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COMMUNICATING ON THE NEEDS

OF RURAL WOMEN

A Working Paper

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by

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WOMEN AND THE PROBLEM OF HUNGER

When the Foreign Assistance Act of 1973 set "new directions" for U.S. development aid, it singled out the area of food and nutrition for primary emphasis. The purpose of the large allocation of funds for agriculture, rural development and nutrition was "to alleviate starvation, hunger, and malnutrition, and to provide basic services to poor people, enhancing their capacity for self-help." To this end more than twice as much was authorized to be spent on food and nutrition development during fiscal years 1974 and 1975 than for the next ranking concern, population planning and health; and almost six times as much as for transportation, power, industry, urban development and export development combined.¹

The context in which Congress took that action was one of a deepening world food problem that reached crisis proportions as stocks fell to the record low of merely a 26-day supply in 1974. The food problem was exacerbated by the magnitude of poverty among the poor majority in most of the Low Income Countries. Of those poor, 80% were located in rural areas. A staggering 40% of the then two billion people in the LICs were estimated by the World Bank to be living in such "absolute poverty" that annual incomes were worth only \$50 in 1969 purchasing power; 70% of them in Asia, 18%

in Africa, and 12% in Latin America.²

The place of rural women in these aggregate estimations of the extent of poverty was not noted, an oversight which has only recently begun to be widely acknowledged as the evidence of both a poverty gap and a malnutrition gap between men and women mounts. However, women as neglected actors within the economies of the LIC's had at least begun to be recognized in development thinking, thanks largely to the appearance in 1970 of Boserup's path-breaking study.³

Thus, among the "new directions" of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1973 was Section 113 "Integrating Women Into National Economies", more commonly referred to after its sponsor as "the Percy Amendment."

The Percy Amendment mandated that development aid for food and nutrition, population planning and health, education and human resources development and other LIC economic and social development programs "shall be administered so as to give particular attention to those programs, projects, and activities which tend to integrate women into the national economies of foreign countries, thus improving their status and assisting the total development effort."

Before the end of the following year the United Nations General Assembly had proclaimed 1975 as the International Women's Year with a world conference to be held in Mexico

City. At the World Food Conference meeting in Rome in November 1974, a Resolution on Women and Food pointed out that rural women in the developing world accounted for "at least fifty percent of food production." In view of the Conference's conclusion that the major part of the required increase in food production must occur in the developing countries themselves if further starvation and malnutrition was to be averted, the resolution called on governments to not only see to the health and nutritional needs of women and children but, more significantly for the future of LIC development policy, to do also the following:

to involve women fully in the decision making machinery for food production and nutrition policies as part of total development strategy.

to include...provision for education and training for women on equal basis with men in food production and agricultural technology, marketing and distribution techniques, as well as consumer, credit and nutrition information.

to promote equal rights and responsibilities for men and women in order that the energy, talent and ability of women can be fully utilized in partnership with men in the battle against world hunger.

The full extent of women's contribution in agriculture in the developing world varies considerably from country to country, but it is often much more than the 50% assumed at the World Food Conference. In Kenya, for

example, recent data (1978) from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning estimates that 90% of rural women are engaged full time in farm work on small holdings as compared with 60%⁴ of the men. Kenya's population is 88% rural, with 52% of the rural population being women.⁵ Up to 80% of all subsistence farming in Kenya and almost all of it in Gabon is done by women.⁶ In Cameroon 80% of the country's seven million people live in rural areas where women and youths do most of the labor in the food crop sector and supply food for 80% of the country.⁷ A 1970 census in Ghana showed only one-third of the Ghanaian women over the age of 15 to be "employed in agriculture." As an experienced American observer in Ghana points out, however, that figure is highly misleading since it is based on the occupation women named for themselves to the census takers. She remarks:

Farming for most rural women in Ghana is as integral a part of their daily lives as is driving a car for the American suburban woman; yet few of the latter would give their occupation as driver.⁸

She suggests that a more accurate analysis would have shown about two million of Ghana's $2\frac{1}{2}$ million women were involved in small-scale farming in 1970. Another study using the same 1970 census data concluded that small holdings of ten acres or less accounted for only 47% of the total land cultivated in Ghana but about 80% of the total food produced in the country. The production of women farmers falls mainly

within this category.⁹ Taking sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in 1974 gave the following comparison of roles of men and women in terms of the amount of time required for each task in the household economy which was provided by the women.¹⁰

<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Percentage of responsibility by women</u>
Food production	70
Domestic food storage	50
Food processing	100
Animal husbandry	50
Marketing	60
Brewing	90
Water supply	90
Fuel supply	80

Few detailed studies of household time budgets have been made. One covering a full year of live-in study by investigators in a village in southern Ghana in 1972 revealed nearly twice as much time spent by women as by men in working.¹¹

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Male hours/month</u>	<u>Female hours/month</u>
Production on and off farm	123.55	141.8
Household	64.2	171.5
Leisure	103.2	40.2

Statistics on the role of women in agriculture for Asia and Latin America seem to indicate less central involvement than in Africa but data are very inadequate. In India women are observed to work as farm labourers on the family farms and the poorer women also hire themselves out to work on farms outside the family. Field studies in India's prosper-

ous wheat belt in Haryana indicate that farm work is usually done by the women of the household with some help from the men for ploughing, although the men are most often the farm managers and claim the farm income for their own. As predominantly unpaid workers, women who work on India's farms are seldom counted in employment statistics.¹²

Women in the Moslem societies of Pakistan and Bangladesh, except for those who are destitute and have no choice, will not expose themselves to the disgrace of laboring in public view in the fields where purdah must be discarded. However, tending the family's animals within the family compound is commonly the woman's job, as is nearly all post-harvest food processing.¹³

In Nepal, where 95% of the people subsist from agriculture but only 12% own more than one hectare of land, both men and women spend on average one third of their 14 to 18 hour work day in farm labor.¹⁴

The picture for Latin America is ambiguous, although there is growing indication that women are more involved in agriculture than has often been assumed. Peruvian women, for example, are found to spend about 38 hours each week in the care of farm animals although they are said to "devote significantly less time than men to agricultural tasks."¹⁵ In a study of four rural areas of Colombia where cash cropping and crop processing have become highly concentrated in large enterprises operated as modern agribusinesses.

women laborers were found to play a large role as a seasonal, marginally paid labor force . Their work on the home agricultural plot seemed to vary according to the degree of family poverty. In all four regions covered by the study it was noted that:

women's increased participation in agricultural production was related to decreasing farm size and rural poverty. As the family loses access to the means of production, the men are proletarianised, either locally or by migrating to other zones in search of work; generally women will remain on the farm, tending the crops and animals. 16

The dangers of generalizing about the role of women in agriculture on the basis of the situation for women in any given culture are so well stated by another observer of the situation in Latin American agriculture that her remarks are worth quoting at length:

There seems to be almost universal agreement that one of the commonest effects of development is to relegate women to the subsistence sector...food production for domestic consumption....It appears to be suggested that the marginalisation of women to food production... is a world-wide phenomenon. However, my own limited knowledge of the effects of development in Latin America would suggest that this is hardly a sufficient analysis even though it is possible that women are participating to a greater extent now in all phases of production of food crops than in the past. Rather I would suggest that a common effect of development policies is to make women central to the production of crops destined for the market. This production may either be on a household basis in which case the women work as unpaid labourers for the man/men of the household, or production may be on a much larger scale in which the women provide.

very cheap seasonal labour for the owners of the enterprise. In this latter case the women may form part of a familial labour group (payment going to the "head of the family"), or member of an all-female work gang (payment going to the gang leader for redistribution to the workers), or be hired as individual labourers.

Women's role in cash crop production may or may not be associated with an increasing percentage of female labour time also being spent on food production on small household plots. Frequently, however, we are looking at labour flows between self-provisioning sectors of the rural economy and the more capitalised sector producing for the market. The insistence in the literature on the pushing of women into subsistence, or their marginalisation as it is often described, may possibly come from an unequal number of studies being carried out in certain parts of the world...On the other hand, it may well stem from our inadequate understanding of rural production systems and the ways in which they have been integrated, and the extent to which they have been integrated, into the market economy. 17

Subsistence farmers, whether men or women the world over, hope each year for some surplus which can be sold for cash in order to supply the household with items or with supplementary foods which can not be obtained except by money. To that extent even subsistence farmers participate in the market economy. The term "cash cropping", however, is usually reserved for production which is intended exclusively for sale, commonly to end up in the export market. The disruption in previously self-contained subsistence cultures by the spread of cash cropping can produce seriously harmful and unintended side

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effects, notably an increase in local malnutrition. A clear illustration of that dynamic comes from Upper Volta. Traditionally the male head of the household was responsible for the grain for the family. Although women worked in the grain fields for certain tasks during the production cycle, their primary food responsibilities lay in producing in the fields assigned to their use the vegetables and herbs that accompanied the grain in the family's meals. From a combination of drought and increasing demand for land for cash cropping, the women have suffered from two disadvantageous side effects. First, with the men engaged in cash cropping, more and more of the work in the family grain fields falls to the women. Secondly, less and less land is allotted to them for their own vegetable production. Competition over the relatively scarce arable land has arisen between food cropping and cash cropping. Food cropping is losing out. The result for the families has been that despite the increased income from cash crops accruing to the men, and despite sufficient grain, the nutritional level of family diets has declined with the decline in vegetables the women can no longer produce in sufficient quantity.

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To protect family economies and well-being from harm by modernization and other innovations, interrelationships must be foreseen that will be affected by any new

agricultural technology or new organization of production. From a summary of research priorities for women in Africa the following two hypotheses with their subsets of questions seem particularly important:

Hypothesis: The nutritional condition of women and children deteriorates with the introduction of cash crops.

Questions: Does cash cropping decrease land area devoted to food crops? How much cash crop income is used for food purchases? Does family diet change with cash cropping? What factors influence food purchasing habits (e.g. multinational corporations, advertising, social mobility, nutrition education)? What factors influence sales of domestically produced food? What disease patterns are associated with poor nutrition? Are there any correlations between cash cropping and nutritional deficiencies, by sex, age, and life cycle?

Hypothesis: Agrarian reform leads to increased work loads for women, restriction of female employment to the primary phases of the production cycle (in the manual as opposed to the mechanical operation), and devaluation of female labor.

Questions: What crops are grown? Which are for sale; for home consumption? Who controls cash crops; the production process in cash crops, the income from cash crops? Who makes decisions about land use in farming; disposal of income? Who provides labor; what type and amount? What is the breakdown of labor by age and sex in farming and by crop? What variables govern the use of hired labor? 20

Production and consumption are twin aspects of the world food problem. Agricultural experts concentrate on the former as the solution to hunger. Nutritionists concentrate on consumption. An effective national or international

policy for nutritional adequacy for all people must take both production and consumption into account.

That means, in turn, to include an awareness of also the many factors outside the more narrowly technical expertise of agricultural scientists and nutritionists which will have an active bearing upon the success or failure of their work in ending hunger and malnutrition among the world's poor. Historical, cultural, economic and political factors will be at play in determining the human motivation to invest scarce resources and hope into the production of this or that crop, using this or that technology, to deal with the harvest in this or that manner. Similarly, the motivations must be understood for the choice to consume or not to consume this or that food.

Such understanding may easily elude planners and program implementers whose own life experience has differed greatly from that of the poor who are the intended beneficiaries. From a broad perspective of cultural differences this is obvious. What has not been equally as obvious, unfortunately, is that within the same culture, the experience of women will differ significantly from that of men, just as the experience of the poor will differ from that of the middle class or less poor. And among the poor themselves, life for a woman makes different demands and often imposes different hardships than life for a man. One of these differences is reflected in food patterns.

In pre-revolutionary Nicaragua the high incidence of malnutrition was estimated to be the primary cause of death among rural women. Nutritional ignorance was considered to be a major contributing factor. However, a study of time-use by women in various villages, while not looking for nutritional information, nonetheless revealed important data for nutrition policy. Because the researchers were present in many homes during food preparation and mealtime they observed that it was a commonly practiced custom for the woman to eat only after the husband and children had been fed. If there was an egg or piece of meat to be consumed, it invariably was given to the husband or the older male children. The diets of residents situated close to the Pan American highway were noticeably more varied and presumably more nutritious than those of residents in the more remote villages. These observations led the researchers to a cautiously modest suggestion that "the high incidence of malnutrition in Nicaragua may be due not only to nutritional ignorance but also to the unavailability (because of poverty, isolation, or both) of more nutritious foodstuffs." ²¹ What they did not point out seems equally obvious, namely, that regardless of the level of nutrition understanding held by the women, both men and women would have had to be willing for sex-specific patterns to change before available food could be shared equally between male and female family members.

The Ethiopian Women's Welfare Association began a program to improve the nutrition levels of poor women and children in Addis Ababa. Like a great many programs of its kind, nutrition education was provided along with a food supplement for the children when women came to the center. In a statement to the International Conference on Women and Food held in Tucson, Arizona in 1978, the EWWA explained why their original program has been thoroughly reoriented in order to serve its nutritional objective:

We discovered that even though we educated the women...about nutrition, their condition and their families' condition did not change much. Infants and small children gained some weight when we provided them with milk and fafa, but the weight immediately went down when we had to stop these programs due to lack of supply. Another problem was that after the women got to know about proper food via the educational programs, they became very unhappy and frustrated when they could not afford to buy the proper food... The women felt guilty because they knew why their children were sick and dying, but were unable to solve the problem because of poverty.

The EWWA became convinced that poor nutrition can be solved only if poverty is battled first. Their program is now working with income generating projects among the women. ²²

This is not to say that educational programs on nutrition and health are always and everywhere impractical before women's incomes, hence family incomes, have been increased. The key to practicality then is whether the

improvements can be brought about without added expense to the families by utilizing foods and materials already within their reach and experience. In a pilot project of this type with one Mother's Club in Bangladesh, infant nutrition was greatly improved within one year. The incidence of second and third degree malnutrition dropped by more than one half. Instruction centered on basic health and sanitation practices, on simple home remedies to prevent dehydration of infants suffering from diarrhea, on breast feeding, and on supplementing breast feeding with solid food at the right time prepared from the same kind of foods available to adults in the household. The mothers in the pilot project became instructors for other mothers in neighboring villages.²³

A contrasting story about a nutrition program in Bangladesh reveals the problem of well-intentioned aid given without practical insights into the recipient's actual situation. In this case a destitute woman came to a Maternal and Child Health center to obtain food rations. She sat quietly through the obligatory lecture of nutrition education, intended to guide her toward steps in self-help for better nutrition for herself and her children. The lecture was on the nutritional value, care and preparation of chicken. What the MCH center worker did not understand was that the woman had no chicken, no hut where she could keep one, and no way of feeding one. When her opinion was solicited, finally, the woman said she wanted not a chicken but a goat. A goat

would provide milk for her children and for selling; a goat would not require special food; and it could be tied up where-
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 ever she went.

India probably presents the most extreme case of a need for sex-specific policies to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, as well as the need to improve the status of women in every aspect of the economy. The normal distribution of population in most countries of the world reveals a higher proportion of women than men. In India the reverse is true. The gap between the sexes has increased from 3.4 million in 1901 to 20 million by 1971. Moreover, there is considerable evidence that this trend has not improved but greatly accelerated since 1951. Girls in the age group of 1-5 years have always died in greater numbers than boys in India, presumably because boy children have traditionally been more prized, better fed, and better cared for in general. Women of child-bearing age of 15 - 34 have also had high death rates. Now, however, women at every age below 49 have a higher death rate than men of the same age, according to
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 the most recent data. Poorer nutrition is part of the reason.

The problem of anaemia in Indian mothers accounts for much of the high maternal mortality rate. A World Health Organization-sponsored study among pregnant Indian women found that despite a corrective program of nutrient supplements about 56% of the women in the study remained anaemic. The poor success rate of the treatment was attributed to

nutrient leakage through the presence of many other diseases, parasites, and a chronic state of malnutrition and malabsorption impeding the absorption of iron and other blood forming medicines. The study concluded that "the overriding reason must be the low social and economic status of women."²⁶

The fact that in recent decades, however, the higher mortality rates for women have persisted even beyond the traditionally vulnerable period of child-bearing is harder to explain. After 35 the most strenuous period of child birth, coupled with arduous physical labor for survival, is usually over; Married sons are able to assist their mother's security and daughters-in-law have come to take on her former labors. Women have traditionally had more leisure in this period of life, they enjoy more authority and therefore greater access to family income. Nevertheless, since 1951 the death rates in this age group have been rising relative to men. The most plausible explanation, one Indian researcher suggests, is that with more and more families being pushed below the poverty line in India, women are having to continue "in fatiguing and exhausting manual labour for longer periods in their lives." Their rising death rates are due to this prolongation of stress "along with the cumulative effect of a life of deprivation, poor nutrition, overwork and strain."²⁷

It is estimated that women living below the subsistence level and on the borderline between relative security and subsistence

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constitute 80% of the female population.

Malnutrition due to poverty afflicts entire households, of course. According to the Development Academy of the Philippines, in 1971 83% of the total rural population of the Philippines fell below the poverty threshold. In Nepal 45% of all rural households are believed to be consuming food at a level below even minimum subsistence -- which is a technical way to say they are slowly but steadily starving. In Kenya the Integrated Rural Survey done in 1974 showed that 52% of the total number of small holders lived at or below the absolute poverty line for that country. Always, the women of the household are the ones who can best say how such poverty is to be seen in terms of a family's ability to eat adequately and in terms of food self-sufficiency in their communities . As James Grant pointed out in UNICEF's address to the World Conference of the Decade for Women:

When you teach a mother to feed her children milk, and fish, and eggs, you cannot close your eyes to her poverty. What can she do with this marvellous knowledge so nicely demonstrated on the flannelgraph outside the village dispensary, that meat and milk would do wonders for her children's health, when she has not the wherewithal to buy them? Once you start to consider the lack of money in her pocket, her lack of earning capacity, the lack of employment opportunities for her, and her disassociation from the wider society, you are reaching way beyond her nurturing role. This is when you start to see that a woman's right to share whatever fruits the process of economic development has to offer is absolutely fundamental to all her roles. It is her poverty above all which is making her an "inadequate mother", not her social behaviour, her illiteracy, her limited horizons, or her exhausting workload, all of which are merely the factors of that poverty. 32

The issue of women and food was prominent on many minds at the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women meeting in Copenhagen in July, 1980. This topic was not expressly on the conference agenda, but it arose naturally under the first two of the three major themes of the Decade: Equality, Development, and Peace. A resolution (number 41) on "Women and Nutritional Self-Sufficiency" enlarged in very significant ways on the earlier one of "Women and Food" from the World Food Conference of 1974. The differences reflect advances made since 1974 in a fuller grasp of both the distinction between an agricultural policy and a national nutritional policy, and of the needs of rural women in order to better manage nutritional adequacy for their families and communities. The Copenhagen resolution points out that:

85% of women in many developing countries are engaged in agriculture and are the principal protagonists in the attainment of nutritional self-sufficiency at the family, community and national levels.

It calls on governments among other things to:

Review the food situation from the point of view of food consumption, quality and distribution and identify nutritional needs at all levels, especially that of the community;

Establish priorities and draw up programmes allocating the necessary resources for them in order to increase women's productivity with a view to ensuring adequate and proper food supplies for families and communities;

Provide rural women with the necessary means and access to resources for agricultural production...;

Promote the effective participation of women in rural organizations involved in the system of food production, distribution and utilization;

Establish machinery at all levels to monitor and evaluate progress with a view to achieving nutritional self-sufficiency at the family, community and national levels. 33

Both food and rural women were singled out by the Women's Conference as two of the seven "priority areas requiring special attention" in the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the UN Decade for Women.³⁴ The basic needs aspect of agricultural policy was stressed again in one of the objectives under the food priority:

To ensure proper planning of the agricultural production sector so that the agricultural output covers as a matter of priority the supply of products that are socially and nationally necessary for the nutrition and food requirements of women in rural areas.

Among the recommended actions for governments to undertake toward that end, the food priority section urged the following:

Provide women with the necessary skills and appropriate technology to enable them to participate better in the process of subsistence food production;

Promote the participation of women, especially in rural areas, in agricultural policy-making, leading to the production of basic foods for family and national consumption;

Stimulate the participation and full voting rights of women in cooperatives and other forms of organization relating to the production, processing, distribution, marketing and consumption of basic food products;

Ensure access for women in conditions of equality with men to financing mechanisms covering all phases of production, up to and including the marketing of food products;

Support forms of marketing of basic foods for family consumption which will be conducive to the opening of priority markets for the sale of their products. 35

Again and again the Copenhagen conference pointed out the essential relationship between women's actions and the welfare of their communities and national development. A closeness to the basic needs of families and communities gave to discussions of all matters relating to food an aspect of practicality and immediacy. In viewing policy and economics at the macro level of national and international operations, the same awareness of the human impact of every policy at the micro level was ever present.

The assessment of the global food situation in 1980 as presented by the United States Department of Agriculture underscores the urgency of increasing the productivity of women in agriculture. While food production increased substantially during the 1970s in Latin America and East Asia, it barely managed to keep pace with population growth in South Asia and actually fell behind in Africa. Per capita food production in Africa (excluding South Africa) was lower in 1979 than it had been at any time since the early sixties. It has been declining steadily each year since 1975. Since most African countries depend on the

export of traditional agricultural commodities to stimulate their domestic economies and earn foreign exchange, the poor agricultural performance has also limited the ability of many of the countries to import food to meet their deficits. The eleven countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region had not been able to fulfill domestic food needs from their own production throughout the seventies. Each has become a net grain importer, although the amount imported still provides only a small part of total consumption. In other words, the region depends largely on its own production. This production urgently needs to increase. The one bright spot in 1979 was Niger which reported to the World Food Programme that it would be self-sufficient in food during all of 1980.³⁷

While there has been a steady, if slight, increase in per capita food production in South Asia during the last twenty years, most of that has been in India. In Nepal per capita production, already disastrously low, has been declining. Sri Lanka showed the greatest increase in per capita grain consumption of the region, but this was primarily due to food imports, not to its own production. The cost of maintaining nutritional adequacy for the population under these circumstances has placed considerable strain on the economic and financial resources of the country. It is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain sufficient food for Sri Lankans.³⁸

In Central America and the Caribbean, Haiti, Honduras

and Nicaragua had minimal or even declining growth rates in grain production during the seventies. High population growth rates in El Salvador, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic cut into their moderate gains in food production. Over all the region has become increasingly dependent on food imports which now account for about 20% of the grain consumed. Many of the countries are having great difficulty in financing continued food imports.

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For South America as a whole both total and per capita food production increased substantially in the seventies. However, Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru did not participate in that favorable trend. The total availability of food, from both domestic production and imports, actually declined in Peru and rose only 1% in Bolivia. The figures for per capita grain consumption in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru are so low that nutritional deficiencies for parts of the population are indicated even on the basis of so gross a measurement. Considering the wide range of consumption which must be leveled off within a statistic showing a national average, severe malnutrition among the poor must be assumed. Those among the hungry who are eating last and eating least are women.

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FOOTNOTES

- 1) Public Law 93-189, Sections 103 - 107.
- 2) Address to the Board of Governors of the World Bank by Robert McNamara in 1973. See also the Bank's Rural Development Sector Policy Paper of 1975.
- 3) Ester Boserup, Women's Role in Economic Development, St. Martin's Press, 1970.
- 4) Cited in Achola Pala Okeyo, "Women in the Household Economy: Managing Multiple Roles," in Learning from Rural Women, 1979, editor Sondra Zeidenstein, page 339.
- 5) Loc. cit.
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- 9) Loc. cit.
- 10) Ibid., page 39.
- 11) Ibid., page 40.

- 12) Shanti Chakravorty, "Farm Women Labour: Waste and Exploitation," Social Change, Journal of the Council for Social Development, V, 122, May - June 1975, pp. 9-16.
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- 13) Susan F. Alamgir, Profile of Bangladeshi Women, Dacca, 1977, page 62 ff. Matik Ashraf, "Notes on the role of rural Pakistani women in farming in the Northwest Frontier Province," Land Tenure Center Newsletter No. 55, January - March, 1977.
- 14) Van Heck, op. cit., page 5. Also Iftikhar Ahmed, "Technological change and the condition of rural women: A preliminary assessment," ILO, Geneva, 1973; as cited in Buvenic, op.cit., page 5.
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- 17) Kate Young, "A methodological approach to analysing the

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- 18) See particularly Susan George, How the Other Half Dies, Penguin Books, 1976.
 - 19) Marilyn Hoskins and Josephine Guissou, Social and Economic Development in Upper Volta Woman's Perspective, 1973, page 23.
 - 20) Achola Palo Okeyo, "Research Priorities: Women in Africa," in Zeidenstein, op. cit., pages 401-404.
 - 21) Vivian Havens Gillespie, "Rural Women's Time Use," in Zeidenstein, editor, Learning from Rural Women, 1979, page 384.
 - 22) Statement of the Ethiopian Women's Welfare Association to the Tucson Conference on Women and Food. Available from the Office of Women in Development, USAID.
 - 23) James Levering, narrated to the author from personal experience as the USAID/Bangladesh officer involved.
 - 24) Martha F. Loutfi, Rural Women: Unequal Partners in Development, ILO, 1980, page 35.
 - 25) Ashok Mitra, Implications of Declining Sex Ratios in India's Population, Indian Council of Social Science Research, 1979. Cited in Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay, Women in Development: An Indian Perspective, 1980, pp. 29-31.

- 26) Ibid., page 33.
- 27) Ibid., pp. 33-34.
- 28) Ibid., page 3.
- 29) Van Heck, op. cit., page 3.
- 30) Ibid., page 5.
- 31) Ibid., page 9.
- 32) James Grant, UNICEF Address to the Plenary, World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, Copenhagen, July 17, 1980.
- 33) Resolutions and Decisions adopted by the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, A/Conf.94/34/Add. 1, 14 August 1980, page 45.
- 34) Programme for Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women, A/Conf.94/34, 13 August 1980, pages 38-39.
- 35) Loc. cit.
- 36) U. S. Department of Agriculture, Global Food Assessment, 1980, chart page 3.
- 37) Ibid., page vi.
- 38) Loc. cit.
- 39) Loc. cit.
- 40) Ibid., page vii.

PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT: CONTEXT FOR PLANNERS

The call by the United Nations Conference of Women in Copenhagen for new strategies during the Third Development Decade for the participation of women comes against a background of a sharpening world economic crisis. In noting the problems of increasing national debt burdens, inadequate levels and patterns of industrialization, and insufficient increases in food production, the conference drew a connection to the underlying lack of effective national policies for the development and full utilization of human resources. Growth in the developing countries has come to be seen by many planners as not so much a problem of lack of resources for investment as it is a problem of mobilizing these resources and apportioning them rationally, both human and material resources. Since the wide-spread poverty of rural areas poses the most critical problem of development, attention is being focused more and more on increasing the capacities of rural populations to participate in development. Rural women figure prominently in this context.

The concept of participation, however, means many different things to different groups of actors within the development arena. Most efforts at stimulating "popular participation" in the past have, in effect, intended to persuade or even compel rural populations to accept and

cooperate with the plans made for them by a centralized and distant planning agency. The failure of such a concept or process of participation to establish sustainable, self-generating development has become the subject of much debate and new investigation.¹ In general, consensus seems to be growing that "cooperation" is not enough for a truly dynamic process of development. Full commitment by people to the investment of their own energy, imagination, hope, and limited capital in any new venture comes only with a sense of "ownership" of the venture. Such whole hearted participation implies participation throughout the process of change: idea, design, implementation, and distribution of benefits. How to bring about a true partnership between local and national development is the ultimate challenge, but it is clear that the least understood aspect of the task is how to work "from bottom-up".

The theme of participation filled the air, positively and negatively at the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD), July 12 - 20, 1979, hosted by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome. If, as the WCARRD Declaration of Principles defines it, the fundamental purpose of development is taken to be

individual and social betterment, development of endogenous capabilities and improvement of the living standards of all people, in particular the rural poor. . .

then, it was further asserted, national programmes of

action can realize their full potential in rural development strategies only through

the motivation, active involvement and organization at the grass-roots level of rural people, with special emphasis on the least advantaged, in conceptualizing and designing policies and programmes and in creating administrative, social and economic institutions, including cooperative and other voluntary forms of organization for implementing and evaluating them. 2

With the best of intentions to do that, however, governments are hampered by inadequate data and inadequate understanding of the problems, aspirations and capabilities of their own rural populations. Hence, the WCARRD Programme of Action urges that governments undertake the collection of quantitative data regularly on such matters as the levels and distribution of rural income, consumption and nutrition; the availability and accessibility of health care, education and other public services; the levels of real wages for agricultural labor; the distribution of land and other productive assets, and similar data pertinent to rural conditions of life. 3

In a study done for the Rural Organizations Action Programme of the FAO in preparation for WCARRD, one conclusion states rather wryly that "it is erroneously assumed that the national and rural development planners know their target sufficiently." On the basis of the country reports submitted to the FAO concerning participation by the poor in rural organizations, van Heck describes the degree of govern-

ment familiarity with the particular needs of the rural poor as falling within three general ranges. In a few countries government officials seemed fully aware of the rural poor and tried to identify and classify them, with preferential attention to their needs given within development programs. A second, and larger, grouping of countries included those in which "part of the Government officials are to a limited extent aware of the poor" but where so far "only limited specific policies and programmes have been enacted for them." The third and largest group of countries were those in which government planners assumed that rural development efforts would automatically serve all the rural population. There was "little evidence of either an official awareness of the poor...or of any special concern for them in policies and programmes." ⁴ Where an attempt was made to identify the rural poor, sub-groupings were noted such as tenants, sharecroppers, landless laborers in agriculture, forestry, or fishing, some rural artisans, tribal people, nomads and refugees. The FAO report points out that the female rural poor can belong to any of these sub-groups, either as independent workers or as dependents. In few of the countries participating in the study, however, was it possible from existing records to disaggregate women from the general statistics on rural poor. The country reports usually considered women only as dependents of households or of

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male workers.

This finding of a particular lack of data on rural women has been underscored recently by many researchers. An assessment of the status of rural women in developing countries conducted by the United Nations Development Programme in preparation for the Women's Conference in Copenhagen concluded that, while many governments have become convinced of the national value of programming for the special needs of rural women, the data base on women's economic activities was wholly inadequate for
6
planning purposes. The World Bank's survey of its own experience in rural development planning admits to the general "invisibility" of women for most
7
development planners. A study for USAID on assessing the impact of development projects on women finds that, despite the Agency's stated policy of emphasis on the needs and inclusion of women in development in conformance with the Percy Amendment, women are not likely to be considered or mentioned in project planning and evaluation documents when projects are designed for a general group of the poor such as small farmers, out-of-school youth, or other mixed male-female populations. Only those projects in which girls and women were the specifically intended beneficiaries made an attempt to relate planning research and project design to

women's economic and social situation as discrete from men's. ⁸

There are two separate elements in the problem of inadequate data for sound planning. One of these is a matter of improved research processes and technologies. The conduct of micro-studies in rural communities is obviously needed in order to bring to light the various, actual constraints on self-reliant development within those communities and within specific sub-groupings of the community. Without such knowledge which can be obtained only from the local people themselves, centralized decision-making bodies are as likely to deter sound development by their plans and policies as they are to foster it. Indeed, many would now say that deterrence and mis-fired efforts are almost inevitable in the absence of the local expertise of groups at the grass-roots. ⁹ Guidelines for data collection targeted to the needs of planners dealing with the rural poor and with rural women as a sub-group of the poor are proposed ¹⁰ in several recent monographs.

The second element in the problem of inadequate data is less tractable than that of improved techniques. This is the element of attitude and habit on the part of national and international decision-makers and planners. As Dixon's analysis reveals, when planners do focus particular attention on women as a sub-group of the poor or of some other sub-group within rural poor as a

general category, data collection and analysis' does improve even if imperfectly. In the absence of such an intent or habitual awareness in the minds of planners, however, the data on women in their plans tends to remain nil or grossly erroneous. It is in the light of this behavioral problem that the importance of international conferences can be seen as a form of peer pressure within the professional community of policy makers and development planners. The Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women takes up the subject of improving the data base on women in eight specific recommendations (paragraphs 92 - 99), while the Programme of Action from the WCARRD does so only in the general admonition that governments should "revise procedures for the collection and presentation of statistical data for the identification, recognition and appreciation of the participation of women in productive activities." The fact that the delegations to the 1980 Women's Conference showed a high degree of sensitivity to this need was to be expected. From government delegations to WCARRD, however, comprised as they were predominantly by men who had been prepared neither by professional training nor by societal traditions to give attention to the significance of women as major actors in national and rural economies, such a recommendation singling out the productive role of women is especially encouraging.

The Programme of Action of the Women's Conference highlights the particular relevance of the mobilization of rural women in view of the alarming shortfalls in agriculture and food supplies in developing countries. Although women are referred to primarily in this context as constituting a "large proportion of the labour force," recognition is also given to their importance as farm managers and food system managers by implication in the recommendation that

in order to promote integrated rural development, and to increase productivity in food and other agricultural commodities...women's access to credit, land and infrastructural technology in rural areas should be significantly improved. 13

The "new consensus" on women's issues in the area of agrarian reform and rural development which emerged at WCARRD is hailed by the Programme of Action of the Women's Conference.

The Women's Conference focused less intently than did WCARRD on women as agricultural producers and more on women as wage earners. This may well have been an accurate reflection of the most pressing, immediate needs of the world's women in view of the dramatic statistical description of women's status contained in the Programme of Action. This description encapsulates the economic inequities between the world's men and the world's women:

while women represent 50% of the world adult population and one third of the official labour force, they perform for nearly two thirds of all working hours and receive only one tenth of the world income and own less than 1% of world property. 14

The World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development treated relatively little with either men or women as wage earners. As its name might imply, the question of distribution, use, and control over productive assets in rural areas, not income, was the dominant theme. One of the primary assumptions proclaimed in the "Declaration of Principles" preceding the WCARRD Programme of Action states that

equitable distribution and efficient use of land, water and other productive resources, with due regard for ecological balance and environmental protection, are indispensable for rural development, for the mobilization of human resources and for increased production for the alleviation of poverty. 15

A further assumption states that women should "participate and contribute on an equal basis with men" in all aspects of rural development and that they "should share fully in improved conditions of life in rural areas." ¹⁶ Precisely how this equity for women is to be accomplished is the subject of sixteen specific recommendations in the Programme of Action under the topic of "Integration of Women in Rural Development." These recommendations, if they were to be implemented widely, would not only stem the tide of deteriorating influence by rural women in the modernisation of rural Africa and elsewhere: More importantly they would lay the foundation for the evolution of economic equality in the ownership and control of the world's property in which the ratio of inequity now stands at 1:99. Under such con-

ditions of overwhelming inequity, women seeking to improve economic status have no choice but to look first to increasing income from better employment or from improved marketing potential for women's products. In the long run, however, jobs, marketing options, and manufacturing options, as well as many of the general conditions of life will be determined largely (as they actually are now) by those who own or control the primary natural resources and other capital assets of a nation or region.

Of the sixteen WCARRD recommendations pertaining to women, including also the one on improved data collection which has already been mentioned, the following six seem crucial and are quoted in entirety. "Governments should consider action" to:

- Repeal those laws which discriminate against women in respect of rights of inheritance, ownership and control of property, and to promote understanding of the need for such measures.
- Promote ownership rights for women, including joint ownership and co-ownership of land in entirety, to give women producers with absentee husbands effective legal rights to take decisions on the land they manage.
- Adopt measures to ensure women equitable access to land, livestock and other productive assets.
- Repeal laws and regulations which inhibit effective participation by women in economic transactions and in the planning, implementation and evaluation of rural development programmes.
- Ensure full membership and equal voting rights for women in people's organizations such as tenants' association, labour unions, cooperatives, credit unions and organizations of the beneficiaries

of land reform and other rural development programmes.

-- Promote collective action and organization by rural women to facilitate their participation in the full range of public services and to enhance their opportunities to participate in economic, political and social activities on an equal footing with men. 17

The first five recommendations are grouped in the Programme of Action under the subject of "Equality of Legal Status." The sixth is drawn from a group of four recommendations under the heading of "Women's Organization and Participation." In view of the greater de facto weight applied by tradition and power structures than by de jure legal rights in the case of groups who are under represented in existing power structures, the necessity of solidarity among women's groups and organized effort to obtain the benefits of de jure opportunity is obvious. Even with the best of intentions, the central governments which have the power to change laws or to create new options for the poor, women among them, are handicapped by the under-developed state of the entire nation reflected in the weakness of the administrative and legal apparatus of most developing countries. Local custom, enforced by local structures of power, will prevail easily wherever the hand of the central government is not present. Only cohesive effort by an organized group in such circumstances offers any hope of influencing the local powers that be to permit improvements in that group's relative position.

The attitudes of government delegations at WCARRD showed marked ambivalence toward participation by non-governmental citizens' groups in anything approaching decision-making on agrarian reform and rural development, despite the many sections in the text of the Declaration of Principles and Programme of Action which pointed strongly in that direction. After much discussion of the role of NGO's in follow-up to the conference, the WCARRD Programme of Action relegated NGO's to the sole function of public education in the developed nations on "the realities of rural poverty and...the need for global commitments for transfer of resources from the developed countries for the benefit of the rural poor in developing countries." The NGO's in developing countries themselves would have little power to do this from lack of funds and no role at all in the implementation of the WCARRD Programme of Action in their own countries.

This limited opening for interaction between governments and NGO's in pursuit of the implementation of conference recommendations from WCARRD stands in sorry contrast to the cordial government-NGO relationships indicated in the Programme of Action from the women's conference. Not only should there be "mutual cooperation...in implementing the programme of action," but governments were urged also to enable NGO's, with financial resources if necessary, "to become involved in the realization of the programme of action." Results of the NGO Forum which

paralleled the U.N. Conference in Copenhagen were to be published and disseminated along with the official conference documents; the role and resources of NGO's were to be considered in international, regional and national plans for the improvement of women's conditions; and government strategies should be developed to consider and implement NGO input and recommendations for future plans.

The responsibilities laid upon non-governmental organizations by the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women articulate the very activities which the NGO's at WCARRD, and a few friendly national delegations there, had urged upon the policy makers and development planners concerned with rural development in vain. With very slight adaptation in wording (shown in parenthesis), the guidelines for NGO activities in follow-up to the women's conference could have served, for the most part, equally well to guide post-WCARRD NGO actions. "Non-governmental organizations should support governmental efforts" by:

- Investigating the problems of different groups of women (rural poor);
- Assisting and promoting organizations of women (the rural poor) at the grass-roots level, especially those established among poor and uneducated women (the poorest of the poor), to promote learning and productive and other developmental activities;
- Providing liaison services for such groups with educational and other development agencies;
- Promoting attitudinal change among men and women;
- Promoting solidarity among women's groups (groups of the rural poor);

- Influencing and informing the mass media and political groups;
- Developing new analytical methodology;
- Launching programmes and activities to serve, in particular rural women (the rural poor);
- Promoting public acceptance of family planning, including sex education;
- Informing their members of government policies and development plans as well as the international standards and programmes for improving the situation of women (of the rural poor). 21

The sticking point for the NGO's at WCARRD would have been in the admonition to "support governmental efforts." In contrast to the collaboration between NGO's and governments on improving the status of women, NGO's found themselves in an adversary relationship with many governments of developing countries, in particular, concerning questions of the distribution and control of rural assets, which meant, of course, the distribution of rural power. The political issue is transparent in the latter instance but more obscure in the former. Many governments now have "Women's Bureaus" or "Women's Divisions" in various governmental departments. Delegations to the Copenhagen conference included many women and men whose job and, often, whose personal commitment inclined them to open cooperation with women's groups in a mutual objective. But there is no parallel in "Bureaus for the Rural Poor" or "Office for the Poorest of the Poor" in the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development of most countries, as

was noted earlier in discussion of the pre-WCARRD study for FAO on the participation of the poor in rural organizations.

The discomfort of most delegations at WCARRD with a participatory role for NGO's in post-conference implementation of the Programme of Action was not eased by the blunt frankness of NGO expressions of criticism of present governmental policies and programmes. NGO irreverence before governmental authority boded ill for attempts at cooperation in the minds of ministers and bureaucrats unaccustomed to the free give and take between citizen groups and governments in some Western democracies. This unwillingness of governments to enter freely into dialogue with NGO critique, on the other hand, fueled NGO self-righteousness and suspicions of hypocrisy in government intentions toward the rural poor. At the final hour of the conference Plenary, an ad hoc consortium of NGO's, frustrated to the limits of endurance by the silence imposed upon them through tight conference rules, was permitted time to address the conference. Both the adversary relationship and some basic facts about a genuinely participatory development of the rural poor are illustrated in the NGO consortium's statement:

We believe that development must be the expansion of the people's consciousness and therefore of power over themselves, environment and society...It is our conviction that a new model for rural development is needed and that this new model must involve a substantial transfer of power to the rural poor. This...emphasizes the need for structural reforms as a basis for real rural development...

In whatever way the complex issue of follow-up to the Conference is resolved, we feel that a role for NGOs needs to be structured into whatever mechanisms are designed. Otherwise, for governments to monitor the progress of governments as perceived by governments based on government documents seems unlikely to inspire either public confidence or effective action. 22

A report based on a year-long process of participatory research into the status of land reform and other aspects of rural equity in seven Asian countries was presented to all of the WCARRD delegations by the Asian NGO coalition which had conducted the research. The project had been funded by the Canadian International Development Agency and assisted by staff from the FAO office of the Freedom From Hunger/ Action For Development Programme. Although the members of the NGOs involved with the research were well-regarded by FAO staff and by many social scientists, humanists and others within their own countries, the political climate at the time made it inadvisable for any but the Indian participants to be publicly identified. 23

The absence of closer cooperation between governments and non-governmental organizations in disseminating information about the WCARRD recommendations has prevented most women's organizations working with rural women from becoming aware of the WCARRD Programme of Action on the "Integration of Women in Rural Development." Such, at least, is the conclusion indicated by an informal poll conducted by this writer among women from Low Income Countries at the NGO

Forum during the women's conference in Copenhagen exactly one year after the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development. The question about knowledge of the WCARRD recommendations was raised with the participants in a variety of seminars and discussions on matters pertaining to rural women, such as "Organizing Rural Women," "Learning From Rural Women," "Income Generating Projects," "Women's Access to Credit," "Rural Women Worldwide" and similar topics. In only one instance had any of the women heard of the WCARRD recommendations on rural women and not even she had actually seen them. Few of the women had been aware that the conference had taken place prior to the writer's questions. All of them, however, are actively engaged in their own countries on behalf of rural women and all requested copies of the WCARRD recommendations. They seemed to feel that it would be useful to know what had been proposed by the 150 governments represented at WCARRD when their own organizations entered into discussions with various government ministries in the future.

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It would be very unlikely that, one year following the women's conference, knowledge of what was recommended there will still be so unfamiliar to organizations dealing with rural women.

The language used in communicating about women and development is itself coming under examination, not only as it reflects planners' attitudes and assumptions but also as

an active influence upon them. There are many unconscious paradoxes in statements such as those, for example, in a report of the International Labour Office in which, on the one hand, it is stated that 70% of the female population in the developing world work in rural areas but, on the other hand, "only 26.4% of the female population are in the workforce." ²⁵ The ILO language, of course, is merely following the conventional prejudice of economic analysis which says that only paid employees are part of the workforce. The International Women's Tribune Center asks, pointedly, if the work of rural women would qualify them for "the workforce", i.e., for serious economic analysis, if it were described differently, as in the following translations:

<u>The Rural Woman</u>	... as <u>Agricultural Engineer</u>
ploughs, sows, weeds, harvests...	plans and executes a programme of vegetable and grain crop production. She is also responsible for seed procurement, land preparation, multiplication of crops, irrigation and fertilization practices and pest control.
markets ...	develops refined cost-analysis of available goods and marketing strategies including: planning, design, lay-out & operation of retail food markets. She is also concerned with quality control and improved shipping practices.
processes...	as <u>Post-Harvest Specialist</u> , prepares analysis of vegetable and grain processing and the

	implementation of suitable techniques for the development of the processing programme.
fetches and carries water and fuel...	monitors household energy consumption, implements cost-effective strategy for the use and maintenance of energy supply, with the goal of maintaining independence from costlier, imported forms of energy.
cares for the family.	develops and implements work/time system for the optimum use of members' time. She supervises health, nutrition and training needs for the group, and manages assignments, scheduling and labour relations. 26

A month after the Copenhagen conference, at a gathering of women from non-governmental organizations, from country delegations to the United Nations, and from United Nations specialized agencies in the open informality common among women sharing a common concern, an international civil servant from Jamaica said in exasperation: "We need a new vocabulary. We don't need to be 'integrated in development'. Women are already in development. We're just not in the decision-making part of it." To which another woman with a wide range of governmental, private sector and NGO experience added: "There are no experts in development. Only 'specialists'. We need new designs of communication and information flow among all people concerned with and affected by development in order to bring the best understandings and programs to the fore." ²⁷ Interestingly enough, in her analysis of the impact of development projects upon women, Dixon found

that the level of women's participation in decision making, both among project staff and project beneficiaries, was greater when the projects were administered through national women's associations, or through sections of government ministries and voluntary organizations which were particularly designated for women's concerns, than when administration was channelled through structures or staff people dealing more broadly with "people in general."²⁸

The implications of language for the context and mindset within which development planners and international or national agencies approach the question of women in development are put most forcefully in the UNDP Administrator's address to the women's conference in Copenhagen. In concluding his remarks he pointed out that he had not used any of the terms so common to discussions of women, such as "contribution", "participation", "involvement", or "integration." He had deliberately not used these terms because:

as these remarks were prepared, it struck me forcibly that I have never delivered an address, anywhere, discussing the contribution, participation, involvement, or integration of men into anything, and I have never seen a single document anywhere that used such terminology.

Language echoes and regenerates ideology and perception. Each of the terms that I have consciously avoided subtly and comfortably cushions a male-dominated planetary society from the ultimate reckoning with the UN Charter, the Declaration of Human Rights, the Covenant on Economic and Social Rights, and the Mexico City Plan of Action. Each of these

words suggests that some modest experimentation in enlarged "roles" for women will be enough. Each of them provides a convenient and cowardly diversion from the heart of the matter, which is very simply, that, whether in rural or urban development in developing countries, or in the struggle against continued over-consumption in industrialized countries, or in the negotiation of a New International Economic Order, humanity is denying itself the intelligence, the experience, the sensitivity and the vision of half of its members, in decision-making, negotiations, planning and practical action. 29

Unfortunately, until it can be taken for granted that government planners and development specialists have not only arrived at but also become habituated to this conviction in their patterns of thought and action, it will continue to be necessary to use language that calls particular attention to the facts about women in development.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Kamene Okonjo, "Rural Women's Credit Systems: A Nigerian Example," in Learning About Rural Women, editor Sondra Zeidenstein, 1979, Volume 10 of Studies in Family Planning, Number 11/12, page 331. For full treatment of the question of participation see Feasibility and Application of Rural Development Participation: A State-of-the-Art Paper, by Norman Uphoff, J. Cohen, and A. Goldsmith, Cornell Univ., 1979.
- 2) World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, Report, July 1979, pages 1 and 8.
- 3) Ibid., page 6.
- 4) Bernard van Heck, Participation of the Poor in Rural Organizations: A Consolidated Report on Studies in Selected Countries of Asia, the Near East, and Africa, FAO, Rome, 1979, page 56.
- 5) Ibid., pages iii and 2.
- 6) Bradford Morse, Statement of the United Nations Development Programme before the World Conference on the United Nations Decade for Women, Copenhagen, July 16, 1980.
- 7) Recognizing the "Invisible" Woman in Development: the World Bank's Experience, October 1979.
- 8) Ruth Dixon, Assessing the Impact of Development Projects on Women, USAID, May 1980, page 48.

- 9) Okonjo, op. cit.; Uphoff, Cohen, and Goldsmith, op.cit.; van Heck, op.cit.; see also the documentation kit on Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand prepared for WCARRD by the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, The Case for Alternative Development, Bangkok, 1979.
- 10) International Center for Research on Women, Policy and Program Recommendations for Enhancing Women's Employment in Developing Countries, Washington, D.C., April 1980; also Okeyo, Mazumdar, Abdullah and others in Zeidenstein, editor, Learning About Rural Women.
- 11) Dixon, op. cit.
- 12) WCARRD Report, page 11. The general recommendation on improved rural data collection has already been mentioned, op. cit., page 8.
- 13) Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women, A/Conf.94/34, paragraph 43.
See also Conference Resolution 44, "Women in agriculture and rural areas" and Resolution 41 "Women and Food." The most pertinent section of the Convention to Eliminate all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, passed by the U.N. General Assembly in December 1979 and signed in Copenhagen during the Conference, is Article 14.
- 14) Programme of Action, Copenhagen, paragraph 16.

- 15) WCARRD Report, page 3, paragraph (viii).
- 16) Loc. cit., paragraph (xiv).
- 17) Ibid., pages 10 - 11.
- 18) Theoretical discussion of this point is particularly good in the A.I.D. State-of-the-Art Paper on rural development participation by Uphoff, et.al (1979), and in the FAO study by van Heck. Illustrations of successful women's group actions are becoming plentiful in the literature, but for the issue of "power struggle" see particularly Development from the Bottom Up. Mobilizing the Rural Poor for Self-Development, by Mary Racelis Hollnsteiner et.al., Manila, 1978.
- 19) WCARRD, Report, page 22.
- 20) Programme of Action for the Second Half of the Decade, section 103, page 26.
- 21) Ibid., section 104, pages 26 - 27.
- 22) "Statement of the NGO Consortium at WCARRD", in HUNGER NOTES November 1979, newsletter of World Hunger Education Service, Washington, D.C., page 10.
- 23) Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, The Case for Alternative Development, Of the People, For the People, By the People, Bangkok, 1979.
- 24) The one informed woman, Mrs. Sita Rajasuriya, vice president of Lanka Jatika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya in Sri Lanka, had learned of the WCARRD results in private conversation with an FAO staff member while in Bangkok. Another woman

reported that her organization in Bangladesh hoped to be kept better informed on FAO activities in the future through the London-based NGO which her organization had recently joined, Associated Country Women of the World.

- 25) As cited in the International Women's Tribune Center Newsletter, No.9, April, 1979, page 6. The IWTC is in New York.
- 26) Ibid., pages 6 - 7.
- 27) Marcella Martinez and Michaela Walsh, respectively, at Conference on An Agenda for the Eighties, August 25, 1980, New York City.
- 28) Dixon, op. cit., page 21.
- 29) Bradford Morse, UNDP Statement, July 16, 1980.

III

COMMUNICATING ON THE NEEDS OF RURAL WOMEN

What women themselves are experiencing, described in their own terms, was the substance of more than two hundred seminars, workshops, and ad hoc discussion daily during the ten days of the NGO Forum of the United Nations Decade for Women, July 14-24, 1980, in Copenhagen. The Forum was attended by more than 8000 women from two hundred different countries.

The discussion which follows is based upon the insights and experience of women from Low Income Countries in communicating with rural women in their own countries, in working cooperatively with them on economic projects to improve their income, and in seeking outside assistance for women's projects.

LAND

Land issues were raised by only a few speakers. Domitila Barrios de Chungara, the prominent Bolivia miner's wife and organizer of collective action by miners' families, referred to the failure of most agrarian reform policies in Latin America to benefit women and peasant families in general. In a seminar on women's employment, she pointed out that the plots distributed to peasants were usually too small to support a family. Consequently, many women were forced to migrate to the cities in search of jobs as maids or street vendors.

A panel speaker from Mexico on the subject of women's employment reported that the low incomes and stagnant land-based economy in the villages near the factory town in which she was working with women created such terrible conditions for the women that even more oppressive factory jobs seemed a blessing to them, despite the fact that the women were required to work below the legal minimum wage and often as long as eighteen hours a day. In comparison with the poverty that awaited them in their villages, the exploited factory workers considered themselves lucky. There could be no question of asserting their legal rights. (Efforts to form a union among the women were easily thwarted by the factory management with the threat to close down the factory and move elsewhere.)

A workshop participant from the Dominican Republic criticized agrarian reforms also on the grounds that they usually created a new dependency on technologies for seeds, fertilizers and other costly inputs which peasants could not afford. They became hopelessly indebted; yet the terms under which they were qualified for government assistance required the use of such technologies. Since the suppliers of the technologies were usually multinational corporations, she viewed national agrarian reform schemes with great suspicion. In any event, they had been no value to the women of her country in her eyes.

In general, however, Third World women rarely raised the issue of access to land during the Forum workshops. When the writer made a direct inquiry, responses varied. Indonesian women at one workshop on rural women seemed at first not to understand the writer's question of whether or not women in their country had access to land. "The Government controlled the land." "Yes, women could own land legally. There was no special problem." But when the question was changed to ask "Do rural families have enough land?", their interest flared high and the answer came back emphatically: "No! The land in the countryside is owned by the rich men in the cities! They don't care about the village people and the village people can't even grow enough food while the rich men leave some of their good land idle. There should be a law that no land can be left idle while anyone is hungry!"

Indian and Pakistani women thought that women did not own agricultural land, only men did. They believed that if a woman owned land, it would be only the plot on which her house or shop was located. The Nigerian women, on the other hand, said land was no problem at all. One woman stated with obvious pride that she herself owned three farms. New land for someone to start a farm could be purchased cheaply from the government. For women in New Guinea, too, land itself was no problem but they had a great need for

knowledge about how to utilize their land more productively and sustainably.

In many cases, however, even where the law of the country permitted a woman to have greater access to or control over land, it could be very unwise for her to attempt to assert her rights, according to several women at one workshop. Without the acceptance of her husband, his family, and her brothers, the woman's life would become intolerable. The options for an independent life simply were not there. Therefore, she could enjoy only that access to land which her male relatives or her husband's family granted her.

When still other women from Bangladesh and Latin America were asked by the writer later to comment on this view, they affirmed its accuracy but added an important qualification. "One woman, alone," they said, "is helpless. But if women organized, even village women, the men would have to listen. Helping poor women get their rights is something what national women's organizations should take up more actively than they have." Women from all parts of the developing world agreed, however, that few women had any sure knowledge of their legal rights. They knew only the de facto practices in their communities.

CREDIT

Since land or other physical property is the basis for credit from standard financial institutions everywhere, women find themselves severely handicapped in obtaining credit. Access to credit for income generating projects, then, rather than access to land (which seemed hopeless), was a subject of eager discussion. The manager of the Maendeleo Handicraft Co-operative Society in Kenya recounted the great struggle the women artisans had had in getting the credit they needed to expand their marketing options "since men own all the land in Kenya". They could not go to a commercial bank for help. Through cooperative banks in which the women participated, however, they had finally managed to meet their needs. Now the Maendeleo Handicraft Cooperative Society even owned its own building in Nairobi. On the basis of that property, access to credit for their crafts business was no longer a problem. The women's craft cooperative is the largest business in Kenya owned by women. Most of the cooperative's members are rural women. About half of their products are marketed within Kenya and half are exported to Europe and the United States.

Since "banks are not credit trees", as one workshop on financing women's projects put it, venture capital has to come from other sources, chiefly from family members or friends. Cooperative credit unions have become very

popular among women in Kenya and elsewhere. A large scale revolving loan fund for women's income generating projects in Upper Volta, launched in 1977 with a U.S.A.I.D. grant, drew great interest at the Forum workshops. The director of the women's credit project reported that more than 2500 women in seventy-five villages had already borrowed the equivalent of \$85,000 in amounts ranging from \$20 to \$3,000. Their projects included leather tanning, weaving, commercialization of cereals and grains, small animal husbandry, soap making, purchasing donkeys and carts for hauling wood and water, collectively-owned motorized grain grinding mills, rice hullers and oil presses, and marketing "karite" (a food made of shea butter and oils). Many more women were applying now for such loans than could be accommodated until the current loans were repaid, the project director reported, but it was too soon for that. Meanwhile, the poverty of the women and their families was pressing. Where could another grant be obtained to enlarge the revolving loan fund?

Despite the Upper Voltan project director's experience with this relatively large-scale women's project, she had no familiarity with the world of donor agencies per se, or with the language and skills of grantsmanship. She, and many others at the NGO Forum, expressed need for training in both the search for grants and in accounting skills to

manage the grants once obtained, as well as in the manage-
ment of modern credit institutions.³ The Upper Voltan
revolving loan fund had built upon the traditional credit
system which had long existed there among women, as it does
in apparently all Sub-Saharan African countries and most
of those in Asia. Called "chit clubs" in Pakistan or
"contribution clubs" in most other places, they are all
based on the accumulation of larger sums from small savings
on a regular basis by members of the club. Members receive
their share of the collective savings in turn. Sometimes
loans will be made from the collective balance to be repaid
with interest. The larger, more sophisticated practices
of a modern credit union or cooperative bank are merely an
extension of this village institution. More sophisticated
record keeping is required, however, and also some account-
ing skills which women will either have to hire from outside
their group or be trained in themselves.

LITERACY

Since the percentage of rural women in Low Income
Countries who are literate is extremely low, the question
of literacy and numeracy training for rural women arose in
regard to their ability to manage modern income-generating
enterprises. At a workshop on organizing rural women, field
workers for UNICEF and Save the Children Foundation in
countries of West and Central Africa noted that, in their

experience, rural women simply did not have time to acquire literacy skills for their own sake, even though privately a woman would often say that she wished she did not have to rely on a third party to help her with her dealings with the post office, where she might have a savings account, or to read to her the letters from her husband who was away working in the city. She would prefer to preserve her privacy by being able to read herself. Nevertheless, learning to read took too much time out of her household duties, farming, marketing, and other essential activities.

Functional literacy, however, taught in direct application to some need arising in a group income generating project was readily acquired if the group's outside advisor (an extension agent or a field worker from a voluntary organization, for example) waited until the women themselves wanted the lacking skill before the training was offered.⁴

OVER-EMPLOYED/UNDER-COMPENSATED

A number of women in the NGO Forum discussions were highly critical of efforts to improve women's economic and social status by getting them into jobs outside the home. Most women in Low Income Countries do not need more employment, an Indian researcher pointed out; they are already over-employed. The real problem is that the work they do is undervalued and under-paid. It does little good to advocate "equal pay for equal work" because men and women

do not generally do the same kind of work. What is needed is for women's jobs to be compensated at the same level as men's jobs. As it is now, because of the double burden of full household responsibilities on top of long hours of under-compensated labor, whether in the fields or in the factories and shops, "the most exploited women in the Third World are those who are the most employed."⁵

The most successful stories of improving women's economic status through jobs came from instances where women succeeded in breaking into a previously all-male job category. The YWCA in South Korea, for example, established a six-month vocational training program for women to learn to become house painters, wallpaper hangers, and tile layers after a survey revealed a shortage of skilled workers in these fields. Women were already employed in building construction but only in the least skilled, most arduous and least paid jobs. In need of skilled labor, employer prejudice melted when the women demonstrated their competence after training. Each of the women in the program found employment in her new trade, earning from two to five times as much as she previously did in "women's work."⁶

WOMEN ORGANIZING WOMEN

The ability to meet with women in groups varies greatly from culture to culture. In Bangladesh, it may be necessary to create a gathering in a woman's home by going from house

to house first obtaining permission from the male heads of households. In African villages consent of the male elders will also be important and it helps to stress the value of the discussion for "improvements for the families." In some African countries there is a Village Development Committee, required by national policy, which may have a Women's Subcommittee. A Cameroon organizer among village women stressed that even while being sensitive to local customs it is important not to assume that the culture is static. "Every culture continues to evolve; find out how flexible the customs may be."⁷

The women's organizations represented at the NGO Forum were not the organizations of women in poverty who were the subject of their concern. They were organizations of middle class or professional women who had the time to concern themselves with their poorer sisters because they enjoyed a certain degree of surplus in life's necessities. As one Latin American put it, "women who are struggling merely for survival for themselves and their children cannot concern themselves with organizations and rights; for this they need the help of women of the middle class."⁸

Despite poverty, however, rural women in many countries are accustomed to their own organizations and are capable of exhibiting strong collective action when sufficiently aroused. Asked if rural African women were organized, a

Nigerian professor replied, "Very highly! They are organized by age groups, by family kinship networks, in cooperatives of various types, by collection clubs. In Nigerian villages, the most powerful women's organization of all is a traditional one which, in translation, is called 'The Daughters.'" It would be difficult for someone outside the village to penetrate the web of women's organization in order to perceive who the actual leaders were. Establishing communication with them would take much patience, courteous waiting, and tact. The first woman an outsider could approach would never be the real leader. Only after these "front people" had screened the outsiders and had judged them sincere would dialogue be brought closer to the real leaders. The "outsider" could as well be a Nigerian from the capital city as a person from a foreign donor agency of the United Nations. Merely being Nigerian would make little difference to the villagers. Only in those villages where the National Council of Women's Societies had chapters was the trust relationship already sufficiently established for urban and rural women to communicate freely. And such villages, she added, were in the more accessible areas.

Women who have been uprooted from rural areas to urban slums are not only more accessible to middle class urban-based women's organizations, but they also tend to lack the

cohesiveness which can be both a source of strength and support and, at the same time, an obstacle to innovations that might improve the relative position of the poorer members of the rural community. The Working Women's Forum in Madras, India, founded and run by middle-class educated women, has had considerable success in seeking out and then developing leadership potential among women in the slums. The object is to help the women organize themselves into both self-help economic ventures and into pressure groups to protect their rights and obtain assistance from government agencies. The organization was reported to be reaching 700,000 urban slum women and 100,000 landless women in the vicinity of Madras.

The participation of women in two different kinds of grassroots agrarian reform movements in India was the subject of a research report in a workshop on "The Politicization of Rural Women." The movement in West Bengal was led by one of India's two major communist parties, the CPIM (Communist Party of India-Marxist). It was highly disciplined and centrally organized. The other movement, in the state of Maharashtra, was more spontaneous, inspired among largely tribal people by some idealistic, independent political activists with a middle class background. The participation of women was significantly higher in the more radically participatory Maharashtra movement both in

numbers of women and in their degree of initiative and
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 activity.

Other Indian women noted that, in general, women will turn out great numbers for demonstrations and other collective action on issues of economic injustice where there seems a possibility of some immediate improvements to be gained. They will also bank together to protect brutality against women. In some instances women will often also assert leadership in a mixed group of men and women, fired up by their indignation. It seems rare, however, for women to sustain involvement in a disciplined movement. A few recent exceptions are seen in some protective associations among women small-scale entrepreneurs in the informal sector and in labor unions. The explanation which seemed most plausible was that "the double burden" of most women within their households, managing both household needs and economic needs, made any time spent on political matters a great hardship. Collective efforts toward economic protection may have been given such precious time because of dire economic need.

ECONOMIC LIMITATIONS OF WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations of middle class women, too, experience a handicap due to economic limitations. The women rarely control enough surplus resources of their own to afford paid staff. As a result, they are frequently incapable of

implementing their ideas for projects. They are also unable to apply the time needed in research and communications to obtain grants from larger organizations or donor agencies which might make their good ideas more feasible of implementation. Two successes in breaking through this double-bind for voluntary women's organizations were described in Kenya and one in Bangladesh.

The Maendeleo Handicraft Co-operative Society is an out-growth of the multipurpose Kenyan women's organization called Maendeleo Ya Wanawake, the Swahila expression for "Women's Progress." The original Maendeleo was started, as the story was told, by wives of the colonial administrators of Kenya "to keep the wives of the rebelling men busy." The wives attended the meetings, the narrator recalled, in order to avoid suspicion and trouble for their men. After Kenyan independence, the women continued to meet on their own but now "under the initiative of our own natural leaders to decide what we really needed and wanted, not to continue the needlecraft and home economics that the colonial women had taught us. What did we need with tableclothes?" First, water for home and garden use was the main project. But soon they added attempts to earn more income. Their traditional handicrafts began to be marketed cooperatively within Kenya, but profitability remained disappointingly low and the craft cooperative nearly died

out. An infusion of technical assistance in quality control of the products, in designs that were more competitive in the urban markets, and in modern marketing skills in general put new life into the cooperative. This assistance came largely from two national government ministries, the Ministry of Cooperative Development and the Ministry of Culture and Social Progress. The women's products were displayed with their help at major trade fairs both in Kenya and abroad. The Kenyan Commercial Trade Center in Nairobi also helped the women establish important commercial links.

The narrator pointed to Maendeleo's experience of fruitful cooperation with men in the power structure of Kenya in her remark that "confrontation with men merely delays our progress; we must work together." This view held generally by the African women at the NGO Forum, was less optimistically shared among women from other parts of the developing world. While not advocating "confrontation", neither did they expect much help from men in the power structure. The strategy for them seemed to be "don't confront; try to quietly go around the male structures and get on with your own project; don't expect help."

The other Kenyan success story is the National Council of Women in Kenya. It took this all-volunteer organization

three years of persistence to persuade any donor agency to provide the organization with a grant to employ a full-time coordinator and a secretary. When help came finally from the Carnegie Foundation, such "professionalizing" was accomplished. With fulltime paid staff the National Council of Women was able to demonstrate an ability to receive and manage grants and projects on a larger scale than was possible under all-volunteer staffing. Grants have been received for many significant projects since then, the UNICEF/NGO Water Project being perhaps the best known internationally. In that project the National Council of Women of Kenya has been assisting women's groups since 1977 in some of the remotest and poorest villages of Kenya to undertake self-help projects which bring safe drinking water within easy access of all households. The NCWK is the umbrella organization for thirty-three affiliated women's groups, of which the Maendeleo ya Wanawake is
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one.

COMMITMENT TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The commitment of national women's organizations to national development in general and to rural women's needs in particular, so well illustrated by this women's organizations of the African countries, was evidenced also by national women's organizations in Asian countries,

particularly Thailand, Indonesia and Bangladesh. The leadership for women's activities in all of these countries come from a miniscule portion of the female population but nowhere more so than Bangladesh, with the restrictions placed on women's education and on women's freedom of movement and association in the Moslem culture as expressed in that country.

Cooperative economic organizing among women in rural villages as well as in urban slums of Bangladesh, clinics and public consciousness raising for family planning, and basic leadership development programs among secluded rural women were among the work described by a group of outstanding Bangladeshi women. The group included among others a lawyer sharing joint practice with her attorney-husband, a journalist, a professor at the University of Dacca, and an economist employed in a government ministry. They spoke candidly of equally exceptional husbands who supported their volunteer work as well as their careers, despite criticism from the husbands' more traditional families. They affirmed the importance for them of their faith in Islam while searching under the layers of cultural additions from a male-dominated society for the genuine essence of their religion. They also spoke of their great difficulty in attracting funding from donor agencies or cooperation for their work from the government. The one big exception to

this seemed to be the organization of Concerned Women for Family Planning. With substantial support from the International Planned Parenthood Federation and other sources, this organization's two-hundred member staff makes it the largest employer of women in all of Bangladesh.

They saw with satisfaction that the numbers of Bangladeshi women with higher education, hence also with greater opportunity to become involved in the problems of their countrywomen, have increased over the past ten years. On the other hand, they noted problem of the brain-drain of educated women out of work among the poor and into more remunerative positions, often out of the country altogether. Women who emerge from poor circumstances into the opportunity for higher education, it was said, almost always bring with them a strong motivation to return to serve the poor in communities like the one they have known. As they progress in their education, however, this resolve often weakens. Their identification with the poor slowly gives way to a new identification with the elites who set the milieu to which they must adapt at the university. Their personal rewards come now not from relationship with people left back home but from relationships with people around them in this new setting. There are many influences to pull away from the university-trained women original idealistic goal. "What kind of education," the Bangladeshi

group asked in one workshop, "would be best for building up the ranks of women leaders who were able to sustain their commitment to the poor even as they gained professional competence and ease in the glittering sophistication of the modern sector?" A troubling dilemma for which no one had an answer but with which many women listening could personally identify.¹⁴

At one of the Forum workshops, a high ranking official from the international headquarters of a United Nations specialized agency remarked, "off the record," that programs or projects intended to benefit women which were sponsored by United Nations agencies always worked best in those cases where the program officer of the agency was a woman. More than a few of these women program officers come from the sparse numbers of highly educated women in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and other countries with limited opportunity for women. In such cases one country's loss may be another developing country's gain.

NATIONAL MACHINERIES PROMOTING THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Most nations created "national machineries" following the International Women's Year Conference to help implement the Mexico City Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women which came out of that 1975 event. These Women's Bureaus, Women's Councils or other bodies, where they exist, are

expected to be coordinating and information agencies for women's issues, at the very least, and advocacy agencies wherever possible.

Inquiries among women from the Third World about the role of these government sponsored agencies in promoting the status of rural women brought very mixed answers. In some countries where women already had effective national organizations of their own, the Women's Bureau or Council seems to have served positively, feeling itself to be accountable to the non-governmental women's organizations as well as to the national government and attempting to promote dialogue and cooperation between its two "constituencies." In other countries, in spite of the tradition of active national women's organizations, the Women's Bureau has played a weak, largely token or ceremonial role. Appointment was by political patronage and the appointee enjoyed the prestige without either feeling or having much actual responsibility.

Women's Bureaus in Latin America were seen as largely ineffective by the Latin American women questioned. Even in those instances where Women's Bureau directors are sincere in wanting to improve the status of women, their effort is said to be greatly handicapped by underfunding and understaffing. In any event, rural women are not very high on the priorities of any of the Women's Bureaus,

probably because they are not very visible in the experience of the kind of women appointed to these posts. Efforts to improve the status of women tend to concentrate on the 14% of Latin American women who are officially counted in the labor force. Since more than 60% of these are domestic workers, attention to their plight is certainly needed; but, as noted in previously this 14% does not represent "the poor majority."

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In no case did a country's Women's Bureau appear to Third World women as the best source of information on the conditions of rural women. The governmental source most frequently recommended was the Ministry of Rural Development or the Extension Service in the Ministry of Agriculture. In some countries a better source might be the women's branch of the political party; in still others, a non-governmental organization. "It depends on who has the best network of contacts into the villages and remote areas."

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An interview with a Nepalese woman Journalist at the NGO Forum, who had learned about the United Nations Women's Conference while on an assignment in Norway, produced the observation that "ninety-six percent of all Nepalese women are rural and poor, and no one and no organization is genuinely in touch with their lives and their problems."

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The Women Services Coordinating Committee of Nepal, created after the International Women's Year Conference in 1975,

is chaired by the queen. Various princesses of the royal family had the several sub-committees.

COMMUNICATING WITH RURAL WOMEN

How to communicate with rural women about the way the women themselves experience their problems and possibilities was the subject of a series of workshops at the NGO Forum titled "Learning from Rural Women." The principal discussants were women engaged in research among rural women in India and Jamaica and women involved in development projects in a variety of situations in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Indian sub-continent. From their many stories emerged a unanimous agreement that "outsiders" who want the truth from rural women have to learn first to accommodate themselves to the rhythms of the rural women and their community. This means first of all that conversation with a rural woman must wait for her convenience, because she is an extremely busy person. A researcher does not choose the time of planting or harvest to go to the village, for example, unless it is to observe these activities themselves. And if that is the case, the researcher should be prepared not merely to observe but also to help with the work, asking the women for instruction and then sharing the hot, dirty, muddy, sweaty, back-breaking work beside them. Before this degree of rapport can be looked for, however, the outsider must expect to spend many days

perhaps weeks, "just being there," slowly but surely winning trust and acceptance.

The necessity of learning "to just be there" was stressed by speaker after speaker. For the goal-oriented, schedule-conscious, productivity-minded development specialist, researcher or planner, this skill is wholly foreign and must be deliberately fostered. "I spent five months of eating in kitchens of villagers and helped to plant paddy...only then did the women open up and begin really talking to 'the outside teacher'." "You have to live in their own manner and work side by side." "We agency people have to be ready to 'sit down and wait it out' if we really want the right results; good participation requires a long, patient, open process." "We have to de-condition ourselves from 'targets' and time limits. Real development must move in its own 'organic' way. It is unpredictable." "You have to learn 'with' not 'from' rural women. You have to understand why women do what they do and when they do it in order to relate to them effectively." "Our biggest planning error is to think that 'anyone' can decide what people need and want. Effective research requires building up mutual trust and learning to hear with the ears of the rural women you are talking with." "Take a slow pace in the communication process. Wait for the women to respond. They will speak

out once they are convinced that their views and ideas are really wanted."

The ability to get accurate information from the poor in rural areas requires the prior establishment of a great deal of trust. Where people have experienced oppression, it was noted, the art of deception has become a deeply ingrained survival skill. Also, where people are vulnerable to loss of status or other penalties for revealing what they really think or do, their answers to an interviewer will conceal more than they reveal. "They will tell you what they think you want to hear." "They will answer just anything in order to get rid of you." The poorer they are, the more probable that they fear manipulation by people of higher class ranking or status. Initially almost any researcher is bound to be identified with the wealthier classes by virtue merely of her or his higher education, clothing, equipment, and speech patterns.

The speaker agreed, however, that this initial handicap in creating genuinely open communication with the rural poor can be surmounted by patience, modesty, tact, and non-aggressive "waiting"; in other words, by respect for the women or men with whom the outsider wishes to communicate, demonstrated more in "body language" than in words. As a Jamaican anthropologist put it: "We must remember that to gather data means either to pry into

personal, sensitive areas or to wait until the information is volunteered." Waiting for volunteered information obviously demonstrates more respect than prying.

The age, sex, and appearance of the inquirer can also make an important difference. In almost all rural cultures, by virtue of their more traditional, less modernized patterns of values, outsiders will have easier access to the local women if they are women themselves. They will be more readily given 'the benefit of the doubt' if they are dressed modestly by local standards and simply. Usually, age is accorded more trust and confidence than youth. Whereas the competence and judgement of a young woman will have to be demonstrated before it will be believed, an older woman, in most cultures is apt to be granted respect from the start.

An International Labor Organization staffer illustrated this point graphically from an incident she experienced in an Indian village where she was on a fact-finding visit with various officials of the Indian government. The gray in her hair was as obvious as the fact that she was a foreigner. The leader of the delegation of planners, a man, was having a hard time eliciting any comments from the women at the mixed village gathering, despite some preliminary work done by a younger team of Indian women who had been sent to the area to help prepare people for this

meeting. Finally, an older, white-haired, lower caste woman walked up from the rear of the gathering and stood directly in front of the ILO representative, looking at her for a long moment without speaking. A question came out of the silent confrontation: "Do you have children?" "Yes," the ILO woman replied, "I have grandchildren." "So. I thought it. You are a woman like me. We have experienced life. I can talk with you, you have some understanding. Why do you send us these young girls who know nothing about life to ask us questions?" And then a description of the needs of women in the village poured out in full frankness, to the obvious discomfort of the male elders.

The link that creates a spark of common identity and trust, however, can be as unexpected as a button with the symbol of the International Women's Year worn on the dress of a visitor from the United States to a remote Honduran village. The sight of the symbol drew a broad smile from a campesina who had never been more than thirty miles from her village. In her local dialect she claimed, pointing at the button, "Me, too! I am one of these! We are the same!" The visitor, puzzled, drew from the enthusiastic campesina the following story.

It seems that in a tomato project introduced in the village by the government to increase family income, village

men were being taught how to terrace the hillsides to create better vegetable beds, while the women were taught how to plant and cultivate the tomatoes. This woman, however, had a crippled husband who could not build her a terrace. She wanted to learn terracing for herself. Other village women were in similar situations, needing terraces but unable to look to men to provide them. Despite the first campesina's explanation of the problem, however, the extension worker insisted on maintaining the sex-specific division of labor and instruction. The determined campesina refused to be stopped. She took her case to the extension worker's supervisor in the district office, a trip which required considerable travel by foot and by bus. The supervisor had supported the cause of the independent woman farmer, fortunately, who was allowed to join the terracing class. Other women, taking heart from her example, joined suit and built their own terraces. The success of the campesina's small rebellion against oppressive tradition had obviously buoyed her confidence and self-esteem. She now identified herself proudly with women world-wide who were working for "equality and development." How the IWY symbol and its meaning had come to be known to a semi-literate woman in that simple, out-of-the-way Honduran mountain village remains a mystery. The moral of the story, the impressed visitor suggests, is to

not underestimate the level of consciousness and desire for change on the part of women in even the poorest and most primitive rural areas.

SPECIAL CASE OF LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN

The attention of Latin American women at the NGO Forum in Copenhagen tended to be absorbed by political events such as the Nicaraguan revolution, the oppression and violence in El Salvador, the Bolivian coup which occurred while the Forum was in progress, and human rights issues in Argentina. Few Latin American women attended Forum workshops on rural development. Therefore, interviews with Latin American women in Washington, D.C. and New York City following the Copenhagen Forum of the Decade for Women tested the applicability to Latin America of some of the assertions made at the Forum.

Regarding the risk to a woman from asserting her rights to land against male opposition, a Colombian agreed that it was dangerous for a woman to do so, but added, "Women must know their rights and stand up in their villages. Other women will join the one who has the courage to start." She then recounted the following incident. A woman politician in Colombia, who was particularly sympathetic to the problems of the rural poor, confronted a rural bank official over his refusal to make loans to small farmers. She knew that national law required

the bank to lend money to very small farmers on special concessional terms. This official, however, stubbornly refused to follow that provision of the law, insisting on "proper collateral" from such small farmers as from anyone else. When threats of disclosure to national authorities failed to change his mind, the woman politician resorted to public exposure of the bank's uncooperative policies. With a loudspeaker, she stood up in the marketplace and proceeded to explain to everyone within ear-shot clearly and definitely what the bank was required to do for small farmers by national law. "She could have been shot!" the narrator concluded admiringly, "But instead the banker was embarrassed and shamed by public disclosure into giving more credit to the campesinos."

An official at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), who had become particularly interested in the question of credit for women's enterprises as a result of the International Women's Year Conference (1975), told of subsequent efforts to render IDB assistance more accessible to women's enterprises. In addition to describing a number of highly successful cooperative enterprises generating income among very poor Latin American women which had begun with a minimum of equipment and venture capital, the bank economist made five significant observations. First, the IDB found that any credit program geared

to "small enterprises" would find women participating in large numbers, often more than half of the total borrowers, simply because most women's enterprises in the Third World are, almost by definition, on a small scale. Conversely, in many countries, most small scale entrepreneurs are women. Secondly, she noted that small scale enterprises are usually very labor intensive and more in need of operating capital than investment capital. Since no normal bank will make loans for operating capital, women's enterprises (or small scale enterprises in general) need a special kind of lending program, perhaps one in which another institution guarantees the loan. Third, precisely because small enterprises are so labor intensive, the entrepreneur, man or woman, cannot spare the time to learn how to deal with big financial institutions. They have to rely on the most readily available sources of credit known to them, namely the "informal credit market" with its often exorbitant interest rates. Fourth, despite the poor credit risk these small entrepreneurs might appear to be from conventional banking perspective, their rate of repayment is actually very high. As explanation for this she hypothesized that small entrepreneurs, knowing they are highly vulnerable to the loss of credit with the consequent dependence again on expensive informal credit, will make any sacrifice needed in order to retain credit-worthiness

with a bank once it has been attained. The IDB official's fifth observation was that a development bank or larger commercial bank finds it too expensive to deal directly with many small borrowers, because the cost to the bank in staff time and accounting processes is the same for a small loan as for a large one. Hence, in order to continue assisting small entrepreneurs, the IDB, for example, must place the money to be made available for this purpose with an intermediary agency, such as a private voluntary organization or a cooperative. The intermediary agency, in turn, deals directly with the small entrepreneurs. (This, in effect, is the nature also of the U.S.A.I.D. credit assistance program for the women of Upper Volta described earlier.) The IDB economist also noted, however, that technical assistance may be necessary to enable the intermediary non-profit organizations develop the institutional capacity to manage effectively the large sums which form the minimum loan level considered economically by a development bank.

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The problems encountered in other cultures when an outsider wishes to meet with women in groups are not present in Latin America. Village women will gather around a stranger readily out of sheer curiosity. Also, messages about a new person or novel events spread rapidly through the women's "grapevine", which is a highly

operational channel of communication between villages and between women's groups within a city or district. Once a stranger's sincerity is accepted, discussion flows freely.

For outsiders from U.S. government agencies, however, regardless of their personal sincerity, the level of trust which must be established for good communication with the poor may remain impossibly elusive. Resentment over U.S. military interventions in Central American and Caribbean countries in the past, suspicion of present political motives, paranoia about activities of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, and the identification of the interests of the United States in the popular mind with the interests of multinational corporations and the feared elites of the country combine to form a seemingly impenetrable obstacle to open communication between official representatives of the U.S. government and poor people's organizations and representatives in Latin America. In response to the question of how someone in a U.S. government agency could best get around such an obstacle to get the needs and opinions of poor rural women heard in project planning and policy making, two suggestions were offered. First, it was recommended that USAID, for example, contract with local women, probably by means of a non-governmental organization, to survey the thinking and situation of rural women in the country. Secondly, it

would be valuable for USAID staff to seek private, strictly off-the-record, low profile conversations with women intellectuals in the country. Latin American women intellectuals are frequently committed to the problems of the poor in general, as are their male colleagues, and are more sensitive to the particular situations of poor women than are men. To cooperate openly with a U.S. government agency, however, would damage their personal credibility with others in their country who are committed to social change. Curiously enough, the same level of distrust does not seem to extend to U.S. citizens working under contract with, but not on the staff of a government agency. Research about rural women or the poor in general which is carried out for the government by non-governmental organizations, it was asserted, whether such organizations are based in the United States or Latin America, would receive full cooperation by Latin American intellectuals and others such as nuns and priests who have the confidence of the rural poor.

COMMUNICATION WITH DONOR AGENCIES

Communications between donor agencies and rural women or women's organizations trying to help them seem to be so inadequate at this point in time that almost any effort toward a fuller exchange of ideas and information would be a significant improvement. With very few exceptions this

was the consensus not only of the Third World women and women's organizations interviewed at the Forum of the Decade for Women in Copenhagen and later, but also of most U.S.A.I.D, United Nations, and Private Voluntary Organization personnel interviewed in the course of this study. While nothing more than a preliminary assessment can be claimed here, the level of agreement is indeed striking.

Interviews and correspondence with a few USAID personnel and their dependents or others familiar with AID Missions in several Asian and African countries suggest that the status of communications between USAID Missions and women's organizations (or indeed any indigenous non-governmental organizations involved with rural development "from the bottom up") ranges from exemplary to non-existent. The determining factor in each case was identified by the person interviewed as the degree of interest shown by the Mission director, or at least the director's readiness to lend support to communication initiatives by interested Mission staff. Good working relationships between the USAID Mission and women's organizations in Ghana and Upper Volta, for example, grew out of both personal commitment from key Mission staff and sound processes of joint research and planning in which the national women's organizations fully participated.

On the other hand, USAID Missions in other countries seemed to have had little or no communication with rural women's groups or with woman's organizations trying to assist rural women, the one exception being family planning organizations. Mission directors were said to plead commonly a lack of sufficient funds and staff for a more active involvement with indigenous non-governmental organizations. This was seen as a hollow excuse. It was noted that where key officers were willing to place women's development higher on the priority list, and where a genuine desire to promote development "from the bottom up" existed, Mission funds were shifted around to permit better interaction with women's groups and NGO's in general. Knowledgeable observers also pointed out that where Mission staff are, in fact, too over-burdened to seek out knowledge of indigenous organizations themselves, interested family dependents of the staff, Peace Corps volunteers and other Americans in volunteer or private capacity in the country could be called upon to perform valuable linkage to local, indigenous NGO efforts and leaders, at no extra expense to the Mission.

Even where Mission liaison with indigenous NGOs is honored with a paid position, however, mere tokenism can result, as was the case in one USAID Mission in an Asian country described by a former staff officer. A contract

person assigned to this task reportedly knew the indigenous NGOs well. She was said to receive so little support from the Mission director, nonetheless, that her knowledge went unused by the Mission and she was unable to obtain more effective support from the Mission for the grassroots rural development projects among the poorest of the poor being performed by NGOs. The story continued: "Six months after the new U.S. ambassador arrived, he had not yet even heard the name of the most highly respected NGO in the country with the best reputation for work with the landless poor. The Ambassador was a good man, but he wasn't receiving very good briefing from his staff." Mission reports to Washington did contain reference to "women in development" and to "meeting basic needs", but, according to the former Mission officer, this was only "window dressing", a reluctant compliance with the Congressional mandate which was actually considered by the Mission director to be a nuisance having nothing to do with real development.

Good relationships between women's organizations and United Nations agency offices in Third World countries seem to depend similarly upon the chance factor of agency staff members with personal commitment to the problems of women in development and to the goal of participatory development. Even when such a personal interest is present, however, the obstacles to communication with rural women remain enormous.

The situation for national, urban-based women's organizations seems to be only very slightly better. In almost every instance where the writer discussed this matter with staff members of intergovernmental development agencies, a profound lack of understanding could be observed as to why women's organizations were not aware of the work of that agency in their country or why women's organizations did not make use of the publications, technical assistance or other services that might be available to them. Reactions to the existence of a serious communications gap ranged from a shrug ("we only deal with governments") to frustration at the absence of adequate institutional channels for good information flows.

The difficulties expressed by the Third World women themselves are not complex for the most part but they are deeply frustrating. Over and over when asked if their organizations had approached a United Nations agency or a foreign donor for help or information, a negative answer was explained by "we do not know how to proceed", "we do not know where to write", "we do not have any name or address". Some who had attempted written communication complained that no replies came and they did not know why. One organization working with rural women replied, "There is no aid for simple people with little education; only the big organizations who know all the right words can get help."

Even the information which exists and which might assist them is of no use, because it does not reach them. Newsletters and other free or low cost publications are not received because no one in the organization has ever heard of them or seen them. A World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development can come and go, with recommendations pertaining to all of the work a Third World women's organization is trying to accomplish, but very few women have an awareness of it. Most are completely outside the charmed circle within their countries within which news about such development events flows and is discussed. How can that circle be widened to include Third World women through their own organizations?

Many practical suggestions came from the women who responded to that question. The most important of them included the following

1) Women in Development Officers.

Each donor agency or United Nations specialized agency which maintains a permanent mission headquarters in a developing country should have a staff officer specializing in women's needs in that country. Among the WID officer's functions should be (a) to develop familiarity with indigenous women's organizations and women professionals involved with rural development; (b) to perform a two-way liaison for pertinent information between the agency

and indigenous women's organizations; (c) to seek inclusion of women professionals and representatives of women's organizations at in-country or regional meetings on all development issues (not merely "women's issues") sponsored by donor agencies or United Nations specialized agencies; (d) to promote problem-specific communication of indigenous women specialists and women's organizations with development planners and policy makers within the country and within the agency.

2) Seminars and Workshops

Donor agencies and United Nations specialized agencies should organize seminars and workshops in each developing country in consultation with women's organizations for the following five purposes: (a) to acquaint agency staff with indigenous national and regional women's organizations and with the needs of rural women as assessed by these organizations, and, conversely, to better acquaint the women's organizations with one another; (b) to identify within that country ways governments, development agencies, and indigenous non-governmental organizations (especially women's organizations) can promote the development capacities and income-generating activities of rural women through collaborative efforts; (c) to improve the access by women's organizations to donor agency technical and funding

assistance through training in project design and proposal writing, training in budgeting and accounting, training in project evaluation, and familiarity with the agency's requirements, timetables, processes, and appropriate personnel; (d) to improve the skills in leadership and communication within national women's organizations in order to maximize participation in the organization's decisions and activities by its members, particularly by rural women in the design and management of programs or projects intended for them; (e) to sensitize donor agency staff in the ways in which the agency's customary language or terminology, requirements and processes hinder effective communication with women's organizations, and to stimulate the design within the agency of improved communication alternatives.

3) A Handbook of "Who's Involved With Rural Development in Country X"

To help bridge the knowledge gap that prevents women's organizations from approaching donors and development planners in their own country, as well as to improve donor and development agency familiarity with indigenous organizations, especially women's organizations, an annotated roster of organizations would be highly useful in each developing country. The roster would give for each UN or major development and donor agency which

maintains an office in the country the address, telephone number, name and title of chief officer and the name and title of the person who responds to general inquiries. It would indicate in one or two sentences the kind of work done by the agency in the country in question, and available publications would be listed with ordering information. The roster might do the same for the most important offices or divisions within government ministries involved with rural communities. It should also provide such information on national non-governmental organizations involved with rural development. The production of such a roster could be sponsored by any of the donor agencies or United Nations specialized agencies. It should be distributed to all of the organizations included in it, with more copies available through these organizations or other appropriate channels to public inquirers within the country. The roster might be produced by a university department, by a national ministry, or by a national non-governmental organization.

Since the roster would need to be updated from time to time, the producer might well be assisted by a donor agency to become an intentional clearinghouse within that country for information about intergovernmental, governmental, foreign, and non-governmental agencies involved with rural development, including information about the

publications they have which are available to women's organizations among others.

The picture of non-governmental organizations in any country tends to be highly dynamic and in a constant state of flux. The state of communications between donor agencies and indigenous NGOs achieved at any given point in time will be inadequate a year later because of changes among the NGOs (if not within the donor agency). A process of networking with NGOs and among NGOs needs to be established within each country as well as internationally which will allow information to continue to flow in both directions and to include new organizations as they arise. Where no agency or NGO is yet serving the function of a clearinghouse for networks, the establishment of such a service should be given high priority by development agencies concerned with the accuracy of their knowledge of the needs and thinking of people at the grassroots, with special attention to the needs of women, and out of concern also with creating the environment of shared information and communication where participation has at least a chance to become real.

CONCLUSION

The communication channels between development agencies and the rural poor, especially rural women, are currently almost non-existent. Channels between these agencies and

indigenous, national non-governmental organizations are not much better in many countries, especially in the case of women's organizations. Women's organizations and other NGOs vary greatly in their quality of communication, with rural women, but some have established good processes that deserve and need support. Others could be assisted to become more effective by means of training and shared experience.

Participatory development cannot occur in an information and communications vacuum. And yet, without genuine participation by the people concerned, development agencies and government ministries will expend millions of dollars in wasted effort.

In the spirit of participatory development it seems fitting to give the last word to a Third World women's organization working with rural women:

We have a deep concern about the lack of an effective interchange of ideas between development agencies and rural women. Development agencies are trying to communicate ideas which will lead to a better life for impoverished communities: equality, education, health, sufficient food, etc. For these ideas to be really beneficial, however, they must be accepted by rural women from institutions or people in whom they have confidence. Therefore, trust is basic for effective communication, and this trust depends upon what we know about the persons who are trying to communicate with us, the understanding and respect which exists toward them.

The rural woman can express her needs better than anyone else, although she does it in a rough, simple, peasant dialect full of metaphors which requires a certain amount of patience to understand. But it is urgent to communicate with her directly. Otherwise efforts to help, however sincere, cannot succeed. 22

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Alamgir's research on women in Bangladesh suggests that the actual case may be more complex than the women's generalized perceptions. She notes that civil law there permits women to both inherit property and to own it by purchase if she can prove that the capital used derived from her own income. Religious law, however, adds other limitations, being most restrictive on Hindu women. The matter is further complicated by the fact that Muslim women frequently "exchange" their inheritance rights with their brothers for annual or semi-annual "visiting rights" to the family homestead. When Moslem women do retain their rights to land, custom requires them to manage their property through male intermediaries. See Susan F. Alamgir, Profile of Bangladeshi Women, USAID/Bangladesh, 1977.
- 2) Mrs. Lily Nzoka, general manager, Maendeleo Handicraft Co-operative Society, Ltd., Nairobi, Kenya. As narrated in a workshop on "Income Generating Projects" at the NGO Forum, July 17, 1980.
- 3) Mme. Mariam Konate, Directrice du Project "Renforcement du Role des Femmes dans le Developpement", Ministry of Rural Development, Ouagadougou, Upper Volta, as told in a workshop on "Funding Women in Development", NGO Forum, July 17, 1980. The project concept seems to have been

initiated by the U.S.A.I.D. Mission in Upper Volta; at least, it seemed clear from Mme. Konate that the paperwork in applying to U.S.A.I.D. Washington had all been handled by the Mission. This would explain why, as eventual project manager, she was nevertheless unfamiliar with the grantsmanship skills needed to replicate it.

- 4) Mrs. Suzanne Bibi Messi, Social Development Coordinator, Save the Children Foundation in Cameroon; and Mme. Marie Taure N'Gom, UNICEF, Ivory Coast. At the NGO Forum, July 14, 1980. Workshop, "Organizing Rural Women."
- 5) Dr. Vina Mazumdar, Center for Women's Development Studies in New Delhi, at an NGO Forum panel on "Employment", July 22, 1980.
- 6) Workshop July 17, 1980 of the Exchange at the NGO Forum on "Income Generating Projects."
- 7) Suzanne Bibi Messi, *ibid.*
- 8) Norma de la Garza, Interamerican Commission on Women, OAS.
- 9) Dr. Mrs. Helen Chukwuma, President of the National Council of Women's Societies for the State of Anambra, Nigeria, July 22, 1980.
- 10) Politicization of Women, NGO Forum, July 18, 1980.
- 11) Amrita Badu reporting on doctoral research for Columbia University, NGO Forum, July 18, 1980.

- 12) Mrs. Lily Nzoka, *ibid.*
- 13) Funding for Women in Development, NGO Forum July 18.
- 14) Among the Bangladeshi women in these discussions were Mrs. Rabia Bhuiyan, Mrs. Mufaweza Khan, Mrs. Zeenat Ara Bhuiyan, Professor Neelima Ibrahim, Mrs. Shama K. Moinuddin, Dr. J. Rounag Jahan, Mrs. Hasina Jahan, and Mrs. Salma Khan, all resident in Dacca.
- 15) Norma Garcia and Carmen Votaw, Comision Interamericana de Mujeres, interviews August 8 and 15, 1980. Also Luz Ramirez, interview at ATI, September 17.
- 16) Danielle Bazin-Tardieu, director, International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, interview August 28, 1980.
- 17) Majula Giri, interview July 22, 1980.
- 18) Story told by Mrs. A.M. Ahmad, Employment and Development Department, ILO, Geneva. Among others in this series of discussions were Dr. Vira Mazumdar, Amrita Badu, Jasleen Dhamija, ILO/UNECA, Mrs. Lily Nzoka, the women of Bangladesh (footnote 14), Allison Lewis (Antigua), and (Jamaica).
See also the interview with Dr. Helen Chukwuma, pages 6 63-64.
- 19) As told by Carmen Votaw, OAS, interview August 15, 1980. Comision Interamericana de Mujeres.

- 20) Luz Ramirez, Latin American Division of Appropriate Technology International, interview September 17, 1980.
- 21) Beatrice Herretche, Deputy Manager for Technical Cooperation, Inter American Development Bank, interview September 12, 1980.
- 22) Sonia Andujar, Mujeres en Desarrollo Dominicana, Dominican Republic. From correspondence received by the writer October 10, 1980. Translated by the author. See Appendix for the original text.

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APPENDIX
NGO QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES ON DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
COMMUNICATIONS WITH RURAL WOMEN

In the summer and fall of 1980 approximately seventy-five women's organizations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America were invited to submit commentary on certain questions related to effective communication between development agencies and rural women. Twelve responses had been received at the time this working paper was prepared. The full list of the women or women's organizations contacted is given at the conclusion of the Appendix.

The actual statements of the twelve respondents, unedited in order to give the full flavor of the communication, are assembled below as collective answers to each of the questions on the questionnaire sent to the women. The number by each response refers to the twelve respondents as follows:

- 1) (name withheld by request), Machakos County Council,
Kenya;
- 2) Chief Mrs. Ayo Bello, National Council of Women's
Societies, Kwara State Branch, Ilona, Nigeria;
- 3) (name withheld by request) Mindolo Ecumenical
Foundation, Zambia;
- 4) Dr. Neelima Ibrahim, Bangladesh Mohila Samity,
Dacca, Bangladesh;
- 5) Shama K. Moinuddin, National Women's Cooperative

- Society, Dacca, Bangladesh;
- 6) Mrs. A. Wahabuddin Ahmed, Bharatiya Grameen Mahila Sangh, (National Association for Rural Women), Hyderabad, India;
 - 7) Mrs. Glorai M. Santos, Asian Church Women's Conference, Delhi, India;
 - 8) (name withheld by request), Aisyiyah (Indonesian Moslem Women Organization), Yogyakarta, Indonesia;
 - 9) Mrs. Sita Rajasuriya, Lanka Jatika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya, Moratuwa, Sri Lanka;
 - 10) Victoria Rodriguez de Herran, Unidad Programas Femeninos Rurales, Federacion Nacional de Cafeteros de Columbia, Bogota, Colombia;
 - 11) Jonia Andujar, Mujeres en Desarrollo Dominicana, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic;
 - 12) Iris Quintero de Simons, Coordinadora de Comunicacion Educativa y Desarrollo de Manuales, Fundacion Educativa de la Confederacion Latino Americana de Cooperativas de Ahorro y Credito (FECOLAC), Panama.

Question Number One

How does your organization know which individual rural women are leaders or potential leaders in a particular village or group of villages? What are your sources of information about them: visits by your organization's staff to the village? personal

knowledge by people in other organizations? information given to you by government extension agents? Please explain how you find out.

Answers

(1) (a) first of all the organization surveys; (b) by talking with individual leaders through extension officers from all ministries, ie., health, agriculture, etc.; (c) organizing "barasa" meeting.

(2) Women elect their own leaders in different villages. We know through communications, meetings, conferences and visits to the villages.

(3) Information given to us by leaders already in existence there such as the Headman. We also find that the leadership changes as time goes on, people elect their own leaders.

(4) B.M.SM has branches in districts and rural areas. In each project we have appointed supervisor and social workers. They visit each home of the area and find out potential leaders. Later on, we arrange for leadership training in the head office, Dacca. But this covers only a little fraction of forty million women in Bangladesh.

(5) We have primary societies in every Thana level. One chairman, secretary, and nine directors are responsible to run their organizations. The rural women are the members.

(6) Yes, we are familiar with rural women. Also we work along with Government Extension Agents. Our staff are in touch with individual rural women wherever we are working.

(7) Through recommendations of the local church because of the actual involvement of the rural women. The community leaders know those who commit themselves to the development of their own rural communities. Delegates are sent from the rural areas to represent their church organizations to national or regional workshops for rural women leaders.

(8) Our organizations (founded in 1917) has had channel/lines in the Community almost in the whole areas in Indonesia, both urban and rural areas and has our representative boards in the provinces, Regions/Districts, cities, down to the low level boards. The election of the Board members in every level is done through the organizational-conference. For the sub-branch level, ie., the lowest level board, the Board members are elected by the organization's members in that area, and are chosen from the Candidates who has been agreed by The Muhammadiyah board in that area. Every Conference is also attended by some upper level board members.

(9) Our Organization works at the grass roots level. Initially our District Co-ordinators have a discussion with the village people and organise a (Shramadana) Work Camp as a first step, in which the whole village is involved. At such a camp it is easy to identify leadership among the people. During the (family gatherings) which take place 3 times a day at these camps, the people themselves help us to identify women who are suitable for specific areas of work relevant to their

own development, e.g. Health, Nutrition, Agriculture, Income generation, etc.

(10) A través de sencillas encuestas llevadas a efecto por las mujeres de la comunidad, aplicadas a su misma comunidad. Por conocimiento de las actividades importantes para la comunidad llevadas a cabo por las personas con calidad de liderazgo. Los líderes se reconocen: (a) a través de grupos en formación o grupos organizados por su actividad, su interés, su calidad de liderazgo; (b) la fuente de información son las mujeres de la misma comunidad más una selección entre tres personas que hace el agente de cambio.

(11) Tenemos promotores sociales que viven en el campo los cuales hacen los contactos preliminares con las mujeres campesinas.

(12) Las mujeres líderes que tienen potencialidad de liderato las identificamos como elementos humanos de gran empuje e importancia y capacidad para orientar las actividades de un grup humano, con una dinámica que permite el logro de los objetivos y satisfacción de quienes participan. Nuestra fuente de información para identificar a una mujer líder es: (a) nuestra experiencia con este tipo de mujeres; (b) conocimientos y experiencias de personas de otras instituciones.

Question Number Two

How do rural women learn about the programs your organiza-

tion has to offer them? By posters in the villages? By spoken announcements at village meetings, to women in the markets, at church meetings, at meetings of Mothers Clubs or Contribution Clubs? (Who makes the announcement, someone from your organization?) By radio announcements? By written announcements sent to them or placed in newspapers? By private conversation with someone from your organization? Please describe your process of informing rural women about your organization's activities or plans.

Answers

(1) For women to learn these programmes we follow all these methods in order to make them aware by using one of our members i.e., the Community Worker.

(2) Our programmes are based on individual need of the community. Each village lists her women's problems and takes one that she can tackle. A report of progress or difficulty is made at our Women's Meetings.

(3) Through announcements, visits to several areas and hearing from other people who have experienced how valuable the programmes are. Radio announcements also provide publicity but very occasionally.

(4) By private conversation with the social workers appointed by B.M.S.

(5) Posters - general meeting every 3. months & visited by the board members, & also at the mothers clubs. We need mobile transport to reach such far flung areas. Yes, we talk

to the village women.

(6) Spoken announcements at village meetings, Mahila Mandals, Mother's Clubs in all our other activities, meetings and also through the staff members of our organization.

(7) a) Written announcements are made in the ACWC News Bulletin; b) thru ACWC national representatives who are notified by the ACWC Executive Secretary; c) through applications from countries that have a viable need. The Fellowship of the Least Coin has met such needs; d) through member churches of the National Council of Churches in the form of posters, verbal announcements, etc.

(8) a) Formal board Channels/lines; b) Organizational conference of the lower level board; c) Organizational magazines, newsletters; d) The Quran Reading Groups/the Religious Groups that can be found in every branch and sub-branch areas. The sending of this is the work of the Central Board.

(9) This is a follow-up of Stage one above (ie., see first question). After the infra-structure is laid through participation in the Camp, Mother's Groups and Youth Groups are formed. An experienced Sarvodaya Worker from the District Centre explains the need for the women to be organized to help improve the quality of life. Young women are selected for training in leadership, pre-school activities, health work and economic projects treating the village as a family.

(10) Las mujeres se informan de nuestros programas a través de reuniones con los grupos de acción comunal que existen en todas las comunidades rurales del país, auspiciadas por el Ministerio de Gobierno. La información es oral en grupos de base de las veredas o poblados rurales. La información la ofrecen en primer término el líder seleccionado calificado, reconocido y adiestrado por la Entidad FEDERACION NACIONAL DE CAFETEROS DE COLOMBIA. En segundo término, un coordinador de campo: a veces el Cura Párroco, el Alcalde, la Policía del poblado; por radio a menudo, se anuncian los proyectos y las fechas de inscripción a cursos y otras actividades.

(11) a) A través de los Promotores Sociales de MUDE; b) a través del Boletín "Mujer y Desarrollo" que circula en el interior del país; c) Programa de TV de MUDE llamada "Diferentes Pero Iguales"; d) Spots radiales; e) Los mismos grupos de mujeres rurales que hablan sobre su experiencia de trabajar con MUDE. Los medios de comunicación solo dejan saber que existimos, usualmente los grupos de mujeres interesadas se comunican con nosotras por correo o visita directa. Los promotores sociales en el campo y el personal que trabaja en el capital explican más detalladamente a las mujeres interesadas que es MUDE y cuál es su trabajo principal.

(12) Dada nuestra estructura y en relación a nuestros programas educativos, las mujeres rurales se enteran de los

mismos, vía las Federaciones y Cooperatives que forman parte del sistema.

Question Number Three

What process should outsiders from United Nations or foreign development agencies use to provide information to rural women and to learn from rural women? Should they use the same process of communication that your organization uses or would it be better for them to do this differently? What do you suggest?

Answers

(1) It will possible to use a different method ie., by conducting seminars to the organisation. By writing books, also by taking rural women to educational tours; but still rural women get it difficulty to learn all these information due to communication.

(2) I suggest rural women should be contacted through their leaders.

(3) Use the same and establish direct contact with provincial Administration in the rural areas so as to get more down to earth information about the real situations.

(4) It is better for the U.N. foreign development agencies to seek the help of Ministry, Women Affairs, Govt. of Bangladesh.

(5) They should try & have one local advisor or consultant or be more cooperative. The local agencies here do not do much when approached locally!!

(6) My suggestion is that we should create better results. The United Nations Development Agencies provide information to voluntary organisations working in rural areas and take them as partners for all programmes implementation for rural women.

(7) It would be good to coordinate efforts and to use existing structures so as not to allow competitions of agencies to creep in. A global network of communication is being conceived of in conjunction with Church Women United, U.S.A. and other regional church organizations, particularly the women's department.

(8) It can be done via some ways: a) Via the formal channel/line that is the Governmental channel: the Departments and the Ministers; Mr. Governors and down to the Head of the villages. (b) Via the Private organizations' channel/line; for us is via The Central Board of 'Aisyiyah. This is the system we used to work with foreign organizations.

(9) International Organizations should always operate through national Grass-roots level organizations.

(10) Las personas que trabajan con Naciones Unidas o otras Agencias ajenas a la misma comunidad deben ponerse en contacto con los agentes de cambio de los Servicios de Exten-

sión Rural y los Programas de Desarrollo establecidos para que éstos a su vez den el mensaje a los líderes, quienes lo traducen al lenguaje sencillo de la zona rural. La información por la revista "Tribuna Internacional" es también valiosa.

(11) Obviamente las instituciones privadas y públicas locales tienen un mayor acceso a las mujeres rurales y deben ser utilizadas como canalizadoras de información. Pero también sería importante desarrollar otras alternativas de contacto directo con las mujeres rurales.

(12) Para suministrar y obtener información para y de las mujeres rurales, las agencias de desarrollo podrían efectuar programas específicos tipo piloto, con objetivos claros, mecanismos prácticos y evaluaciones constantes para medir las metas alcanzadas.

Question Number Four

Has your organization tried to get support from a foreign government's development assistance agency or from a United Nations agency? If you have tried this, what happened? Were you satisfied with the quality of communications? If you have not tried this, why not?

Answers

(1) No; just because we don't know the methods to use in order to conduct them. Otherwise it's a problem for we rural women to get informations unless otherwise.

(2) We have NOT tried to get any support from foreign government or U.N. because it was rumoured that it is difficult to obtain support.

(3) Yes, mainly from church organizations. I am not aware of U.N. help as yet. Yes, quality of communication was very good.

(4) We receive help from IPPF through Bangladesh Family Planning association. Directly we cannot communicate with U.N. or any other donor agency. We have to approach through the Ministry of Women Affairs. It makes delay and sometimes with no reponse.

(5) We have tried many foreign agencies. But till now - unfortunately no - responce - We have about (editor's omission, illegible) member's both rural and urban areas.

(6) As it is a policy matter of the Government and we have to go through the Government. If international agencies entrusts any programme to voluntary organisations it will be easier. Some of our state branches have approached through the Associated Country Women of the World and they are satisfied.

(7) We have not tried a foreign government's development assistance agency. We do not know the mechanics. However, we work in cooperation with World Council of Churches and Christian Conference of Asia.

(8) Basicly Aisyyah always does try to realize its programs using its own power and potency by asking all its

members to give participation in making these programs successful. In these last few years some foreign organizations know about Aisyyiah and its activities. And its seemed that these organizations have been attracted and payed attentions to what Aisyyiah is doing. So many times Aisyyiah has been offered such a coordination work in carrying out its programs; they like to help these programs run well. And according to the ordinary procedure, Aisyyiah then offered its project proposal and this happened several times, for instance the cooperation work with Overseas Education Fund in publishing a guide book for Aisyyiah Kindergartens; with NOVIB in building the nurse and midwife's boarding house; with The Pathfinder Fund in carrying out a rural women's program in Family Planning and skill/vocational training; with CEFPA in training some board members about population education.

(9) So far we are not aware of U.N. Programmes which work with peoples' participatory organizations like ours directly except the U.N. Volunteer programme. The U.N. operational structure has to change to make this possible. Instead of talking about people's participation they must make it a reality by working with people's participatory NGOs.

(10) La organización ha tratado en vano de conseguir financiación para nuevos proyectos. (a) No acusan recibo del despacho del proyecto o del perfil del mismo. (b) No

hay respuesta pronta. (c) Con SAVE THE CHILDREN y PACT se logro una ayuda debido a que tienen Oficina en Bogotá y un proyecto en marcha. (d) La dificultad del idioma impide la comunicación.

(11) Sí, los resultados han sido mas o menos satisfactorios ya que la mayoría de organismos aducen la falta de recursos para trabajo como el nuestro. Nos falta acceso a información actualizada sobre organizaciones de financiamiento y como acercarnos a ellas.

(12) Efectivamente, nuestra Institución ha gestionada financiamientos de instituciones privadas y gubernamentales a nivel extranjero, con resultados positivos. El proceso y calidad de la comunicación fue satisfactoria debido a que se suministró información previa sobre el projector y sus objetivos.

Question Number Five

Have any of the local women's groups in rural areas with which you are familiar approached a foreign or UN donor agency for assistance in their projects? If the answer is "yes", what happened? Were the rural women satisfied with the quality of the communication they experienced? If they have not approached such agencies for help with their projects, what do you think is the explanation for this?

Answers

(1) No. I dont know of any such donations because every rural women are faced with the above problems (e.g., see question four).

(2) No group has approached any foreign or UN donor for assistance in our projects because we do not know whom or how to do so and the above information (e.g. question four) does not encourage us to find out.

(3) No, I am not aware of any such groups which have sought assistance from a foreign or UN donor Agency.

(4) UNICEF has direct project like this, you, please write to UNICEF, Dacca, Bangladesh.

(5) We & many others did approach. The results were very poor.

(6) Some of our state branches did approach the UN donor agencies through Associated Country Women of the World. So far they have been satisfied.

(7) Not that I know of.

(8) Yes, and the procedure is via the Central Board of Aisiyah. The program done is one of our Congress decisions; it is a program for rural women in promoting their education and on additional education in their involving the Family Planning program. The policy maker of the planning of the program is The Central Board; the Branch-board level persons are the executive persons. In this case we use our Quran

Reading Groups in the branch areas. And it seems that these group members are happy having the chance joining the program and following the new curriculum/lessons.

(9) No. I refer to the answer above. The U.N. has no system at present

(10) Varias organizaciones de mujeres han tratado de conseguir fondos de Entidades Internacionales para proyectos: el resultado ha sido negativo. No ha habido respuesta, ni dinero para las gentes sencillas sin mayor educación; gentes que saben el proceso de solicitud sí han conseguido dinero.

(11) No sabemos de ninguna. Creemos que las mujeres rurales tienen aún menos acceso a información sobre estas instituciones cuyos requisitos para obtención de fondos podría ser bastante compleja para las mujeres rurales.

Question Number Six

Did you already know about the UN Food and Agriculture Organization World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) before you read my letter? If so, how did you know about it?

Answers

(1) I had no information before otherwise no one had mentioned it to me or gather information from elsewhere.

(2) No knowledge about UN Food and Agriculture Organization.

(3) I knew about F.A.O. but not about the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and rural Development.

(4) I know about F.A.O. working in my country but not directly with my organization. Hope to be in touch in future with the help of Associated country Women of the world of which B.M.S. is an affiliate member.

(5) No. Very Interested.

(6) Yes. I attended. I was in the Official delegation from India headed by the Agriculture Minister.

(7) No, I'm sorry.

(8) We don't hear about it clearly. We have heard that there are agencies trying to help lighten the severe of hunger in the Development Countries. But we don't know exactly who does this works and how the activity is done. It is because we are been busy with activities for our own community.

(9) No

(10) No lo sabía. No hubo difusión de esa actividad.
Me gustaría tener las memorias.

(11) No lo sabíamos.

Question Number Seven

Have you been informed by any agency in your country (government agency, United Nations agency, or non-governmental organization) about the WCARRD recommendations for actions affecting rural women? If the answer is "yes", which agency provided you

with that information? If the answer is no", would such information be of interest to you or your organization?

Answers

(1) I didn't know. But it would be better If I get information of such organization. I am very much interested.

(2) I have never been informed of the WCARRD recommendations for actions affecting rural women. I would be interested to know because most of our women deal with agriculture work.

(3) No. Yes, very much

(4) No. I am interested to know.

(5) No. Such information would be of interest.

(6) Yes, informed.

(7) No, I shall welcome a copy of the WCARRD recommendations.

Thank you.

(8) Not yet. We'll be happy if we still have time to share thinking out these activities in WCARRD; though we have to say that we really have to pay the priority to our own community before we involve ourselves to other countries' difficulties.

(9) We heard it at a personal level from the F.A.O. regional representative in Bangkok, and we would be interested in receiving such information.

(10) No, no me ha llegado información ni memorias! Me gusta tener las recomendaciones y las memorias de la misma Conferencia Mundial.

(11) No tenemos conocimientos sobre las recomendaciones de

la conferencia Mundial para accion que afecta la mujer rural. Hemos escrito a la direccion de la FAO que usted gentilmente facilita.

Question Number Eight

Please add any other comments that you would like to make about the communication between rural women and development assistance agencies.

Answers

(1) Its very difficulty for rural women to get information simply because there are some barriers between the rural women and the Ministry concerned. Otherwise it takes time for such information to reach rural areas. So I would suggest to find means and ways to send such information straight to rural areas without such barriers or else without first of all going to Government officers.

(2) Development Assistance Agencies should deal more with non-governmental organisations through which they can get the true picture of the needs of the rural women. Our projects at the moment are: (a) maternity clinics, (b) day care centre, (c) nursery/primary school, (d) farming.

(3) Development Assistance agencies need to make on the spot investigations as to what the rural women are doing. This will ensure less wastage of funds. This will ensure provision of relevant assistance.

(4) The main difficulty is the red tapison in the Ministry of Women Affairs. If you want to make the communication easy and successful, please communicate with the Govt. and find out some easy ways and means to communicate directly with the N.G.O's who have grants rate organizations in rural areas.

(5) We should have more contacts with development agency or other organizations who are really interested to work with rural women. More mass-media - posters. Free schools should be organized so that the women from the rural areas can gather, they can get their primary education, BE TALKED - LISTENED. And they should be attached to more facilities by having "mothers Club", family planning, health & "solid income generating" programmes so they could be economically better off!

(6) Communication is very important. I had suggested that the Government should keep 50% of the international grants and the remaining 50% should be distributed to voluntary organisations. It is always better to have international support and also guidance. Evaluation of the work is also recommended from time to time.

(7) I'm commenting based on observations and conversations with development people. There is a gap between development assistance agencies and the rural women. Personal interests get in the way. Funding is sporadic and can only touch the surface. There is a need for follow-up into the grassroots

level. In May this year, our organization sponsored an Asian regional workshop for rural women leaders. Programs for follow-up were set up. However, implementation of these programs will be hampered because of lack of adequate resources.

(8) Thank you for your paying attention to us.

(9) Sarvodaya has in every village a Women's Group (Mothers' Group). If these agencies work with Sarvodaya, direct communication with these groups is possible.

(10) ...

(11) Tenemos una hondo preocupación por la falta de un intercambio eficaz de ideas entre las agencias de desarrollo y las mujeres rurales. Las agencias de desarrollo estan tratando de comunicar ideas que conllevan a que las comunidades empobrecidas tengan una mejor vida: igualdad, educación, salud, suficiente comida, etc. Estas ideas aunque son realmente beneficiosas suelen ser aceptadas por las mujeres rurales solo de instituciones (personas) en las cuales ellas confían. Por lo tanto la confianza es básica para una comunicación efectiva y esta confianza depende del conocimiento que tenemos sobre las personas, la comprensión y el respeto que existe hacia ellas. La mujer rural puede expresar mejor que nadie sus necesidades aunque lo hace en un lenguaje rustico, simple lleno de metáforas que requiere una cierta dosis de paciencia. Pero es urgente comunicarse con ellas directamente porque de lo contrario los esfuerzos podrian ser no beneficiosos.

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