

Women's Issues at AID:
Implementation of the Percy Amendment

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Patricia Blair

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Development institutions, as one researcher has noted, accepted women in Development (WID) as a policy goal, with "stunning speed" after 1970,¹ the year in which Ester Boserup's seminal work calling attention to women's marginal role in economic development was published, and the year a one-sentence mention of women was included in the Plan of Action for United Nations Second Development Decade. In 1973, WID was incorporated into the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act via an amendment introduced by Senator Charles Percy, which called on AID "to give particular attention to . . . activities which tend to integrate women into the national economies of foreign countries, thus improving their status and assisting the total development effort." By 1975, WID had become an important item on the agenda of the U.N. International Decade for Women, the subject of a growing number of academic papers and seminars, and, to a lesser extent, a basis for international women's solidarity. By the late 1970s, most developing countries and international development agencies had some sort of WID program on the books.

¹ Rae Lesser Blumberg and Cara Hinderstein, "At the End of the Line: Women and U.S. Foreign Aid in Asia, 1978-1980," in Women and Politics, Vol. 2, No. 4, Kathleen Staudt and Jane Jaquette, eds. (Haworth Press, 1983), p. 43.

The following paper details the progress of the WID issue in the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID), which, thanks to the Percy Amendment, has made one of the longest and most significant attempts to institutionalize women's concerns throughout its programs. Whether AID would have made this effort in the absence of a legislative mandate seems doubtful, though an argument might be made that WID was "in the air" and a concern for alleviating poverty would eventually force policymakers to recognize that some development programs were having a negative effect on women. But the Percy Amendment surely speeded the process. At the same time, the Amendment introduced what was to be a continuing tension between development goals and the feminist goals implicit in the demand for equity and status for women. Considerations of equity and development effectiveness are easily lumped together in a subordinate clause of one paragraph of a major piece of legislation devoted to general U.S. aid policy. But policy is one thing, and implementation is another. Bureaucratic decisions that are responsive to one aspect of a policy goal can work at cross-purposes with those responsive to another. Operating styles that are appropriate to one set of goals may be counterproductive vis-a-vis another.

Although the mandate of the Percy Amendment is now almost ten years old, AID cannot yet be said to have found an effective way to fulfill it. Part of the problem is that the more emphasis AID puts on meeting the goal of integrating women into the total development effort, the easier it is for it to lose sight of the equity and status goals that were also built into the Amendment. And vice versa. These tensions show themselves in differences of opinion over the relative places of separate programs for women and across-the-board efforts at

integration of women's concerns, over non-traditional employment for women and services for women in the home, and over leadership and managerial training for women, as well as over the best ways to institutionalize WID bureaucratically. They account for some of the ambivalence with which AID and other development institutions view WID, as well as the indifference, even antagonism, of many committed feminists to officially sponsored WID programs. The WID constituency itself--a loose coalition of women (and some men) in private voluntary organizations, universities, consultanting groups, as well as development-oriented feminists in the U.S. and abroad--seems never to have decided whether WID is a movement or a cause or a development-cum-academic specialty. As WID's record in AID shows, there may be no fully satisfactory way to resolve all of these cross-currents.

A. First Responses

Within AID, responsibility for reacting to the 1973 Percy Amendment fell initially to the Program and Policy Coordination Bureau (PPC) which, as its name suggests, is the "gatekeeper" of U.S. aid policy. PPC's population and health program officer was asked to follow up with Senator Percy's office, presumably because (a) she was a "she", and (b) she was concerned with sectors that AID recognized as related to women--i.e., those that dealt with their reproductive functions. Although this program officer remembers the Amendment as "coming out of the blue," it appears to have struck a responsive chord, at least in the intellectually oriented PPC. "We all thought it was a good idea that we could do something with," she says.²

² Personal interview.

One of her colleagues, having "discovered" the women's movement on his return from an overseas posting, had already circulated a thoughtful paper calling attention to the lack of concern for women in AID's programming.³ Other people in the Bureau, including the Deputy Director, were also supportive. AID was then in the midst of implementing a Congressionally mandated "new directions" strategy, which called for U.S. aid to focus on the the basic human needs of the poor in developing countries; a focus on women, generally among the poorest of the poor, fit well with this thrust.

Not everyone was so enthusiastic. For many, women in development was just one more special issue--made more troublesome for being a "feminist" issue in an agency dominated by middle-aged, middle-class white males; a "social" issue in a field dominated by mathematically minded economists; an "equity" issue in an institution that likes to think of itself as a-political and technocratic. Conventional development theory held that development is sex-neutral; if anything, modernization would free women from traditional constraints and open new opportunities for them.⁴ There was thus no need, in this view, for AID to pay any special attention to women and, indeed, every reason not to "export women's lib" to sensitive Third World governments. Nonetheless, some response had to be made. The Percy Amendment was on the books, and Congress would expect some follow-up.

³ Arthur D. Silver, "Women, Development, and AID," July 6, 1973, mimeo.

⁴ See Jane S. Jaquette, "Women and Modernization Theory: A Decade of Feminist Criticism," World Politics 34(2), January 1982, pp. 268-9.

Furthermore, there was a need to deal with the domestic feminist constituency. For skeptics, the question was how best to comply with the Amendment without disrupting the day-to-day work of AID.

1. The Working Committee

AID's first agency-wide response was to name a Percy Amendment Working Committee to consider the matter. Nira Long, an attorney who had been AID's Equal Employment Officer for two years (and thus bore the brunt of feminist pressure to hire more women at higher levels in AID), was named chairperson. The other members, three of whom were women, represented two of the all-important regional bureaus (Africa and Asia/Near East), two central bureaus (Technical Assistance and Population/Humanitarian Assistance), and two divisions of PPC. The head of the Community Participation Office of PPC and two women from the Office of Labor Affairs (including Clara Beyer, who had made the original suggestion for what became the Percy Amendment⁵ were added later.

The fact that Nira Long was chosen to chair the group reflected some of the ambivalence with which the WID issue was seen in mid-1974. True, the Percy Amendment called for integrating Third World women into their own economies. But the Amendment had been pushed by American women, who were also pressing for women's access to jobs and power in this country. AID had already been "deluged with applications for funding," phone calls, visits, letters of inquiry, and the like from interested women.⁶

⁵ See Irene Tinker, "Gender Equity in Development: A Policy Perspective," mimeo., p. 5.

⁶ AID, Percy Amendment Working Committee, Plan of Action, Nira Long, et al. June 1974, mimeo.

The Working Committee met over the ensuing two or three months, attempting, in its words, to serve "several masters: the public/Congressional interest; developing country interest; and AID administration/management interest." It concluded that the extent of popular interest warranted a "high profile" for WID and recommended, as an "interim approach," the appointment of a Women in Development Coordinator to handle liaison with women's groups, participate in international conferences, and undertake special studies, field reviews, and "small investments." The Committee also recommended that all units in AID take responsibility for institutionalizing WID concerns throughout the programming process, that WID persons be appointed in all bureaus and offices as liaison with the Coordinator, and that AID "make measurable improvement in employing women professionals."⁷

In the early 1970s, women in AID, as elsewhere, were neither numerous nor well-placed. At the time of the Percy Amendment, they held only 6.4% of program positions. The 87 program officers in the central Technical Assistance Bureau included only three women; PPC had six out of 54; Population/Humanitarian Assistance only two. There were no women at all among the top fourteen people in the Population Office, which was dominated by male physicians who saw women chiefly as potential "targets" for contraceptives. The 29 women in the regional bureaus accounted for only 14% of program positions. Of 51 missions overseas, only ten had any women at all with program responsibilities. The Working Committee reported that "the Senator's interest

⁷ Ibid, passim.

in seeing that AID improve its own record [on employing women] was made quite clear" by his staff aides.⁸

Women's concerns took of the generally low status of women. Until the Percy Amendment, AID programs dealt with women almost exclusively as mothers or as targets for family planning. When forced by the Amendment to consider women as active contributors to development, many male bureaucrats--already feeling pressured by the "bra-burners," who may have included their wives and daughters--took refuge in sullen humor. One former AID employee remembers the "tedious joking about the absence of a 'men in development' program or comments on how 'I'd like to develop a woman.'"⁹ "It was a good two years," recalls another, "before WID wasn't an occasion for laughter" at project review sessions.¹⁰ Nonetheless, the various units within AID did their duty by complying with the letter, if not the spirit, of the Working Committee recommendations.

2. Policy Statements

Supportive policy statements regarding WID were in place by the end of 1974. In September, PPC issued Policy Determination 60, which called attention to the Percy Amendment and the need to implement it "through inclusion of a role for women in all of the Agency's programs

8 Ibid, p. 10.

9 Kathleen Staudt, "Bureaucratic Resistance to Women's Programs: The Case of Women in Development" in Women, Power, and Policy, Ellen Boneparth, ed. (Pergamon Press, 1982) Chap. 14, pp. 263-81.

10 Personal interview.

and projects." It directed all central and regional bureaus, as well as field missions, to "institutionalize the conscious concern for women in development" in their work and to encourage other aid agencies to do the same. Support was promised for developing countries interested in setting up or strengthening women's commissions, bureaus, and non-governmental organizations involved in "legal, economic, and social development activities which promote the integration of women in development." Other than asking that all planning documents and field submissions contain a "clear statement" of how women were to be involved, PD-60 did not specify any bureaucratic mechanisms for implementing the policies it advocated, nor did it allocate any money for doing so.¹¹

Between April and November, all the regional bureaus and two central units sent cables to the field, each elaborating its understanding of WID. Their tone was tentative. The Latin America Bureau emphasized the need for data and analysis of women's roles. The Africa Bureau recommended several possible consultants, including a home economist and a retired official of the U.S. Information Agency. East Asia emphasized health and data gathering, and the Near East promised to forward case material from other regions. The International Training Office urged selection of more women for AID's participant training program.¹² The Population/Humanitarian

¹¹ Policy Determination 60, September 16, 1974, in AID, Office of WID. Report on Women in Development, submitted to the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, August 1978. Appendix.

¹² In Fiscal Year 1973, only 4.5% of participants coming to the U.S. had been women, and they were concentrated largely in the fields of population and education.

Assistance Bureau urged missions "to ensure that the factor of WID is sufficiently and creatively addressed."¹³ In Washington, the Technical Assistance Bureau issued internal guidelines on research activities related to women, and the Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid enthusiastically endorsed the notion of "joint continual exploration by the voluntary agency community and AID of innovative ways" of translating WID goals into action."¹⁴

3. The WID Office

By late 1974, WID had also made its way onto AID's Table of Organization. Although some WID proponents worried (rightly) that WID would become confused with affirmative action for American women, Nira Long was appointed in October as the first WID Coordinator, while retaining her equal-employment responsibilities. She was able to negotiate a small staff and budget, along with a promotion, to permit her to handle the additional office. Nan Frederick was seconded from the Africa Bureau as Deputy. In addition, each Assistant Administrator and appropriate Office Director appointed someone to act as WID Officer on a part-time basis. The relationship of these WID Officers to the Coordinator remained unclear (as it has to this day).

The ambiguity of the WID Office position was evident from the first. Was it to "coordinate" WID programming--i.e., to have substantive responsibility for developing and vetting women-related programs throughout AID? Was it an operational office, with its own budget for women-related programs? Was it a specialized "resource"

¹³ Cables collected in AID, Reference Paper on Integration of Women, 1974, mimeo.

¹⁴ Nira H. Long, "Progress Report on 'Women in Development,'" November 10, 1975, mimeo.

on women's issues for the rest of the agency? Or was it an "advocacy" office, intent on promoting women's causes in AID and acting as AID's ambassador to women's constituencies at home and abroad? The easy answer is "all of the above," and the WID Coordinator's scope of work is broad enough to encompass all of them. But in practice it is extremely hard to do all of these jobs simultaneously. The more the WID Office emphasizes its advocacy role, the easier it is to dismiss women's concerns as special pleading and isolate them from the broader AID program. Attempts at genuine coordination of women-related programs risk treading on the turf of ever-jealous regional and central bureaus. Operational responsibilities raise similar problems and require more staff and budget than the WID Office has ever had any realistic possibility of getting. Emphasis on WID as a technical specialty tends to relieve sectoral technicians of the need to be involved. These contradictions have never been satisfactorily resolved. Over the years, different WID Coordinators have developed their own mix of approaches, with attendant gains and losses.

The Percy Amendment Working Committee opted for placing the Coordinator temporarily in the AID Administrator's office, thus implicitly endorsing her advocacy and public relations roles. The selection of Nira Long, whose affirmative-action responsibilities were responsive to domestic pressures, reinforced this impression. The extent of public interest can be gauged from the fact that Ms. Long spent almost half of her first months on the job "responding to public requests for speeches, interviews, articles, attendance at

conferences, etc."¹⁵ At the same time, the Coordinator was given a small operating budget, primarily to finance AID's preparations for the upcoming International Women's Year. But the Committee had also considered placing the office in PPC, which would have emphasized its coordinating and resource possibilities; in the Technical Assistance Bureau, which would have implied that WID was a sectoral program, in competition with other technical specialties for central funds and field-mission attention; or in Population/Humanitarian Assistance, which would have reinforced AID's historical focus on women's reproductive roles. The Community Participation sub-unit of PPC was asked to take it, but refused, on the ground that WID would thereby be buried too far down in the bureaucratic hierarchy.¹⁶ Certainly no one fought to get the WID function. Kathleen Staudt finds this significant. In a turf-conscious bureaucracy, she writes, "the absence of conflict over or demand for housing a function suggests . . . marginality."¹⁷ A more benign interpretation would suggest confusion as to WID goals and functions.

By 1976, WID was a function looking for a home. The administrative link with equal employment was never satisfactory and was terminated in August of that year. The arrangement in the Administrator's office had always been envisioned as temporary, although there

15 Ibid, p. 13.

16 More recently, it was suggested that WID be moved to the bureau that deals with private voluntary organizations; the bureau chief rejected the idea on similar grounds.

17 Staudt, op cit, p. 272.

were those who thought it should continue. Nan Frederick, by then Acting Coordinator, was negotiating for more space and staff, and had high hopes for WID's future. Ultimately, however, it was decided to emphasize the need for integrating women into the total development effort, which argued for locating the WID function in a part of the agency with overall policy and review responsibilities. As a result, WID was returned to PPC, where it had begun its bureaucratic journey two years earlier and where some of the staff were already reviewing programs and projects with WID in mind.

4. Early WID Programming

Some WID programming began to appear in field-mission portfolios, though much of it amounted to little more than re-labeling of pre-existing health and population programs. Some preliminary research was undertaken; the Latin America bureau, for example, funded a brief anthropological study of the role of women in Peru, Chile, and Brazil. The WID Office itself financed some international meetings and field visits, as well as a large, four-day conference in Washington designed to sensitize key AID headquarters and field staff to WID issues.¹⁸ But field officials were clearly unsure of just how to handle WID. The required "impact statements,"¹⁹ where they were included in program documents at all, tended to become boilerplate sentences or paragraphs stating that (or, at best, how) projects would affect women, rather than the bases for re-thinking and

¹⁸ See Nira Long, et al, Report: Women in Development Conference, October 28-31, 1975 (Washington, Department of State, 1975).

¹⁹ See p. 8.

re-shaping programs, as PD-60 presumably intended. One program officer remembers, "I was always saying, 'I need something in my toolbox, something short and concise to tell me what the WID issues are, what are useful ways to approach them.'"²⁰

A few small, women-only projects and/or women's organizations were funded, especially by Nan Frederick's previous employer, the Africa Bureau. The Office of Private Voluntary Organizations gave some politically astute Development Program Grants to the Overseas Education Fund (OEF) of the League of Women Voters and the National Council of Negro Women to help strengthen their capacity to work in the Third World; it also supported creation of a new WID Secretariat at New Transcentury Foundation.²¹ One field mission actually reported revising the education component of a rural development project to include girls as well as boys. The most active WID program was one that had been under way for some years before the Percy Amendment was passed. This was Clara Beyer's program for promoting the establishment of national commissions on women and/or women's bureaus in aid-recipient countries; by 1975, this Labor Office program

20 Personal interview. Field officers weren't the only ones who were confused. Senator Percy himself, when asked to "give an idea of some of the dimensions he had in mind," listed day-care among his top priorities, thereby reflecting his knowledge of the U.S. women's movement but not of the extended family system common in developing countries (Percy Amendment Working Committee, *op cit*, p. 2). Within AID, one proposal (rejected) was for teaching interior decoration to homeless Bangladesh refugee women!

21 These grants have since been restructured or phased out in favor of support for selected projects; OEF has been the most active of the three organizations, particularly in working with women's groups in Latin America.

had provided technical assistance or consulting services to more than a dozen countries in Africa and Latin America and was in the process of extending its outreach to Asia.

In order not to get too far out in front of its allies, the U.S. was also pushing WID issues at the international level. The subject was discussed at the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and at several international conferences as a result of U.S. initiatives originating in PPC. And AID contributed \$100,000 toward preparations for the International Women's Year Conference held in Mexico City in July 1975.

The Mexico City conference was a watershed in many ways. It drew together feminists worldwide and helped to de-fuse the charge that the women's movement was strictly an American phenomenon. It also encouraged governments in developing countries to set up or expand official machinery devoted to women's concerns. And it moved women-in-development solidly onto the international agenda by giving visibility to WID issues, broadening the international WID network, and establishing both a small Voluntary Fund for women's projects and an International Research and Training Institute.

U.S. experience was proving, however, that WID is easier to enunciate as a principle than to implement in practice. Nira Long and her colleagues had tried to use standard bureaucratic mechanisms-- policy pronouncements, coordinating committees, liaison officers, impact statements, and the like--to effect a major change in AID programming. What they got, for the most part, was standard

bureaucratic response--i.e., lip service and numerous rationalizations for the fact that little had changed. WID was not the first new element introduced into AID programming, nor would it be the last. In the early 1970s, the list of Congressionally mandated concerns numbered 62 separate items. Environmental impact statements, social soundness analyses, and population paragraphs were already part of AID's vocabulary. "Basic human needs" and "appropriate technology" were the latest buzzwords. "Frankly, we didn't always see WID as the biggest issue around," says one program officer.²²

B. WID in Practice

The election of President Carter provided an opportunity for a new look at WID within AID. The women's movement helped elect the President, and his appointees were correspondingly responsive to its concerns.

1. Looking Outward: The WID Office, 1977-81

Arvonne Fraser, the new WID Coordinator, brought a very different set of experiences and interests to the job. Her husband was a member of the House of Representatives, and, through him, she had been instrumental in promoting support for the Percy Amendment in 1973.²³ When she took office in April 1977, she brought with her an extensive set of contacts with women's groups and other political activists, as well as in Congress. WID, she reasoned, had got nowhere in AID because it lacked political and intellectual "clout." And the way to

22 Personal interview.

23 See Tinker, op cit, p. 6.

get clout was through building external constituencies that would put pressure on AID and add to her stature within the Agency.

Thus, one of Ms. Fraser's first official acts was to facilitate a meeting on WID between AID Administrator John Gilligan and representatives of the Women's Political Caucus. She financed a discussion of WID at the Houston follow-up to the Mexico City conference, in order to interest American feminists in their Third World sisters. And she circulated a steady stream of memos within PPC, noting various expressions of non-governmental and Congressional interest in WID. She also maintained her ties with an informal network of women staffers on Capitol Hill, who saw to it that WID-related questions were asked at confirmation hearings, that WID supporters' questions and complaints were included in committee reports, and that AID was required to submit biannual reports on its implementation of the WID mandate. Together with other WID activists, especially from church groups, this network helped obtain a two-day hearing on international women's issues before the House Subcommittees on International Organizations and International Development in March 1978, as a demonstration of continuing Congressional interest. These hearings offered a setting for reasserting the need for a WID program and showing support from American women's groups.

There was no blinking the fact that, four years after passage of the Percy Amendment, women were still a marginal concern for AID. Employment of women professionals had risen somewhat, despite an

agency-wide freeze on hiring, but it was still very low.²⁴ AID's record on WID programming was hardly better. Field missions resisted approaching host governments on the matter, and host governments, for their part, were content to leave women's concerns to whatever machinery they had set up in response to International Women's Year, usually a women's bureau or commission attached to a relatively powerless ministry. AID missions reported 128 WID projects, some of which cost less than \$25,000. Almost half of them were still in the planning stages and many never came to fruition. Furthermore, most dealt with women in stereotypical ways. Two-thirds of reported WID expenditures related to health and family planning services. Women-only projects tended to stress home economics, child rearing, or marginally profitable handicraft production. Putting the best face on it, the 1978 WID report to Congress called them "solid, if small, beginnings."²⁵

24 Hearings, U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, Subcommittees on International Organizations and International Development, Hearing and Briefing, International Women's Issues, November 8 and 22, 1978. Appendix 8, pp. 136 ff. Summary of Interviews with AID officials by the WID Coalition. The percentage of women in the Technical Assistance Bureau above the level of GS-13, generally considered the lowest supervisory rank, had risen from 3.4% in 1974 to 8.4% in mid-1977. In Population/Humanitarian Assistance, women now accounted for 10.6% of professional staff. PPC had three female Office Directors. Women appear to have lost ground, however, in the regional bureaus, which hold the keys to programming in the field. They accounted for only 5.3% of professional staff in the Africa Bureau, 3.7% in Asia, 4.8% in Latin America, and 5.1% in the Near East. The bureaus tended to blame lack of technically qualified women, especially in agriculture, for their poor showing. Arvonne Fraser did not want to perpetuate the confusion between WID and affirmative action that had existed under Nira Long, and so tried to avoid identification with questions of women's employment or advancement within the Agency; these were handled by the now-separate Office of Equal Employment Programs.

25 AID, Office of Women in Development, Report on Women in Development, August 1978, op cit, p. 10.

Given this history, it is perhaps understandable that the WID Office and its outside supporters sought to nail down a meaningful amount of money for WID-related programs. At the 1978 hearings, they pushed for a \$10 million set-aside, \$3.5 million of which would be controlled by the WID Office. In the event, Congress amended the Foreign Assistance Act to specify "up to \$10 million" in "directional money" for WID, but the price of passage was a clear statement that "this subsection does not authorize separate monies nor does it earmark funds for WID."²⁶

Rather than add to WID's internal clout, this amendment further confused matters within the Agency. It seemed to suggest \$10 million as a target for WID programming, when, in fact, far more than \$10 million could easily be called WID-related with a little creative labelling. It implied that separate WID funds were somehow available, leading field missions to demand a "sweetener" from the WID Office on projects relating to women. It suggested to the WID research community that the WID Office had plenty of money to support their project proposals. And, despite rhetoric to the contrary, it emphasized WID's separateness, its isolation from the mainstream of agency programming, at just the time when the Office's shift to PPC had sent the opposite message. In retrospect, Ms. Fraser comments, the \$10 million "may have caused us more trouble than it was worth."²⁷

26 Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Report #95-848.

27 Personal interview.

The other route to internal influence, in Ms. Fraser's view, was via Academe. "In some ways," she says, "AID is a very academic place." WID was at a disadvantage in part because "we didn't know enough." Lack of a fully elaborated information base is a standard bureaucratic excuse for not implementing new policy thrusts. In the case of WID, however, the lack of reliable data and analysis was more than ordinarily severe. Some anthropological micro-studies were confirming many of the initial insights of Ester Boserup and others, but country-wide studies, economic analyses, and hard data were severely limited. Material that offered program guidance was scarcer still. Early rosters of WID "experts" were similarly limited and of doubtful quality. When representatives of the WID Office--themselves civil servants with little firsthand knowledge of the conditions of women in developing countries--sat in on project review sessions, they were often reduced to a plaintive, "What about the women?" One official remembers that this "may have hurt us more than it helped."²⁸

Much of Ms. Fraser's tenure at AID can be seen as an attempt to give WID intellectual respectability and to strengthen the constituency for WID among women scholars interested in development. She recruited Elsa Chaney, a respected feminist academic, as her deputy and, through her, reached out to the research community. She supported a number of WID Resource Centers on university campuses, and the WID Office itself maintained a growing collection of relevant materials. She encouraged women scholars to apply to their universities for research grants under the well-funded Title XII of the Foreign Assistance Act, which reserves money to enable land-grant colleges and universities to strengthen their development expertise.

She found some contract money for small women's consulting groups and selected researchers, although some radical feminists refused to work with AID on the ground that it was irredeemably chauvinist and imperialist. The results, though uneven, benefited both WID scholarship and, potentially, AID. One study, for example, showed that up to 30% of households in many developing countries were headed by women, with important implications for AID's program. Others documented the different obligations of men and women for basic family expenditures, thus highlighting women's needs for independent income. Some useful studies were also financed by field missions, notably in Nepal. These and other WID materials were sent to an ever-lengthening list of contacts inside and outside AID.

In addition, Ms. Fraser expended a good deal of effort on widening the international WID network and raising WID concerns in broader international forums. For example, she sponsored an international conference on the role of women's organizations; financed background papers and briefings for the U.S. delegation to the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, which in turn promoted a WID section in the Conference's Declaration of Principles, and underwrote document exchanges and other supporting services for the DAC Correspondents Group on Women in Development, which she chaired until January 1981.

Ms. Fraser's last two years in office were devoted largely to preparations for, participation in, and follow-up on the Mid-Decade Conference on Women, held in Copenhagen in 1980. This conference, when it did not bog down in global political argument over such

matters as the role of the Palestine Liberation Organization, devoted much of its time to measures of women's status in the modern sector and other issues of interest to official women's institutions. As Irene Tinker comments, "In many respects there is less sensitivity to poverty issues at women's meetings than at the other UN conferences where the subject matter relates to the actions of the poor."²⁹ Nonetheless, the subthemes of the conference were women's education, employment, and health, and Ms. Fraser did her best to use these themes to raise development issues of concern to women. Her office contributed almost \$1 million to support preliminary UN-sponsored regional conferences, non-governmental organization activity, background papers, donor consultations, and participation in the conference by women from developing countries. One particularly creative project, labelled The Exchange, supported some 70 informal WID-related workshops involving over 1500 participants in the NGO Forum that ran parallel to the official conference.

These accomplishments were considerable, but they were achieved at the cost of further delay in institutionalizing WID within AID. WID staff tended to blame the marginalization of women's concerns on deep-seated male biases³⁰, but this is only partly true. Neither Ms. Fraser nor her academically inclined associates made much real effort to impact on the bureaucratic process. Although Ms. Fraser managed to hire a series of academics on a temporary basis to augment the small career staff she inherited, the Office staff was inadequate either for monitoring project development worldwide or for identifying

²⁹ Tinker, op cit, p. 16.

³⁰ See, for example, Staudt, op cit.

priority projects on which to try to impact. WID Office participation in project reviews, never very great, slacked off. Even contact with the rest of PPC was sporadic. Although a number of Assistant Administrators were sympathetic to WID, mid-level staff in regional bureaus felt free to ignore it. "We weren't really on any routing slip," recalls the then Deputy Coordinator. "We learned about projects by accident..." To which one seasoned bureaucrat--a woman who has made valuable contributions to WID programming--retorts: "You don't learn about things if you don't 'work the halls.' No one will hand you anything."³¹

For the most part, the WID Office appears to have ignored or by-passed the WID Officers in regional and sector units. Whether these people could have been more helpful to WID is a question. Most of them were part-time (one estimates that he spends perhaps 5% of his time on WID matters) or low-level or both, and they received no special training on WID issues. Some had little interest in WID and even less interest in the WID Office; they owed their loyalties to the units that appointed them. When they did try to promote the issue, their lack of bureaucratic power was evident. WID Officers at field missions were sometimes relatives of mission personnel or local employees chosen for their political connections. Toward the end of her tenure, Ms. Fraser suggested that their positions be phased out. "They are simply the ones who get the mail and have to respond to the WID Office," sniffed one WID specialist.³²

31 Personal interviews.

32 U.S. House of Representatives, Hearing and Briefing, op cit, p. 57.

Insofar as WID issues did surface in programs and projects, it was apparently thanks to an informal network of women in various regions and sectors who volunteered their interest and/or were cultivated by the WID staff. These women sometimes alerted the WID Office to potential problems; more often, they tried to promote WID concerns within their own units. Congress heard testimony, for example, that a program officer in one regional bureau had "done a very creative kind of pushing behind the scenes, and is now going to be sending women in development experts to about five Near East countries."³³ Support also came from some of the wives and daughters of field mission personnel. The wife of one mission director in Africa, for example, developed some small WID projects on her own.

This "system" had its down side, however: Relying on a presumed women's solidarity within AID was no substitute for systematic efforts to gain support from higher-level men (and some women) who controlled the bureaucratic process. If anything, it tended to reinforce the image of a small, embattled band of feminists scrabbling for recognition. The result was that WID failed to achieve much respect or credibility within AID. Potential friends and allies were put off. The WID budget failed to grow. Small women's projects were subject to detailed questioning, and getting changes in favor of women in larger projects required a major effort.

2. WID Programming

The WID Office had one further means for impacting on agency programming, and that was the power to define what was and was not

³³ Ibid, p. 86.

legitimate WID activity for purposes of meeting Congressional reporting requirements. Bureaus and missions had a real, if relatively small, incentive to mount the kind of programs that would be reported on favorably. By 1978, the WID Office had developed a system for identifying the projects that qualified as WID-related. Three types were included, each of which had as a criterion the provision of identifiable, productive roles for women:

- Women-specific projects, which were "highly concentrated efforts to direct development benefits to women as a group" or to give them leadership or organizational experience;
- Women's components of larger projects, reflecting a conscious effort "to overcome constraints on women's participation"; and
- Health, nutrition, and population projects that involved training or income-earning possibilities for women.

Ms. Fraser favored a "two-track" strategy combining the first two categories³⁴ and found it "disheartening" that missions were

34 AID, Office of Women in Development. Women in Development: 1980 Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, and Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, February 10, 1981, pp. 233-4: Ms. Fraser resisted associating women's programs too closely with health and population on the grounds that most projects in those sectors "did not represent a new women in development initiative and . . . women were in most cases beneficiaries but not the agents of such programs" (ibid, p. 60). Had such traditional women-related projects been included, their cost and numbers would have overshadowed the newer efforts to focus on women as individuals, rather than only as wives and mothers.

spending very little for women-specific projects.³⁵ In practice, however, neither track produced significant benefits for many women. By 1980, the Office of Labor Affairs' women's projects, which were small to start with, were being reorganized or phased out, in part because some turf-conscious WID staff failed to support them. Most women-only projects were marginal, poorly funded, and considered easily expendable by the field missions. They reached relatively few women, opened up few new opportunities, and had little spread effect. In terms of cost per woman benefited, they were very expensive. Neither WID nor non-Wid officials found them satisfactory, although a number of women's organizations and consulting groups developed a vested interest in their continuation, since they depended for their own financing on contracts to design, advise, and evaluate them. In terms of dollars expended, women's components far exceeded women-specific projects in importance, but they, too, tended to be add-ons, haphazardly conceived and developed after the main funds had been allocated to other activities. Women's activities rarely accounted for more than 10% of the total project and were often peripheral to the project's main thrust. Health and population projects that involved training directed women mostly to low-level, stereotypical jobs as nurses and community health workers. (The Director of the Office of Population is said to have turned down one proposal for training women as managers with the words, "You want to train Amazons!")

35 Ibid, p.234.

By fiscal year 1980, the report on WID submitted to Congress could cite only a little more than 2% of AID's development assistance, or \$29 million, as WID-related. Although the 1982 report indicates that WID programming had risen to \$53 million (4% of development assistance) by FY 1982, these totals should be treated with caution. Since the WID Office has neither the means nor the authority to make an independent assessment, the figures are developed from project descriptions submitted by field missions, using a variety of often elusive criteria. When checked against other documentation, as one WID staffer discovered, the information often failed to match up.³⁶ Some field missions did not respond to WID questionnaires at all, thus causing the total of WID-related programming to be understated, especially in 1980. Other missions inflated the totals by including activities that did not actually bring much benefit to women. For example, one sericulture project in Thailand is listed in the 1982 report as a WID project, because silk production is traditionally done by village women. But Rae Lesser Blumberg, in her review of projects for the Asia Bureau, found that men, not women, received more than half the training and all the loans necessary for putting the new methods into practice. She concludes, "It is too early to tell whether the sericulture project, as presently constituted, will help or hurt the women involved, but all the warning signals are present."³⁷

Earlier WID reports identified a fourth type of project, one which simply reflected, by means of an impact statement, that planners knew women would be affected. But reports to Congress on WID do not

³⁶ Personal interview.

³⁷ Blumberg and Hinderstein, op cit, p. 51.

discuss these "impact projects". As one noted, "a road project does not become a women in development project simply because women walk on roads."³⁸ In any event, researchers uniformly remark on the superficiality of impact statements, where they are included in project descriptions at all. The aforementioned study of AID projects in Asia found that, "using the most liberal coding imaginable, there is some mention of women--sometimes only a phrase or two--in 15 of the 49 evaluation reports."³⁹

Nonetheless, these "impact projects" may be the ones that have contributed most to marginalizing women. The milling projects that heedlessly deprive women of traditional roles in foodgrain processing without offering them alternatives, the projects that provide credit or technology only to male heads of households, the programs that effectively exclude women by requiring trainees to leave home for extended periods, the schools that make no provision for women's dormitories--all cry out for thoughtful analysis from a WID perspective. The obverse of such projects are those in which women's concerns are thoroughly integrated into project planning from the start. For practical reasons--including an almost universal lack of gender-specific data for evaluation purposes--it has never been possible to report on such projects. In fact, however, few of them exist and some scholars contend that sex stratification systems in developing countries would prevent women from benefiting equally with men in any case.⁴⁰

38 AID, Report on WID, August 1978, op cit, p. 2.

39 Blumberg and Hinderstein, op cit, p. 47.

40 See, for example, Constantina Safilios-Rothschild, "Integrating Women and Women's Issues in Large Development Projects: Existing Barriers and Suggested Guidelines," mimeo., n.d., p. 8.

Only a very small part of WID expenditures are controlled by the WID Office itself. In early 1978, its program budget was only \$300,000. Subsequently, perhaps due to expressions of Congressional interest, the budget grew to \$1.1 million and \$1.4 million in fiscal years 1979 and 1980, respectively (but nowhere near the \$3.5 million that WID backers had hoped for). Arvonne Fraser used these funds primarily for outward-looking activities--at home, through support of WID studies, conferences, seminars, and publication and distribution of WID materials; abroad, through support of WID activity at international forums. Little was left for impacting on AID's own programming. Toward the end of her tenure, Ms. Fraser began to fund some consultants for missions requesting technical assistance and to investigate possibilities for staff training. She also contracted with the Bureau of the Census to help gather gender-specific data regarding Third World countries, and she used small sums to support occasional experimental projects, such as one to promote consciousness-raising among women in two Tanzanian villages by means of audio-cassette listening forums. But, essentially, the WID office tried to influence AID by means of an outpouring of WID-related printed matter and by "mau-mau[ing] our male colleagues to remind them that a policy paper or project proposal would be strengthened by taking into account the part women play. . . ." Results were predictably marginal. As Elsa Chaney has written, "'Tsk, tsk' and 'you forgot again, gentlemen' are not the most effective policy tools."⁴¹

41

Both quotations from Elsa M. Chaney, "'If Only We Could Find A Good Woman...': Women as Policymakers in Development." Presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, New York City, 1978. Mimeo., p. 14.

3. Looking Inward: the WID Office, 1981---

Arvonne Fraser's successors under the Reagan Administration have chosen a quite different tack. It was always understood that "a fully integrated strategy for women in development would recognize that all projects have impact on women and develop the capability, through collection of sex disaggregated data, to measure differential impact."⁴² Ms. Fraser had not really attempted to move forward on this front, both for reasons of temperament and because she felt that the WID knowledge base was still inadequate for such an effort. Sarah Tinsley, named WID Coordinator in June 1982 after a year as Deputy Coordinator, evidently believes the time has come to try. She seems to be making a determined effort to master the paperwork, alliance building, and technical expertise that are prerequisite to impacting on AID's own processes. In this effort, Ms. Tinsley appears to have the trust of AID Administrator Peter MacPherson. (She joined AID originally as his Special Assistant, mainly for speech writing, and has retained that title.) Other top-level appointees are said to be supportive. Although some still disparage WID as a feminist issue, program officers inside and outside the WID Office appear pleased with the new strategy. "The WID issue isn't as strident as before," says one. A WID staffer comments, "We're more a part of the agency now."⁴³

42 AID, Women in Development: 1980 Report, op cit, p. 60.

43 Personal interviews.

The turn toward integration, or 'mainstreaming,' of WID concerns actually began earlier, when Avonne Fraser acquired a new deputy with roots in the Peace Corps rather than Academe. Paula Goddard, who later spent a year as Acting Coordinator, began the process of repairing the Office's relations with other parts of the Agency and replacing earlier rhetoric with development arguments that were meaningful to AID programmers. Ms. Tinsley's approach reflects the attitudes and knowledge she picked up during her year as Deputy Coordinator.

One of the new WID Coordinator's first acts was to secure approval for a Policy Paper on Women in Development, one of a series of papers laying out Agency positions on a variety of issues. Paula Goddard, who was the paper's principal author, reports having drawn on the insights of a number of respected WID scholars and consultants during the drafting, as well as on the advice of people "who really knew how AID works."⁴⁴

The Policy Paper reflects the growth of the WID field since PD-60 was issued in 1974. It recognizes that "most [developing countries] have endorsed the goal of further integrating women and girls into the development process" and calls on AID to "provide leadership" in helping to make this happen. It offers specific, bureaucratically relevant steps to ensure that WID policy is reflected throughout AID's portfolio, and details both the roles expected of WID Officers in bureaus and missions and the support that missions can expect from the WID Office. Although note is taken of "equity issues

⁴⁴ Personal interview.

which derive from women's status relative to men in many countries," the rationale for this new, integrative approach is couched solidly in terms of development "efficiency":

...gender roles constitute a key variable in the socio-economic conditions of any country--one that can be decisive in the success or failure of development plans....The experience of the past ten years tells us that the key issue underlying the women in development concept is ultimately an economic one: misunderstanding of gender differences, leading to inadequate planning and designing of projects, results in diminished returns on investments.⁴⁵

Programmatically, this approach downplays projects directed specifically to women, whether of the women-only or women's component type. Indeed, a cable on implementation sent to field missions in 1983 urges missions to move away from separate projects for women and toward integrated projects planned on the basis of gender-specific data and analysis. Missions, with occasional help from the WID Office, will continue to fund some high-priority women's components, but the expectation is that these will be both more substantial and planned from the outset as integral parts of the larger project. Insofar as women-only programs continue, the trend is to implement them through private voluntary organizations and through \$500,000

45 Women in Development: AID Policy Paper, October 1982, passim.

worth of support to selected projects of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Women, chosen by the WID Coordinator. 46

The WID Office budget has grown to almost \$2.5 million. It supports an increasingly active program for adding WID specialists to project design teams, providing technical assistance to field missions, and co-financing certain high-priority WID projects, especially of the WID-component type. In a somewhat unusual move, program money is being spent to acquire staff on loan from universities and government agencies to help monitor WID throughout AID. The aim is to have at least one experienced WID person to work regularly with each regional bureau in setting project review priorities, suggesting appropriate consultants, and evaluating results. In addition, the Office has contracted with Harvard Business School for several case studies of WID projects, to be used in an ambitious series of internal staff training exercise. The AID Administrator is expected to attend the first such exercise, a two-day residential workshop for senior staff, consultants, and AID-supported private voluntary organizations scheduled for October, where discussion will be based on Business school methodology. Ultimately, the WID Office hopes to expose smaller groups of mid-level staff to the case-study method on a regular basis. One WID official notes, "This is the longest fingers we've ever had into the central operations of the agency."⁴⁷

46 The U.S. was an early supporter of the Voluntary Fund but no longer contributes to it directly, since disagreements over the treatment of Middle East questions at the Copenhagen Conference caused Congress to block appropriations for the Fund. Some WID supporters are now lobbying for the U.S. to renew, and enlarge, its commitment. The present arrangement makes for an uneasy compromise.

47 Personal interview.

It is too early to tell whether this new approach will produce better results for Third World women. Surely, it would not have been possible without the work of earlier WID Coordinators to sensitize non-WID staff, elaborate on the information base for WID, and develop a core of WID specialists. Furthermore, an internally focused WID strategy may have costs in terms of attenuation of links with the worldwide women's movement, separation from possible sources of intellectual renewal in the WID research community, and possible loss of interest from those, including some in Congress, who support WID as a feminist issue. The traditional WID constituency appears wary. Many would argue that it is far too early to downgrade women-specific programming at a time when AID (and the Reagan Administration) has yet to prove that it can be trusted to follow through on genuine integration of women's concerns and when most countries still preclude women from equal access to development resources and benefits.

4. WID at the Peace Corps

Although this paper deals primarily with AID, it is appropriate to include a brief note about the handling of WID in the Peace Corps. Peace Corps experience in general parallels that of AID, although WID came to the Peace Corps surprisingly late, perhaps in part because of the organization's sensitivity to local custom. Until 1977, the year the Peace Corps Act was amended to reflect Percy Amendment language, only one woman staff member seems to have shown a consistent interest in women in development. A 1978 survey of Peace Corps projects indicated that "Third World women seem to interact with [volunteers] disproportionately as clients," especially of health and nutrition

services; "the relative exclusion of women from agricultural programs is particularly striking."⁴⁸ Appointees of the Carter Administration, many of whom were women, were more responsive. Cables were sent to field missions endorsing the WID concept; a consultant was engaged to talk to headquarters staff and field missions; and some key officials joined in pushing women's programming. As one former country director put it, "How could we avoid women if we wanted to reach the most marginal people?"⁴⁹

Peace Corps appear to have chosen intensive, agency-wide training as the vehicle for integrating women's issues. A Special Assistant for Women in Development was appointed in August 1982, one of whose duties is to see that WID becomes an integral part of the training curricula for both staff and Volunteers. Previously, WID had been discussed at optional brown-bag lunches for new staff; these were attended by less than half those eligible, mostly women, and the signal that women's concerns were "optional" was unfortunate. Now, new staff spend two-and-a-half days out of their month-long orientation participating in a mock WID programming exercise; stress is placed on cross-cultural negotiating skills for working with host governments. Consultants have been sent to a number of field missions to build on these beginnings. For their part, Peace Corps Volunteers get general instructions to look for opportunities for women's advancement; field training provides background on local women's issues. Perhaps more significant, technical manuals used for training

48 Steven Cohn, et al, "US Aid and Third World Women: The Impact of Peace Corps Programs," Economic Development and Cultural Change 29(4), July 1981, p. 801.

49 Personal interview.

Volunteers are being thoroughly revised to incorporate women's concerns; the forestry and marine fisheries manuals have already been revised and work is under way on inland fisheries.

C. Looking to the Future

Mainstreaming is the latest strategy for accommodating women's interests in general development programming in AID and elsewhere. Its backers hope thereby to avoid the curse of marginalization that has accompanied more women-specific approaches. But it is important to note that the new strategy, in giving all units responsibility for institutionalizing WID, could easily become a cover for "benign neglect." Responsibility given to everyone often becomes responsibility taken by no one. If this is to be avoided, several factors will require sustained attention.

1. Support from the Top

Higher officials set the tone for field staff and the large bureaucracy at headquarters. They can, and do, help by signing supportive cables and other policy statements. But other signals are more telling. The story is told of one AID Administrator who agreed to come to a luncheon discussion of WID matters in order to show his support--and promptly fell asleep. That is one kind of signal. A different message is sent by the Administrator who returns some project papers, saying, "I know perfectly well those 'farmers' are women; why don't you say so?" or the Assistant Administrators and Peace Corps directors who make a point of asking about WID projects whenever they visit a field office. Research for this paper happily turned up a number, some say a growing number, of positive signals.

Unfortunately, their existence seems to depend almost wholly on the vagaries of personality and past experience among higher officials. WID proponents must still make a point of actively seeking higher-up support for their efforts.

2. Support from the WID Office

Some AID officials appear to believe that mainstreaming will make a separate WID office unnecessary. On the contrary, it will be more important than ever for a WID Office to provide the rest of the Agency with program-relevant knowledge and expertise. There are several functions the Office needs, and is uniquely qualified, to perform. It must develop the materials and techniques for training program and technical staff to know when and how women's concerns are crucial to effective development; it must identify and provide WID specialists to participate in program planning and project design; and it must document the WID experience to draw lessons for the future. A major effort must still be made to develop techniques for gender-specific data-gathering and analysis, so that mainstream projects can be assessed in terms of their impact on women. Only a specialized central office can hope to keep on top of WID's growing complexity and only an office that contributes positively to the bureaucratic process can hope to build firm links with the rest of the Agency.

Some have suggested that the WID Office requires more concrete mechanisms for impacting on Agency programs. An independent program budget, sign-off responsibility on all programming documents, and supervisory control over a network of WID Officers or WID Committees (that it has a hand in naming) are among those most often mentioned.

Such mechanisms would give the Office more independent power. But their potential efficacy is uncertain. In practice, they would tend to emphasize WID as a separate programming concern and thus might be counterproductive. They would doubtless meet with resistance from other parts of the bureaucracy. Field missions, in particular, are reluctant to support activities, including WID projects, that they do not themselves originate, even when funding is assured. For the near term, at least, it would seem wiser for the WID Office to concentrate on improving its services to the rest of the agency. One long-time WID observer has commented, "WID's advocacy days are over; now its credibility will stand or fall on the usefulness of its program."⁵⁰

3. Bureaucratic Receptivity

An internal memo written toward the close of Arvonne Fraser's tenure noted that, "while the concept of women in development is accepted at upper levels of management and enjoys strong support outside the Agency, the middle levels in AID are still reluctant, resistant, or incapable of transforming the concept into practical, project terms."⁵¹ Positive signals from the top and constructive assistance from the WID Office will help remedy this problem. But it is also necessary that practitioners be receptive, especially in the regional bureaus and field missions.

This means, for one thing, continued growth in employment of WID-sensitive professionals. Such women and men do not yet form a

50 Personal interview.

51 5/14/81, mimeo.

critical mass in AID (and AID is far ahead of most other development agencies in this regard). "WID is still in the networking stage," remarks one WID supporter. "There are still embarrassing holes in people's thinking," says another.⁵² Nonetheless, their numbers and ability to influence programming are growing.

The relation of employment of women professionals to the need for WID sensitivity is a matter of some controversy. "The simple fact is that 'the women's issue' is more salient to women," writes Elsa Chaney.⁵³ Others do not agree. Women who have fought their own battles for advancement in bureaucratic settings tend to distance themselves from WID issues--a reflection of continuing status problems for women and women's issues. Men who empathize with Third World cultures, by contrast, often make good "WID people." The WID Office has a male program officer on its staff for the first time in many years. Indeed, one former WID official maintains, "you weaken the argument [for WID] by saying this is women's work....There are too many men out there."⁵⁴

On the other hand, interviews for this paper turned up repeated stories about how helpful this or that (female) mission director or bureau chief or program officer had been in promoting WID concerns. There has been an encouraging growth of interest in WID among some strategically placed younger women professionals, some of whom are WID Office "graduates." It is thus relevant that--while there is still

52 Personal interviews.

53 Chaney, op cit, p. 11.

54 Personal interview.

room for improvement--the proportion of women in programming positions has about tripled since 1974.⁵⁵

WID sensitivity is too important to be left to the happenstance of hiring practice, however. It must be systematically promoted. New staff training programs in AID and the Peace Corps appear to be constructive steps in this direction. Both concentrate on concrete applications of WID in specific circumstances, rather than on general identification of the problem and descriptions of the situation of women in developing countries. "I'm not talking about sensitivity sessions," says AID's Sarah Tinsley, but about imparting "a new set of analytical and conceptual skills."⁵⁶ Hopefully, this kind of training will in time be made mandatory for all programming and technical personnel and be extended to the contractors and private voluntary organizations that bear much of the responsibility for actual project implementation.

4. WID Expertise

To advocate staff training is not to say that training should seek to turn all personnel into WID programmers. Early WID proponents did themselves a disservice by suggesting that, as one of them told Congress, "all it takes is an intelligent programmer, a person who

⁵⁵ As of mid-1983, according to figures supplied by AID's Office of Equal Employment Programs, the proportions of women at GS-13 and above were as follows: Asia Bureau, 13.1%; Latin America, 15.9%; Near East, 17.6%; Africa 25.6%; Bureau of Science and Technology (which now includes the Office of Population) 22.2%; and PPC, 29.2%. More than half the field missions have at least one woman at supervisory levels, though some of them probably hold stereotypical administrative or personnel positions rather than program responsibilities.

⁵⁶ Personal interview.

sees women on the level of people."⁵⁷ There is still some sentiment of this sort among both WID and non-WID officials in aid agencies. It shows itself particularly in a tendency to feel that social soundness analyses (theoretically required for all projects) are sufficient to uncover WID concerns. But the experience of the past ten years seems to indicate otherwise. The track record of social scientists-- themselves not fully accepted within AID--has been highly uneven, especially in regard to women's issues. Furthermore, even the best statement of a problem does not necessarily indicate how to resolve it. WID programming has fared best where experienced WID staff or consultants have worked with field missions to review project portfolios, help develop project proposals, and analyze results. The International Center for Research on Women, for example, has successfully provided technical help on economic alternatives for poor women in 14 countries under a contract jointly funded by the WID Office and the Office of Human Resources, and nine more missions have asked for their help. Ideally, a WID specialist who is familiar with AID procedures and limitations should be included in all strategy, project design, and evaluation teams, working alongside economists and technicians.

Ideally, too, WID specialists should develop the sectoral expertise that is the meat and potatoes of development programming. Most of today's WID scholars and consultants have trained as sociologists or anthropologists. They are often ill-equipped to communicate in programmatic terms that make sense to macroeconomists

57 U.S. House of Representatives, Hearing and Briefing,
op cit, p. 57.

and sector technicians and, in any event, suffer from the generally low status accorded to "soft" social scientists within AID. The recent WID Policy Paper outlines distinct women's concerns in agriculture, employment and income generation, education, population, health, nutrition, energy and conservation, water use and management, and institutional development. No one WID "expert" is likely to be familiar with all of them. It is heartening that an agricultural economist was for a time attached to the WID Office and undertook visits to field missions. Population and health have attracted a number of WID specialists, as has employment and income generation. Social forestry and water management can each count at least one WID specialist. And the WID Office is now funding a university-based program for sending female technical specialists to work with missions and local development institutions in a variety of fields. But these are still the exceptions, and recognition of the importance of sectoral expertise is not yet widespread among those concerned with women in development.

5. Women-specific Programming

Women-specific projects present difficult problems for AID in the context of a mainstreaming strategy. As noted, such programs have developed a poor reputation. Nonetheless, certain kinds of women-only projects meet distinctive needs of Third World women and thus may be justifiable, even if they are not immediately relevant to mainstream development programming.

First, women-specific projects can help to identify the techniques most suitable for reaching women. A number of projects have involved experiments with instruments as diverse as audio-cassette

tapes played at village wells and incentives for traditional midwives to deliver health and nutrition information to their clients. The pilot project has a long and honorable history at AID. It is worth while, however, only if its lessons are absorbed into the larger program.

More importantly, women-specific projects can help programmers to learn how women experience development. It seems clear that women do not necessarily respond in expected ways to programs that are meant to help them. In a perceptive article, Jane Jaquette points out that "a number of studies have shown that women derive power and satisfaction from their separate roles, that they use women's networks or kin groups to gain economic advantage or to ensure community survival..." Dr. Jaquette elaborates on how the programmatic implications of such "female-sphere" insights differ from those of more conventional "liberal feminist theory," which sees "equal access to work and its economic rewards" as the solution to women's marginalization.⁵⁸ "Female-sphere" theorists tend, for example, to favor programs in appropriate technology for women, while liberal feminists may argue that appropriate technology for women and modern technology for men only perpetuates women's subordination. These and other theoretical cross-currents will be played out chiefly in the conferences and seminars where WID scholars gather. But they also need to be tested against specific situations and their lessons absorbed into WID policymaking. It would be unfortunate if too exclusive a preoccupation with fitting WID into AID's existing program resulted in a distancing

58 Jaquette, op cit, pp. 280,271. Jaquette identifies socialist feminism as a third theoretical strain; its prescriptions are more political than developmental.

of WID officials from important sources of intellectual sustenance. The fact that Ms. Tinsley is playing an active part in the new Association of Women in Development, which includes both scholars and practitioners, may indicate that she is aware of this danger.

Finally, women-specific projects can help women to "catch up," where they have been disadvantaged in the past. Credit and income-generating schemes for women, non-traditional job training, education programs of all sorts, and research and extension programs for crops commonly grown by women all fall into this category, as do many others. While such projects may make economic sense, their true justification is on equity grounds. "In the end," says one WID specialist, "it's redistribution we're really talking about."⁵⁹ There is a place for equity programming in AID. Indeed, basic human needs projects in favor of the poor also stem from a desire to promote social justice. But it is well for WID supporters to recognize that equity programming is more likely to be ~~undertaken~~ undertaken where it is shown to make economic sense. In that case, WID supporters will be in a better position to insist that programs be mounted on a sufficient scale to be meaningful to more than a handful of women.

The challenge for WID proponents, then, is to learn to design effective women-specific projects and to make the case for their inclusion in AID's program. They must not become, as one scholar cautions, "an easy way out for bilateral donors and international organizations for fulfilling their mandate of showing development activities for women."⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Personal interview.

⁶⁰ Safilios-Rothschild, op cit, p. 15.

6. Empowerment Activity

Support for women's organizations, women's bureaus, and women's rights policy represents a special subcategory of women-specific programming which might be called "empowerment" activity. It is of particular interest to feminists because of its potential to give Third World women leadership experience and enhance their power to protect their own group interests vis-a-vis male-dominated institutions. It has also been of interest to some Third World governments groping for ways to respond to indigenous women's movements. Some of AID's field missions have used umbrella projects or regional funds for responding to these interests with technical assistance or small grants to selected women's bureaus and organizations. WID and other central funds have provided a limited amount of management training and international exposure for women leaders. Many of the projects of the U.N. Voluntary Fund for Women also work through official and non-official women's organizations.

But empowerment projects have been a problem for AID. Official women's bureaus and similar institutions have generally been more concerned with social welfare or women's rights than with development, and AID has paid little attention to them since the Office of Labor Affairs projects were phased out. Suggestions that "legal . . . activities" were a legitimate part of WID programming (see p. 8) faded away early on. Indigenous non-governmental women's organizations tend to be small and weak, unable to articulate their needs in terms that AID can deal with. Some are comprised of elite women, removed from the lives and concerns of the poor. The more overtly political these organizations are, the harder it is for AID to support them.

The use of private-sector intermediary organizations may point a way out of this dilemma. AID's (well funded) Population Office has made frequent use of this technique to promote family planning in developing countries. It has the advantages of removing AID from direct funding of "sensitive" issues, taking AID out of the business of overseeing many small projects, and enlisting external constituencies and financial resources. In the 1970s, the Office of Private Voluntary Organizations experimented with grants to intermediaries like the Overseas Education Fund, to enable them to expand their work with official and non-official women's groups in developing countries. The experience was less successful than that for population, but it may be worth while to press AID to try a similar approach again, perhaps through the regional bureaus. Leadership training is surely a priority need.⁶¹ More could doubtless be done to help official women's bureaus to work more effectively with development agencies and ministries in their own countries. To be effective, such efforts would have to be better financed than in the past and administered with sensitivity to Third World conditions. Many Third World women are leery of U.S.-style feminist politics. Ideally, politically oriented empowerment programming should take place via international women's networks, not development agencies. The U.N. Commission on the Status of Women and some private groups seem to be encouraging moves in this direction; for example, Arvonne Fraser, who is now associated with the

⁶¹ In this connection, it should be noted that women still constitute less than 20 percent of the participants brought to the U.S. by AID for training.

University of Minnesota, has obtained a foundation grant to study the role of women's organizations in changing public policy. Regardless of the mechanism, however, it is important that empowerment activity continue. Ultimately, the surest guarantee that WID concerns will be addressed in developing countries is that their female citizens are in a position to insist on it.

7. External Attention

WID has come a good distance in AID and other development agencies since the Percy Amendment. But it cannot yet be said that WID is regularly or thoroughly integrated into development programming. There is a danger that, without continuing attention from the outside, mainstreaming strategy will permit programmers once again to neglect women's interest.

For the next two years, events will conspire to keep WID in a spotlight. The tenth anniversary of the Percy Amendment has already inspired some retrospective analysis and renewed dedication; the WID constituency plans other efforts. In addition, another report on WID is due to be presented to Congress in 1984, which will provide an occasion for generating attention to the issue on Capitol Hill. There have been no oversight hearings on WID since 1978, and WID theory and practice have grown considerably in the interim; it may be time for Congress to review this experience.

More importantly, the international conference scheduled to mark the end of the International Decade for Women at Nairobi in 1985 will generate considerable interest in the progress of women worldwide.

The WID Coordinator will be expected to take an active part in official preparations for the conference and to show how AID's programs have helped women's advancement in developing countries. She will also be under pressure to match the activism of her predecessors in supporting non-governmental activities related to the conference. These activities will tie her closer to the international women's network, with its interest in the equity and empowerment dimensions of WID programming. Thus, while the Nairobi conference may divert the WID Office from its present focus on institutionalizing WID within AID, it may bring benefits in terms of enhanced interest and support from outside the Agency, to the long-term benefit of women's programming.

The real test for WID will come after 1985. By then, the pressures generated by the Nairobi conference will have subsided. Interest among American feminists, never very great, may have diminished further. WID's future will then depend, on the one hand, on whether Third World women have become strong enough to force governments and aid donors to respond to their needs and, on the other, whether WID concepts have become sufficiently integrated into development assistance programming to help in that process. The WID constituency has an interest in seeing that both these things happen. To that end, it must gird itself for the long haul. As one supporter says, "WID is taking hold, but it's a long process."⁶²

62 Personal interview.

Persons Consulted

Carolyn Rose Avila	Overseas Education Fund, formerly Peace Corps
Patricia Baldi	Center for Population, formerly AID
Robert Berg	Overseas Development Council, formerly AID
Mayra Buvinic	International Center for Research on Women
Carol Capps	Church World Service
Elsa Chaney	WID Consultant, formerly AID
Emily di Chicco	Overseas Education Fund
Mary Elmendorf	Consultant
John Eriksson	AID
Thomas Fox	Council on Foundations, formerly AID
Arvonne Fraser	Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, formerly AID
Nan Frederick	AID
Paula Goddard	AID
Margaret Goodman	House Foreign Affairs Committee
Gloria J. Greene	AID
Kaval Gulhati	Center for Development and Family Planning Activities
Deborah Harding	Peace Corps
Judith Helzner	PACT
Barbara Herz	World Bank, formerly AID

Persons Consulted (continued)

Roma Knee	AID
Louis Kuhn	AID
Barbara Pillsbury	Consultant, formerly AID
Deborah Purcell	AID
Marilyn Richards	New Transcentury Foundation
Susan Scull	Peace Corps
Margaret Shaw	AID
Katherine Shreedhar	formerly Peace Corps
Arthur Silver	AID
Jonathan Silverstone	AID
F. William Small	AID
Kathleen Staudt	University of Texas at El Paso, formerly AID
Lael Stegall	Windom Fund, formerly Peace Corps
Irene Tinker	Equity Policy Center
Sarah Tinsley	AID
Roxann van Dusen	AID
Ruth Zagorin	AID

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