendations

AID
NE/TECH/SA,
Mona Hammam

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Women in Development
Agency for International Development
Room 2043, New State
Washington, D.C. 20523
(202) 472-5992

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PREFACE

The scope of work for my TDY in Egypt included the following responsibilities:

1. A review of the Egypt portfolio of projects from a "women in development" perspective.
2. Liaising with Dr. Hannah Papanek and assisting in the conceptualization of female labour force participation in the industrial sector (actual and potential) -- a component of a larger study on the industrial sector presently being undertaken by Boston University.
3. Liaising with the Michigan State University team, researching off-farm employment and rural small scale industries in Fayyum and Qalyubiya, with a view to generating data on the range of economic activities in which women are engaged and which span the continuum of unvalorized and remunerated work in domestic and market spheres. These data (which consistently have been unreported in official statistics) would provide the informational base for sound programming interventions to enhance employment and income-earning opportunities for women in rural small scale enterprises, building on the economic activities in which they already are presently engaged.
4. Recommending feasible programming efforts that would strengthen and increase women's involvement in AID-supported projects.

The major focus of my TDY was on identifying programming opportunities that draw women into productive employment, strengthen their access to sources of income as well as to basic goods and services where such access is circumscribed by insufficient purchasing power, inadequate levels of skills and training, household responsibilities, lack of information on legal rights and procedures, etc. Informing this focus is the recognition that women not only assume economic responsibility for the house-

hold's consumption needs through income-savings activities (such as raising poultry on Cairene rooftops, for instance), but are increasingly assuming financial responsibility as well, be it through informal sector occupations or regular wage employment, to meet the family's heightened dependence on market goods for basic subsistence. The primary consideration, given the existing need to raise household disposable income and savings potential as reflected, in part, by the increased levels of female participation in the labour force and in informal sector occupations, is to ascertain where the aggregate demand for female labour exists and can be expanded within an overall employment strategy for Egypt.

' The mandate for my TDY, as outlined above, was undertaken with the guidance of Ms. Keys MacManus and John Blackton, as well as through liaison with Elizabeth Martella.

Some Reflections on the Content of USAID

WID Programming in Egypt

The Mission's approach to WID, as enunciated in its response to the Bennet cable on WID activities, is to incorporate women in specific, broad-based projects rather than developing a separate portfolio of discreet women's projects. Strategy considerations, based on earlier reviews of women's roles within the overall context of Egyptian development, led to the conclusion that "AID involvement in WID activities should be limited to the economic sphere." Program-wise, WID activities are largely concentrated in the areas of population and health, education and human resources, as well as in agriculture and rural development.

Is there a "fit" between strategy and programming as articulated above?

Of the 12 projects identified by the Mission as having significant WID components, only 5 actually fall in the economic sphere. These are:

- (1) Rural Employment Generation
- (2) Poultry Improvement II
- (3) Major Cereals (the add-on forage component)
- (4) Industrial and Vocational Training (which includes pre-employment and apprenticeship/on the job training).
- (5) Family Planning II (where increased employment opportunities will be generated in the services sector with the expansion of the rural "raidat" program);

However, an overall review of the Egypt portfolio reveals other program activities not enumerated by the Mission in its response to the Bennet cable. The following additional projects are being identified on the basis of the same criteria identified by the Mission, i.e., that they

include a significant WID component and fall in the economic sphere. These are:

- (6) Aquaculture Development -- Stage II of the project, as stated in the Project Paper, has as an objective the distribution of 1,500 feddans (or 30% of the available land mass) to women's cooperatives. These cooperatives will manage 30 units of a mix of poultry and fish production farms. For these operations, the cooperatives will receive loans, funded through a revolving credit fund, to cover the cost of construction, capital equipment and two years of operating expenses. This stated objective was qualified, in the Project Paper, as being a "desired" one, but there was no elaboration as to whether the project intends to organise women's cooperatives, train women in marketing and management, facilitate their access to credit, etc. The question that must be posed is: what are the constraints and/or the ways to make this "desired" objective a realisable one?
- (7) Industrial Free Zones -- the preliminary draft of manufacturing industries proposed include a number that have a high demand potential for female labour. These are spinning and weaving, blankets, velvet, tea-packing, syringes, chemicals, food (coca-cola), vacuum cleaner assembly, cosmetics, ready-made garments, coffee packing, knit-wear, catering, etc. Primary beneficiaries are identified as "women, the low-skilled and unemployed." While it is stated that "a large proportion of those employed will be women," storage firms proliferate in the free zones and these do not contribute to increasing the aggregate demand for labour. Similarly, two of the proposed manufacturing industries are highly capital-intensive. Arguments for those manufacturing industries identified above, rest on their contribution to increasing the aggregate demand for female labour and, in part, to producing intermediate goods that will be consumed by a broad-based home market. While women will not actually be competing with men for scarce jobs in the above-mentioned manufacturing industries, this must be complemented by the expansion of productive employment opportunities that raise the demand for labour on the aggregate.

- (8) Small Farmer Production: this project aims to upgrade small farmer lending operations of the Principal Bank for Development and Agricultural Credit (PBDAC). Loans will finance agricultural activities, including poultry and livestock, orchards and farm machinery. A notable, if not singular, feature of this project resides in its stated concern to involve landless labourers by making loans available to operate off-farm enterprises (customer services, agribusinesses) and, eventually, to increase employment opportunities. The PP makes no grandiose claims about how the project will impact on women as beneficiaries. Rather, it presents a modest appraisal, recognises the need for base line data on women's economic activities, and aims to include the collection of these data as part of its ongoing efforts in the life of the project: "on-going social analysis under the project will examine the role of women in farm management and help to identify medium-term loan opportunities that would increase the income of women, including such ventures as poultry and livestock, collection and marketing of produce, and improvements in home storage facilities." It points out that 8.5% of the total PBDAC staff are women where, in the village banks, "they tend to occupy the lowest status positions, participating in clerical areas (and) have a large share of the onerous calculations involved in keeping several thousand accounts entirely by hand...Many of these women have the academic preparation needed to handle more responsibility." The project aims to mechanize calculations and upgrade their positions. The PP also points out that 41% of the farmers surveyed consulted their wives in major decisions, and that the problem of the inability of male extension workers to reach women falls outside the scope of this project.

Assuming that data on women's economic activities is consistently being generated through this project, to what extent has the project used this data to design off-farm enterprises in which women can be actively drawn, to build on the economic activities in which women are presently engaged, to facilitate access to credit, etc.?

- (9) Small Scale Agricultural Activities: this project aims to introduce

appropriate technology to the small farmer, begin the process of developing institutional capability in AT, and eventually increase rural employment opportunities through expanding small agribusinesses and service workshops. While the PP states that "project staff will be sensitized to women's roles, and technological planning and implementation will consciously and specifically take account of how the item might affect women, i.e., reduce or expand labor requirements, decision-making role..." it also states, rather confusedly, that "the effect of the project on women will be determined by the items of appropriate technology adapted and extended." One wonders, should not the inverse hold sway, i.e., that the AT needs of women (labour-saving) will determine the types of items to be adapted and extended? With such a wayward approach, one is hard-pressed in believing, except as an article of faith, that subsequent intended outcomes of this project (such as releasing women from unvalored or arduous and time-consuming tasks so that they can engage in remunerated work) will ever materialise.

- (10) Cooperative Marketing -- this project is aimed at the small peasant fruit and vegetable producers owning less than 5 feddans. Produce will be marketed through the United Cooperative Society (UCS) for members and non-members alike, and the amount of credit to be made available for loans will be increased by 50%. Increased employment opportunities both on the farm and in marketing are anticipated outcomes of this project. The PP identifies women as representing 11% of the total full-time UCS staff and includes them as beneficiaries of expanded employment opportunities: "women do a better job in the delicate task of sorting and grading fresh produce..." The PP also points out that 75% of seasonal workers employed in harvesting, processing and transporting of fruits and vegetables are women, and that increased employment opportunities will accrue to women in new production and shipment centres, in fruit and vegetable plants, and in the up-graded intercommunications system. It is stated that "women owners and operators of fruit and vegetable farms in the project will obtain benefits equally with others," and that "the UCS will be encouraged to continue to expand upon hiring women and to allow women

to become bonafide coop members." No mention is made of the mechanisms involved for recruiting women nor ensuring that equal benefits will accrue to female operators/owners of fruit and vegetable farms.

- (11) Low-income Housing and Community Upgrading -- this is one of the few projects in the Egypt portfolio that offers, potentially, employment and income opportunities for the urban poor in Cairo and Helwan: day care, street cleaning, poultry-raising (a common feature of Cairene rooftops and stairwells), construction (Egyptian women were engaged in construction as early as 1816 and, not unlike today, because of male labour shortages), as well as community development. Women should be actively recruited among the pool of beneficiaries who will be trained in building trades (plumbing, drafting, wiring, etc.) when the proposed building trades technical centre is established.

A relevant note: Osman Ahmed Osman's Arab Contractors already has facilities in place and on-going training of women in construction trades. Most of the trainees utilize these skills for income-savings purposes rather than income earning.

Also, Al Azhar University's WID centre of the College for Women has entered into discussions with USAID about establishing a pilot project for women of the El-Waily district (an exceedingly poor neighbourhood in Cairo) in construction trades (more information on this pilot project is contained in the section on new WID programming opportunities).

Moreover, the Vocational and Industrial Training project could, perhaps include training in construction trades. The skill areas originally proposed in the PID consisted of textiles, chemical products, leather works, electronics, electricity, garment making, instrument repair, and drafting. Noteworthy, is the NEAC's recommendation, after approving the PID, that the forthcoming Project Paper "contain a well-defined section devoted to feasible alternatives for encouraging women in the labor force, the means to determine employment demand and opportunities..." Also noteworthy, within the PID, is the

suggestion that scheduling of women's training be made flexible to accommodate women with families, and that enrollment requirements (preparatory school certificates) be lowered so that more women can enrol. It is also important to determine the extent to which women currently receive any vocational training in industrial skills, be it on-the-job training or apprenticeship, what are the constraints, how can the constraints be overcome, etc.

- (12) Urban Neighbourhood Services: although this project is not yet fully defined, it does intend to incorporate income-generating activities for the urban poor: street cleaning, production coops, functional literacy combined with vocational training for community upgrading, etc. Moreover, community participation in decision-making processes on prioritizing the types of services needed in the neighbourhood must, necessarily, encourage women's involvement.
- (13) Basic Village Services: the single and rather perfunctory reference to women, in the Project Paper, alludes to Venus rising from the half-shell ... a refreshing intellectual-cum-artistic note, but hardly enlightening nor edifying. Yet, within this project, there are possibilities for employment generation within extended services.
- (14) Development Decentralization: To what extent has the extension of credit lines for profit-making ventures on the village level created increased job opportunities for women, to what extent have women applied for loans, why/why not? To what extent are women involved in construction (canals, roads, etc.) or in servicing construction (preparation of food, hauling water, etc.)?
- (15) Provincial Cities: to what extent will women be involved in rehabilitation of the Middle Egyptian cities, what mechanisms are being considered for involving women in income-earning opportunities?
- (16) Mahalla El Kubra Textile Plant: To what extent have women workers been displaced by upgrading plant equipment, to what extent have women workers benefitted?

Summary Reflections and Recommendations:

Most of the broad-based projects noted above (selected on the basis of their inclusion of significant WID components and their placement in the "economic sphere") share the following shortcomings:

1. Sections in PIDs and PPs devoted to addressing WID issues generally suffer the same fate as Social Analysis, of which they form a part.

(a) Both appear as afterthoughts rather than form the basis upon which program interventions are to be decided.

(b) Base-line data, such as amount of household disposable income, income streams (by occupation, economic activity, household member, and disaggregated by age, sex, marital status), as well as the wide range of economic activities that span the continuum of unvalorized (domestic production) and remunerated work (regular wage employment, itinerant and temporary wage work, informal exchanges, etc) which characterize female economic roles within the overall division of labour, are totally absent. Such data are not only important for designing appropriate program interventions, but as importantly allow for formative evaluations and redesign during implementation.

The Rural Employment Generation project, whose background paper had identified textile and food manufacturing small scale industries among those SSI's with the greatest potential for growth (without once mentioning the role of women in rural industries), will address these concerns. But so too could Small Farmer Production, Small Scale Agricultural Activities, Aquaculture Development, and Coopera-

tive Marketing. Also absent are:

(c) The means for determining the market demand for female labour as well as products of labour (both in terms of what types of commodities are being produced, their quality, etc. and what sectors of the population will consume/purchase them). It is important to note that women largely proliferate in the production of means of subsistence, be it at the level of the household, informal sector or in wage employment, both in agriculture and industry. In other words, women produce those basic commodities which will be consumed by the broadest spectrum of the population, the poor, the working class, the fellahin. This recognition must inform project identification and design, as well as be integrally incorporated in the formulation of an overall employment strategy. This recognition argues for not only the expansion of those manufacturing industries in which women are already actively involved, but equally for the provisioning of the poor.

2. The CDSS Annex on Labor Force and Employment of 1982 (as well as the 1983 CDSS Annex on Manpower and Employment) recognises that the Egyptian population is increasingly becoming more urban than rural, and that "job creation strategies must acknowledge this reality." Yet, with the exception of the immanent Low-income Housing and Urban Neighbourhood Services projects, no employment or income-generation projects currently exist in the portfolio to address the socio-economic needs of the urban poor -- an estimated 1.5 million who proliferate in informal sector occupations to eke out a living. There is, however, a seminal and exciting pre-project research acti-

vity that the Development GAP is currently undertaking on micro-level enterprises in the urban informal sector. The importance of this research activity, from the standpoint of this review, is that it is the only study of the informal sector that has as one of its central objectives the generation of much needed information on the activity rates of women in this sector, the range and types of occupations and activities, as well as their structure and organisation, the ease of entry and withdrawal as well as the conditions (institutional and structural) for both, etc... This, with a view to identifying appropriate project opportunities that would build on these activities, perhaps rationalise them where suitable, determine mechanisms which could facilitate a more regular access to income such as, for instance, establishing a placement centre for itinerant, part-time or temporary work, etc... Moreover, the development of a methodology for researching the informal sector with a particular emphasis on an analysis of women's role in this sector will, in and of itself, be a significant contribution -- one which the ILO Comprehensive Employment Strategy study failed to make.

Another research activity that reflects USAID's keen interest in addressing WID issues and improving WID project design as well as overall programme strategy, is the study of the industrial sector currently being undertaken by Boston University. An integral component of this study is devoted to women in the industrial labour force, current participation levels, trends, prospects for increas-

ing the aggregate demand for female labour and the diversification of skills categories, government policies and employers' hiring practices, etc. This particular research activity, while still in its preliminary stages of investigation, finds a logical complementarity with the Vocational and Industrial Training project as the latter intends to explore some of the same issues on the supply side of the employment equation.

3. Mission's concern that "large-scale, external attempts to introduce change in the status of (Egyptian) women (is) neither wise nor in the interest of ... the USG or GOE" is a legitimate concern. However, there is ample room for maximizing opportunities that do exist, particularly in the areas of employment and income generation. Egyptian women have a long history of factory employment which dates back to the early 19th century; they are protected by labour legislation which, in public sector firms, require the provision of social services such as nurseries (when more than 100 women are employed in an enterprise), leaves and other idemnities; clinics, transportation, housing, etc. which are funded through the "profit-sharing" system promulgated in 1962; ~~they~~ receive equal wages with men in the same grade level; employers are required to eradicate illiteracy within the workplace, and so on. The enforcement of these laws is not uniformly upheld and, in many instances, is contravened through a variety of loopholes. Similarly, women workers are not always aware of their rights nor are they knowledgeable about legal procedures and recourse. AID might be interested, when providing capital assistance to particular industrial enterprises, for in-

stance, to ascertain the extent to which these enterprises comply with the provision of social services to women as stipulated in the labour codes. AID might also be interested in providing technical assistance in literacy classes at the workplace (also stipulated in the labour code) and attempt to combine functional literacy with information on women's legal rights (personal and family status laws as well as labour laws, etc.). The Vocational and Industrial Training project is another excellent avenue for improving the status of women within the workplace as well as for enhancing their access to skilled employment opportunities in the industrial sector.

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR "WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT" IN EGYPT:

THE SOCIAL DIVISION AND REPRODUCTION OF LABOUR

(qua the "economic sphere" of USAID WID strategy)

As noted earlier, USAID has incisively determined that the "economic sphere" is where WID development assistance should be concentrated. What is required, then, is a formulation of women's roles in this economic sphere such that the articulated Mission strategy can inform programmatic and policy decisions whose aim is to maximize the incorporation of women in the development process in response to real needs.

In this section, we are positing the social division of labour and its reproduction as a generic basis for conceptualizing the roles women assume in the economic sphere. Moreover, we are positing that this economic sphere is itself not confined to the formal wage sector alone but, rather, integrally includes domestic production and informal sector occupations which together form a continuum, i.e., a single unitary process of economic activities that women perform.

In Egypt, as in other Arab countries, the extent to which women are drawn into the wage labour market cannot be considered a function of cultural variables attributed, as is often done, to the seemingly inviolable laws and traditions of Islam. Rather, it reflects the varied interplay of social and economic forces at the base of which lies the sexual division of labour within the household. The protracted development process gradually destroys the hegemony of subsistence and household production and eventually supersedes them. It is this supersession which constitutes the dynamic of the development process -- a process, in other

words, that involves and is characterized by the subsumptive transformation of "traditional" forms of production in which women are actively engaged for subsistence and simple commodity exchange. Because this subsumptive transformation is protracted and uneven, "traditional" forms of subsistence and household production, as well as casual labour and exchange, continue to persist, coexisting and articulated with the "modern" wage sector of production, as well as modified by it.

One of the consequences of the creation of a wage labour market is that it erodes the traditional division of labour within the household which, in subsistence economies, allocates work to almost all family members. As the household is compelled to release one of its members to the wage sector, this requires the reorganisation of family production relations, both in terms of task reallocations and labour time expended on each task. Yet, while there is a reorganisation of labour at the level of the household to compensate for the "loss" of one of its members, the family does not actually cease to be a productive unit. Women and children continue to be economically active but outside the monetized sectors of the economy, mainly towards the family's subsistence -- i.e., the sphere of their economic activity becomes privatized and separated from the general (public) circuit of social reproduction.

The persistence of household economic activities performed by women and children effectively means that the wage alone does not secure for the family the material conditions for its existence and repro-

duction. The same holds true when the preponderance of informal sector occupations (through which the poor eke out a living or supplement meagre earnings) are taken into account.

These economic activities can alternatively constrain or compel women's integration in the wage labour market. At the level of the household, women actively engage in the production of use values (simple commodities outside the sphere of market circulation) for the family's direct consumption and, occasionally, for exchange (mainly in the informal sector or local village market). In the urban informal sector, women preponderate in personal, individualised services as launderers, domestic servants, seamstresses, mid-wives, soothsayers, etc., and as petty producers and traders. In both these economic spheres, women appear on the economic scene in the classical category of the "labour reserve" to be absorbed in the paid sector (whether in kind or in cash) usually in cases of male labour shortages, or in those manufacturing industries where women are considered uniquely suited, or in service occupations that generally are extensions of women's prescribed social roles. Any cursory review of Egyptian women's labour force participation rates since the early 19th century would demonstrate this classical pattern of female absorption.

Women's availability as a potential and flexible supply of labour tends to reduce wages. This, in turn, functionally reinforces the perpetuation of informal sector and household-based production and services to meet basic needs that the wage alone cannot secure. Moreover, it is precisely women's direct involvement in the production and provi-

sion of basic goods as well as in services at a lower price than would obtain in the wage-goods sector which helps maintain a low-cost of living for the poor. Yet, the expansion of the wage-goods sector, as part of the development process, increases the household's dependence on an assured and regular inflow of cash income, since families will gradually consume a greater proportion of market goods for meeting basic needs than they will produce themselves. In the absence of regular wage employment opportunities, this heightened dependence is met through informal sector occupations. Moreover, the informal market becomes the source of most of the wage-goods that are consumed by the poor. In short, the informal sector can partially be conceptualised as the nexus for alternative or secondary sources of cash income (i.e., as the sole source of cash income or as a supplement to meagre earnings), on the one hand, and as the market where cheap goods and services are sought by the poor. In similar fashion, household economic activities that women engage in become the means by which the family can save a portion of disposable income or, more likely, a means by which families can "make do" with an income that is insufficient to cover all the costs of subsistence (i.e., of the material reproduction of labour).

In Egypt, it is a common pattern among intact working class families to find that the husband, in addition to steady wage employment, takes on a secondary occupation in the informal sector, while his wife raises chickens (on rooftops or in stairwells) both for the family's direct consumption and, alternatively, for occasional exchange. In

addition, she might also take on casual labour as a washer-woman, for instance, or work on an itinerant basis as a seamstress, mid-wife, soothsayer, etc. In such a situation, the bulk of disposable family income is derived from the urban informal sector. In this regard, it is significant to note that an estimated one-fifth of the urban population of Egypt, or roughly 900,000 households, live below the poverty level (Radwan: 1979). It is safe to assume, then, that informal sector occupations frequently provide the only source of household income.

For women, these informal sector occupations are relatively "convenient" in that they allow a flexible work schedule that accommodates the entire range on the continuum of socio-economic activities that span remunerated and unvalorized work -- i.e., the activities necessary to ensure the material, social, biological and ideological reproduction of labour. The obvious limitation on this flexibility is that it can either constrain women from entering the regular wage employment market, on the one hand, or it structurally conditions their entry to the lowest levels of skills and pay.

Household labour requirements, for instance, often prevent girls from completing the compulsory primary school cycle, or from attending school altogether. In 1976, illiterate women comprised 36% of the female labour force, 32% of paid female employees, and 58% of female unemployment (Chaudri: 1981). Similarly, Harik has noted that at age 20, rural women are withdrawn from wage work to engage in domestic production and services as unpaid family workers (1979). In other words,

household size and an age-specific sexual division of labour can also restrict the availability of women for outside employment as well as induce changes in the allocation of tasks within the household. In the case of formal wage employment, site visits to two food-processing firms in Alexandria, where women are heavily concentrated, corroborates the contention that the insertion of women in the division of labour within the factory relegates them to specific activities deemed uniquely suited to that sex, "accommodates" (sic) their multi-faceted socio-economic roles, and these contribute to placing them at the lowest levels of skills and pay. The majority of women at the two factories visited (one, a private sector firm and the other, a public sector firm) were engaged in the arduous process of peeling onions in preparation for the mechanized phases of the production process. Women were paid on a piece-rate basis (15 piastres per bushel in the private sector firm and 12 piastres per bushel in the public sector firm -- it is interesting to note that the difference in the wage rates are totally meaningless because the weight required per bushel is 70 kilograms in the private sector firm and 60 kilograms in the public sector firm). These women are hired on a seasonal basis, have no job security, nor are they entitled to most of the rights and services stipulated in the labour code which, for the most part, benefit permanent wage labourers. Because payment is on a piece-rate basis, many of the women bring their children to work alongside them or, if they are too young, to tend them. Many of the women work for as long as 13 hours per day.

It is instructive to note that the predominant mechanism for supplying female labourers to meet an existing demand largely takes place through informal channels of communication. Rarely does a job placement centre, for example, play the principal role in filling vacancies. This is particularly true for unskilled and semi-skilled female workers. The prevailing pattern is that an informally designated "contractor" (moqāwel) or middle-man known to the community and to the employer takes on the task of recruitment. The women recruited attach themselves to him as their sponsor not only until they are placed in the job but also throughout their tenure on the job. Any grievances on the job are referred to him and he negotiates with the employer on their behalf. The moqāwel is paid for his services both by the employer and by the workers, though in the latter case the payment may be in kind, i.e., returning a favour, informal exchanges, etc.

Thus far, we have attempted to connect conceptually what is in fact connected in reality, i.e., to recognise the structurally conditioned and mutually reinforced functional relationships that exist between household subsistence production and income-earning activities in the informal sector, on the one hand, and wage employment in the formal sector, on the other, whose confluence is located within the total social division of labour at the base of which lies the sex division of labour. These three interfaced spheres of economic activities in which women are engaged are articulated (or disarticulated) in the protracted process of development (which is conceived here as the subsumptive transformation

of "traditional" forms of production and exchange). The various phases of this subsumptive transformation include the separation and privatization of the sphere of reproducing labour from the general (public) circuit of social reproduction. The utility of such a framework resides in its revealing the obscured, often invisible, certainly underrepresented and generally unacknowledged contribution women make to the entire circuit of production and, hence, to gross national product, through their privatized activities in the material reproduction of labour (i.e., ensuring that the family is adequately nourished, clothed, sheltered, etc.) which involves petty commodity production and trade as well as services, and through their direct involvement in the wage labour market. Their employment in the formal wage sector itself does not entirely release women from continuing to assume the responsibilities of reproducing labour in the domestic sphere (the "double burden").

The structural constraints to women's absorption into the formal wage sector, noted above, are further buttressed by institutional ones. For instance, access to credit for the economically active in the informal sector, men and women, is severely limited due to eligibility requirements and to the dilatory nature of the time it takes to process loan applications. Hence, recourse to informal credit markets, which are generally at a higher rate of interest than commercial sources but are faster to obtain, inflates the cost of production in small-scale and family enterprises (rural and urban), while the outputs of goods and services are cheaper than in the formal sector. A survey of squatter settlements and informal financing for

housing construction in Cairo and its vicinities reveals that the rate of interest, in the informal credit market, ranged from 10-20% at a time when commercial interest rates were set at 6% in 1977 (S. Hammam: 1979).

When one considers that roughly one-half of Egypt's rural population, or approximately 1.5 million families, is landless (Richards: 1980 -- figures are for 1972), and approximately one-quarter of these live below the poverty level (Harik:1979; Radwan:1978), ineligibility for loans is obvious. But access, or lack of access, to credit is more a function of class than sexually discriminatory practices in Egypt as in the rest of the Arab World. Women, in accordance with Islamic law, are granted full autonomy in owning and disposing of property. Moreover, they are not even obligated to contribute any portion of their wealth to the physical maintenance of the family. However, these rights are severely circumscribed by the tradition of preserving property intact within the agnatic kin group as well as by the objective necessity of pooling the resources of the family to meet subsistence requirements. Hence, a property owner would have access to credit (class privilege), but she would not be able to exercise full control over her share of the family's property (sex inequalities).

Among those who do not own property, or own very little (and these comprise the vast majority), access to small sums of ready cash is often accomplished through the formation of informal rotating credit cooperatives or "gam'eyyas." These "gam'eyyas" consist of a group of women who pool their resources together in order to extend credit to one of their members. They continue to put in the same amount of money every month

thus extending credit to another member, then a third, and so on, until the loans to all members have been paid off and the "gam'eyya" disbands. These loans are interest-free, defaulting is usually unlikely because of the women's interdependencies, but since the amount of funds that can be mustered is limited, "gam'eyyas" tend to be a "last resort" strategy for coping with poverty or a convenient and occasional means for acquiring goods and services whose costs outstrip the family's monthly budget.

Other institutional mechanisms constraining absorption of informal sector occupations into the formal wage sector include lack of access to national, regional, and/or export markets. Access to markets is not only circumscribed by the restrictions on credit noted above, but also by such associated factors as transportation costs, steady supplies of raw materials and capital goods, exploitation by suppliers, employers, middlemen, etc. These are further compounded by a general lack of basic skills (literacy and numeracy) which are more acute in rural than urban areas and higher for women than for men, as well as lack of skills in marketing, accounting, management, and so on, whose acquisition might enhance the success potential of small-scale and family enterprises.

It is estimated that approximately one-half of rural households derive their primary earnings from off-farm employment in Egypt. Many of these are engaged in small-scale industries such as food processing, textiles and garment making (where women preponderate as producers), as well as wood and metal work (where men predominate). Women who produce at home such commodities as goat's milk cheese, refined butter

(samna), a variety of goods made of wheat (kishk, ro'a', fereek, etc.) have access only to the local or informal market when they produce a surplus beyond the family's subsistence needs. Most of these small-scale and domestic production activities are not linked to national or regional markets though the potential exists to create such linkages. The perpetuation of petty commodity production and trade, and the current inflated cost of that production coupled with the relatively cheap price at which these commodities are sold, are reinforced by the confluence of relations of exploitation in the cycle of production and exchange. For instance, 80% of the seats on the board of supervisors of cooperatives, whose responsibilities include the allocation of supplies to farmers, are supposed to be small farmers. Illiterates are excluded from membership and, therefore, the majority of small farmers, because of the high illiteracy rates among the rural poor, are excluded. As Richards points out:

"This... allocation mechanism (the cooperatives)...exclude the poor... On the one hand, an extensive black market emerged, supplied by the farmers themselves and from other sources in the distribution channels in the bureaucracy. On the other hand, the cooperatives themselves have simply rationed the inputs directly. There is every reason to suppose that this has favoured rich peasants. Their wealth, status, and social similarity to government-appointed agronomists formally in charge of cooperative decisions ensures that the well-to-do peasants are the first to receive whatever scarce inputs are available ... Further, most small peasants are too preoccupied with the struggle for subsistence to try to interfere with the wishes of rich peasants

who are often their landlords or employers."

(Richards 1980:7-8)

Moreover, the small farmers' increased need for credit as a result of land reform policy which consolidated crop rotation and which, as Richards points out "meant that small peasants were required to plant all of their land in cotton one year, all in clover the next, and all in food the next, rather than have a little cash, a little fodder, and a little food every year," was met by recourse to loans from rich peasants (i.e., "informally" at high rates of interests) and not from commercial sources (Ibid).

Structural and institutional constraints serve to inflate the ranks of those engaged in informal sector occupations (casual and seasonal labourers, petty commodity producers and traders, itinerant service workers, etc.) as well as to perpetuate household-based productive activities where women are the main producers of the most essential items of subsistence: food and clothing. The inability of the "modern" sector to absorb informal sector occupations (at the same time as it maintains and, structurally as well as functionally, reinforces them), coupled with high population pressures, have contributed to a growing and world-wide phenomenon of internationalisation of labour -- a phenomenon whose impact on women is not yet adequately documented empirically. The proportion of Egyptians working abroad represents roughly 10% of the labour force. Migration tends to be predominantly male among unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled workers. Families generally accompany the professionals and technicians and

Egyptian women with professional and technical qualifications are almost on par with male migrants in specific job categories. For instance, among Egyptian teachers working in Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, slightly more than half were women (Birks & Sinclair:197).

The impact of the internationalisation of labour on changing and redefining women's economic and, to a lesser extent, social roles, has only just begun to surface. One major consequence of out-migration and the role of remittances in capital formation (through savings and patterns of investments) is the introduction of new class differentiations reflected, in part, in the redivision of labour and the reorganisation of production relations both within the household and in the society as a whole.

In some areas of rural Egypt, for instance, agricultural productivity has declined due, in part, to temporary labour shortages resulting from male outmigration. The necessity for, and availability of, imported foodstuffs and other goods increases the household's dependence on an assured cash income for meeting basic needs as self-sufficiency declines. Below the stratum whose main or sole source of cash income to meet basic needs is derived from remittances are the mass of households who could not afford to finance the departure of family members. They constitute the stratum most adversely affected by the transfer of remittances, the commercialisation of the economy and inflation. Above both these groups are the families of migrants who spend a portion of transferred income on direct consumption and/or debts, and set aside the other portion as savings. Typical use of

savings are in land acquisition, housing, construction, purchase of trucks and tractors (for use on individual farms as well as for rental to other farmers and merchants), or cars to serve as taxis, as well as irrigation pumps and other farm equipment. Spending is also directed towards consumer durables such as television sets and refrigerators or air-conditioners. Another pattern is to engage in the distribution of imported commodities (watches, soaps, candy, cigarettes, etc.) in the informal market. Within this group, rural households are to be further differentiated by their respective patterns of investments.

In the rural areas, such modifications in production and property relations induce changes in the division of labour within the household. Depending on the size, regularity and pattern of investment of remittances a household receives, the migration of men relieves some women of the necessity to work either as family producers or for a wage. At the same time it compels others to assume increased workloads either as family producers or as wage earners. Similarly, acquisition of land or expansion of landholdings may accentuate dependence on family labour, or it may increase the range of options allowing the household to rent out land or hire day labourers etc. Land use also becomes a determining factor, i.e., whether it is used for the cultivation of subsistence crops (where women assume a major share of agricultural labour) or for cash crops (which are generally less labour intensive, increasingly becoming mechanized, and more dependent on male than female labour).

In some areas of Upper Egypt, such as Beit Alam and Haraga, male outmigration (mainly to Kuwait and Libya) ranges between 50-75% of the economically active population. Labour scarcity and the rise in the price of hired labour has accentuated dependence on the unpaid family labour of women and children to substitute for hired hands which the household can no longer afford. In other cases, where household income has been substantially augmented by remittances, the material conditions are created for withdrawing women from production altogether. The range and extent of women's participation in agriculture and agricultural-related chores, comparing Upper Egypt and the Delta, is indicated in the table below. It should be noted that the lower participation rates of "Saidi" women is attributable to the region's historical dependence on natural Nile flooding to irrigate the land which has meant a reduced reliance on labour hands than required in the Delta -- hence, a lower dependence on women's labour than in the Delta. In other words, the "conservatism" imputed to the Upper Egyptians is itself a by-product of the organisation of agricultural labour in the region and not the original reason for the low participation of women in production.

While mechanization alleviates temporary labour shortages (when women are not or cannot be recruited as substitutes), it also leads to displacement of men and women, thus fueling the ranks of the un- and underemployed. This, in turn, increases rural-to-urban migration and accentuates the proliferation of informal sector occupations in cities and towns.

Summary of Female Work Participation in Rural Areas of Upper
and Lower Egypt (Hundreds)

Activity	Participating Females in Lower Egypt		Participating Females in Upper Egypt	
	No.	%	No.	%
Plowing	83	49.7	10	10.9
Harrowing	83	49.7	38	41.3
Drilling	91	54.5	38	41.3
Cultivation	105	62.9	31	33.7
Irrigation	104	62.3	32	34.6
Fertilizing	95	56.9	35	38.0
Resowing	107	64.1	32	34.6
Thinning	111	65.8	32	34.8
Hoeing	93	55.7	34	37.0
Insecticide spraying	93	55.7	35	39.0
Reaping	113	67.7	35	38.0
Transporting crops	117	70.1	25	27.2
Packing crops	109	65.3	38	41.3
Animal husbandry	28	20.3	19	28.4
Curing animals	34	24.6	7	10.5
Milking	101	73.2	37	55.2
Raising poultry	132	79.0	75	81.5
Home agricultural manufacturing	107	64.1	42.	45.65

Source: Abou El Seoud, K. and F. Estira, A Study of the Role of Women and Youth in Rural Development with an Emphasis on Production and Consumption of Nutritive Elements. FAO/Middle East Office, 1977-8

In 1976, according to the Population Census, roughly 11 million women were classified in the category of "not seeking work." Of these, approximately 10 million were classified as "housewives." Such a classification obscures the real economic activities that women are engaged in, as demonstrated above, and lends credibility to the misinformed but presiding conventional wisdom that Arab women do not work, do not need to work, or do not want to work. This, in turn, justifies a "hands off" policy in terms of active recruitment of women in pre-vocational skills training and for regular wage-employment. We must assume that a large portion of these women are engaged in some form of domestic production and/or informal sector occupations, particularly in that 8.4 million of these women are illiterate (and these have the highest rate of reported unemployment) and 1.6 million are barely literate. Moreover, 4.6% of the economically active female population, recognised by the Population Census, are engaged in "activities not adequately described." These, in addition to the approximately 400,000 women who hold "certificates below intermediate," constitute the potential labour pool that employment generation efforts will have to assess and analyze, as well as ultimately absorb.

SUMMARY REFLECTIONS: The Implications of Conceptualizing "Women in Development" in the Social Division and Reproduction of Labour:

The foregoing discussion essentially serves to deconstruct the conventional notion of "women in development" as simply an integrative process premised solely on equity considerations (measured, for instance, by establishing a quota of female beneficiaries within a total number of beneficiaries), or on the assumption that women somehow stand outside the historical process in the production and reproduction of material life, wherein there resides a formulation of women as a separate and special group requiring incorporation, a discreet and separate "problem" requiring separate and discreet solutions in the development process.

Both notions have only advocacy value. They are not, in and of themselves, sufficiently generic nor comprehensive. We have argued instead that women are already integrated in the economic sphere by virtue of their insertion in the total social division of labour, inclusive of their role in the modern sector of production as well as in the privatized activities that reproduce labour materially, socially, biologically and ideologically. These activities form a continuum. Any conceptualization of "women in development" must begin with the existing social division of labour based on sex, and proceed from that point of origin.

We have pointed out that women are inserted in two spheres of

production: (a) direct use values for the family's direct consumption (food, clothing, etc. which are necessary for the material reproduction of labour, i.e., for subsistence), and (b) commodities for exchange (whether in the informal market or in the modern wage-goods sector).

This insertion within the total social division of labour necessarily means that the improvement of women's position in the development process cannot be isolated from the conditions of the household as a whole. This is particularly true when one considers that the process of substantive transformation of traditional forms of production -- a process that is uneven and protracted -- obscures the continuum of women's economic activities which span the domestic and market spheres of production, separating and privatizing the former from the general circuit of social reproduction; obscuring, in essence, that the wage alone does not secure for the family, all the conditions of its existence. It only secures a portion and, therefore, must be supplemented by the economic activities women perform in domestic and informal sector production, trade and services.

Employment generation has, of necessity, become one of the central concerns of AID's development strategy in Egypt. We suggest that the conceptualization of "women in development" posited throughout this report -- a conceptualization which locates women within the the total social division of labour and in the material reproduction of labour (as well as social, biological and ideological reproduction) is intrinsic to any formulation of employment strategy, both in terms of strengthen-

ing access to a regular and assured source of cash income as well as to basic goods and services (wherein women assume the primary responsibility) at affordable prices for Egypt's poor. Programmatically, it is also intrinsic to the industrial labour force study being undertaken by Boston University, the MSU off-farm employment study, and to the Development GAP's study of the urban informal sector. In this regard, it is noteworthy to indicate that the primary concentration of women in the modern wage sector (as well as in the informal sector and domestic sphere) continues to be in the production of articles of consumption, particularly of basic subsistence commodities such as food, clothing, textiles, shoes, etc.; as well as in those manufacturing industries where women are considered to be uniquely suited: electronics, pharmaceuticals, etc., which largely depend on manual operations in production. Their concentration in those branches of production which provide basic sustenance must be noted in all development efforts rather than be undermined by dismissing these "traditionally female" occupations as not pertaining to "real development" and "real" integration of women in the development process. The focus instead should be on improving the working conditions of women in these important branches of production: wage levels, provision of social services, job security and protection, etc..., as well as on expanding these branches.

The entry of women in the modern wage sector of production, be it in "traditional" occupations (food, clothing, etc.), or in "feminine" occupations (electronics, pharmaceuticals, etc.), or in "non-traditional"

branches (steel, construction, etc.) does not, in and of itself, release women from performing domestic production functions, nor does it, particularly in "traditional" occupations, provide sufficient income for these to be replaced by wage-goods. A principal consideration, therefore, in the formulation of an employment strategy, is to ensure adequate income levels such that the wage can secure for the family all the material conditions of its existence and, in this manner, the "dual burden" of women can partially be relieved. This dual burden can also be partially relieved by the provision of social services such as day-care, consumer cooperatives, transportation services, etc., which, in public sector firms, are ostensibly provided to workers through the 25 percent "profit-sharing" system. In private sector firms, the provision of such services is an added cost to the employer and, therefore, might discourage the employment of women, except in those branches of production where the demand for female labour is high.

In the informal sector, the encouragement of small-scale enterprises through credit extension, regulating supply of raw materials, training, etc., essentially "formalizes" a segment of this sector while it pauperizes others even further. To the extent that formalization (or capitalization/modernization) takes place, the flexibility of labour organisation and labour processes (important for women's dual role) is diminished with the demand for a full working day in successful (formalized) enterprises.

While the absorption of a segment of informal sector occupations is an integral part of the process of development, there exists another alternative to partially offset increased pauperization, particularly of women. This alternative is the encouragement of co-operatives (of petty commodity producers, traders, itinerant service workers, etc.). The advantages of forming production cooperatives, for instance, are that it socializes labour, reduces the cost of wage goods, maintains surplus in the hands of the producers, and maintains the organizational flexibility of labour -- all of which are of vital importance to women. At the same time, service cooperatives: day care, laundry, food preparation, housework, etc., would also act to regulate access to cash income, as well as socialize these chores (see the identification of new programmatic opportunities recommended for AID's involvement).

THE WID PROBLEMMATIC: QUESTIONS
AND FOCUS FOR CURRENT RESEARCH

A. Boston University Study of the Female Industrial Labour Force:

The following is a questionnaire administered in Morocco to survey industrial firms from the point of view of their hiring policies and employers' attitudes towards women in the industrial labour force. We recommend its replication in Egypt.

V. Indicate the mechanisms utilised by your firm to recruit workers, men and/or women

- a) Placement Bureau of the Ministry of Labour men.... women....
- b) Private Selection Agency
- c) Employers' Association
- d) Advertisements in the press
- e) Job seeker initiates contact
- f) Other (please specify)

II. Indicate the various categories of personnel employed in your firm:

By Qualification	Men	Women
Upper Level Cadres		
Middle Level Cadres		
Supervisors (of workers)		
Supervisors (administrative)		
Technicians		
Operatives		
Workers		
Skilled		
Semi-skilled (qualified)		
Unskilled (non-qualified by training)		

III. Indicate the number of vacancies in the same categories listed in II. above.

IV. Experience and Attitude regarding Female Employment:

- a) Are you in favour or against employing women in general?
 i) for a technical position ii) an administrative position
- b) In terms of worker productivity among females in your firms, do they perform assigned tasks in a manner that you would rate:
 i) Excellent ii) Generally Good
 iii) Average iv) Unsatisfactorily
 v) Very unsatisfactorily

Reasons:

- c) In your opinion, are women easily integrated into the workplace?
 i) If yes, what are the factors which make them good candidates for work:
 Dexterity
 Infrequent pregnancies
 Favourable social climate regarding women's employment
 Marital Status: married
 unmarried (widow or divorced)
 unmarried (single)
 Fewer Health problems
 Other (please specify)
- ii) If no, what makes their integration difficult? (choices, same as above.
- d) Indicate the occupations which, in your firm, are presently filled by men and which, in your opinion, could equally be filled by women with the same qualifications.
- e) If positions traditionally filled by men become vacant, are you willing to replace the men with women?
 i) If yes, on what terms: part-time/short term (several weeks)
 medium term (one to two years)
 long term (three to five years)
- ii) If no, why not?
- f) Select a dozen of the following occupations you deem suitable for women:
- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Industrial designer | Mason | Typist |
| Electrician | mechanic | Carpentry |
| Construction worker | Electronics | Welder |

Production foreman/supervisor	Motor Vehicle electrician
Production manager	Industrial drafter
Metallurgy	Packaging
Spinning	Canning
Ginning	Tanning
Garment making	Leather works
Tailor	Machine operator
Plumbing	Electrical wiring
Others...	

g) If women acquired the above skills, would you be disposed to hiring them?

In addition, the B.U. industrial labour force survey should determine the following, per establishment:

Percent of female employment that is hired on a seasonal basis
 Percent of female employment that is hired on a permanent basis
 Method of recruitment for seasonal as well as full-time workers
 Turn-over rates and Reasons
 Availability of Social Services: day-care, transportation, occupational safety, etc.
 Occupational mobility: factors which allow or constrain mobility
 Availability of on-the-job training and extent of female recruitment
 Proportion of women who are machine operators (types of machines)
 Proportion of women who are manual operators,
 Proportion of women by marital status
 Proportion of women by age
 Number of children per female worker
 Number of income streams per family
 Destination of female income
 Relative proportion of female wages in household budget
 Comparative data on working conditions in private and public sector companies.
 Extent of compliance with labour codes pertaining to women workers
 The availability for work of the 400,000 women with certificates below intermediate who are classified as "not seeking work." (N.B. this category of female workers has the lowest unemployment rate).
 The availability for work and types of occupations that can be created for, or filled by the category of workers having the highest rate of unemployment (illiterate).

B. MSU Off-Farm Employment Study:

Determine:

1. The range and types of economic activities women perform within the household.
2. The allocation of household tasks by age, marital status, and sex.
3. The range and types of goods produced by women for direct consumption within the household.
4. The range and types of goods produced by women for exchange in the market.
5. Frequency of exchange, for cash or for barter
6. The costs of production and the price of goods exchanged as compared to the formal market.
7. The range and types of economic activities women engaged in outside the household.
8. Feasibility of forming production cooperatives (constraints/advantages)
9. Feasibility of forming consumer cooperatives (constraints/advantages)
10. Feasibility of forming marketing cooperatives (constraints/advantages)
11. Women's control over income earned
12. Proportion of wage-goods consumed by the household as compared to subsistence goods produced directly within the household.
13. Appropriate technology for women in the production process
14. Skills training required

C. The Development GAP: Urban Informal Sector study:

Determine:

1. The types and range of economic activities women engage in
2. The structure and organisation of occupations
3. Ease of entry and withdrawal (Reasons)
4. Relative significance of organisational flexibility of occupations for carrying out other responsibilities such as child-care, household chores, etc.
5. Methods for securing itinerant, casual, or part-time work
6. Methods for seeking itinerant, casual, or part-time work
7. Proportion of household income dependent on women's earned income
8. Number of household members engaged in informal sector occupations by sex, age, marital status
9. Number of household members with steady wage employment (permanent)
10. Desire for permanent wage work
- 11/ Perceived constraints to entry in the formal job market
12. Actual structural and institutional constraints to absorption in the formal labour market
13. Proportion of women engaged in:
 - production of goods (types of goods produced; costs of production, etc)
 - distribution or marketing of goods (types of goods, sources, prices as compared to the formal market)
 - services
14. Proportion of income saved
15. Structural and functional linkages between informal sector occupations and the formal modern sector (subcontracting, supply of raw materials, credit extension, etc.)
16. Proportion of women in informal sector occupation as compared to men.
17. Disaggregate the 4.6% of all female workers who are classified in the Population Census as engaged in activities "not adequately described."