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FEMINISM AND DEVELOPMENT

An Interview with Peggy Antrobus

Exchange:

What is your working definition of feminism?

Peggy Antrobus:

I have a definition which is very simple. To me, feminism means first of all a consciousness of women's oppression and secondly, a determination or a commitment to work to change that. By that definition we can include men and by that definition we can exclude a whole lot of women. But there are problems with this simple definition. For instance, I'm becoming more and more convinced that the Caribbean, for example, is full of feminists, that the majority of the women are feminists. But they don't use the word and they don't have the sort of consciousness or commitment which I've just said is a part of the definition. But bear in mind that the women of a country may be living a daily struggle of which they're not conscious. They're simply surviving. But when you really analyze it, you see that they are struggling to

maintain some dignity, some autonomy, some meaning for their existence. They're not passive, ignorant, indifferent to their situation. So in a sense their lives show a kind of consciousness of women's oppression. What is necessary is for somehow that experience of struggle and that experience of survival to be made conscious and then translated into some real effort to overcome.

Exchange:

How would you link up feminism and women in development?

Antrobus:

Let me see if I can find where that link is. I think that women struggling to survive, which is the climate out of which feminism will come, is the daily experience of the mass of women. This unconscious struggle is not development; in a way it's the opposite of development. But it is the situation out of which comes a need for development. Development is the tool for transforming that situation. And that is the link. The link between feminism and development is that both of them are processes, almost parallel processes toward transforming the lives of people. In the case of feminism, it would be a process for transforming the lives of women. You can have feminism in a developed country as a means of helping women to recognize that in certain areas they're not developed. It's a vehicle of transforming women to make them recognize their strengths and the things that are keeping them back from being in the mainstream and

of giving women the energy, the commitment to change the situation. Development is the vehicle which enables not only men but men and women to transform their situation into something that gives them a better quality of life.

Another link between feminism and development is that it is impossible to talk about development unless everybody's participating and it is clear that women have not been participants in the process of social and economic transformation. But even when they are not being paid, women are clearly contributing to development in its largest sense--in the traditional ways of being mothers and bringing up the next generation, of carrying water and firewood, of producing backyard gardens.

Or take the typical Caribbean woman who is obviously contributing to economic development by reaping food and selling it at the market. Even though she may get paid something for the food that she sells, she never fully recovers the cost of reaping it and of transportation and she probably doesn't ever figure in the cost of her time. So the money she earns doesn't really compensate her for her effort. Nor is it recognized as part of a development economy. What follows is that women are not rewarded and they are not given the necessary tools and skills to change their situation. But once a woman's contributions are acknowledged, it makes sense to give her the tools that

would help her operate more efficiently and productively. Then the entire marketing system would be more efficient, losses from delays and damaged goods would be minimized, and women's role in the economy and in development would be greater.

Exchange:

And what about her own consciousness in that process?

Antrobus:

Well, it may or may not change, depending on how you approach it. I mean it's possible to give her skills in accounting and bookkeeping and grading and selling and so on without touching her consciousness. Or her conscience. That leads me to another point. I think part of development has to be what Paolo Friere has called conscientization-- people, not just women, all people who are going to really engage in transforming society have to understand the structures and the systems that keep them underdeveloped.

Out of that understanding they can be energized to do something about it. And women also have to understand what that means to them as women. So I think that feminism has to be part of development, it has to be one of the elements in that tool that will transform. If it isn't, women may get skills and they may get more money; but they're not necessarily transforming the structures or finally influencing the shape of development. To me, development has to include the active participation of women all along the line,

contributing to design and priority betting so that development money, for example, doesn't go only to build highways but also goes to create better communications in rural areas, or doesn't only go to built an electricity plant, but also to make sure that some of that electricity actually reaches the villages.

Let me give you a very good example of a situation in which women's involvement in the market economy was not recognized. In Jamaica, I once saw a television program in which the heads of two large agricultural organizations, men of course, were discussing the marketing of local food, locally produced foods. There was nothing wrong with what they were saying. They were talking about opening more shops, making them more efficient, setting up depots for collecting the produce from the farms, for grading it, packaging it, sending it into the shops. But nobody recognized that the people who were actually doing this work at the present time were almost exclusively women. They were talking without even knowing how many women were involved. So I got in touch with them and asked whether they had thought about those women and about what would happen to them in this proposed new system. And had they thought about what information on marketing they could get from the women? It had never occurred to them. They weren't against doing it, it was just that they hand't thought about the women.

Exchange:

What other issues do you think are important for women in development?

Antrobus:

The quality of development is important. By that I mean, what priority do you give to housing, to roads, or to supplies, daycare centers, schools and so on. Where do you locate health centers and what hours are they open? And the style of development is key. I think that we need a more democratic style, one that emphasizes people more than profitability of a product.

Furthermore, we must look at the impact of development on women. One good example in the Caribbean is the setting up of garment factories. These factories not only put thousands of dressmakers out of work, but also introduced increasingly exploitative working conditions. All over the Caribbean they're starting these small industries, small factories, which employ mostly women and pay very low wages. I think it's a deliberate policy-- employers exploit women sexually and keep them in a kind of slavery, and they know that these women have to have jobs because many of them are the sole supports of their children.

Exchange:

What about the argument that those industries, after all, provide employment, and once a country reaches full employment then the opportunities for improving conditions of labor and developing labor unions will prevail?

Antrobus:

I don't believe that will automatically happen, because I think the development of unions and better conditions for

people have always had to come out of a consciousness and determination on the part of the workers. I agree that women need employment and that that is part of development. But I'm saying that it can be exploitation unless the whole process is a feminist process. If you look beyond helping those women to get jobs to helping them get a sense of dignity and autonomy and an awareness of their oppression and a determination to change that, then they will do what workers have done traditionally. They'll form unions. That would be a feminist transformation, a contribution to development.

Exchange:

How is that going to come about, the developing, the changing awareness?

Antrobus:

In a society as stratified as the Caribbean or any developing country, there's a small elite, people who have had certain levels of education, certain training, and know how to get things organized. But these middle-class women often owe their position only to the fact that they are married, and they may be in a very oppressive family situation. However, they see a very clear contrast between what they have and what the mass of people have. They think they must hold onto their position, so they are not taking risks, not doing anything to change the status quo. Often, I'm afraid, they are themselves oppressing a lot of other

women because they employ women in their homes and factories. Now that's a sort of class situation which is part of the history of the Caribbean.

There are beginning to be a few women among that middle-class group who are feminists and who are growing and deepening their consciousness. Some have become feminist because they've been exposed to the struggle of low-income women; there's no doubt that it was my work with low-income Jamaican women that helped to develop my feminist consciousness. But I think there is a limit to what feminists who come from the middle class can do to really get a mass movement or to help those women who are being exploited in the factories. I mean, we have very little credibility with those women as a group.

Interestingly enough, in the Caribbean I think that because the low-income woman is living the struggle, that she actually has more autonomy than the middle-class woman, even though she doesn't have the same level of education and material wherewithal. So what has to happen, I think, is to find within those low income groups women who do have feminist consciousness and to work with them to transform and conscientize their own women.

It can almost be spontaneous. People who don't even call themselves feminists increasingly become conscious of the oppressiveness of their lives and suddenly, at some point,

decide to do something about it. It's happened in the working-class struggle; it can happen to women. Feminism and development--this is the social transformation which is affecting not only the class and the economic structure but also relationships between men and women.

Feminism essentially involves relationships. It's about situations of domination and subordination, of oppression and submission. You could find those same situations in an economic struggle as well--between employer and employee, between the government and the people, between the rich countries and the poor, between the town and the country. All of those oppressive systems are linked.

Exchange:

Peggy, you were Chairperson of the Advisory Committee for the Exchange. Could you talk a little bit about why you thought that was an important activity?

Antrobus:

In 1975 at the Mexico City conference there were thousands of women from all over the world, many of them with tremendous experiences to share. But there was no climate and no time for that sharing. I keep meeting people who were in Mexico in 1975 whom I never met then and I think it is a real tragedy that we were all there, but there was no way we could get together, although sometimes we were sitting in the same row of seats at the U.N.

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Conference. We designed the Exchange to provide opportunities for women to meet each other and to offer some focus for conversation, in order to draw together people with common experiences and concerns.

Exchange:

Looking back on your experiences of the last five years and on what you've heard at this 1980 conference, how has your thinking about women in development changed.

Antrobus:

At Mexico City, the issues seemed very clear to me, and maybe to many of us. We were talking then of integrating women into the process of development, both as agents and as beneficiaries. After five years and a lot of thought and a lot of action on my part, I am not as certain. The problem seems much more complex. Some of us are beginning to question whether women do want to be integrated into what are essentially patriarchal structures. For example, does equal access to education provide what women want? Is it enough for women to go to school when in those schools the stereotypes which limit our participation are reinforced? Is it not better that they do not go to schools than to have their spirit educated out of them? Is it that women want more jobs? Would the provision of more jobs really help women to experience their own dignity and autonomy? Certainly we know of many new jobs in certain industries that expose women to great exploitation, sexual harrassment, and subhuman

conditions. So perhaps we should question the whole current concept of development and look to find a new concept, not just for women but for all people.

First, we need to restructure the patriarchal structure, to change relationships within society that are now relationships of domination, one class by another, one sex by another, one segment by another, one political ideology by another. We want a concept of development that changes relationships of domination and subordination into relationships of partnerships.

Second, women must be allowed to make decisions about their society. It's not enough for us to be represented by men who are benovolent or even who are feminists. I am not satisfied with a concept of development unless women are making the decisions themselves. We need to own our lives. Unless women contribute their own experience, their own reality, to shaping the concept of development, then for me the notions of integration and equality can be a misleading path for women to take.

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A ROLE FOR WESTERNERS: HELPING WOMEN CATCH-UP

An Interview with Judith Helzner

Judith Helzner, an Associate in Women's Programs at the Pathfinder Fund, was the convenor of Exchange workshops on family planning and health services. Pathfinder is a small, private donor agency which, for the past twenty years has been funding family planning projects and women's projects in developing countries.

The Exchange:

What do you see as the basic issues of women in development?

Judith Helzner:

There are two basic rationales underlying the concept of women in development: equity and efficiency.

The equity rationale, which a few donor agencies and some theorists hold, rests on the idea that women deserve the same rights and opportunities as men, the same pay levels if they're in a job, the same opportunities to have

a job, and the same legal status. They deserve the same--whatever. Everything. Women should have an equal share.

On the other hand, people who support the efficiency argument don't really focus on the imbalance between the way men and women relate to the world. What they see as the main overall objective is not equity but development. They see the poverty in the developing world and conclude that much must be done to increase the social and economic welfare of the people in developing countries--and that one of the most significant inputs is human resources. And they see that if you don't pay any attention to the women, you're wasting half of the available human resources. So to them it's a matter of how do you speed up the process of development--you use all the inputs that you can: all the capital, all the labor, all the everything. And you use women's input as well as men's. They don't care, really, about whether women deserve a better shot; they think that development should happen faster and that it will happen faster if you use women.

Exchange:

Do you think it makes sense for governmental or non-governmental agencies to implement development programs specifically aimed at and limited to women?

Helzner:

That's another big question. There are a lot of people--even women's programs people--who argue violently

against doing any women-specific things. Why? They think that since the ultimate goal is integrated development, women and men participating equally, that we should therefore do development projects in an integrated way immediately. These people feel very strongly that women-specific programs--especially small ones in terms of funding--are counter-productive. They're afraid that donors will feel they are doing their bit with these twenty-thousand dollar projects and that it doesn't matter whether they pay attention to women in the big development projects.

For my part, though, I think there must be women-specific projects. The whole reason why women in development came up as an issue is because people began to realize that women had been actually set back by the development efforts of the past. There are many documented examples of that from all over the world. For example, a development program brought new fishing nets into an Indonesian fishing village, nets that never required mending. But traditionally, women had done that mending. They had earned some income this way, and had status. Now their work was no longer necessary. But the program made no provision for any kind of alternative employment or skills for these women; they were just left behind. And in another case, a development project in Africa to train people in new techniques for raising livestock, totally ignored the fact that women traditionally owned and cared for livestock.

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So I believe that in many instances, development has hurt women. And that's why there's a need for women-specific programs. There is an analogy here with the situation of blacks in the U.S. where there also are documented negative effects from past policies and practices. Do you use affirmative action or not? Can you get to the big picture, the real integrated picture, without compensating for the inequalities of the past? To me the answer is no, you can't get there without a period, at least, an interim period, of catch-up efforts. I think that's true for blacks in the United States and I think it's true for women.

Exchange:

Do you think that Westerners have a role in the process of development?

Helzner:

Yes. But up until now everything in development, not just health and population, has been top-down. The idea of development has been to increase the gross national product through big industrial projects and big agricultural projects that would trickle down to the people at the bottom level. It's only been in the last five years or so at the most that people in the development field have started to realize that this top-down, trickle-down theory isn't going to work and that you've got to work from the bottom up. We must look carefully at the real situation of the community, including the women's situation, and design programs

accordingly. The ideal would be to have the intended beneficiaries design the program themselves. But we're a long way from that because Western people like to think in what we characterize as "rational," "scientific" ways, and have concluded that people in developing countries without education can't have plans that are "rational," "scientific" or "logical". All too often we don't respect the fact that they might have solutions to their own problems that could be far more valid than our rational, scientific ones.

Exchange:

How does family planning fit into the whole set of women's issues in the third world?

Helzner:

Well, you can't generalize because the way it fits into the life of a woman in a place where there are no services and where the concept of controlling one's reproduction barely even exists is much different from the way it fits into the life of a woman who lives in an urban Latin American area with drugstores and free government clinics giving out pills. The main thing is that in many places until recently and even now the "rational" behavior--you know, the behavior that's rewarded by society--for a woman is to have a lot of children. There are many reasons: so that people will think her husband is virile; because that's her main role in life and if she doesn't have a lot of children she has no status; because there are no social

security systems and she needs the children to care for her in her old age; because infant mortality has been so high she hasn't realized yet that a lower proportion of her own children are going to die. So up until recently there were many rational reasons for women not to try and limit their own reproduction.

Now for a lot of reasons--because of modernization and urbanization, because of the possibility of status for women being derived from other roles than mothering, the possibility of women earning income or whatever--that calculation of what's rational behavior is starting to change in some places. And there is the health factor: pregnancy after pregnancy with very little time in between is incredibly draining on the body. It will take away all your iron and leave you badly anemic; it will take all your calcium; it will take all your nutrients; they'll all just go into the kids. So now you want to have the methods of contraception available to women so that they can choose them. It goes without saying that you don't want to force it on anybody.

Changing attitudes are critical to this whole thing--and it's important to say, not just the attitudes of women but of men as well. If every single woman within a country changed her mind all of a sudden and decided she didn't want many more children, but none of the husbands changed their minds, the behavior wouldn't change.

Exchange:

And what role can Westerners play in family planning programs?

Helzner:

In the population field, it was Western-origin public health programs that caused the great decrease in mortality in developing countries that led to the population explosion. So since we had a role in getting the mortality to go down and since that put the growth of population out of balance, I think we also have a role in helping the births to come into balance--and in this women and development case, in helping women to catch up.

What I want to say about women and family planning in the 1980's is that I hope the trend is going from the population-control, top-down, politically unappealing kind of image that agencies like Pathfinder have had in the past to a new reality and a new image, both giving more attention to the women who are actually involved in the projects in some way--a bottom-up approach. We're not big hotshot doctors or something, we're just women who have something to do with health and family planning services even as clients ourselves. I think that's very exciting and that's why I like fighting the battles of women and family planning around this time because I see us turning a corner--I hope! If not, it will be very serious, I think.

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"WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT" MEANS THE STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE

An Interview with Isabel Nieves

Exchange:

Are you a feminist?

Nieves:

I consider myself a feminist in my personal life, but not in my work. Women in development is an issue of the struggle to survive. Feminism is an issue of recognition of women as human beings. The first is an issue of life or death, the second is not. A lot of women in the Third World are turned off by "women in development" because they see it as feminism coming in from the West -- just another form of imperialism.

Exchange:

What do you mean by development? Is it strictly something originating in the West?

Nieves:

There is a process of modernization going on which we cannot stop. But the conscious process of modernization, which we call development -- that is basically an export. It is what "development experts" conceive of.

Exchange:

What do you see as the basic issues of women in development?

Nieves:

For me it is economics. Poverty is probably the most immediate problem that women have to face, much more so than legal or ideological equality. The feminist movement in the more developed countries made women look at other women. Looking at their own role made them say, "Wait a minute -- what is going on? We're really exporting a male-dominated model of development." So women in development is calling into question the model of development as it has been exported from the Western world and by the international development agencies like the World Bank.

Exchange:

Why do you see a need to focus specifically on women?

Nieves:

Because development has often adversely affected women. Women are overrepresented among those in poverty in the Third World. But the recognition of the adverse effects of development on women came only in the early 1970's, after almost a decade of development work.

Those effects are real and grave. For example, in the late 50's and early 60's we had the "green revolution." Agricultural expertise was provided by the developed to the developing countries. But the agricultural "experts" assumed that men were the farmers, and therefore women were excluded from the benefits of these programs.

In Africa, when the plow was first introduced by development agencies, it was given to men. From then on men had control over

this key resource, and they could enter the modern economy through the sale of cash crops. Women didn't get this chance; they kept on at the subsistence level. But in fact subsistence living has become less and less viable. Women still have to meet their subsistence responsibilities--they are still expected to be the main providers of food for their children, to pay school fees, to purchase clothes and supplies--but they are less able to meet these responsibilities through subsistence production alone. They need cash in order to stay afloat in a money economy.

The point of the women in development movement is to make sure that women's economic contributions -- and their capacity to contribute economically -- are recognized and counted. We are trying to get people to see that women are not one-dimensional human beings, that they fill many roles. Development programs must be based on an accurate accounting of how women actually spend their time on a day-to-day basis and of how much extra time they have available. The increased workload that development has meant for women must be acknowledged. And we have to recognize that women's productive responsibilities, their economic responsibilities, are directly related -- in many different ways -- to the obligations that come from their reproduction function.

These, and many other reasons, call for a focus specifically on women in development.

But those of us concerned with women in development have to watch out that we're not taking women out of the frying pan and throwing them into the fire -- that is, that we are not just moving women into exploitative roles. Efforts to introduce women into the process of development must not be mere gestures to make them appear useful, like to many handicrafts projects which are not only exploitative of women, but have no relevance to the socioeconomic reality in which they live. Women in development projects must fit in with national guidelines and overall development plans. Furthermore, we have to remember that employment may not be a solution. For example; the multinationals may offer employment -- but it's a job with dignity and with security that's needed. We want women to be able to meet their economic needs, but we must not forget that they might be happier at home than working in an oppressive factory.

Another thing planners should recognize is that women have shown remarkable resourcefulness and capacity in reacting to the adverse effects of development. They have drawn on their traditions of cooperative work, their ability to band together for mutual self-help, and their practice of organizing themselves into grass-roots women's groups. They have shown impressive initiative in their attempts to become active in the cash economy. Although relegated to the informal service sector, they have become involved in many economic pursuits. Still, women's struggle to become

more productive and secure is far from approaching the point of success, because in general, they remain in temporary, seasonal, unstable and, unprofitable enterprises.

Exchange:

What are the most promising approaches to changing the perceptions of the people who are exporting development?

Nieves:

We must educate the personnel working in international agencies. The term "women in development" has too many bad connotations now. We have to capture the attention of these people -- through empirical evidence on the real situation of women. We have to demonstrate to them what is wrong with the process of development itself. In this effort, not just the field personnel but those at the central office need to be reached -- the policy makers, the programming people, the project directors. Then there's another important group -- the governments of developing countries. If the men and women in these governments think we are trying to export feminism, it will be a disaster. Because they are the ones who set up government programs and they are the ones who ask for development money.

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## What Unites Women

To a great extent every workshop at the Exchange addressed the question of what unites women across national borders, class lines, from region to region. The Exchange was determined to offer women from all over the world an opportunity to come together to share their thoughts and beliefs on a number of different issues. Our similarities are differences as women were always an ingredient of these discussions. But in addition, sessions following the screenings of Martha Stuart's videotape "World Feminists" (see page xx), workshops on "What Unites Women" convened by Elise Cross (see page xx) focused specifically on what it means to be a woman. The talk was sometimes bitter and angry, sometimes hopeful and warm. But what was important, as one participant put it, was "the fact that we can unite and confide in each other as women, right here, even though we are strangers." Here are excerpts of what some of the others had to say.

U.S.A. :

One impression I've had of this Copenhagen meeting has been that as women we haven't been very different from men, that we should have paid more attention to our process and how we interacted as women. We could have had a different kind of meeting that did not have to duplicate the patriarchy, the way men need to interact and destroy one another.

England:

I feel strongly that all we have is numbers. We must unite. Women are deliberately kept in isolation so that the men can rule us. We are kept in neat little houses.

Bengladesh:

In my experience, women suffer from two kinds of oppression: because they are poor and because they are women.

Sweden:

I am a widow. I'm angry that socially I need a husband or a male. We women don't take care of each other. We are suspicious of each other.

Sweden #2:

We must also stop the self-suppression. We must make all girls believe that they can do something, that they are just as smart as men.

Barbados:

In fact rural women in the Caribbean are very strong. They are survivors. But they are psychologically dependent. Some of us just have to be casualties -- not in the negative sense exactly, but we must be the first ones to disturb the patriarchal system.

India:

We go through all this hardship because we want more for our children. But because of the way we must work, because of all the hardship, not all of our children survive.

About men and women:India:

Our men are subject to the same oppression from poverty as are our women. But the men's reaction is different. They are often irresponsible, spending money without thinking of their families. There is pain coming out of pain. The original pain come from the system itself. The men are in pain and are powerless. Then they inflict pain on others to relieve their own pain.

Mexico:

Men are proud of being macho. There is no guilt, even when they see your pain.

Jamaica:

I think there's often a tendency to women to measure themselves compared to men.

Denmark:

We must remember that men are also oppressed. Most men don't have decision-making power either. We must deal with human beings.

U.S.A.:

Men have been cheated into believing that they are not good as parents, that their only worth is as breadwinners. The more men are involved in our feminist movement, the better.

Indonesia:

I always put a woman in a family setting. She is an essential part of the family and she keeps it going. But she should be an equal partner with the man.

Kenya:

We are respected by the men. We have ways to get exactly where we want to without the men knowing. An important part of feminism must be that we use our own particular female talents to contribute to the improvement of society in general.

Denmark:

It is important not to fight men, not to suppress them; we must move side by side with men.

On feminism:Antigua:

Women's liberation is full of elite women. There are no choices for poor, uneducated women.

Sweden:

What I fear about feminism is that women forget the motherhood aspect of a woman's life.

Guyana:

Feminism is looked at as a threat to the family. People are afraid of shaking up the status quo, especially when they don't know what the alternatives are. The connotations of feminism are often hard to identify with -- men often think it means "women who are against men." But that's not what it means. That's only what we've been told it means.

U.S.A.:

It's the label that's the problem. People say, with contempt, "Oh, so you're a feminist." The first thing you want to say is "No, not me."

U.S.A.: #2

Given enough time, through the process of talking together, I think that women from all over the world could come together and make coalitions. One of the interesting things that seems to unite women outside of the United States is an opposition to the way women in the United States

are. We in the United States have a lot of work to do trying to understand what that means and doing something to change that perception.

U.S.A. #3:

The media has distorted the word 'feminism' and turned many women away. The press covers demonstrations only and not kdeas. Women need demonstrations, we need to be loud and strong in order to get attention. But there is more to feminism than demonstrations.

Mexico:

We must find a world feminism. The differences between undeveloped and developed countries must be solidly recognized before this world feminism can emerge. Feminism must be seen as a political movement, like the struggle against colonialism. Too often it is seen in an isolated context.

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JS Draft 12/1/80

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### INCOME GENERATION

Income generation--getting cash income to women. But how? In one series of workshops, under the leadership of Jasleen Dhamija, Exchange participants talked about income-generation, sharing their ideas, frustrations, and experiences.

They identified some basic problems: women are already overburdened by work; women often lack management skills; when new techniques and technology are introduced, men take over; women have no access to credit.

And they suggested guidelines for developing income-generating programs to meet women's needs:

- Look to existing activities and skills.
- Look to existing traditions in the community.
- Focus on upgrading already existing skills, diversifying skills, and developing new skills to meet new consumer demands.
- Rely on local resources for the materials of production.
- Train women in management skills.
- Provide access to credit.
- Improve transportation and communication.
- Develop local leadership and end dependence on outside experts.
- Use income-generation as a way of moving women into the mainstream of economic life.

Jasleen Dhamija:

Cash incomes are becoming increasingly important to rural women, because of migration and development. More and more women are becoming heads of households and finding that cash is essential for meeting the needs of their families.

Let's take rural women as a priority. In most countries, agriculture is marginal and people live below subsistence. The problems for women are accentuated with industrialization and pockets of urbanization. There are mass migrations to the city, leaving women behind. Rural women have enormous workloads. They work 8 to 12 hours daily. Where a Western woman might turn on a shower and get hot and cold water, these women walk miles to get water to use for drinking and washing. You can ask for a drink of milk, but to ask for water is embarrassing because there often is no water.

There also are the landless families. Only 1 percent of women in the world own land. The problems of the rural non-farm worker are often ignored, and the women in this category suffer most. These are the real invisible women, the ones who belong to the landless class. They carry the entire burden of their family. When the men move, they move alone; when the women move, they move with their babies on their backs. To improve health, diet, and sanitary

conditions, these women say they need cash. Cash to buy food. But the rural extension program of India, which provides irrigation and seeds, for instance, is only useful if someone owns land. Or if a landless woman is given a cow, it does her no good since she has no place to find fodder.

Sometimes a family does not even have money to buy matches, to buy soap, to buy oil for lighting a light. So when the experts advise, "Wash your children," the women ask, "Have you got a piece of soap?" And of what use is information about nutrition and a balanced diet when <sup>Some women</sup>  $\wedge$  can't put a substantial meal before their family? When we ask rural women what they need, they respond that they need cash.

Income-generation programs need not be exclusively for women, but they must be in the mainstream of the economy. Seventy percent of African women are involved in agriculture, 3 percent in industry, and 30 percent in services. There is a projection that in the year 2000, 70 percent more women will be added to the agricultural sector. But if even the present number of women is not being absorbed in this sector, how will there be enough room for 70 percent more? We must do something about this now. We must upgrade skills.

"Upgrading" means improving skills and technology to produce a better product in less time and for a more com-

petitive price in the market. We have not only to change the image of women that policy-makers have, we must change our own ideas as well. We should move up step by step. We should not encourage development which keeps women in a subservient level, where we are exploited. We must learn to protect our own interests. In the area of marketing, we should not be prepared to accept a low level of return. We must learn to cost our products. We take into account the cost of raw materials, but we do not calculate the time we have spent, the time the children have spent. And we must also look to the market. Often a machine-made product would cost twice as much, and people will pay that price because big manufacturers have packaging and advertising; individual women do not have this.

#### Handicrafts: Two Case Histories

##### Kenya:

In Kenya, we have a handicraft co-op run by a women's organization called Mandeleo ya Wanawake. The organization was formed in the 1950's, during the time of struggle to get freedom. Many men were killed or in prison and the women were left with much work. So we got together to try to help each other. Now we have 100,000 members who live in rural areas. They form their own groups and

affiliate with the central organization. We get new groups forming and joining us all the time. Women in Kenya know a lot about the strength in forming groups.

⑨ As soon as a group is formed, the members decide what they want to do. To give these groups an outlet that could bring them cash, we--the main organization of Mandeleo ya Wanawake--set up many handicrafts shops all around the country. But they all failed because we had no experience in administration. So we united all of them into one shop in Nairobi and got government support. In some countries, women sometimes refuse to work with government or with men. We discovered that if we fight with the men it will just take us longer to get what we want.

We started a handicraft cooperative and received advice and bookkeeping help from the government. We use the cooperative form because in Kenya almost all the property is owned by men. If we had gone to the bank for a loan, we would have been refused because we had no security. As a co-op we could get a loan from a co-op bank.

With handicrafts, women can get money to buy food and support their families. But handicrafts is not a good field unless you know what you are doing, because you can end up with a lot of products that no one wants. We change from item to item--based on the advice of government experts.

But sometimes we have trouble reaching our members in the rural areas with the necessary information because of problems of transportation.

Pakistan:

For rural projects we must get a line to the women. Transport is a must, it is a lifeline for our projects. If we are provided with transport, half our problems would be over.

Dhamija:

People doing income-generating activities often think of going into handicrafts. But handicrafts can be exploitative. It is a low-productivity enterprise, with a low rate of return and no room for growth. Women do crafts to supply their own households, with maybe a little surplus. This is low-productivity, labor-intensive, and low-paying work. If men are moving out of handicrafts and into more lucrative jobs, why should women simply move into handicrafts? For example, in Africa, women do the pottery. But historically, as soon as the pottery wheel becomes available, the men take over pottery. Upgrading skills has always been for men.

England:

This seems like a universal problem. Once you bring in a small piece of machinery the men get interested and there is no place for the women any more.

Dhamija:

We must look to women's traditional skills and upgrade

and diversify them. For example, in food processing. Even though this might be part of everyday life for women, it can be expanded to become an income-generating project, with improved technology. But as soon as it becomes an industry the men take over, though they've never done food processing before. Industrialization is leaving women out.

India:

Most poor women are working. We think it is most important to focus on underemployment. For example, if a woman works spinning yarn for 50¢ a week, the key thing to do for her is to get her \$1 a week for spinning yarn. This is much better than moving her into another field, like making plastic boxes for the United States. The foreign markets are vulnerable. So we must look at what women are doing now and strengthen them in that work.

Ivory Coast:

In my country, people already have skills, but with economic development their activities were diminished, because local markets are overshadowed by imported goods.

We looked at the situation of women making pottery; how do they work; how can they be integrated into the general market economy? We found that this activity had a sacrosanct nature, done exclusively by women, passed down from mother to daughter. All this was a development in the pre-metal age--when we didn't have imported tin and plastic for

containers. This was a vital aspect of life and it was the domain of women. Then came the European clientele which also stimulated this activity. They did not highlight the utility of the vessels, but they did use them for decoration. But now it is no longer central to our own society as much, and we have turned to imported containers for our daily use. Our own pottery is becoming an export item and now men are entering into this activity, and they are more aware of marketing problems and needs.

It was recognized that the women who make pottery should be organized. They formed themselves into groups, and the government set up a training center. But the women did not use the training center! Instead, 12 men went there. At times, these men couldn't do some of the pottery work that was being done in the countryside, and they would have the women come in to teach them. But ultimately, it is the men who now produce the products for the market.

My project was to improve what was being done by the women--not to change it. We figured it out this way: First, we will try to improve working conditions. We will look at each step and try to find ways to make it easier. Second, we will improve the commerce. We need to encourage the daily use of our own locally produced items, instead of foreign imports. Then we must look to exporting ourselves. Third, we want to introduce training so that women can manage dollars and accounts and deal in the market. Fourth, when

we can augment our revenues, we will introduce other programs--hygiene, nutrition, or look at female circumcision. (This is not, as some intellectuals here say, to indicate that female circumcision is all bad--but only to show what dangers exist and then let women themselves decide what to do.) We must involve women in a program which shows success; once credibility is established, we can go on to deal with other issues.

Dhamija:

I was also involved in this project, so there are some things I want to add. One of the problems that comes up in this kind of project is that people have been working as individuals or as families and when you introduce new technology, new organizations are also necessary. When you have a kiln, you need 500 pots at once to make it worthwhile. At first we started out with a small kiln. We didn't start out with a large co-op. We must have an awareness that any introduction of technology also changes the rhythm of work, the organization.

Training--A Key Ingredient

England:

Women need basic education. Without this we'll never get anywhere; the next generation will be lost. You can't give machines without training. But which comes first--

money, machines, or training?

Korea:

We developed a project on vocational training for non-traditional jobs for women. From a survey conducted by the YWCA, we learned that women are primarily employed as unskilled laborers and are excluded from training programs. Although some women do have advanced education, the system still favors men at all levels. So we looked into new areas of work for women and focused on wallpapering, tiling, and painting. We chose these three areas because they don't cost much money to start--there is no need to buy equipment. Also, there were many women already in the construction industry, but only in low-paying, unskilled jobs.

To be eligible for our program, women had to be between the ages of 14 and 45; they had to come from low-income families, be unemployed, and be the main family breadwinner. There were no educational requirements for the program, but since most women in Korea have at least six years of primary education, our trainees could read and write.

At first there was resistance from men workers. Now, after graduation, our women earn three or four times what they earned before. They feel confident and the employers are pleased with their work.

Dhamija:

Another important goal is the development of new skills

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and new products for new consumer demands. For example, in India people used to sit on the floor, but now people sit on stools. So stools must be built. Changes in wearing apparel, cooking, or anything else, create new consumer demands.

Another new area for women to move into is the processing of raw materials. Third World people are becoming more aware that their resources are being exploited. Why should Africans have to buy flour that is processed and packaged in England? In Ethiopia, they export leather for processing, but then import leather from England in order to produce fine shoes and books. If Tanzania wants to buy copper from Zambia, it must buy from London. This is exploitative.

Local raw materials must be processed locally. Then the informal economy will give way to more formal employment, higher wages, and more jobs, with trade unions to protect women workers. Also, this kind of development is less inflationary; it is slower. And it doesn't lead to mass production of an item before there is a demand. This is a good area for women to move into because it is a new area and there won't be already established groups in opposition.

St. Vincent:

Most of our island economy is based on tourism. We have to import food, to please the tourists. They are not used to our indigenous products, so we buy flour.

Our government has set up a processing plant, but we must buy wheat. So flour ends up being just as expensive; but the processing plant does create jobs. In St. Vincent we are trying to pressure our government to look around and find local products to develop for tourists.

Dhamija:

This is an area that should be a natural for women. We are good hostesses and cooks, but the hotel and restaurant business is run by men. Perhaps women could get involved in running small pensions for tourists, and guest houses, or traditional food places (under hygienic conditions). Even if tourists have a lot of money, they want to taste local food, live under local conditions. So women could get involved in short courses in running a guest house.

St. Vincent:

We have taken school dropouts and young women and put them in informal adult education courses to train them as waitresses. The school also acts as an employment agency. The students are sent out on jobs for people who need someone to serve.

Dhamija:

We should work in upgrading skills. From waitresses, we should train them to be owners and entrepreneurs. We train women for jobs in lower levels where they can't move into executive or managerial positions.

St. Kitts:

We have opened a project in one village. The island is growing peanuts. The government reaps the peanuts, but the people paid to do this do not do a good job, so women in rural areas go in after these reapers and take what's left. We show these women how to prepare the peanut, salt it, and so forth for marketing. These women formed a little center. We process the peanuts, then put them in bags, seal with candlewax, and we are trying to sell them to shops. If we can earn money, then perhaps we can buy peanuts for processing.

The Problem of Capital: Getting Credit for Women

Dhamija:

Money is always a problem. We should rely on traditional sources of credit in order to finance income-generating projects.

India:

We organized women into a "Working Women's Forum." Our members are vegetable vendors, head loaders, scrap-iron sellers, and agricultural laborers. We surveyed the slums and found natural leaders in the community. Our objectives were: first, to mobilize working women in the organized sector to pressure the government. Second, to look to banks to provide credit so that women could

get away from the money lenders. The community leaders provided the guarantees for the loans, and the banks agreed to give the money. The leaders chose their groups carefully and picked those women who would listen and pay back. Third, our goal was to get proper status for working women regardless of the work they do. At first, women were embarrassed to admit they were vegetable vendors or something like that. So we tried to improve the dignity of their work.

Upper Volta:

Upper Volta has six million people; ninety percent are in agriculture. Women represent 54 percent of this sector. Women are also heads of household. They are overburdened with work. Just for water alone, they must walk 30 to 40 kilometers to the nearest well.

Within each of Upper Volta's 11 development regions, women's groups have been created for training in livestock care, crafts, money handling, nutrition, and sanitation. They are trying to set up small projects.

But we had a problem. The men are able to get credit in the banks, but we are not. There was a traditional credit system existing in Upper Volta, though. It was quite widespread, to pool money. And there were already women's groups in the villages, organized by the women, not by the government. So we designed a project to use these groups and the tradition of pooling money. Our government

got a contract with the U.S. Agency for International Development to get money for loans to women. Our goals have been to initiate women into the whole system of credit, to develop micro-projects, and to involve women in the whole development process.

### Roadblocks

#### Papua New Guinea:

We keep running into problems when we try to start projects. We had an idea to have women make lunches and bring them to areas where workers might buy them. But the City Council said we couldn't do this. We have been relying on imported Chinese rice mats for sleeping, but our women can make mats just as well. So we go to the government to ask about stopping or limiting imports of these mats. They tell us there is some big trade agreement. We have had an idea for women who work in crafts at home but didn't want to sell on the street. We tried to set up a shop, but we needed an OK from the building offices. These are some of the trivial discouragements that happened.

#### Dhamija:

These "laws for protection" don't always protect. We need supportive laws and policies linking us up with existing institutions. For example, in India our handloom industry is a large employer and we have had textile imports

banned. Our own textile mills were forbidden from making certain products, so that handloom products could continue. And textile mills had to pay a tax on certain of their production items. This tax was given to the handloom industry to improve technology and conditions. So there are ways to pressure the government both locally and nationally.

We have a project for making laundry soap. On our island we can't make soap for export to any other island, because of Caribbean trade agreements. So if we make soap it is only for internal sale. We are making soap to earn money to help with nutrition of pre-school kids. We teach mothers how to make laundry soap and the funds are used to buy hot lunches for kids at school.

We are also limited by our storage space. At times now we can make more soap than we can store. We have no money to buy a building for storage. We can make money only by raising the prices.

Dhamija:

Since you are having a storage problem, the soap is probably not moving that fast. And you have no marketing outlet. You should look at what else is needed by consumers in your area and try to get a marketing outlet.

We do not utilize fully enough the existing institutions that are already there. We go off on our own. But if we do not enter the mainstream of industrial development, we will not get the benefits of the government programs.

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What Is the End Effect of Income-Generating Projects?

India:

The whole idea of income-generating projects is very dangerous. This has become a slogan. When it began, the aim was to try to reach poor women. In the past, our programs in education, nutrition and so forth--had only reached women who knew how to find services. We couldn't reach the poorest because they are so poor and so busy. The only way to reach these women would be by providing income first--and then providing education or family planning.

But, unfortunately, income-generating has been divorced from its original intent of mobilization for other empowering activities. Income-generation has become an end in itself, instead of mobilizing women to be more self-sufficient.

Income-generation has camouflaged the other word--employment. Income-generation is marginal labor. It is not covered by any of the formal, legal security of labor laws and systems. So promoting income-generation only deepens women's removal from employment.

Kenya:

There is a big problem: an NGO sets up a program and then takes on all the problems of the group. This leads to dependence. Local people need leadership and management skills.

Dhamija:

That is another mistake. We tend to make the people with whom we are working too dependent on us. We should train a whole group to take over the total management. While we are giving technological skills we should also give management skills, such as how to buy raw materials, how to market, how to price. A lot of church projects, for instance, take on--out of good will--the entire responsibility for everything.

U.S.A.:

There often is a game going on. International "experts" have their friends as national contacts, but they never train anyone to take over. People must define their jobs as training others.

Dhamija:

I have a project for the development of income-generating activities in handicrafts in Africa. We have management programs where we discuss these issues, management training and appropriate technology. We are going to have seminars on "development and cooperation" in Zimbabwe, Botswana, Swaziland--but I am not going to get a consultant from outside.

I do not believe in technical assistance from the outside. They can be catalysts. But what happens is a UN expert comes in and runs everything, does not train anyone from inside, makes himself or herself indispensable, stays

two or three years and then leaves, and the whole thing collapses. It is often much easier to take up and do the job yourself than to train 10 or 12 people to do the job. I could walk in and set up a program. But that's not my job.

### Support for Projects

#### St. Kitts:

One problem we had was with all the red tape and delays in getting money from a funder. Our National Council of Women did a survey to determine the needs of women. We found that in the parish of St. John there was no church, no cinema, and no recreation. There was a birth explosion. We approached a funder in 1978. We learned that projects take time. After about a year we got money for a pilot project to train women in the preservation of local foods. Now the women are using what we grow: mango, pumpkin, grapefruit, limes. But now we must find another donor so we can continue.

#### Sweden:

The Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) is a government body. Usually we work through foreign governments. But now we can give money directly to women's groups in other countries--but only in those countries where Sweden has a bilateral assistance agreement.

In Tanzania we supported training and education of women workers. This was an attempt to raise the consciousness of these women, to encourage them to feel that they actually could produce something--self-actualization. There was not much money for women's projects in local councils. Now this has changed somewhat and women fight better for themselves.

Ivory Coast:

At the African Development Bank we make loans and technical assistance grants. Up to now, the bank has not focused on women. But now, when we get back, we will try to get the bank to fund women's projects. We work through the governments or through national development banks, not directly with women's groups. The bank also gives technical assistance grants, but recipients still must get government endorsement.

Kenya:

We have an Industrial Development Bank in Kenya. This has been geared more to establishing small industry. But this year, our government has required that banks must lend a certain percentage of money to rural agricultural areas. This is an opportunity for women, since it is mostly women who are in agriculture.

Kenya #2:

One of the things most difficult for donors, <sup>like us at Appropriate Technology International,</sup> to deal with is being able to find groups outside the urban areas,

in the grass roots areas. It is easier to find relatively sophisticated groups who know how to write proposals. There is usefulness of being able to give money to an intermediary. Appropriate Technology International just gave money to the National Council of Women in Kenya. Now that intermediary will be in charge of distributing that money. It's very hard to get money to the grass roots; far outside of Nairobi, to find groups that don't have a connection with Nairobi, let alone Washington, D.C. We want to give money for start-ups, for self-reliance projects, and finding intermediaries to help us. Also, donors need feedback. The only way <sup>we</sup> donors get our money is by accounting for the money we've spent.

Kenya #3:

We found at the National Council of Women that the only way we could persuade donors to give to us was to have a full-time office. But we all have other jobs, we are all volunteers. So we got a grant from Carnegie Corporation in New York to fund a full-time staff.

Barbados:

In the Caribbean, the Women in Development Group at the University of the West Indies provides technical assistance, training, and project formulation for the Caribbean. We give technical assistance, mostly drawn from other sources in the region. We have been able to

train women with limited literacy to do management tasks. If people can evaluate and monitor their own projects, it gives an extra element of self-control and self-reliance to local people.

Integrated Programs: What the Rural Poor Need the Most  
Dhamija:

We need to build the infrastructure that is lacking. We need to develop integrated programs. Much is talked about, but few programs have been developed. The government machinery and even NGO machinery does not reach the rural women. When the extension worker comes in he meets the head man, but not the poor and landless worker. But these <sup>people</sup> need immunization and health services the most; they need to upgrade skills. We must build up institutional support using NGO's, which are more flexible than government.

Tanzania:

The so-called successful groups involve women who are leaders, women who have communication with outside, and women who have time already; we don't reach the neediest. We help those who are already better off.

Dhamija:

The only way to reach the poorest women is through integrated programs. If we add new activities for a woman's time and energies without building an infrastructure, we are only adding another burden. We will simply be the

last straw, the straw that breaks her back. Because she needs the cash income--for oil, for matches, for food, for salt--she will get get involved in an income-generating program. But she will still have all her other responsibilities as well.

We developed a pilot program in a village of 158 households in Ethiopia. We were very careful in selecting this village. The officials and the people were hard-working; the head of the women's association was strong; the school principal was very helpful; and there was a village leader who was forward-looking and accepted the project.

We carried out a study of the daily activities of the women to learn what they actually did. We found that they already had some community development programs and that the village did not have a problem with water. But no development project had focused on the most back-breaking work for women--extracting products from "inset," a fibrous banana-like fruit. So we developed tools and equipment to aid in this work. And, drawing on an existing <sup>village</sup> custom ~~the village~~ of women working together to weave their household mats, we also encouraged them to work together on the inset. What used to take 30 days now takes only three days.

An integrated program must free women first from overwhelming labor and upgrade their skills. We have initiated vegetable growing and are starting a child care center.

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In addition, we have sent some of the women to a special training program to learn new skills in horn and metal work. The women express their needs and the community is beginning to respond. For example, previously the women had been raising money for a new school. But since there already was a school, the women felt they didn't need another one as much as they needed better transportation. So they pressured the local people to work instead on the roads and also on a year-round well.

Phillipines:

We serve the rural women who are coming to the city. We found that the women we were training were not hired because of requirements such as education or age. So we identified women with entrepreneurial ability and gave them the opportunity to set up their own business. We provided loan assistance, media support, education, marketing support and a petty loan revolving fund accessible night and day. We also have an emergency medical fund so that women can borrow money in a medical emergency and not have to use their capital. This is an integrated employment development program.

Dhamija:

Let me share another experience. We conducted training classes for women in a remote area of Iran. At the same time we introduced a new loom, which produced a better product and which was physically easier to use. We also introduced

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functional literacy--along with a UNESCO project. And because this would help them and bring in money, we hoped they'd join the adult literacy class in the village. Also we chose the brightest women and gave them some training in management, inheritance laws, etc. Then we asked them to select one person to get even more training. This developed over a period of two years. In the end we got a lot of leadership.

What was important was that we linked these women to the commercial market. The men used to do the finer carpets, and the women made those that were used at home. But things changed. The traders realized that women were making finer carpets. Though we didn't try to form a co-op, the women's leader would fight for other women when they were not treated fairly. Women in other villages began to make finer carpets as well. When you link a program with income-generation, then it is easier to develop literacy and leadership.

India:

There are dairy, poultry, and sheep marketing associations. This has produced cash income. Having more cash income leads women to learn that their children must be educated, and get immunization, and that they can themselves use contraception.

Dhamija:

The true definition of income-generation should be not only to obtain cash income, but also to change the status of women, to open up opportunities. What is wonderful is the spirit of the women. Suddenly they feel that their dreams will come true. Their own self-image has improved.

# The Exchange Report

JS Draft 12/1/80

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## INCOME-GENERATION MUST LEAD TO EMPOWERMENT

An Interview with Jasleen Dhamija

Jasleen Dhamija, Chief Technical Advisor for the Handicrafts and Small Scale Industries Unit in the African Training and Research Centre for Women, has strong views on income-generating projects for women--what works, what doesn't, and why. Here is some of what she has to say:

When we are working on income-generating projects it is crucial to understand the difference between income preservation and income generation. For the most part, women have been taught skills that are associated with their own house, so they can avoid purchasing certain goods or services outside. This is income preservation; it preserves family income for other expenditures. But it does not generate income. Income preservation tasks tend to produce goods with extremely low economic value compared to the labor involved. Such work is particularly labor-intensive and does not often lead to further opportunities for production of income. This may have been

fine in a barter economy where women didn't need cash. But now women require cash and we must focus on activities that will produce cash incomes.

There are enormous dangers<sup>in</sup> designing income-generating projects. As we discussed in our workshop, income-generating activities may serve only to further isolate women from the market economy, leaving them outside the protections of labor laws or trade unions. Furthermore, given that a woman is already so overburdened by enormous workloads, unless we take an integrated approach to income-generation, we will just kill her. In the case of rural women, particularly, we need to build up the infrastructure. We must look at the overall role of women in the community environment. What are her needs in water, fuel, energy, communications? Women traditionally provide for their families in these realms, but no one recognizes the priority and necessity of such work. The village could not survive without women's ongoing involvement in making the community function. So we need a government policy to meet these basic needs of rural development, to lighten the burden on women. We must build up that infrastructure before focusing too much on income-generation.

At the African Training Research Center, we work with the national governments, women's bureaus, women's groups, trying to change attitudes about traditional roles for women

and what income-generating activities they might take part in. We run regional workshops and training programs. But there's a limit to which such a workshop can go. You've got to demonstrate in action the theories you are talking about. First, we do a study to find out what's going on. Since we are a regional project covering several countries, we have to work through an existing national group such as a national council of women. They will point us to the local people and we'll do a feasibility study. It's important to check out the situation carefully; if you fail with a pilot project you will hamper future attempts. So we look at the whole context of a community and of the women's lives within it. We investigate the cost and availability of raw materials and equipment, the government support or lack of it, the existing skills of the women. We analyze the market--what is available for sale, what are the prices, how does the black market fit in, can we produce a product for sale at a lower price. Then we look at the women themselves--is there a viable group, what informal cooperation exists, is there leadership potential.

This is the approach we took in the project in Kille, Ethiopia, a village of 158 families. I described this project in our workshop (see p. , col. ). In Kille, we first concentrated on reducing the women's daily labor

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involved in processing the local food for their own family's consumption. We introduced some new tools to simplify the process, reducing the work to one-third of what it was. And drawing on a tradition of cooperation already in the village, we encouraged women to work together on this food-processing task. At the same time, we trained women in other work--"horn work" that they were already doing. If we upgrade their technology and skills, they can produce more in a shorter period. We are also introducing a change in food habits, encouraging women to grow vegetables to aid in reducing malnutrition and health problems. And we have started a day-care center. All this is what I mean by integrated development.

We have several other pilot programs, all at different stages. In Ethiopia, we started a handicraft program in September 1979 for a group of prostitutes. We trained the women and introduced new technology. In the Sudan, we started a training school to introduce production to replace imported goods, for example, saris. We trained the women to make the saris and to open up shops. And because no one else had been involved in this activity locally, there was no competition. The women filled a gap.

Other projects have been somewhat harder to get going. In the Ivory Coast we developed a project for pottery workers, based on a feasibility study. But though the money was approved in September 1979, it still has not arrived.

So the people continue working as they've been doing all along, and continue producing inferior products which are not competitive in the market. In Somalia, we learned that husbands do not want their wives to go to male tailors to have clothing made. So we designed a program to train women to be tailors. But the program has been stalled because the equipment is incomplete and because instructors were not easily found. Now, however, we have a good person to run the project and we are hopeful.

Funding of income-generating projects must not deprive women of self-generation of incomes. We must not create dependence by our unwillingness to train local leadership, by being experts at being indispensable experts. Communities must be encouraged to turn to local resources and local funding sources, to use existing traditional means of credit.

Establishing income-generating opportunities for women will do more than simply provide cash incomes. Once a woman is contributing to the cash economy and cash income of her family, her social status changes. Her family treats her with more respect and she has increased self-respect as well. Income-generation must lead to empowerment.

JS Draft 12/1/80

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## INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural areas need integrated, not fragmented, development programs--that is, programs should deal with all aspects of women's lives. This was a theme repeated often in Exchange workshops. In a series of sessions conducted in French, several African participants discussed their experiences in development projects. Their suggestions, which parallel those presented in other Exchange workshops, were: turn to local people in planning projects; lighten women's enormous workload; train women in new skills; and involve men.

### Mali:

Ninety percent of the women live in rural areas, yet in development programs women had been largely ignored. We felt that the important thing is to help women in their assigned tasks so that they could have more time.

We created cooperatives. The first one came out of the initiative of the village. It was not the government that imposed it, but the village, which asked and explained what was needed. There was a demand for schools, a clinic, and female extension agents.

This initiative of the women was supported by the men. Often there are more women than men in the villages and,

following democratic nations, women are progressively gaining influence.

Togo:

We too turned to cooperatives. Women should own their own land and the best solution is to work in cooperatives and associations. This is also the best way to get assistance from the outside. Further, since sales prices for our goods are often so low, the marketing cooperatives are organized. The cooperative should not only be organized in the rural areas, but also be extended to urban areas. It is a form of political organization.

Mali:

We tried to give women free time through the introduction of appropriate technology.

Upper Volta:

But in order to understand what technology is appropriate, we must look at the whole picture of women's lives. For example, in order to have a garden, wells need to be drilled first so that water will be available; otherwise it is senseless. And to drill a well in Upper Volta, it has to be 40 meters deep.

Togo#2:

How can women be unburdened? There are some practical solutions. Like developing food preservation. Not preservation of enormous amounts, like in industry, but a way to conserve food for a family's use. What could be done

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is to make sauces of tomato, for example, on a small scale. People collectively could organize together. Also women need carts to get water, or wells so they won't have to carry water as far. Village stores near the women's homes would help so that they wouldn't have to walk long hours to get supplies. And a village child care center, so that women are less burdened with caring for their infants. Also women need access to training and to credit with low interest rates.

Upper Volta:

Training will help. Historically, when extension agents taught villagers they focused on men. Now we demand that women also be taught. And more and more women are trained technically. But the problem is that the government does not want to train young women who will leave the area when they marry. Now it was recommended to train women who are already married. This is a general problem with women's employment; one has to train women who already have had their children. And their husbands should be involved if possible. In Upper Volta we have a project where land is given to couples, thereby helping both men and women.

Mali:

Yes, we cannot forget the men. The liberation of women cannot take place against the wishes of men, because the structure demands that men agree. To go to Africa, to speak with women, you have to start by talking to the men.

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If they are not in favor you cannot go on. You have to explain to them first and their consent has to be gained. If they feel that they are frustrated in their position and in danger of losing it, then there will be problems. Women who participate in meetings have to report back to the husband. If he is not agreeing, he can forbid her to participate--he can threaten divorce and send her back home. So we must involve men if we want progress for women.

Senegal:

I think it's important to say, too, that rural development must work from the bottom up, building on the existing structures. An evaluation of women in development projects, recently conducted in nine countries, found that in many cases a project failed because plans were imposed from above. The populations want to participate on the conception and decisions of the project.

Rwanda:

On the local level we have what we call "monitors" of various specialties who discuss with the people and the technicians the problems and the possible solutions. In this way we try to plan locally. These monitors are like social workers; they give courses and deal with problems. This is a governmental structure. In some countries all is taken care of on the governmental level, while others

have to rely more on NGO's. But we need to teach women that they should not depend too much on aid from the outside.

Togo:

I agree. Technical assistance may be another sort of imperialism. It's cooperation that we need. Europeans are beginning to learn from Africans.

Mali: (Sira Diop)

In Mali, we believe in integrated rural development. Our programs have as their objectives the improvement of living conditions. Throughout the country there are about 500 development projects, each one usually covering about 20 villages. Each project has social extension agents who decide, with the participation of the population, how these problems could be solved. Women extension agents give social services and health assistance, going into the villages for vaccinations and maternal care. They are also teaching literacy, nutrition and sanitary practices. Midwives are being trained. Women are learning how to filter and purify water and wells are being drilled in the villages to make water more easily accessible. All this is to alleviate some of the women's work burden.

In the economic sphere, in the villages women have been organized to produce vegetables collectively and sell the surplus. Assistance is given to increase agricultural productivity. To improve poultry production, new breeding

stocks are introduced. In handicrafts, women are learning sewing and cloth-dyeing. All this we call integrated development.

Togo:

We launched a pilot project, beginning with the organization of women. Our goals were to increase women's knowledge and improve their skills; to make access to credit available; and to use this credit to improve the standard of living.

Togo #2:

In our project, the aim was to organize women into a cooperative organization in order to improve agricultural production; to ameliorate living conditions; and to improve women's skills. We started with ten female extension agents.

We trained women in how to manage money and then we provided credit. With this access to credit, we were able to introduce livestock-raising for women. And we organized a collective for the production of vegetables. The benefit of all these projects goes to the women and their community. They have installed stores, mills, and clinics on the village level.

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### WORKING WOMEN ORGANIZE

Women throughout the world are working. Some work for low wages, some work for no wages at all. Some are organized into trade unions, many are not. Within unions, the problems of women are often neglected, the voices of women go unheard. Issues surrounding the organization of working women--such as the level of women's unionization; the existence and enforcement of labor laws; union participation and leadership by women; racism; education and consciousness-raising; practices of multinational corporations--were discussed in a series of Exchange workshops led by Amelia Rokotuivuna of Fiji.

Development and the internationalization of commerce have had enormous effects on the lives of women. An Indian woman, for example, stressed that she feels that the development process has been devastating to women's employment. In an agricultural and household economy, she pointed out, the woman's role was important, but now with industrialization, women have been left behind with no training or skills for new jobs.

Moreover, participants emphasized, it is the political and social structure that dictates the kind of development a country can have. Clearly, there are serious philosophical and political questions about the role of politics in development and in the impact of development on women's lives.

Women tend to be outside the organized sector of the economy, in marginal, self-employed labor, often low paid, sometimes with no pay whatsoever. Thus women do not benefit from the industrial labor organizing which has accompanied development to some extent.

India:

And in this process of development, we find that the greatest percentage--80 percent--of women working, work in agriculture. Also, there are a great many women workers who have moved from rural to semi-urban areas. These workers are not organized; they have to hang around worksites just waiting for employment. They do not have a conventional employer-employee relationship. The organized sector of the economy--those who are unionized--includes only 6 percent of all working women, and probably only 4 percent are actually in unions.

As a result of having no unions to bargain for them or to enforce implementation of labor laws, women in the unorganized sector are easily exploited as cheap labor. They have no minimum wage, no maternity benefits, no equal pay, no legal protections. Their work is part-time or seasonal. All these problems defeat trade unionism. Unless these workers are brought into the mainstream of the labor force, trade unions cannot really be said to exist. Yet there must be a distinction from the unions which bargain for industrial workers. Each individual country should design its own trade unions to meet the needs of its workers.

Montserrat:

The women in rural areas get forgotten. The woman who plants a few rows of potatoes--she is out of the mainstream, she doesn't know anything at all. My whole purpose in coming to this meeting is to find a way to reach these women.

Women and Unions: What About Participation and Leadership?

Any effort to organize women must recognize the realities of their lives. Again and again in the Exchange workshops, women from all over the world--from Europe and Africa, the Caribbean and Asia--spoke out about their double workloads in their homes and employment present great barriers to their full participation in trade unions.

Namibia:

Women work for as long as 16 hours a day, with no time for family enjoyment. Their men are off in other towns working. Rural women are not only responsible for reproduction, but are part of the labor force as well. They teach domestic skills to their daughters and work in the fields and in the home. They grow the food their family eats. They earn no wages. The number of women employed outside the home is low. Some women work in dairy industry but they get low wages and preference is given to men.

Australia:

Forty-eight percent of the women eligible to join unions, do join; but when we get to the question of participation it is different.

Canada:

Right. If a union is organized by men, they hold their meetings at night. Women can't participate. They would have to make arrangements for their families, find babysitters.

And if basic participation is quite difficult, taking on leadership roles in a union is often impossible for women. Even those unions with a majority of women members are many times directed and controlled by men.

Belgium:

Even though women can discuss our own issues in the unions, we have no power. When it comes to decision-making, the men do that.

Lebanon:

It's the same for us. Women join, but we cannot go into the active part, into the administration. Whenever we want to change something that concerns women, it stops right there.

Montserrat:

Let me tell you about a personal experience. My husband was president of the union before he died and now the union has asked me to be president. But I am afraid. They are all men. I go to their picnics and annual meetings and they cherish me as a little bird. But if I were president, how would I deal with them? They are rough. There is confusion at the meeting. I don't think I could handle it. I need more self-confidence.

India:

Those men are crude; that seems like one of the qualifications of their job. They will consider you an equal only when you have a membership following of your own. But if you become president, the women will come.

Women questioned whether these male-dominated unions effectively or forcefully represent their women members. Often women feel their concerns are ignored.

Denmark:

With us, most women work in offices and they are in a union which is dominated by men. When women wanted to ask that women and men both be provided time off for child care, the union leader said he saw no reason to make such a demand because there was no reason for men to take care of children. He claimed that if men were given time off for child care they would just go fishing. The question is, should we women use our energy to fight male-dominated unions, or should we form our own union?

Holland:

But women have been fighting in male-dominated unions for years, and these unions are still male-dominated. Trade unions regularly have their meetings at 8 p.m. and women cannot attend.

India:

When unions have both men and women members, the women's problems are never discussed. For example, in the tea industry, women are paid less than men. When asked why, the employer said it was because the productivity of women is lower; but the records show that this is not so. Still, the unions haven't taken any action on this. How can we say that they are really representing the interests of women workers?

Women and Laws: What Difference Does a Law Make?

The relationship between a country's laws and the functioning of its society is often complicated. Some laws are repressive, racist, and sexist, serving to keep women and others in disadvantaged and exploited positions. In other places, there may be fine laws written, quite progressive and supportive. But these laws remain unenforced, essentially unknown to most people. The point is, we must look at the laws, but we must look beyond them as well. Both investigations will tell us something about the context in which working women are organizing.

South Africa:

Our whole system is a repressive one. For example, Africans are denied the right to work on buildings in cities. The government by its laws and policies is trying to cripple the unions and to keep Africans in the country as cheap labor to build houses for rich white farmers.

Namibia:

We have been colonized by South Africa, and all the oppressive legislation from South Africa has been introduced in Namibia. Often union organizers who are fighting for better working conditions are arrested and exiled. It has been a real struggle to get proper working conditions laid down for women and to fight for equal pay because the laws don't support us.

Holland:

In Holland we have laws which allow for discrimination by age. Young workers--ages 15 to 26--have different salary scales, just based on their age. The adult trade unions support this discrimination. This whole scheme is

is discriminatory against women because it is based on the idea that men at age 27 have wives and children and should get more money. The trade unions support these laws and previously <sup>we</sup> young workers had worked for below the minimum wage and had not protested about the different wage scales. Then we started asking for more money. This bothered the bosses and the trade unions. So the young workers separated from the other unions, though we maintained a formal link.

Guyana:

But even when we have some good laws, our problems aren't solved. For example, we have a law for an eight hour working day. But it is regularly violated and women are forced to sign wage sheets for fewer hours than they actually worked.

Indonesia:

It's the same for us. We have laws that require equal pay for equal work. But private companies get around these laws by simply not providing equal work opportunities for women. Instead, women are allowed only in part-time or assistant positions.

Sudan:

After 1969, laws were passed for equal pay and other rights for workers. But the rights were simply words on paper. They were not enforced. And costs went up ten times.

The cost of living went way up, but wages did not. So the question is not whether a working woman has equal pay; now the question is whether she can earn enough to meet the high cost of living. Reform of the marriage laws became unimportant, because marriage itself is economically impossible. We got maternity leave, but now no one is interested in having a child. We got a pension, but working women are afraid of that law; they struggle day by day and all they see is that the pension is taking money away from them now.

Iraq:

In Iraq we have some good national laws and we have signed the ILO laws. But just as you other women have described for your countries, in Iraq in practice there is great discrimination against women. This is because women are not respected in society or in the family.

The International System

The concerns of women workers cross national boundaries. Large multinational corporations dominate international and national commerce and, with their immense power, have enormous effects on the lives of working people around the world. Industries and businesses are moved to exploit the newest source of cheap labor and to avoid acknowledging the demands of trade unions. The system is so complex and interrelated that it is often difficult, or impossible, for a union to see the whole picture. But the whole picture is crucial.

Amelia Rokotuivuna:

One of the problems I find with trade unions in my country is that they see their primary role as negotiators for wages and contracts. They do not see the whole gamut, the whole context in which workers work. The crucial question one has to ask now is who owns the means of production. For if anyone's capital is at risk, the big corporation simply just shifts it. They have no social obligation to where they are located.

U.S.A.:

I am concerned about growing unemployment and micro-technology. Transnational corporations can simply follow the cheapest labor. And if labor balks, the companies can simply move to microtechnology.

Holland:

I know about what happened when a textile mill from Holland moved to Tunisia. They hired young Tunisian girls on apprenticeship wages. When the girls worked long enough so that it would be illegal to continue to pay them apprenticeship wages, they were fired. Meanwhile, they had been trained only to sew one seam; they couldn't do anything else. And if they got married they wouldn't be hired because the employer did not want to deal with child care.. This kind of development, even though it supposedly brings jobs, doesn't help the women. And it doesn't help the

country much, either. They get some tax money, but not much. And the government of Holland actually aids these factories in moving to a developing country; they see this as "aiding" a developing country. It is only a cycle: the factory will reopen in Holland when Dutch women are desperate enough to work for low wages again.

Guyana:

It's true. We have to be aware of the big picture. For instance, at a large private laundry in my country, when the trade union began making demands, the laundry said it would close. There is nothing to worker control if we don't know about these multinational corporations, about negotiation, advertising, management.

England:

That's right. Otherwise the same problems come up for women someplace else. We had a large multinational factory in Liverpool which employed mostly women. The owners shut it down with just one half hour's notice--despite a law that requires six months' notice. The corporation had money from the government to modernize the Liverpool plant, but they used the money instead to set up a plant in Hong Kong.

What really worries me is that though the workers are bitter against the corporation, they are also bitter against the workers in Hong Kong. Only if women workers can be made

aware of the conditions of workers in other places in the world, of the exploitation of women around the world, can we eradicate that kind of hatred. We must focus the anger on the actual culprit--the corporation and the governments in collusion.

### Getting the Facts: Raising Awareness

#### Guyana:

When the multinational corporation decides that it is more viable to go where the cheapest labor is, the women will always suffer.

#### Rokotuivuna:

I think that part of the problem, part of why we can't take action to pressure our governments, is that people just don't know enough. We don't know what's going on or who exists. The organized trade unions are one thing; but maybe we could put up a list of magazines, books, etc., that can give us alternative information. And a list of research. I'm sure there are studies from many countries. We don't always need to do new research. The problem is to get the research data to the hands of the people who organize.

We need to have money committed to research and education of this kind--not just funds for income-generating activities. Because women lack political awareness, we

don't get into the mainstream of discussion and study on political economy.

In my small country I find that "development" means you get a project going; but you can't get funding for education in political awareness. And the real problem at this conference is that we focus too much on that project level--and all you get is more projects. No one really looks at the economic structure. We need political awareness. Women say that's for men--they go instead to lectures on baby feeding. But we need women in central positions and the union is a good place to put women in power.

India:

We have a law that prevents trade unions getting money from outside for doing political education. So we call it "adult education" instead--though it's really consciousness raising.

U.S.A.:

Most of these funds come through the government; and many governments are not democratic. Then the UN agency comes through and runs these little income-generating projects. 1985, the end of the UN Decade for Women, will come and we'll still be doing the same thing. I'd like to see it this way: that the UN tries to set up an industry or find jobs, not this little income-generating stuff.

Guyana:

We must be very cautious in taking money from international organizations; they have their own interests. Workers have to work for themselves--to rise up--but they are suppressed. We think that with international solidarity we can change the government.

Rokotuivuna:

In my organization we try to teach about other international issues so people will see their interconnectedness--for example, we talk about disarmament, multinationals.

Great Britain:

But money isn't all we need. The problem in England is that the few people who do recognize the necessity for this kind of education can sometimes find the funds but rarely can find the teachers. Our teachers are trained to maintain the system. The system as it exists today is not going to produce the teachers we need.

South Africa:

I agree that education is essential. It's the only way to raise awareness. I think it would be very useful to have the questions listed at our planning session for this workshop. Then we could use that list as a basis for a further seminar.

Rokotuivuna:

Here is the list of issues, and I agree that we should go on discussing these topics:



1. General level of women's unionization
2. Labor laws--national and international
3. Free zones--where unions are not allowed
4. The basis of forming unions: by type of work, or employer-oriented
5. Structure of wages
6. Organizing young workers
7. Participation of women in trade unions
8. Membership of unemployed workers
9. Organized housewives: wages for women
10. Rural women workers
11. Undocumented workers (illegal workers)
12. Education, awareness-raising
13. Helping women's organizations organize women workers; problems of religion, caste, racism
14. Supportive services for employed women--creche, research
15. International solidarity
16. Effect of rise in wages on inflation and the general economic situation
17. Curbing profits--socialization of the means of production
18. Internationalization of capital--role of the transnational corporations
19. Computerization and mechanization and employment/unemployment

# The Exchange Report

JS Draft 12/1/80

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## WORKING WOMEN'S FORUM

Working Women's Forum, an organization of urban and rural poor Indian women founded in 1978, was described at an Exchange workshop by its president, Jaya Arunachalam.

When we started the Working Women's Forum we looked into the city slums and saw many problems. We saw that women suffered from the practices of the money lenders, from the bad living conditions and poverty, from double work loads, from the lack of civic amenities and water. I went out and told the women to organize themselves into groups and select leaders from amongst themselves. And with this beginning came the Working Women's Forum.

Our goals are to mobilize women for common economic, political and social action; to mobilize women for themselves to increase their self-respect; and to provide training, materials and other assistance. Our members are vegetable vendors, head-loaders, snack shop holders, scrap iron workers, leaf plate makers, file tag makers,

tea shop holders, flower and fruit sellers and agriculture laborers. They are women in the unorganized sector of the economy. Now we have 7000 members; 6000 are from urban areas, 1000 from rural areas. And we have six paid employees: two organizers, two field workers, an accountant and a chief organizer.

For our members, we provide various services. So that they can avoid the money lenders, we give loans-- business loans, not personal ones. The criteria for the loans are simple: the woman must be a person doing business and she must repay regularly. If the women don't meet these criteria they are dropped. The group's leaders guarantee the members' loans with the bank. These leaders are willing to take on the risk because they live in the community and know they will get their money back if they have to cover the loan. The banks gave the loans in the first place because they were under pressure from the government to loan money to the poor. And we looked like a fairly safe bet.

We also provide training for self-employment, training in cardboard box and envelope making, and training in tailoring. We tried to promote literacy classes, but we failed. Our members have no time for this and they manage to do their businesses without reading or writing. They keep everything in their heads; they are very clever and are not easily cheated. Women do come to our office in the afternoons and we read the newspapers to them. They

are very interested politically. We have a program in family planning education and, in the rural areas, we give women dairy animals and sheep.

One of our most exciting efforts has been to arrange for mass intercaste weddings. Young people who married between castes have traditionally been discriminated against by their families, by society and by the law. We are trying to break down these barriers between people. In our mass weddings, parades of hundreds of people march through the streets.

Our future plans include slum redevelopment projects; a training program for health, nutrition, and family planning; and founding a development cooperative bank. We need a bank of our own because the national banks take so long to process loans for our members that women are driven back to the money lenders. Also our bank will provide technical assistance, such as market research, for women's development projects; for example, for women who want to organize themselves into a production unit so that they will no longer have to sell on the streets. As for the plans for the family planning program, we intend to train women and then send them out to reach others. And we will pay them what they would have made if they'd been working at their own trades during that time.

The strength of Working Women's Forum is that it is not just an organization, it is a movement for us. Many of our members who were previously insecure and weak, now are leaders.

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UNIONIZING SELF-EMPLOYED WOMEN

Ela Bhatt and SEWA

In 1972, Ela Bhatt, then head of the women's wing of the Gandhian Textile Labour Association in her native city of Ahmedabad, India, organized SEWA, the Self-Employed Women's Association, in order to fight for decent working and living conditions and wages for the previously unprotected, yet substantial, number of self-employed women. These women's problems were many-- indebtedness, insecure income, non-ownership of the tools of their trade, non-recognition by local authorities, poor health--and SEWA was designed to organize women together to find solutions. Today SEWA has over 10,000 members, its own co-operative bank, and social security, health, creche, housing, and training programs. In an Exchange workshop, Ela Bhatt described SEWA:

I come from the city of Ahmedabad. Our city has 65 textile mills and the workers are unionized in the Textile Labour Association (TLA) which started some years ago. In this large union there is a women's wing. Prior to 1968, this women's wing concentrated on doing social work for the wives of the textile workers. But I saw that women were outside of their homes doing a number of economic activities in the city. And they wanted to organize.

The first group who came to us at the textile union were headloaders. These women, who worked for very low wages, were responsible for getting textiles from wholesalers to retailers. In one day a headloader earned less than one half pound. These women were afraid of the traders they dealt with.

In 1972 another group of women came to us. They were the used garment dealers who trade pots and pans to middle-class families for second-hand clothes. They repair the clothes and sell them in the market. These women deal a lot with the public and decided to organize themselves.

Today there are more than 10,000 members in our Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA). There are three categories of members: those manufacturing things at home, such as incense, garments, or cigarettes; and smiths and carpenters who work from scraps of iron and wood. These women take their products to the traders to sell. The second group is made up of small vendors of fruit, eggs, and vegetables, women who either sit in the market or who have a cart in the streets. Third are the manual laborers, headloaders, cart pullers, and construction workers.

We workers are responsible to the people. Capitalists are the trustees of the capital, but we are responsible to the people. We believe in non-violence and negotiation. Our creed is that a strike is used only as a last resort.

The "Informal" Sector--Unorganized and Unprotected

Our membership comes from the "informal" sector of the economy, which constitutes 45 percent of the urban work force. But to call it "informal" is somewhat misleading. It's more serious than informal, though it is a weak segment of the work force, made up from a continuous spill-over of population from rural to adjacent urban areas. This section of workers, the majority of whom are women, is almost entirely unorganized. With little or none of the bargaining power that industrial workers have, this section is unprotected, unorganized, and underemployed. No labor laws apply to them. The wages, hours of work and employer-employee relationships are not fixed. Workers simply hang around until there is a job.

In the beginning of SEWA we conducted a survey as a way of organizing. We sent out investigators--people who worked in the same trade--to visit families. This investigator later becomes the organizer for the families she has surveyed. Our survey disclosed some interesting statistics about the women in the so-called informal sector: Ninety-seven percent live in slums; 93 percent are illiterate; 91 percent are married; 61 percent are under 25 years old; 60 percent are in debt; 78 percent work on rented machinery; 70 percent take their children to work. Their average daily income is 4 to 12 rupees.

There are several common problems among these workers. First, their means of production are hired. For example, a cart puller does not own her cart and can never even dream of owning one. Instead she must pay rent on a cart. Similarly, the garment workers rent their sewing and spinning machines. Second, these workers are always short of capital. For example, a vegetable vendor in the morning needs money to buy vegetables. But she doesn't have enough money, so she must borrow from the money lender at high interest to start the day. All the time she is under that exploitative situation with the money lender.

#### SEWA's Program

We designed a program to address these problems.

Money. We tried to get these women credit. The banks were reluctant, but they had been recently nationalized and were under pressure to help small, rural areas. One bank was willing to experiment, in part because our union had a good reputation. We gathered 500 women and took on all the paperwork, and the bank gave the loans. The repayment rate was satisfactory and other banks then agreed to give loans, too.

Some of the women, however, did not repay. We investigated the reasons. We found that often when members went to repay, the bank would be closed and they would be told

to come back later. But in the meantime they would spend the money elsewhere, on something for their family. Or a woman might make her repayment to the wrong branch or to the wrong bank. Or she would put her father's instead of her husband's name at the end of her name since she might not know that changing the name is such a big crime in banking. Or she would write the wrong name on her photo identification card. The bank then could say, See! These women are thieves.

Identity cards. There are many other causes for non-repayment. For example, with the street vendors. All they need is a place to be, they don't need training or anything. But with the modern city, in the name of traffic, the police say: These women can't be here. They say: Why don't you go to this other place where there is plenty of space? But who will buy at that other place? Our planners came from western countries--they are planning the roads. In our country the roads are mostly used by pedestrians, but they are planned for motor traffic. So vendors suffer from harrassment by the police, from arrests and fines. A vendor spends a few days in jail and all her produce is spoiled, her cart is gone, and she can't repay her loan. So we have struggled for the right to sell in the markets without harrassment and we demand some sort of identity card so that women won't have to pay bribes any more.

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A production unit. About 685 poor women of the Dariapar area who were making quilts out of waste cloth from textile mills, organized themselves in SEWA to fight the exploitation of the traders who paid extremely low wages for the women's production. SEWA struggled for a higher rate. We tried all the peaceful methods but meanwhile, many were victimized, especially those who were active in the union and were the sole supporters of their families. So we started an alternatives production unit ourselves. We created a link between the urban poor producers and the rural consumers, omitting the traders. This led to better wages. We can now dictate to some extent the rate of wages and the price in the market. The workers' own economic unit acts as a lever on the system.

Our own bank. The biggest difficulty was that women did not have a protected place to put their money. They would give the money to the currency lender or the renter to hold. Women wanted a safer place. So we started a co-operative bank in 1974. The first year was a loss, but since then there have been profits. When we tried to register our bank the government told us that we couldn't, because the women weren't dependable, because they were illiterate. But we used photographs for the pass books and now our bank gives loans.

Training. We set up other programs as well. For

vegetable vendors we tried literacy classes, but every time we failed, because the women had no time to sit and read, and they didn't find it useful in the actual problems of their life or work. We also had a hard time finding a teacher. But in 1976 we ran a successful productivity training program for millworkers. Then we designed training for the vegetable vendors in dealing with modern markets, with the concepts of profits and losses, and this was useful.

Insurance. We also set up a Social Security system for members. Of the five hundred women who had taken our loans, twenty women had died within two years. And they were young women. We found out that these were maternity-related deaths. So we tried to get maternity life insurance. But the company wasn't interested because the women were slum dwellers. We tried to get group insurance, where no physical examination was required, but the premiums were too high. In the end, we had to set up our own system. Members donate one day's wage and we have a trust for maternity, widow and death assistance. Also, each member pays a set fee and is monitored during pregnancy. Then she gets 100 rupees after delivery. We saw this as a way of replacing lost wages. We also have a creche (day care) program and a housing program. We work as a link between existing agencies of government and our members.

### Organizing Outside the City

For rural women, the biggest problem is unemployment. The region is dry and work is available for only three or four months a year. So SEWA started organizing. At first there was much bloodshed and bad feelings. Employers refused to hire people from their own village and there was much scab labor. And since we organizers lived in the city, we realized that we must do things in a peaceful way, because the people must go on living in their own village. For example, there were weavers in one village who hadn't been weaving for five years, even though they were skilled. We sent out an organizer to get all the looms back in order and to obtain some loans from the bank. There must be a different organizing approach than that for factory workers. We must use a combination of union and cooperatives.

In the beginning these women came to us. They were ready to do something to solve their problems. When they saw there was an economic advantage, they all came. Also, handbills were distributed. We thought that this might not be useful because the women were illiterate. But they carried them home to get someone else to read. Word of mouth goes round, one is able to tell the other.

### Organizing and Empowerment

Unless the economic and social utility of women is

enhanced in the eyes of their families and of the nation by opportunities to take part in socially and economically productive roles, the nation will continue to neglect women. SEWA enables each individual member to feel more confident to deal with an environment which had battered them earlier, making them feel helpless or overpowered.

When women associate themselves together outside their roles of home and children, they see themselves in a new way. There is a new urge among our members for education. Wife-beating has declined. A SEWA member commands a certain respect in her family.

SEWA meetings are like a melting pot where women of various communities forget their differences and distances for a while, and get involved in each others' sufferings. Recognition of SEWA by banks, universities, the press and the government has raised these women's status in their own eyes and those of their families and neighbors. Some husbands have asked why they cannot become members.

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### THE POLITICAL QUESTIONS

#### An Interview with Amelia Rokotuivuna

Amelia Rokotuivuna, the convenor of the Exchange workshops on "Working Women Organize," talked to us at length about her own work in Fiji, about the lessons she has learned and about her views on the politics of women and development.

When I think about women and development I believe it is crucial to focus on certain political questions: What happens to women after we deal with problems like getting water, after we set up small income-generating projects? Does the political system have to change? What are the limits and strings on funding agency demands? Why are women part of the marginal group? Why should income be so unevenly distributed, even by public spending? Who are the people in decision-making bodies? In whose interest is this system?

I grew up in a mining town, controlled by an Australian company which organized its business by Apartheid. Fijians were on the bottom; we couldn't hold certain jobs. I left that town, and, after going to school, I took a job with

the YWCA in 1964. In 1972, I became the National Executive Director.

At the YWCA we tried to assess women's needs and devise programs to meet those needs. We ran projects in vocational training, cottage industries, early school-leavers education, pre-school education, nutrition, and politics. Many of our projects became quite effective and professional, at least partly because we had a paid staff and in-service training. There was a multiplier effect through the country. Lots of people became aware of the lack of government programs for women and children.

However, as we became more radical--for example, on abortion and on foreign investment questions--we lost the support of our own board and of the community. Though the YWCA would have no qualms about establishing a nutrition program, or about designing services for squatters, they wouldn't want to deal with the causes of these problems. They were comfortable doing charity work. But some of us on the staff started pointing out that perhaps these elite, monied, educated women were part of the problem. It may be, after all, unavoidable that the educated elite will have the leadership of a country. What is also inevitable is that these women do not want to lose their status and position. For me, it became clear that my perspective was too different from the perspective of the community and

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it was not good for a community organization like the YWCA to have such a director. So in 1977 I left.

If I were working for the YWCA now, I'd do it differently. I would be more mature. We went to the press quite often and these public statements stirred up a lot of controversy. This time I wouldn't do the same, because the women in the association took a lot of flak. I think there is a place for quiet education, but in those days it was the time for demonstrations. Now I would have more realistic dreams about what a YWCA could do. I had fantasies then. But the YWCA must represent all the varied parts of the community.

If you hold opinions like mine, it is sometimes very difficult to work with other women, because they belong to a group that wants to hold on to their position. I must learn to see the bits of good amongst those women and work with them on the little things, yet remembering the important principles in which I believe. Now I work for the Pacific Peoples Action Fund, an organization that helps independence movements and fights against imperialism, militarism, and colonialism in the Pacific through research, organizing, and development and distribution of educational materials.

In my own small village of 300 people I am chairman of our community development group. It is progressive for our village to have me, a woman, as chairperson. Why me? Because I was educated and had the support of the educated men.

In Fiji, the community owns the land and everyone over age 18 in the village belongs to the development group. Everyone is allowed to speak. But usually, when we have a village meeting, the men make all the decisions. Some of those men are so bad that if a woman stands up to speak they will tell her to sit down. We must help those women feel comfortable in voicing their opinions, in feeling more confident. This is important because if the women could make the decisions, the villages would be better off. Because the women work harder, they know what the village needs.

Though we do have electricity and water, the women in our village still have many hardships. They work twelve hours a day. Since the biggest problem is the transport of goods for marketing, the women are trying to buy a truck. Also, they are trying to buy a freezer so that they won't have to fish every day. And they are seeking to improve housing and the drainage for sanitation.

But we need money. I have a real moral dilemma about whether to ask for money for my own village. There are thousands of other villages that also have needs. And I just happen to have access to funders. Only a few of us in Fiji even know about funding agencies. For quite a few things we should be able to raise money at home, but we also need some outside initial capital for our projects.

Still we must be aware that once women get involved in projects they get tied into the status quo. They need the funders. What I fear about the women's movement is that we'll wake up and all we'll have is income-generating projects, supported by the government--because it will keep the women happy and quiet.

It's the community attitudes that have kept women from participating. Simple customs can tell you a lot about attitudes. In Fiji, the men eat first, before the women. There are people in Third World countries who believe they must keep their traditions. The people who oppose me politically also tend to be traditionalists. They talk about their identity and culture. There are good things about our culture in the Pacific, things we should maintain, like communal living and ownership of land. But when they say that women's liberation is too foreign, that's just rubbish.

Some of the traditions just must be rejected straight out as bad. I try to do this in my village, by being involved in a lot of activities. For in order for the present political and economic system to stay intact it must build up those negative attitudes towards women. The major companies and employers hold those views. That way they can pay women lower wages, deny equal opportunities, and keep women at home producing a good, healthy

supply of future workers. So even if you change the attitudes of rural women, you must also change the attitudes of the national government as well.

The educated, rich, and urban elite in Fiji generally oppose me. They don't want to give up their power. The privileged people give me flak. And also, lots of women are scared. They think that the man is the head of the family; since women care about their families they are afraid when they think the family might be destroyed. But in my village I get a lot of support from the women. They are pleased that they are getting the chance to speak out. It's encouraging to me when I make a public statement and the women hawkers in the street recognize me and say, Yes, you were right. Now my most important allies are my friends and family. They consider me a little bit of a freak perhaps, but they support me. I think that's the most important thing if you are interested in change--to have friends who support you.

I think that if you care about women there are very limited things that you can do in Fiji in established organizations. It is very political, because I can't see how the political economy of Fiji could help women. What is needed is a fair, equitable division of property and resources before anything can be done to help women. Even this won't be enough for women, because attitudes need changing as well. But those attitudes will change only after political and economic change.

# The Exchange Report

JS Draft 12/1/80

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## FAMILY PLANNING

In one series of Exchange workshops, participants discussed health and family planning services in developing countries. Several themes emerged: that in planning and delivering health and family planning services, cultural and religious traditions must not be ignored; that women ought to have an important voice in designing services for their use; that health and family planning education must involve men as well as women; that family planning services must be part of an integrated development program; that the choices of methods of birth control for Third World women are dictated by the limited availability of alternative methods, by the inaccessibility of services, and by the attitudes of their husbands, their families, and themselves.

Machtuchah

^Yusuf:

Why do funding agencies for family planning only come from Western countries? Do they have hidden agendas?

Italy: The coming of the white man brought health care, curtailing mortality and increasing population. That is why they are trying to give family planning, because in a way they caused the population increase.

Kenya: When you Westerners talk about giving birth at an "alarming rate"--is it our problem or yours?

Denmark: After the industrial revolution, the population explosion happened. Many people emigrated. There were family planning pioneers in England and America who saw the misery of women giving birth to so many children. Family planning is not anti-birth; it is an effort to help women space their children.

U.S.A.: An additional point is that it is a woman's right to control her body and reproduction. Trying to provide family planning is a way of helping women break out of feeling that "their biology is their destiny." In the less developed countries the fact that mortality has gone way down hasn't yet sunk in; so there is a high birth rate. Because the developed countries had a lot to do with low mortality, they feel obliged to help with fertility.

### Family Planning in a Cultural Context

#### Machtwchah Yusuf:

In Indonesia a cultural approach to health and family planning is very important. We have five pillars

of the state, one of which is the importance of the belief in God. This faith is significant in the success of any family planning program. All people are expected to have religion, and everything comes back to what God says to do. Thirty-five percent of the women are illiterate; they are superstitious and leave everything to fate. They must have health and family life education so they can understand and plan the number of children they want. In our program we focus on having "happy" and "healthy" families and bring up the idea of "small" families later.

Muazzez Okay:

In Islam, family planning is not frowned upon. Islam says that if you cannot afford a child, you should not have one. This is from the Koran and our religious leaders have announced it. But village women need to hear this; the older village women believe that religion forbids family planning.

Cornelia Muga:

You know, women have this faith that there is some place up in heaven and they all want to get there. Women go to church and hear that they won't get to the kingdom of heaven if they take the pills. Then they go to the health center and hear they should take the pills. But the church says no and their husbands say no. We must be careful to help these women without destroying their

Kingdom of faith and without destroying their  
families. We must deny the husband the excuse for kicking out a wife because she is taking pills.

Ecuador:

Sometimes family planning is seen as a plot of the government. And there are also religious bans on family planning because women are supposed to be directed by God.

Italy:

The people living in the slums of Rome are also superstitious, and they think the social workers are the police.

Zambia:

There is a war between the generations. Older people want to follow the Catholic-type methods or use herbs.

Indonesia:

Things are changing. My mother has 20 children; 5 miscarriages and 15 born. I was number 4. But I have only one child.

Italy:

In polygamous societies the wives would like to have a number of children, they're looking for a son--so the problem of family planning<sup>is</sup> difficult.

Fiji:

In Fiji we have an extensive family system, so decisions are based on the group. If medical personnel ask

a woman if she wants to go on contraceptives and she says no, it was not her decision, it has been a group decision. The family network is made up of such a complication of roles and responsibilities that no one wants to make a decision that might disrupt their social relationships. Let's say my grandmother has been a midwife all her life. When I am asked questions regarding family planning, I will have a hard time, because I won't want to disrupt the network. Also, we have traditional methods. The traditional healer plays an important role; he makes you not only physically fit, he also makes you socially fit as well, since being sick means you are unable to fulfill your obligations in the community. If you approach a rural person and say, "Take this pill and you won't get sick," that won't mean much. But if you say, "Take this pill and you will be strong and able to fill your responsibilities," then they will take the pill.

Tanzania:

Though family planning services are available, it is a question of acceptance. We have a high infant mortality rate. We need better health services before we think about distributing the pill.

Yusuf:

The people are very poor and the infant mortality rate is very high. You cannot talk about family planning with

the infant death rate so high. You can't tell a woman to have just two children when two children might die. So the first thing to do is to lower the infant death rate by better nutrition, better health care, better water, etc. As for the men--they like their women to participate in health care, but not in family planning. The men will be called strong if they have many children. Children are valued as being able to give security and satisfaction in old age.

Education and Information: For Both Men and Women

Mugu:

Information about services is geared particularly to women. Yet most women depend on a man to give the okay for family planning. A literate woman might be able to start pills without a man knowing. But for an illiterate woman, it is difficult to use contraceptives without her husband being involved.

Kenya #2:

We still remain the property of our husbands. And in anything we do the decision is made by the husband. Even the decision of how many children to have is left to the husband, unless the woman acts in secret. We have a problem because of the history of imperialism.

The imperialists came to our country and only educated the men. But our children belong to the women. So in family planning, we must educate the men; we should go to the men and say, here is an education program, you can decide when your wife will have children, and how many children to have. If you can convince the men, the women will come later. After all, we don't want all those kids.

Italy:

The husbands say they do not want their wives to have contraceptives because then they will be free. We do need to educate the men. Though at first, when we talk to the woman, we must talk to her alone. She will be afraid of her husband and her mother-in-law.

Kenya #3:

Men have been left behind in education in family planning. If you ask the man he will say it is fine for his wife to use contraceptives. But if you ask the wife what her husband tells her, she says, "He tells me not to go near the pills."

Upper Volta:

In my country, the government is opposed to family planning but the women are in favor of it. We believe family planning is important for family and women's health, but we cannot even say the words "family planning" or

we wouldn't be allowed to hold our seminars. Our country has a lot of land, and <sup>(the government)</sup> wants more people on the land. But there is a discrepancy between what the government wants and what women want. We have tried to pressure the government. There is a Minister of Women's Conditions and she transmits our requests; but she is alone among the men so it is hard for her to get her point across. When she tries to present something, all the men vote against her.

Family Planning Methods: Are There Choices?

Zambia:

The problem is not whether or not to use contraceptives but the need for a method that is more reliable and effective.

Kenya:

Family planning has been in Africa for a long time, with methods including breast-feeding, separation of husband and wife after childbirth, and others. These practices are breaking down now; men no longer practice polygamy, and traditional family planning is no longer possible. But many people still rely on these methods because in rural areas, especially, medical care is not accessible. So people go back to the old methods that are available.

Fiji:

We too have our traditional methods. People resort to

health clinics only when traditional methods have not been effective. Why? Because it takes three hours to walk to the clinic.

Brazil:

In history, every society has had some knowledge about controlling fertility. But you do not see research about these traditional methods; they only give out pills and IUD's. I am trying to do research on traditional methods such as plants used by Indians, but the multi-nationals push pills.

Zambia:

Women in developing countries are used as guinea pigs by the multinational companies, and awareness of this discourages them from using contraceptives.

Kenya:

In Third World countries we have no choice of methods of family planning. We have to do with what we get from the developed countries, and this will remain a problem for a long time to come. We do not have the technology to make things like condoms.

Yusuf:

But some of the methods just aren't appropriate. In Indonesia there is a tradition that a woman can't show her vagina to anyone, not even to a female doctor. Therefore women can't go to a doctor to get an IUD.

Yemen:

Family planning was introduced three years ago. It was started by Yemeni medical doctors; the government did not help, but it did not stop them. They received no support from anyone. International Planned Parenthood Foundation, the Pathfinder Fund, and UNICEF sent high-dosage pills, and Depo Provera. The women have the side effects and so are not eager to use the contraceptives.

Bangladesh:

We are left with two bad choices. Death from child-bearing or from the pill.

Indonesia:

My daughter tried to take pills, but she had side effects. The young generation is afraid of pills.

Kenya:

The side effects of the methods are a real setback to family planning. Like the heavy bleeding with the IUD. And the women do not get quick attention when they go to the hospitals with these problems. So women prefer to have children rather than deal with these problems.

U.S.A.:

The question of side effects is a very important one. Too often services are designed with the priorities of the producers rather than those of the consumer in mind. The side effects may not be as great as the benefit of the drug; but while that may be a general rule, it may not mean much

to the individual client. We must involve the users.

Kenya:

Some people say that abortion is less dangerous than the drugs. But it is an operation and it is dangerous. The problem is thinking of abortion as a method of contraception--if this is so, what happens next month? Another abortion? Public opinion is against legalized abortion as a contraceptive. We have along way to go before we can even discuss abortion publicly.

Yemen:

For us, abortion is illegal.

Okay:

There are 500,000 abortions a year in Turkey, but 50 percent of them are illegal.

Muga:

Abortion is not legal in Kenya, but many young people are dying from illegal abortions. Most are under the age of 18. There will be resistance, but this is an issue that should be taken up.

U.S.A.:

In many countries that have legalized abortion, it has been important to present data on mortality and morbidity. It is important to link abortion with the issue of good family planning services.

Kenya:

In many countries in Africa, abortion would not be

considered because children are seen as belonging to the whole village. It is difficult enough to get people to accept family planning at all. Abortion may hurt the whole issue since it is so controversial itself.

U.S.A.:

A discouraging trend is developing in the United States. Our Supreme Court does not allow federal funding for abortions any more. Women interpret this action as taking away their power over their own bodies and as an infringement upon their lives.

Another U.S.A.:

The Supreme Court action has insured that only the women who can afford abortions will get them.

Zambia:

But that will not solve the problem; it is the poor women who need the support.

Turkey:

With birth control, this would all be academic. Good family planning eliminates the need for abortion.

Kenya:

True--if family planning services were freely available, there might be no need for abortion at all.

U.S.A.:

No, I think they will just lessen the need.

Getting the Services to the People

Okay:

In Turkey,

The state provides health and family planning programs; however, facilities for these programs are missing in some areas. The ministry is trying to bring these programs to the rural areas. Women come to the clinics for their children so we decided to integrate family planning into these clinics while the mothers are waiting for their children. Nurses give them instructions and answer questions. Family planning information is also provided at such meeting places as handicraft areas and public education areas. Where women are illiterate, radio and television programs are important because these women can listen and see. In the house, television is okay; in the fields, radio is more important.

St. Vincent:

While health services may be available, they are so far away <sup>that</sup> they take too long to get there for the mother who must walk carrying her child. Also, if a woman wants to practice family planning without telling her husband, there is not enough privacy in her small family home. So the lack of privacy and the lack of transportation mean that even if services are provided, women can't use them.

Yusuf:

In Bali they use men, the village heads and village

leaders. They train these men with the midwives so they can help give family planning advice.

Indonesia:

But women will accept family planning programs only if they are done in a manner the women feel comfortable with, and in an accessible place. Like providing education in places where women gather, such as the wells. Some women must walk six or seven hours just to get water. You cannot open up a program and expect women to come; their time is too important. To teach them, it is necessary to find a place where they meet in the ordinary course of their lives. Or perhaps teach them about health in connection with readings of the Koran. Or by using traditional art forms like puppet shows. It is not enough to just tell them that small families are better.

Jamaica:

We need sex education and job-training, too.

Yusuf:

Family planning has been integrated into all development programs, and especially health programs, in Java. Family planning has also been integrated into social welfare programs and employment. For example, income-generating activities are given to women outside of the home so that they can do more than just make babies. Family planning is also done for the betterment of children's lives.

We have a weighing program which teaches village women

consciousness about their babies' health and good nutrition. In this program we talk about family planning. Also, we now have a program where each family can obtain seeds from the agricultural department so they can grow nutritious food. We have a project where we teach about building housing appropriate for their families. And a "model mother" program where a mother with only two children is chosen as an example for others. We try to change women's outlook by educating them. We are also trying to raise the legal marriage age for girls to 18.

Okay:

We need trained personnel and we need methods to keep the ones we already have at work. The majority of health services are being developed by women in Turkey. Nurses and wives are trained in family planning. But we need day-care facilities so that our trained personnel can keep working after having their own children and even after that we still need more nurses and midwives.

Thailand:

If people understand about contraceptives, they will use them. We try to educate people. We train policemen's wives because they get stationed all around the country and then they can teach others. We also use volunteers in the villages, called "communicators," who give out pills and condoms.

Indonesia:

The government can't reach all these women because there are too many of them and they are too spread out. So we educated the women in the villages. The women do not trust the men so much, they trust the women. So we work with the women. The traditional midwives help give birth. They are influential. We encouraged village heads to persuade these midwives to be trained in family planning. At first, the midwives said no because they feared that family planning would curtail their incomes. But we found them other ways to earn money and they became more amenable.

JS Draft 12/1/80

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# The Exchange

## PROBLEMS IN RURAL HEALTH CARE

Several Exchange workshops were conducted in French, to allow for full participation of Francophone women. In one of these sessions, health services were discussed and concerns were voiced about the unavailability of health care, particularly of modern maternity services.

### Upper Volta:

We tell rural women to have babies in modern maternity wards, but often those wards are too far away. I have seen pregnant women giving birth on the road while they are being transported by cart to the nearest maternity ward. Yet we can't afford to send a midwife to each village. So we try to train the traditional village midwives. But along with training they need equipment; for example, scales and tables for delivery.

### Mauritius:

We have the same problem. Rural women give birth assisted by traditional midwives, sometimes in terribly unsanitary conditions, on a dirt floor or a piece of cloth.

But still the village women prefer the traditional midwives. Unlike the trained nurses, the traditional midwives spend ten days with the family, helping with the birth and afterwards as well. So it is important that we think about training the traditional midwives.

Togo:

We have the same situation as you describe. Our women prefer traditional midwives; they are efficient and available. But if complications arise, there is a big problem. For the evacuation of the sick, some solution must be found.

Senegal:

One of the biggest problems is lack of transportation. To evacuate a sick person to Dakar, parents have to pay. Often they cannot afford it. Even to have ambulances available in rural areas is not enough, for gas must be paid for and must be found. Often it is not possible for people to pay.

Senegal #2:

In my country in 1972 there was a political reform; taxes were redistributed to the regions, allowing local populations to decide what they need. In five regions, clinics were built. Training and assistance were extended to the villages and materials were supplied from UNICEF. Now it is the local population which is responsible for the maternity centers. Certain fees are charged and the money is used to replenish materials, to buy medicine, and to pay midwives. But it is often not sufficient.

Many deliveries are still done in the houses by traditional midwives. Especially where women are 100 kilometers from the centers. And the traditional midwives stick to their traditional ways of working. The dangers are great; there is infection and hemorrhage and the women can die.

Rwanda:

Traditional medicine is quite strong in my country. This is especially used during pregnancy. Now we are trying to educate the people about modern medicine. And at the same time we are studying the traditional herbs to see whether or not they are poisonous and which ones are good and thus to encourage the suitable use of indigenous medicines.

Senegal #3:

Training and education is of utmost importance. Especially for those cases where there are complications; midwives don't have the means to deal with that. So we are taking the traditional midwives and giving them additional training. But the three months of training is not sufficient. And if women are not well trained they can do damage. Also, the well-trained people do not want to go into the bush. Midwives who are trained in the capital of the region can be recruited in the hospitals among girls and women who work there; but they do not want to go into rural areas. People have to be recruited from areas where they are needed.

The problem is that the village people do not have the means to pay for the delivery. And the fees are always changing. Perhaps if we could support the midwife's salary by the community as a whole, it would be better.

Upper Volta:

UNICEF's per diem is supposedly given for living expenses for the women while they are in training. It would be better simply to guarantee these women lodging and food.

Togo:

I disagree. There was a time when they did provide food for the women. But because of various taboos, the women refused to eat certain of the things prepared. So the program went back to money payments for per diems. NGO's should collaborate with the government so that the midwives can be paid.

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THREE WOMEN WHO WORK IN FAMILY PLANNING

The Exchange's workshops on health and family planning were conducted by an Asian, an African, and a Middle Eastern woman. All three attended every session of the discussion, but each one talked about her own background in an individual interview with the Exchange.

"Educate the Public about Health Care"

An Interview with Cornelia Muga (Kenya)

The Exchange: What is the program you work in?

Cornelia Muga: I am a supervisor of maternal and child health care and family planning clinics in Nairobi. We do preventive as well as curative care for outpatients. We also do deliveries. For prenatal care you attend the program any time up to giving birth. For child health care, you can go from the time babies are two weeks to when they are five years old.

Exchange: What is your target group?

CM: It is difficult to focus exactly on one target group because it is an urban area with great mobility in and out of the city. Somebody may tell people in a rural area that there's a big housing project and they move in.

It depends on employment as well; it's seasonal, with more people in the city when the harvest is over.

When the weather is very cold in winter, illness goes up. The clinics treat whoever needs care. It is specifically a women's program because it singles out the women for maternal and child health care. The activities at the prenatal clinics involve taking a full history and doing referrals for further management. Any woman who comes in and needs care is in the target group. It is a free service, partly because of government subsidy.

Exchange: Do you have any operational problems?

CM: Our number one problem is transportation. It is simply too hard to reach everyone. It is difficult to get goods and equipment from the central depot to the next clinic. Second, we are short-staffed. We continue to increase our case load every day. Third, our drug supply is limited because of budget constraints.

Exchange: What are the major successes of your program?

CM: We have been able to give priority care to a high-risk group. We find them and refer them. We have a maternity hospital which is run by the City Council and gets only referrals from our program. We more or less can decide who is going to that hospital. The biggest problem at the hospital is congestion. Sometimes there are two or three people in a bed, and others sleeping on the floor.

Exchange: Can you draw any general lessons about running programs from your work?

CM: Yes. It is important to educate the public at large, not just to give the curative service. The service is not as important as the information--especially in maternal and child health and family planning. Those who need the service most fail to attend. These women are not really informed and rumors keep them away.

Our services are free, but we are not selling them to the public. We don't educate them about benefits. When you are educated you realize that the risk of having the baby can be worse than the risk of family planning. But it is not a woman-to-woman service; it's too medical. We don't offer the privacy that women need. We should offer information and education either at home or in private, especially on family planning.

In Kenya, health care is not available to the majority of women, especially in the rural areas, where 90 percent of the population lives. If one of your 5 children is sick and you have to walk two hours each way to the clinic--that's just not possible. There are very few clinics in the rural areas and their personnel is limited. And transportation is always a problem.

Exchange: What is the most promising way to deal with these problems?

CM: I think it is information and education. Even if a health center is 20 miles away, the people should be informed. A primary health care system should inform them, for example, about nutrition. Most of these women are illiterate and they need information. They need education about the prevention of disease and about the availability of services.

"THE HIGHER IDEALS YOU HAVE, THE BETTER"

An Interview with Machtwahah Yusuf (Indonesia)

Exchange: What is your background? How did you get involved in your current work?

MY: I used to head the family unit program of Mohammediya, a large Moslem organization in Indonesia with 3 to 4 million members. Mohammediya had many hospitals and maternal and child health centers and I was in charge of population education. I saw that preventive medicine is lacking in many areas and I believed the only way to change that situation would be through education. I also felt that religion must be involved in a positive way. I have very strong feelings about religion; you should never drop your ideals, and the higher ideals you have, the better.

Exchange: How do you involve women in your programs?

MY: If you want to do something for women, the women should want and like that particular something. Also, we reach out to women where they already are, rather than

asking them to come to us. We work through Koran reading sessions and infant health services. The poor women come to Koran readings in hope of a better life after death, so we use this opportunity to make contact.

Exchange: What, if any, are your disappointments?

MY: First, I am disappointed by the women who oppose me-- mostly élite women and some men who do not like my work. Second, there is a great lack of funds. Third, younger girls do not want to follow the ideals of my organization. They have such different aspirations.

Exchange: What changes are needed most, in your opinion?

MY: I think we could improve peoples' lives rapidly if women participated in politics. All the party leaders are men. I would change the pattern of political women and make them policy makers in full political life. I would like to see women as ministers in my government. Not as ministers of health or social welfare--the traditional portfolios for women, but in the ministries of power held by men--finance, economy, trade. We don't ask for much. Since we are 50 percent of the population we should have 50 percent of the posts. But we'll take 20 percent.

JS draft 12/1/80

"THERE SHOULD BE NO POLITICS IN HEALTH CARE"

An Interview with Muazzez Okay (Turkey)

I have been working in health care for 30 years, as a nurse, a teacher, and as an administrator at a nursing and midwifery school. At first it was difficult for me, as a woman, to be working. My husband was not pleased. There were few crèche [day-care] facilities available for my children, so even though I was trained myself in modern pediatric nursing, I had to leave my three children in the care of a twelve-year-old village girl. And the majority of the personnel at the school were men; they felt uneasy about me.

After the beginning, though, things did change. My husband became very supportive and my colleagues accepted me. An organization of nurses complained to the Ministry of Health that they were unable to continue to work after they had children; now all health institutions have crèches and nursery schools.

Health services have not reached every village yet. Transportation is a major problem. In some areas roads do not exist. Village midwives travel on donkeys. The government is active in improving transportation facilities and tries to send a trained midwife to every cluster of ten villages. Untrained midwives--traditional birth attendants--are not legally allowed to practice any more, but they are still found in villages the government midwives haven't yet reached. Village women have many problems that are health-related. Now they want fewer children. Children used to be seen as a source of labor; but now women are realizing that for economic, social and medical reasons they want fewer children.

There are 84 schools of nursing and midwifery in Turkey and graduates are encouraged by the government--through higher pay and good housing--to work in rural areas, especially in Eastern Turkey. But there still is an unequal distribution of trained personnel throughout the country. There is a move to make some stint in the rural countryside compulsory.

I am concerned about politics interfering with health care. I believe that health personnel should never have political ambitions or be involved in politics. In the health field we take care of Christians, Moslems, everyone. People should not be divided. When a government tampers with health services for political reasons, when personnel and management policies change because of politics, then the entire system is disrupted.

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The Sarvodaya Shramadama Movement  
An Interview with Leela Jayasekera

Exchange:

Could you briefly describe the organization that you are involved with at the present? How did it begin?

Jayasekera:

The Sarvodaya Shramadama movement is one of the biggest voluntary organizations in Sri Lanka and is primarily involved in the area of community health programmes and training of community health workers. The S.S. movement was started by the present president of the movement, Mr. A.T. Ariyatane, about 22 years ago. The major idea behind the movement was Awakening or "Sarvodaya." It was to awaken/enlighten people to think in terms of family and community. "We belong to each other." The idea was to change the present situation through revival of "old" ideas, i.e. the indigenous, cultural philosophical beliefs from Buddhism.

Exchange:

Could you elaborate on the beliefs?

Jayasekera:

Buddhism is a way of life, it is not a religion. The Sarvodaya Movement incorporates Buddhist philosophy of life. By pooling together all the resources--both human and material--the individuals in a community are prepared to share in a voluntary capacity, towards the well-being of all. We talk to people and

communities about their problems, for example, one person has drinking water and the rest of the people don't. The particular person or government will not help, so we all get together and build a well for the rest of us. The pioneering group were also able to instill leadership in the villagers, encouraging them to participate in constructive activities to improve their living conditions and to meet their basic needs in a cooperative manner. The experiment of sharing labor in the village became a popular activity and shramadama ("dama" means sharing) went on for ten years. We learned that constructive activity must be a continuous ~~commitment~~ if we are to have peace and non-violence. We must share our hurt as much as our happiness.

Exchange:

How do you actually put your project ideas into action?

Jayasekera:

Actually there were different phases of our movement: First ~~was~~ the Sharamadama Movement, the labor sharing movement awakening ~~people~~ in the villages. Second, was the "100 Villages Development Scheme." This involved the awakening not of individuals, but of entire villages. This 100 villages scheme became very popular and expanded into 1,000 villages.

Right now 3,000 villages are involved in the development activities. In a few years, Sarvodaya will be the biggest village awakening organization in Sri Lanka.

Sarvodaya village is divided into groups according to age and occupation. There are groups of pre-school children, school age (4 to 14 years old) children, youth (15 to 25 years old),

mothers, professionals (for example, carpenters and farmers), and elders. Each group has its own organizational structure and membership and leadership is group leadership.

The youngest children's group is the most important and gets the priority of attention. The mothers' group is also very important. Sarvodaya has revived the traditional dignity and importance and respect attributed to the mothers. The philosophy that there is a Buddha in every home and that is the mother implies that mothers are highly respected. "Ask your mother" is one of the commonest responses of our father. So you see the importance of the woman's role in decision making. The mothers' group has the leadership in the care of the health and well-being of children. The mothers' group also nominates the youths/young girls who get trained as community health workers.

We women are not slaves. We work shoulder to shoulder with the men. But we don't like to be dominating.

Exchange:

How do you train your Community Health Workers?

Jayasekera:

The trainees are selected by the mothers. I started the village program for training women workers in 1972 at the Central Development Education Institute. Now there are decentralized education institutes in twelve of the twenty four electoral districts in Sri Lanka. Women between 18-25 years old who have previously undergone training in basic nutrition and hygiene as play group leaders for children's groups are selected by the village mothers.

Training is residential and available at no cost. All trainees have a basic level of education (usually high school); some are university graduates. If a woman's educational standard is not enough, training is adjusted to meet the lower standard of education. The trainee should be acceptable to all villagers, be pleasant, affectionate to children and of good health.

After selection, every trainee surveys her village to become aware of the problems that exist and to design solutions. She also works in the community kitchen program. Then the trainee enrolls in a two week course which gives basic knowledge of nutrition, health, hygiene and play activities. The training is mainly of a practical nature, taught by volunteer M.D.'s, teachers, and other professionals.

Of the trainees who complete the 2 week course, some are selected for further 3 months' training in maternal and child health, general health care and administration. Trainees meet and work with mid-wives, public health nurses and other health personnel. Preventive care/medicine is emphasized. Then the trainee goes back to her village, surveys it again in more detail and contacts health personnel in the area to secure assistance to solve the village problems.

Exchange:

Could you please describe the tasks of the Community Health Workers?

Jayasekera:

They have several responsibilities. First, they motivate mothers to get children immunized during pre-school years. They work to persuade expectant mothers to attend maternal and child

and child health clinics. Also, they teach nutrition, advising on breast feeding and supplementing babies' diets. Then they focus on sanitation in the village. For example, getting clean wells, building extra toilets. They use labor help from the youth groups. We have found that a good organized youth group is the backbone of a successful Sarvodaya Movement.

Exchange:

How are these Community Health Workers paid?

Jayasekera:

Since 1977, the Sarvodaya Movement has been able to pay 700 rupees (about \$10) per month to the CHW's mainly from funds from donor agencies in countries such as Holland, Belgium, Denmark and Germany. Oxfam also has contributed support. It is hoped that the villages themselves will be able to pay these women when the funds from donor agencies run out.

Exchange:

Since other communities are not Buddhist, how could you start a project like Sarvodaya in other countries?

Jayasekera:

Start with small communities so you can easily modify to suit their needs. The ideas are universal; the situation may be different.

Exchange:

How do you resolve conflicts within your communities or groups?

Jayasekera:

Yes there are conflicts with individuals and groups in our villages. We encourage people to talk vocally about their

misunderstandings. We have 3 meetings or "family gatherings." In Sri Lanka there is a custom for the whole village to gather three times a day: In the morning, there is a brief moment of prayer and then distribution of tasks. After lunch, there is time to evaluate the morning's work and to have a brief rest period. And in the evening, after the meal, we join for rest and recreation purposes. At all these meetings people are given the opportunity to talk about their grievances. Individuals do not resolve their conflicts personally, but rather at meetings. Usually people think their problem is too petty to be brought up at these meetings, so in this way big problems become little problems.

Exchange:

What is your personal background?

Jayasekera:

I'm about 66 years old. My father was a professor in chemistry, the first Doctor of Science in Sri Lanka. He was English trained and educated. When I was a child, I studied music in Munich and Berlin and traveled with my parents. Then I taught music and other subjects, e.g. history, literature in school. I married a lawyer, but am now a widow. I had one son who was an engineer and who died at age 32.

EDUCATION

Education is indispensable to women's participation in development. In virtually every Exchange workshop, no matter what the general topic, participants stressed the critical importance of education for women. As a woman in one of our Income Generation workshops stated, "Women need basic education. Without this we'll never get anywhere and the next generation will be lost."

Gayla Cook, the convenor of the series of Exchange workshops on Education, put it this way: "I think that education and training are the most fundamental component of women in development. Look at this Copenhagen conference with its sub-themes of education, health, and employment. All these go back to education when you want to make changes. You can't make changes without educating people. If women are to assert their rights and make any advances in health, housing, government, etc., you always have to come back to education."

Without education and training women cannot take part in development. A woman who can't read or write--and the majority of illiterates in the world are women--is cut off from an immense amount of information. She can't comprehend the written instructions for the operation of a new tool or the directions for the preparation of the foreign-made baby formula she is feeding her infant. She can't fill out the necessary forms to open a bank account or to obtain credit. She can't read the warnings and instructions printed about different methods of birth control. She can't make her own decisions about family planning. As a Kenyan woman pointed out in an Exchange family planning workshop: "A literate woman might be able to start pills without a man knowing. But for an illiterate woman, it is difficult to use contraception without her husband being involved."

But education means more than literacy. It means specific training in skills that will move women out of traditional roles and into new ones in a developing economy. Without such training, women's skills have become obsolete as new technology and imported goods are introduced into Third World countries. For example, when machines move into a production area, the men move in and the women are moved out. Participants in an Income Generating workshop discussed the phenomenon. "In Africa, women do the pottery. But historically, as soon as the pottery wheel becomes available, the men take over pottery. Upgrading skills has always been for men." An English woman agreed: "This seems like a



universal problem. Once you bring in a small piece of machinery the men get interested and there is no place for the women anymore."

Further, management and leadership training are important at the project level, where so much development work on behalf of women is going on. "What happens is a UN expert comes in and runs everything, does not train anyone from inside, makes himself or herself indispensable, stays two or three years and then leaves, and the whole thing collapses." Again and again, projects supposedly aimed at supporting women have collapsed when the departure of outside experts leaves a vacuum of skills leadership.

Education is a key to awareness. And awareness is the first step for women in getting what they need. When women are not aware of their legal rights and entitlements, for instance, it becomes irrelevant that a country might have progressive laws. Rights have no meaning unless people know about them. For example, in the Ivory Coast the government has outlawed polygamy and also has provided that a man must consult his wife in disposing of his property. These laws were designed to protect women--but most women in the Ivory Coast don't know about them. Similarly, as Amelia Rokotuivuna, the convenor of Exchange workshops on "Working Women Organize" pointed out: "Because women lack political awareness, we don't get into the mainstream of discussion and study on political economy. We focus too much on the project level--and all you get is more projects. We need political awareness."

Without education women are left behind. They can't take advantage of economic development, or understand it; and, in some

cases, they may even not know that it is going on. But development is happening--with or without women. Education is the key to women's active participation in shaping the world in which they live.

Education: What is Needed?

What exactly is meant by education? Gayla Cook sees it this way: "At a functional level, education means providing basic skills--like literacy--so that women can participate in the total process or development. It is crucial to provide educational opportunities specifically for women. Worldwide, women are discriminated against in terms of education. In Africa 88 percent of the women are illiterate, compared to 66 percent of the men. There need to be major changes made in this and it can't be just lip service. There has to be a political commitment by the governments concerned. There has to be a political commitment to formal education for girls as well as women, too. You can't have higher education if you don't have a pool or educated applicants to begin with."

Education goes beyond formal training. There needs to be education on the changing role of women--for women and men. Women's role in society is culturally defined. So to change women's status you have to change attitudes on many levels. This is public education. Women need to change their own attitudes as well. Jasleen Dhamija, in an Income Generating workshop, stressed: "We have not only to change the image of women that policy-makers have, we must change our own ideas as well. We should move up step by

step. We should not encourage development which keeps women in a subservient level, where we are exploited. We must learn to protect our own interests."

In various different Exchange workshops, women highlighted areas where education is needed:

In health and family planning: "Those who need the service most fail to attend. These women are not really informed and rumors keep them away. We don't educate them about benefits. When you are educated you realize that the risk of having the baby can be worse than the risk of family planning."

In upgrading and diversifying skills: "We should work in upgrading skills. We now train women for jobs in lower levels where they can't move into executive or managerial positions."

In marketing, profits and losses: "In the area of marketing, we must learn to cost our products. We take into account the cost of raw materials, but we do not calculate the time we have spent, the time the children have spent."

In managerial skills: A Kenyan woman spoke up in one of the Exchange workshops on Technical Assistance: "We have financial problems, but we also lack education. Let's say we get an idea about a problem and we start collecting money. But somewhere, somehow we get stuck, because no one knows how to run the group and get things moving. Money can come, but it will be useless without education. You can tell women that we want a nursery school. They will collect the dollars - but all the necessities, how to build the school and run it, those they don't know."

In leadership training: "We need leadership within the various groups, so they can have a leader in their own village. But so far this hasn't happened yet, so some of us must go night after night, village to village, to carry the message of nutrition and health."

In political and economic analysis: "We have to be aware of the big picture. There is nothing to worker control if we don't know about these multinational corporations, about negotiation, advertising, and management policies."

In understanding legal rights.

Education: What Keeps Women Out?

What are the barriers to education for women? Participants in the Exchange education workshops forwarded several. As in other areas, many education programs fail because they have been designed without a full enough understanding of the lives of the women they are supposed to be serving. A woman from Zambia reported that "the basic information for planning training programs for women has until now often been incorrect or insufficient." Too often education is imposed from above, without consulting the women themselves. Frequently, what is being taught is not relevant to the women. Ela Bhatt, the organizer of India's 10,000 member Self Employed Women's Association, described her organization's experience: "For the vegetable vendors we tried literacy classes, but every time we failed. The women had no time to sit and read, and they didn't find it useful in the actual problems of their life or work. Later we designed training in dealing with

modern markets and in the concepts of profits and losses. The vendors found this useful and they came."

As in every aspect of their lives, women are kept from participating in education by their double workloads. Women simply do not have the time or opportunity to attend classes. Sometimes there is opposition from their husbands or church. A woman from Trinidad explained: "For Catholic women in my country, if the church is suspicious of an education program, there will be difficulties. But if the church knows that the program is not disruptive to family life, then they will cooperate. Programs have to be careful and go slowly and not be stridently feminist."

Often girls drop out of school because of pregnancy. "In Zambia, pregnancy is one of the major reasons for dropping out of school. This is a controversial subject, since contraception is not really acceptable according to certain members of our government. What can we tell young women if their leaders tell them that it's beautiful to have a baby?" Sometimes, it is the structure of the educational system itself which, intentionally or not, works to keep girls and women out. Another Zambian woman reported: "Our educational system is like a pyramid, with several cut-off points. During the process of going up the pyramid, the child has no choice, there's a big lack of opportunity. In theory, all children qualify for the lowest step of the pyramid, but in fact not all children go to primary school. There aren't enough places. If the child then must wait two years for a place, suddenly she will be handicapped by her age. It is likely she will never go to school." And along with a shortage of available places for students, there is a lack of teachers as well.

### Education: How to Design a Program

This look at women's needs in education and at the barriers to meeting those needs leads logically to some important pointers for setting up educational programs for women.

First: education must be geared towards women, with teachers specially trained to deal with adult women who have been out of the system for some time, or who may never have been in the system at all.

Second: the program should respond to the women's own expressed interests and needs, rather than being imposed from the outside. The program must be participatory.

Third: materials should be drawn from and be relevant to the women's lives and experiences. For example, vocational education must prepare women for real employment opportunities.

Fourth: forms of communication other than writing should be employed. In Zambia, to educate women about new laws, one program finds someone in the community who is willing to come and talk to someone who suffered personally from the old law. They share experiences and then bring in a lawyer to discuss the new law and how to implement it.

Fifth: unusual and creative approaches to learning must be employed. All sorts of media can be involved - slides, posters, TV, radio, lectures, demonstrations. Tapes of the women themselves have been successfully used in a program in the Phillipines.. Along this line, there are further imaginative uses of video tape, as described by Martha Stuart in Exchange workshops (see \_\_\_\_\_), which should be explored. Similarly, group dynamics work, the

subject of another series of Exchange sessions led by Elsie Cross (see \_\_\_\_\_) can produce valuable learning experiences in leadership skills.

Sixth: community support is essential. It is often important to involve men as well. For example, one participant in an Exchange Family Planning session stressed: "In family planning, we must educate the men; we should go to the men and say, here is an education program, you can decide when your wife will have children and how many children to have."

Seventh: education must be accessible. Programs must reach out to women where they already are spending time, for example at the water wells.

Eighth: education should include formal literacy training, but must go beyond it as well. Women need training in new technical skills and in management and leadership as well. Women's perceptions about themselves, and Society's expectations of women must change. Education must lead to empowerment.

Ninth: education must be part of an integrated development approach. It must be linked to building an infrastructure of support for women, to reducing their enormous work loads, to offering other services such as health and family planning, and to providing opportunities for income generation.

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1/12/81

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EDUCATION AND CULTURE ARE FUNDAMENTALLY LINKED

An Interview with Gayla Cook

Gayla Cook, convenor of Exchange workshops on education, is director of the Women and African Development Project of the African American Institute. Set up over twenty-five years ago, the institute has provided scholarships for more than 13,000 Africans for programs from the secondary level through advanced post-graduate study for high-level manpower needs. In an interview, Cook described how the discussions in her Exchange workshops broadened her view of education in relation to women in development, and how that expanded view will affect her program in the future.

Gayla Cook:

I think that education and training are the most fundamental component of women and development. It's clear that many women in the third world think so, too. The first thing women often want is educational training because this is a key to economic empowerment.

But women have their own ideas of what kind of training is important. In order to do anything myself, I must first assess the needs with the people. For example, before

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I came here to Copenhagen, when I was thinking of what we might talk about in our education workshops, I concentrated on formal higher education. But the women here wanted to talk about a much broader concept: What is education? What does it mean in the community? They wanted to talk about education as a means of changing perceptions.

I had thought we would deal with policy issues in higher education. But these women said that there needed to be more basic activities in education at the village level. Not only literacy, but on the changing role of women as well. People had ideas about how these community level programs should work.

Exchange:

How will that translate into programs.

Cook:

To me, this Copenhagen conference is a kind of watershed. I'll continue working in some formal education. But as a program objective, I've added the goal of influencing the attitudes of policy-makers and of women themselves about women.

Interestingly, where women have been involved in a long revolutionary struggle -- as in Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Mauritania -- the country has a drastic difference in its commitment to women in education. Revolution turns the traditional way of relating upside down, and women have

more access to and awareness of educational opportunities.

Part of the AAI program is to influence public awareness. We do this through conferences and through tours for policy-makers and journalists. We have also experimented with travel programs. I intend to build into all these programs sessions about how development affects women. Then, in an operational sense, we must make sure that women get invited to participate. We will expand our travel program so that African women can go to other African countries or developing countries elsewhere to learn. Not just to the U.S.A. For instance, we might send African women to Jamaica to see how the Jamaican women's bureau operates.

Another thing I'm going to do is to develop a media project -- either video or film -- that will illuminate the issues of women in development. And also AAI will be commissioning research pieces on various issues having to do with women in development in Africa.

Exchange:

How does this relate to program planning and design?

Cook:

All this means that changes in African society have to be accomplished by the Africans, by the African women. For instance, the discussion of female circumcision in one of our education workshops (see page xx) got to the way that attitudes and practices are so embedded in culture. Western women were saying that circumcision is disgusting, but the

Africans were showing how it's embedded in a culture and that change must involve education. So for people from outside to go in and do things that are divorce from the Africans' ideas--that is not relevant to development. For example, in family planning, if women don't understand why they are practicing family planning, then they won't do it. Or if they don't understand how a latrine or a pump relates to health, the latrine and pump won't get used. When the outside development people leave, the people will stop using the pump, perhaps because they see it harboring ~~bad spirits~~.

Exchange:

How do you see the relationship between development and education?

Cook:

Development is a process that affects a whole society. I believe that development has fundamentally to do with ~~the economy~~ and education has fundamentally to do with culture. Education has its basis in culture and women's ~~role in~~ society is culturally defined. So to change women's status you have to change attitudes on many levels. Education involves all the things that shape people's perceptions. It is crucial to how people think about women and how women think about themselves. We must educate all people so that it is ~~understood~~ that women in development is not an isolated set of issues. Changing perceptions like this is a broad undertaking.

The Exchange

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TRAINING PEOPLE TO WORK IN GROUPS

An Interview with Elsie Cross

Elsie Cross, an American trained at National Training Labs in Bethel, Maine, U.S.A., works in group dynamics and leadership training, was the convenor of two series of Exchange workshops, "What Unites Women" and "Effective Group Dynamics." In an interview, she described her work and discussed its relevance to women in development.

Exchange:

What is the nature of the work you do?

Elsie Cross:

As a trainer, I do sensitivity training, human relations training, and also work in helping people become more aware of racism and sexism. I help organizations look at themselves, diagnose what's wrong, and come up with a series of actions that will develop change in the system. This involves leadership training, team-

building, and problem-solving.

The overall goal, I think, is to help people learn to deal with themselves in relation to other people and to understand the relationship between human interaction and tasks. You have the individual, the group, and the organization or system. All those things interact in different ways. For example, I have my own personal experiences that I need to learn how to manage. I also have interpersonal relationships. Then there is the context of some kind of group. Next there are intergroup situations where, say, blacks and whites, or bosses and subordinates, don't get along very well. People need to learn to manage themselves within the context of all these different levels.

People come to my groups to learn to become more effective in the way they interact with others. One of the basic problems that comes forward in any group is dealing with authority and power and responsibility. And within that context are the issues of communication, of trust, of how to deal with conflict, how to be more effective at problem-solving and decision-making.

Exchange:

How does this kind of work pertain to women internationally?

Cross:

At the individual level, this training helps improve women's self-image and self-concepts; it helps to give

individuals a more expanded view of what's possible for them. Further, the training allows the development of coalitions and of team-building among people who are different. It helps people understand cross-cultural differences and similarities and to envision a more effective form of organization. Therefore, it's very useful for women in development because we must all learn how to do things differently, how to feel better about ourselves, and how to develop strategies for change. Group dynamics helps really to free people to do their work more effectively.

Exchange:

Have you worked with women in international situations?

Cross:

Yes. There was a project in Jamaica where I worked with Peggy Antrobus on forming the Women's Bureau. She was gathering data for a national agenda for women. I helped her design a series of one day meetings in rural areas all over Jamaica which brought together 30, 50, or 100 women to find out what their concerns and issues were. These were extraordinarily successful gatherings. We did a lot of role-playing, and we used group dynamics techniques with women who had never heard the phrase before. But it seems that there is something natural about the process of group dynamics to help people share and fantasize about the kind of different world they'd like to live in. And so the agenda was built in a much more powerful way than anybody had anticipated.

There was another project in Barbados. A group of U.S. women in Barbados got some money, a very small amount, and devised a plan to bring together about 35 young women who had graduated from high school to develop some entrepreneurial plans. The government provided the women about \$50 each, plus advice and information and leads to help in finding space to develop crafts and other kinds of projects. The idea was that these young women would come in with some kind of a plan or business that would get them to earn money. And these were women starting from ground zero.

I did seven days of training with this group. When I first arrived, the thing that was most striking to me was that these young women were shy, withdrawn. They didn't face me or speak to me directly. These were women ages 18 to 26 who had almost never been employed, never earned any money and were pretty hopeless.

The training involved developing a sense of community, building up some trust in order to provide each other with feedback, and the beginning of some sense of what was possible in terms of their becoming entrepreneurs. Some of them developed plans that had to do with a catering service, baking, with gardening, sewing, and baby-sitting. These were to be group projects. Then we--they--developed more concrete plans for each of the projects.

And we continued to build self-confidence.

They called me "Missy" in a very formal way when I first came down. By the end of the first four-day period they were calling me Elsie, which I considered to be very positive; and they were looking at me and each other directly; they were addressing each other directly. In a very short period of time their self-confidence seemed to be raised. The second week, the last three days, the plan was to have representatives of government agencies come in and describe what their agencies could offer that would be of help. And the fear was that the women would not be able to question these authority figures, the men that they'd be too shy, too withdrawn, too frightened. So we worked on that with role play and repetition. When the authorities came, the women demanded answers! They pushed them for more -- it was really very dramatic, I can't tell you. It was so dramatic that I kept shivering.

Exchange:

Can these groups take place without a trained leader like you?

Cross:

Yes and no. There have been effective groups ever since there have been people coming together, from churches to tribal councils. But I think there are also dangers to not having trainers in groups. It's always possible for a conflict to arise or for problems to occur that an untrained

person wouldn't know how to deal with, and without some conscious awareness of group dynamics and group process, the group might get stuck. But the problem for women in the third world is, where would the money come for training? All the training centers I know about are in the United States and Europe. There are some trainers I know about in some African countries, in India, in Australia. But they're very, very few and far between. I'm really struggling with this, because I don't have an answer.

Exchange:

For a women who wants to form a group directed to some task, what would she have to have in mind as she began?

Cross:

Well, here is a sort of checklist. The groups ought to be heterogeneous, in order to maximize differences and similarities and to understand how to deal with differences and to take advantage of the richness of the group. I mean heterogeneous in terms of age and points of view and status. People in the group ought to be encouraged to participate and take responsibility for themselves and for the group. They ought to be willing to risk new behavior and challenge old notions. The group ought to encourage the expression of feelings appropriately. Feelings are important data for learning, and if suppressed or not paid attention to they will interfere with the groups process.

The leader should be aware of her own needs and issues so that they don't interfere with the progress of the group.

The leader should try not to interpose her fears, guilt, needs, on the group. You really have to be aware of what's happening to you all the time. If you're not, you will in some way direct that group very subtly--it's a very subtle process. The leader ought to be aware of competition for leadership, challenges to leadership, and some of the difficulties in not becoming defensive and argumentative--but to try to accept where people are. The value of groups and group dynamics is to accept people where they are, to allow people their own space, to grow at their own pace, be who they are.

And my suggestions for everyone in the group are: Pay attention to the process--the process of how people in-eract--as opposed to the content. How would participants do this? They would watch participation, like who talks to whom. They would watch the leadership issues--who's assuming leadership, how; the effect of leadership. They would watch for influence--who influences whom--and how, and so forth. They would try to understand the power relationships. How is power dealt with in the group, or not dealt with? Are feelings expressed? How is conflict dealt with? How does the group make decisions?

Exchange:

What did you want from the workshop on group-dynamics that you ran here in Copenhagen at the Exchange?

Cross:

My goal was three-fold: First, to give people an experience of group dynamics. Second, I wanted to demonstrate some processes that people could use in their own meetings back home. And third, I wanted people to get some new insight into themselves and how they interact. So every day I did a different series of activities as a way of demonstrating those three principles. Each day the group shifted. There was a core of six or eight women who came every day and then there were others who just dropped in for one day or two days.

I started every session with some mixer which demonstrates what experience or learning is, but it also gets people to know one another very quickly. I wanted to demonstrate the effectiveness of breaking down a large group into smaller subsets--trios or quartets or whatever--and having each of those subsets do the same work, but differently. The impact of that was to get people interacting at a smaller level; to get more air time for each participant; and, if they moved from one group to another, to meet a whole lot of new people.

Another aspect of that workshop was to teach skills, so that I did some modules on communication, and I did modules on decision-making. I wanted to help people to understand group process, so that periodically throughout each session I would ask people to share with each other what

was going on in the small group, how they were feeling, what they were learning, and the implications of that for back home.

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INITIATION, TRADITION AND SEX EDUCATION

One double session of the education series at The Exchange was devoted to sex education, and much of the discussion concentrated on female circumcision, a subject that has sometimes revealed a striking conflict of views between Western and Third World Women. The dialogue that follows is reconstructed from detailed notes taken at the two sessions. Participants are identified by country only, but more formal statements by resource people for the workshop are attributed to the speaker by name.

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Eddah Gachukia (Kenya):

This is a mixed group--a good mix. I can see just from looking around this room that African women are not deaf to this issue! We have a wealth of experience here, in a field we want to come to with sensitivity.

The themes of this U.N. conference are equality, development, and peace. But how prepared are key women to work for these issues? How prepared are we for equality? We need educational opportunities for women. There are drop-outs at all levels--college, high school--due primarily to teenage pregnancy and early marriage. But the term "sex education" does not appear in the U.N. agenda.

We need sex education in the schools. A major subject we are going to discuss today is initiation tradition for girls--female circumcision--but the point is not to concentrate only on circumcision but to deal broadly with issues of education particularly for women. In some of our societies, in the initiation period, education is what will give girls an identity as to who they are.

Can we send women out as equals with men? I would like to hear comments from our panel and anyone else here.

Edna Ismail (Somalia):

To introduce the subject of female circumcision, I should say that various types are done in Somalia.

The mildest form is the mild sunna. This is so mild that the girl may not know it was done. It is only pricking the prepuce of the clitoris with a pin. If it is done with a sharp thong or needle, it is like a finger prick for blood. It leaves no scar. It is done at birth; the umbilical cord is cut, the prepuce is pricked. It is symbolic.

Next is the modified sunna, which means excision of the prepuce of the clitoris. This corresponds to male circumcision. The body of the clitoris is not cut.

The severe sunna is cutting away the body of the clitoris, also maybe the labia minora. This procedure involves scarring, pain, shock to the system, the chance of infection, sometimes hemorrhage.

Infibulation, the most severe, is also called pharonic female circumcision. The excision of the body of the clitoris; the excision of the labia minora; the excision of the inner walls of the labia majora, and the stitching of the walls to form a barrier. There are complications that ensue: the immediate ones are pain, shock, hemorrhage. Slightly later there may be infection, and retention of urine because the passage is restricted. Still later: (1) ten days later a complication may be failure of the infibulation to take place. If the labia majora do not fuse--heal together--with this first attempt, that poor girl will have it repeated. (2) At menstruation more complications: the small opening is ideally no larger than a grain of dura, so there may be problems with the passage of blood, called dysmenorrhea, causing the menstrual flow. (3) At marriage, the barrier--the scar--has to be opened for intercourse. There is pain with coitus, more scarring, danger of infection. (4) At childbirth, the baby has to pass through this very scarred, narrow, painful passage. The elasticity of the birth canal has been reduced--often the child has to burst through--there is pain and trauma. Then because of

the loss of elasticity there's a danger of prolapse of the uterus. Also because of the rigidity of the scars, the woman has to bear down in childbirth, increasing the risk of prolapse.

Those are the physical effects. Then there are mental and emotional complications. The girl knows about this procedure in advance. Later, if she has a baby daughter she has to subject her to the same process. The physical scars heal, but the mental scars don't.

Until 1976, it was taboo to discuss this--or anything about female genitalia. The formation of the Somalia Women's Democratic Association in 1976 opened up the possibility of talking about it. Fortunately the government has also encouraged suicidal missions like mine--because in 1976 it was suicidal!--to tackle circumcision as a health problem rather than a social or religious problem (which of course it also is). The issue can only be presented as a health issue. I can talk about it because I am a midwife. At one meeting I took a census of about 500 women asking if they thought there should be a fight against circumcision. The majority supported a movement to end the practice provided that it did not result in outside interference and that assistance is channeled through Somalian women's organizations. Since 1976 many groups of women have shown a favorable response. Every health worker has to have at least one lecture on this subject. And we have coordinated our program with other countries.

I want this on record: I am very grateful to the women of the Sudan, who gave me the courage to stand up and speak of this. The greatest credit goes to them. The most important step in our

struggle was taken in Lusaka, Zambia, in December 1979 at a meeting of African women. Somalia presented a motion calling on countries where the practice of female circumcision is prevalent to support people doing education in this area and to abolish the practice. But we stressed that only people from their own country should do work in this delicate area. It is very closely tied to tradition. I welcome the support of women around the world--but I deplore the sensationalism of the press. This really sets us back.

We have shown progress. We can't go any faster in this process; our societies will not permit it.

Luzia Gachukia:

When the press sensationalizes these issues it hinders the progress on them in the less developed countries.

Anna Badri (Sudan):

I have some comments to add to Edna Ismail's thoughts. In the Sudan, the campaign began in the 1930's and 1940's with articles in the press by a Sudanese doctor, a man whose sister had been circumcised. In 1945 the Sudan Medical Society was made aware of the medical complications. One strong argument it is important to bring forward is that the Koran does not call for circumcision.

In 1946 a law was passed that prohibits the pharonic circumcision. But unfortunately, since this is a social custom we cannot change it by passing laws. Illiteracy makes this a much worse problem. ~~Women~~ don't even know there is a law. We have had conferences, but conferences usually just produce papers and recommendations and nothing happens.

The practice of circumcision is highly ingrained in Sudanese society. Many women believe girls are girls: they get married, they get circumcised. Women don't perceive the effects on their daughters' health unless they have had a problem themselves--and even these problems are thought to be caused by some superstition or other.

Then there is money. The midwife is paid good money to do the operation. Doing circumcisions is her income-generating project! She will oppose the loss of this income.

There is a tradition in the Sudan that when a girl gets circumcised, the relatives and friends will pay her parents a tribute and the girl will get presents. So you have to watch all this when you are making a change. We don't have birthday parties. This is the only time girls get presents, when they are circumcised. It's once in a lifetime. It's a big celebration, a big social gathering for the people. So if you want to make a change, you have to give them something to compensate for the loss of the social gathering.

Also, there is male circumcision as well as female. So when a young girl hears that a male classmate is being circumcised, she feels she is missing something. Educated mothers--but only an enlightened few--sometimes persuade their daughters it is not desirable.

There are several things we can do, besides pass laws or hold conferences:

1. Use the media with a nationwide publicity campaign in each of our countries to reach the uneducated as well as the educated. For instance, via the radio. At least one family in every village

will have a radio. Even T.V. (especially in agricultural regions), or articles in the papers, and stories in comic books for kids.

2. In the formal education system, we should teach about this subject at the school level, particularly to boys--about the effects of circumcision on a girl's health.

3. At the nonformal level, we have to stimulate people to go to public health classes. We can use health education to educate the mothers. Of course we cannot just tell women in the villages to stop circumcision; we must have an integrated approach to get their interest. Health education should be integrated with income-generating activities; otherwise they will not attend.

4. We should involve men, too--because men believe in it. It is a social custom.

#### Sudan:

In schools of nursing and midwifery, circumcision used to be part of the curriculum. But ten years ago it was dropped. Now we're trying to teach how to combat circumcision. Higher levels of training, like the nursing college, have never encouraged the practice. At that level, the subject is taught under ethics, and the ethics course cites it as mutilation.

Sex education in the schools was initiated by the Information Education Committee of the Sudan Family Planning Association, which has had two seminars on sex education under "family health." We are campaigning to include sex education, family planning, and circumcision in the regular curriculum.

Dr. Johnson (Nigeria):

Until recently we did not talk about this subject, but since the topic has come up in the international press the Nigerians have looked into the issue and we learn that we don't have the same problem as Somalia and the Sudan. It seems that no pharonic circumcision exists in Nigeria. But maybe we haven't looked deeply enough.

About sex education in general, I'm impressed with our sisters from the Sudan. The big questions about sex education are:

1. What is the content?

2. Who is the target group? Is it the child at school?

Do you address it in biology, or where? It has to be done at the right time and in the right way. For example, waiting until age 13 to introduce this subject may be too late.

3. Who gives the sex education? There's a lot of informal sex education in homes. But many people don't know the facts and they don't know how to talk about it openly. We have to educate the public on how the body works. You have to have a different plan for different groups--and especially men are important.

Many teachers don't have any special training in sex education. And then the same ones may teach in morals classes. They have biases. They don't have a clear point of view. Parts of the subject may be unknown to them. Children know this.

Kenya:

A formal biology lesson does not tell you much about relationships between men and women.

Nigeria:

Women aren't aware of the consequences of circumcision for health. One reason given for circumcision is the fear for health consequences if it is not done! A child in the womb might die if a woman is not circumcised, people believe, because the baby might touch the clitoris on the way out.

It's important to understand the culture to know why it is practiced. Circumcision is done mainly because of superstitions. In Nigeria now someone in the Ministry of Health is doing the essential thing: collecting data for epidemiology.

Somalia:

There is such a taboo against sex that there is no sex education as such in schools. In intermediate schools we include lessons in biology, where sex organs are mentioned--that's about all. Most sex education is left to mothers and grandmothers, who introduce the subject at the time of circumcision and then again at menstruation, and another installment just before marriage.

Kenya #2:

The missionaries carried out a campaign against circumcision which almost caused a civil war. They said that circumcision was a sin and could not be practiced if you wanted to be a Christian. But others felt that circumcision taught you discipline and could put an end to teenage pregnancy. The controversy is part of the whole problem of coping with modernization. Circumcision is seen as a way of controlling teenage sexuality.

There are over 50 different groups of people in Kenya. Some practice circumcision and some don't; some practice circumcision

of men. So it is not even a national issue. It is an issue for each group and should be left to each group to handle. We should go to the government only when it's absolutely necessary. We have been accused of apathy. We are not apathetic but we want to approach this problem on a grass-roots level.

Kenya #3:

Circumcision marks the person as an adult. There are many reasons people believe in it:

1. If you're not circumcised you will have a great lust for sex and are likely to be unfaithful to your husband. Both men and women believe this deeply. And girls who live in towns without parental or village protection--people think they're promiscuous because they're not circumcised.

2. Another reason--a belief that we've always done it, so it should be done. Some of the reasons we give against circumcision are not convincing to the women. We talk about pain and scars--but women have those from other things too. Nobody looks at your genitals anyway; who cares about the scar? Or the tearing at birth--it tears anyway.

We have to see the issue objectively. You can't go to women and tell them you're going to educate them about circumcision; you have to be more gradual. You definitely cannot talk about this issue on its own; you have to integrate it with other subjects. Discussing it at a big international forum like this is very helpful. But it is suicidal to stand up before women of your country and tell them they are doing something barbaric.

Edna Ismail:

Many of the same reasons are given in Somalia. People talk about tradition, or they believe that Islam requires circumcision. This is false; infivulation goes contrary to the Koran. Other people say that circumcision is hygienic, that it reduces secretions. Some women argue that everyone has it and why should their daughter be different. But the real reason they do it is to preserve chastity--by limiting sexual desire and by creating a barrier that makes intercourse more difficult.

U.S.A.

The same kinds of things go on in the West. I can't give the reason why I had my son circumcised. There is no health or religious reason; it is just traditional.

Nigeria:

The whole panic results from years and years of the portrayal of African women and children. This is the ultimate projection, and it is degrading. I saw the Ms. magazine article on circumcision that showed a young girl with her legs apart. I was shocked. Please, if you really care--and the question is if you really care--then handle these things in a way that doesn't degrade us.

U.S.A.

Some principles in general are very clear: First, Western women should not get involved. Second, the press is very dangerous. Third, for the West the thing to do is raise money for African organizations that are doing something.

Sweden:

We have been asked at Save the Children in Sweden not to interfere in internal matters. I'm on committees on female slavery and female circumcision. We support the program financially in the Sudan--an income-generating program called "Children's Health through Mothers' Education." We Europeans want to keep in the background. We work through an African coordinator.

Mrs. Sow (Senegal):

It's a very delicate problem--not just an economic development problem. It's a problem of traditional moral values. Speaking especially for Senegalese, I say it is delicate and Africans should handle it. We are not in favor of excision, but we are African women and we can look after our own problems; we don't want outsiders coming in and messing with them. The international organizations that can bring in funds for this education--that's great. But outsiders must not come in to impose their values on Africans. Some Western practices are scandalous--for instance, the way you put your old people into ghettos--but Africans would not come in with banners and news stories to tell you how backward you are.

All sympathy and help to African women to solve the problem is welcome, but the actual action on the spot must be done by the Africans.

Upper Volta #1:

Westerners are very shocked by the subject of excision. But

we do not believe this can be discussed by those who are not circumcised themselves. Western women cannot understand circumcision, especially if they have not been to Africa.

Upper Volta #2:

If the Western women are so excited about this problem, why can't they collect money for it? For the African women, female circumcision is not considered a big problem. It is only a problem of generations--it will clear itself up over the years.

Hunger, thirst, sickness--these are our real problems. Anyone can see these; they are getting worse. They are decimating populations. So to hear slogans in the West is ridiculous; in 10, 20, 30 years I assure women of the European NGO's that the circumcision question will solve itself. I'd like to say thanks to the Western women for their interest--but let's just use the interest in this as a spearhead to raise money for the real problems.

Upper Volta #1:

Here in Copenhagen you can't understand what is meant by "the problem of water." The wells are sometimes 40 feet deep and 15 kilometers away. And who gets the water? The mother, often one who is already pregnant, and she has another child along. She has a pail on her head; she walks. In Africa men and women and children are dying of thirst--of hunger--because they haven't enough water. This is much more important than what happens inside your pants!

We appeal to all of you here that you stop this propoganda against African women and help us fill these empty stomachs, because an empty stomach has no ears. We can do nothing else important until we eat.

Eddah Gachukia:

We may be a little too sensitive to this issue if we say it concerns only us and no one else should be working on it. But many years ago if people had sat down and people said, "Slavery concerns us," things might have been different.

Let us leave this room feeling we are all women working together.

The Exchange

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GIVING WOMEN A VOICE

A Statement by Martha Stuart about the Uses of  
Videotape in Developing  
Countries

Martha Stuart, an independent film producer, has worked all over the world making videotapes and training people in video technology. A number of videotapes from her well known series "Are You Listening?" were shown continuously for a week in the Exchange's corridor at the Forum. In a series of Exchange workshops and in an interview, Martha Stuart set forth her ideas on communication and development.

When I want to learn about someone's life, I want to hear from the person directly, not just about that person. My videotapes give a voice to people who are often talked about but who are rarely listened to.

Development communication is usually a one-way flow. It goes from the top down, from the government to the people, from the expert to the supposed beneficiary, from the central authority to the countryside, from the educated to the uneducated. It relies on the written word, with an assumption that once an experience has been committed to words and placed in a report, then it has officially happened and can be repeated elsewhere. The report itself becomes the primary reality and the real people and real

events are left behind as shadows. Literacy becomes the ground rule of the development game -- without it you cannot be a player, only a pawn.

The ability to transfer successful experience from one area of the world to another is at the very heart of the development effort. We need communication that can transport results from place to place, that gives people tools and ideas and the experiences of others and then invites them to make their own solutions.

But conventional development communication approaches people at their lowest level -- and fear of authority -- rather than at their highest -- the exercise of their creative functions. Development must be based on shared concerns -- whatever is on the mind of the people themselves is just as important as whatever is on the agenda of the central authority. As one of the Javanese women who participated in a videotape on family planning explained: "Women shouldn't just be listeners or observers, they should be equal partners. This videotape will benefit women in the villages by showing them that women have valuable things to say and should be heard. This will help contribute to the success of all sectors of women's development." Where and how does video fit in to fashioning a workable and worthwhile development communication? I believe that video is an incredibly powerful communications tool with multiple uses to help people participate in the processes of national

development. The equipment of video gives this medium enormous potential. It is simple to understand, easy to maintain and operate, durable and relatively inexpensive. It can be used under a wide range of adverse conditions and in many different natural lighting situations. It doesn't require a lot of special skills or extensive training, expensive set-up or a lot of capital. You don't need an array of supporting technicians. You are not tied to a specific place. It is "appropriate technology" -- small-scale, individually manageable, adaptable to many different circumstances.

And video has a further, unique strength. It does not require central processing the way film, print, television and practically every other medium of communication does. With video, the same piece of tape can be used over and over again, and each time it is immediately accessible -- whatever has been recorded can be played at a moment's notice. In this way, communication can become horizontal rather than vertical. What this means is that material produced in one place can be taken and shown directly in another place with no prior necessity of going to some central laboratory. People can communicate directly with one another. There is no need for intermediaries. In a way, video is like people sending letters to one another instead of trying to communicate through the columns of a newspaper. But video is even better than letters because you don't need to know how to

read or write to use it. It also offers a special learning experience: the possibility of seeing yourself as others see you.

With video, it is possible to think of development work in a different way. Instead of telling people what to do, you can elicit their involvement. Video provides information, not in order to control, but rather as the raw material for choices. Since the early 1970's I have worked with video in countries all around the world -- Columbia, India, Jamaica, Egypt, Mexico, Jordan, Indonesia, Mali, and Guyana -- often in villages or rural areas where people had no running water, much less any previous acquaintance with electronic technology. We have made tapes on family planning in India, on vasectomies in Columbia, on village women in Egypt. And in each place we have also trained local people in the technology of video so that we leave something concrete behind -- people with skills to make their own tapes, to guarantee continuing communication. I've heard that some of the people we trained in Egypt have gone to Mali to do training there. The ripple effect is enormous, and thrilling.

I believe that there are two things that this century is going to be remembered for -- the minitiarization of technology and the women's movement. Small video technology means that we all can be producers of material, that communication can be direct, whether or not we can read or write.

The women's movement is a change in consciousness which has produced an immense change in the form, content and sources of communication and information.

One of my recent projects, in anticipation of this meeting here in Copenhagen, was to use video to further women's communication about feminism. Though many people might assume that there exists a clearly articulated, widely shared feminist ideology, this is simply not the case. Women are not fully agreed on what they are struggling for and there is no common understanding of what it means to be a feminist. And communication on these issues is complicated by the fact that media of all sorts regularly distort the image both of womanhood and of the women's movement. In an effort to open new channels of communication, to stimulate discussion here in Copenhagen and elsewhere, and to present some articulated sense of feminism, we produced a videotape of a discussion amongst 14 women from all regions of the world who talked about feminism--what it means to them in their own environment and its significance internationally. Hopefully, this tape will be a step towards putting people in touch with women's realities in individual, local, national and international contexts. Again, we can see the use of video as a tool for direct, important, and indispensable communication. I think that the response to the tape in Copenhagen--the conversations it has sparked--shows that the tool has been an effective one. (See "\_\_\_\_\_", p.xx)

GETTING CREDIT FOR WOMEN

An Interview with Michaela Walsh,  
President of Women's World Banking

The Exchange:

What is Women's World Banking? Could you describe it?

Michaela Walsh:

Women's World Banking is an independent financial institution established in the Netherlands and designed primarily to:

- Establish a capital fund as the basis of collateral and guarantees to women on a local banking basis. This will give a base in local banking institutions to women borrowers.
- Arrange the necessary management and technical assistance to help insure the viability of borrowing enterprises.
- Develop a worldwide network of women with banking and financial expertise.

The only way to bring women into local economies is to eliminate the risks at local lending institutions. Our goal for two years from now is to have eight to ten loans

under way, anywhere from \$100 to \$100,000. On the \$100 loan our idea is to get banks to make the small loans themselves from their own funds. Our encouragement for them is that if they do so, they can then make one big loan from our funds.

Exchange:

What are the principles behind the organization?

Walsh:

I believe in access to information rather than the development of technology as a way of building a base. The information is crucial--you could call it "information technology." Get information to people and that in itself is a way to decentralize an economy. One of the basic lacks among women in the world is the lack of knowledge of formal banking institutions. This is fundamental.

In 1975 at the Mexico City meeting, many people were talking about an international bank for women with an interest in getting credit for women. There were lots of politics at that meeting but no one was focusing on the world's capital resources. Access to cash in hand--and preservation of it--is power. But it is hard to preserve capital. Income-generating projects aren't the answer. They can be totally government-controlled. So in 1975 we began to research the best way to get money to people. Now we are ready to start implementing our ideas.

Exchange:

Whom are you thinking of? Whom will your project reach?

Walsh:

We're thinking of all people and any economy.

What women are interested in is easy credit--but they don't know how to deal with it and it can enslave them--they can't handle it. This is not what women need!

There's a trend now to move money out of central banks into local banks--but there are almost no women in those banks. This has to change first. Then women in the development projects have to know that those women exist.

Women do own the money in the world--they just don't control it. So our focus is to work primarily as a central financial resource--to encourage banks to extend credit to women. Simultaneously we want to focus on developing the management and technical skills people need to use the money that they're going to borrow. We will arrange training to develop those skills.

In the first year we'll hold 2 to 4 workshops abroad. We'll bring in the key people in the local economy, and during workshops we'll identify candidates for loans.

Exchange:

How much capital do you need, and where is it going to come from?

Walsh:

I've been trying to keep this enterprise independent of the U.N. and everyone else. We need 10 million dollars to start. I want an international fund that is invested on an international market; on that you can make 15 to 20 percent.

We now have two verbal commitments of one million dollars--as loans, technically. So we'll have the use of that, not the capital itself. But we can use this as the basis for matching funds--raising our own funds from women. From women who in their countries have the influence to raise it there.

We can have a board of 25 people, maximum. We now have ten, with two men. Most of them are people in banking or business, representing all regions of the world. They will be committed to the fund-raising. For operations, the Swedish International Development Authority and the United Nations Development programs have given us money. I was just elected president, and I will hire an assistant, but the idea is to have next to no staff and hire consultants for specific regions.

Exchange:

Do you know where you will begin?

Walsh:

Not really. But possibly we will have projects in, say, Haiti, India, and Africa the first year.

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WOMEN'S WORLD BANKING IN NIGERIA

An Interview with Modupe Ibiayo

Modupe Ibiayo was one of 37 leading women in banking, finance, and business from 27 countries to attend a workshop on Women's World Banking in Amsterdam in March 1980. During the workshop, this group agreed to serve as advisory associates for the organization. (A videotape and written report on this workshop are available from Women's World Banking. P.O. Box 1691, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10017, U.S.A.) In an interview at the Exchange in Copenhagen, Modupe Ibiayo elaborated on how the organization will work in a specific situation in West Africa. She is a board member of Women's World Banking worldwide, an advisory associate, and executive director of the Nigerian chapter.

Exchange:

What is Women's World Banking interested in doing in Nigeria?

Modupe Ibiayo:

It is designed to attack difficulties women have in getting credit -- their lack of collateral. There is a great lack of capital for women who want to undertake projects, and institutions like Women's World Banking can be an answer. Commercial banks can also help through a focus on women's projects in their rural branches, but at present they are doing none of that.

In Nigeria, Women's World Banking wants to work in urban and rural areas which either have not had access to capital for their projects or need an infusion of more capital. The bank also hopes to provide some form of technical assistance to women's projects. For example, we envision the setting up of garment factories, since imported dresses have been banned in Nigeria. Also, we will work in poultry and craft centers in rural areas and we are interested in providing aid for extending agricultural acreage, for transportation of products to market and for warehousing facilities.

Exchange:

What are the major components of the program?

Ibiayo:

First, to raise money locally. Second, to deposit that money in a commercial bank and to raise loans based on it. Third, to make loans to women who come forth with projects. We might also take shares or equity in some of the women's projects, like craft centers. Women's World Banking worldwide will, in addition, provide back up guarantees.

Exchange:

How will the organization function?

Ibiayo:

We will work with existing women's societies in each state. When the national branch is incorporated, money will be raised locally by women members and will then be deposited

with a bank. Women's World Banking will raise a loan from this bank of triple or more the amount deposited. This can then be loaned out to needy urban and rural women. The women who get loans will have to be dynamic business-wise, which Nigerian women already are. For women educated or well off enough to obtain credit on their own, Women's World Banking will simply tell them where else they can go to get credit.

Women's World Banking will bear 50 to 70 percent of the risk of the loan to the women, and the commercial bank will bear the rest. Or else women needing the money might be asked to raise up to 25 percent of the required capital if they can, while Women's World Banking and the commercial bank take care of the rest. This 25 percent will not be a stringent requirement, however.

Exchange:

Do you foresee any problems?

Ibiayo:

A major problem lies with finding people -- women-- who can go out to the field and write up projects. They will need the technical know how to put the projects down on paper. Grants from abroad to start up a technical committee will be needed.

Also, some women entrepreneurs in Nigeria already see this as a giveaway project from which they hope to benefit. They will have to be convinced that this is an economic and financial venture, repayable, and only for needy women.

Another problem is to convince the men that this is not a program designed to take the women from the home or make them superior, since Nigeria is a patriarchal country. Once the men can be convinced, then a lot of women will have more freedom to participate.

Nigerian men are basically fearful of the successful entrepreneurial woman. They fear she will leave home. So Women's World Banking is aiming at programs that will not take women away from home.

Men are also fearful that programs aimed specifically at women will discriminate against them. Once they understand that the program is aimed at helping women economically--for example to get collateral--they are less resistant. Nigerian women have been entrepreneurs for a long time. Once you make the men understand that Women's World Banking is only to help them (the women) continue this tradition and help the men financially in the home, then they are less resistant. In fact, we may invite men to join in the cooperatives--for instance, men who are also disadvantaged in getting credit normally.

Exchange:

What will you count as major successes?

Ibiayo:

If we can get women together for a common purpose with women helping each other. This would be a big success. Later, we can evaluate the success of the women economically,

if the projects succeed and the women advance economically, then that will be a success.

And I hope that the economic advancement which is helping foster will not divert women away too much from the personal touch with their families. I hope Nigerian women will not lose their feminine perspective and become like Western women.

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Jill Kneerim/  
Draft 1/21/81

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PRELIMINARY DRAFT - Revisions to come

### FUNDING

#### Recipients and Donors Define Problems and Suggest Improvements in Getting Support to Women's Projects

Women's programs need money, and funders need programs to support, but the two sides in this exchange often have trouble finding each other and further trouble cooperating once they have. The subject of funding was one of the most discussed topics at the Exchange, as well as at other meetings in the Forum in Copenhagen. Marilyn Richards of the New TransCentury Foundation in Washington, D.C., organized an evening meeting where funders could describe their criteria and recipients could describe their frustrations in obtaining money for important work. The following account, organized to reflect the major points that were on people's minds concerning the giving and getting of grants, draws on the discussions at that meeting, at a planning session that preceded it (held at Vivencia under the aegis of the International Women's Tribune Center), and at three different Exchange workshops: "Funding Grass-Roots Organizations," "Women and World Food Systems," and "Improving Development Cooperation between the Third World and NGO's."

In all these discussions, recipients from a wide range of countries agreed that one assumption should precede all planning, negotiation, and actual funding:

Barbados: A discussion between donors and grass-roots organizations should start from the premise that people know what they want. Now, what are the problems experienced in getting assistance? And, on the donors' side, what are the problems experienced in giving?

Thailand: What is a grass-roots organization?

Sri Lanka: It's a group started up by the people themselves who have the problems, not by others. These people have the knowledge, the cultural background. They know the needs, but they need financing.

Barbados: For me it is essential to know that the donor agency will treat the grass-roots women with respect and dignity and recognize that they also have some skills. Attitudes towards grass roots women are critically important. In fact, I would like to find an agency in donor countries that could help me assess donors' attitudes.

Sensitivity toward the women who need help, and respect for their strengths, would go a long way toward bridging one of the gaps in the funding process that most troubles women in the Third World, namely a wide difference in agenda and priorities between donors and recipients of grants. Grantees almost universally felt that the criteria and the requirements of funders do not relate well to the realities of the situation in the Third World and do not serve the best interests of the very women they seek to support.

South Pacific: You have a project; you submit it to the donor. But they have their own programs, and you have to

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wait. One funder in New York--we had to wait two years to get money, and then we found that it had strings attached--it was just for such-and-such. We couldn't spend it on our whole program but just on what they specified.

Did they ever consider that it is our project? We have our priorities, but our needs were ignored.

Some agencies I would not even go back to because of the restrictions. Even for us to sort out a proposal for getting \$500--it's not worth it.

South Pacific #2: In my area, we have only the airplane to get around; then we have to walk. So I asked one agency for a Land Cruiser to reach our projects. Six months later I get the word: no, their money cannot be used for a vehicle.

Funding agencies will not fund certain components of a program at all--for instance the administration. So how do we run a project that way?

India: Donor agencies lay down rules. They do not understand the economy. They define aid for poor people who really turn out to be middle-class, in India. Also, their rules are so stringent that you can't redirect funds where they are needed.

Upper Volta: Donors should do research first to determine the needs rather than conceive a project on the basis of funds available.

India: But the international organizations have been established a while. They have their likes and dislikes. What can we do?

Another participant: If agencies really want to be helpful to the countries, they have got to be more flexible. They have got to let go of some of their priorities.

Well--for instance, in family planning. They have their own ideas how it should be done, and their ideas are often completely ineffective. They've got to have more confidence in the people of the country.

Bangladesh: Exactly. I'm in family planning--but very few agencies will give money for abortion work.

U.S. (donor): At times I have fifteen or twenty proposals or ideas in my file for, say, Latin America, because my organization doesn't have the category to fund them. So I wait. Here's a file full of proposals, waiting for money, and there's Germany looking for projects! What a shame! Perhaps we need more coordination between PVO's.

Caribbean: I want to make a special plea for flexibility from the agencies, because so much money now has to go to the priorities of the agency and not of the country. This is terrible. And not giving money for administration is very hard on projects. It can cripple them.

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Despite these problems, grantees as well as donors acknowledged that it is difficult to forge links between the funders and the people in the field without some sort of help in the middle. Most funders are large agencies in Europe or North America, with cumbersome bureaucracies and complicated requirements. Women who need funding the most live in rural areas of the Third World and many have no links to national, much less international, organizations. As Peggy Antrobus of Barbados said in the Exchange workshop on getting assistance to grass-roots organizations, "One basic problem for funders is, how do they make contact with people at the grass-roots level? What we need is intermediary organizations at the national and community level. Also, there are international organizations which have branches all over the world. So there are ways of linking up that still will not jeopardize the power of local groups to make their own decisions."

But intermediate organizations, everyone agreed, introduce a new set of problems. When patience with these functional problems ran shortest, people just said they would like to dispense with middlemen entirely.

Germany: Apparently it is hard to get funds to small projects, which is mostly what women need. "Hard" means expensive. Of course both sides deplore how much money disappears on the way. But why does it? Basically because of suspicion. What is needed is just more confidence. Why do we have to have all these go-betweens? So what if \$2000 disappears sometimes?

Guatemala: It's true. Women who have projects don't want any more intermediaries. They want quick, easy access to the funders themselves. But agencies are cumbersome and too centralized. That is the problem.

But most people argued that intermediaries are able to do what neither side can do alone.

U.S. #1: I'm with a university that has a development technology program. It's very difficult for us to know directly what the needs are.

U.S. #2 (AID): We have so much paperwork that it's as easy for us to give large grants as it is to give small ones. This is why it's sometimes better if the funds go through an intermediary like the YWCA.

U.S. #3: I agree that it's important to deal through intermediary organizations. They can do some of the proposal writing and reporting work. On the developed countries' side these are organizations like Pathfinder Fund or PACT. PACT gets AID money and puts together locally the machinery for evaluating, so the project doesn't have to do it.

Barbados: The intermediary organizations have an especially important role to play in follow-up assistance and training, which are essential to most projects. These are not likely to be funded by the big donors; we must build the national and local and regional middle-level agencies which can do this.

Guyana: But the organizations that go between tend to control your funds and direct them.

Zimbabwe: The small group getting money should get a copy of the papers when a grant is given to the larger agency--

so they know how much to extract from the agency.

If intermediaries are necessary, the question is, who should perform this function?

Thailand: Local groups must understand that change is up to them--they can do it. If locals need funding they should go to a national organization, which has power at the national government level, and get help through that channel.

India (to the funders): Each organization of yours which is funding should have its own representative to go out and see projects for themselves and judge whether they are worth funding.

Tonga: Maybe you should give this additional responsibility to the Peace Corps director, because they are the people who really know us and they speak the language of the country.

Donor (IPPF): At a meeting last week, the suggestion was made that the money of various big donor agencies should be put together in one organization where the small projects could apply without having to do all the fancy stuff like write proposals. In other words, form an organization to channel donors' money.

U.S.: We try to give money through the PVC's (private voluntary organizations), because some have simplified their procedures. The point is to find a good PVO with a good management system.

Ghana: When you are looking for an intermediary to give money through, remember that the big organizations have the sweet words, but it's the small organizations which can sacrifice to be with the villages. So I say to the donors: help the small PVC's to know how you work, and a great reward will come!

Projects of any size generally must receive their funds through the national government of the country in which the project operates. Even with the best of intentions, government everywhere is almost always heavy with bureaucracy.

St. Kitts: We are not happy with some donor agencies sending funds directly to governments. We have a proverb: "Doctors differ; patients die." Funds should go directly to projects.

England: But sometimes donor agencies have to work through the government of a less developed country--and problems may be the fault of the bureaucracy there.

Upper Volta: Real problems arise when aid goes from government to government. It takes longer and it is more complicated. Private initiative can adjust itself much faster to local demands and needs. Change on the governmental level is much slower, less flexible.

Mauritius: It is important that donor agencies coordinate their funding with the needs of the governmental development plans. But that doesn't mean they have to send the money to the government.

Nigeria: Most sizable grants have to go through the government.

South Pacific: Wouldn't it be possible to have a regional alliance so it wouldn't have to?

South Pacific #2: We're working on it.

Zambia: The home government makes things very difficult for women to begin with, and then it lays down conditions for their receiving money for making changes as well.

Ghana: Even when funders just send information--say on how to write proposals--they don't send it to private groups, they send it to the government. And the government won't help private companies or groups, only government companies or groups.

Funders should inform their grantees when they send things to the government, so the organization can chase after the government to get them!

St. Kitts: Even when it does get the money, governments are political, so often the politicians want grass-roots people who receive funds to spend them in their constituencies, when the need is really elsewhere, in the rural areas.

Barbados: But we should not exclude the governments; there are some things that only governments can do. The partnership between governments and NGOs is essential for the advancement of women.

Donors and recipients, though they were sometimes at odds in this continuing dialogue over funding, found common ground over the issue of dealing with their intermediaries. Few aspects of any discussion at the Exchange revealed more clearly the sense of international solidarity felt by women than considering how to use the system to women's advantage.

Almost everyone agreed that lobbying for women's programs is important. Almost everyone wanted people on the other side of the world to be lobbying, too. Both funders and the women in the Third World urged each other to put pressure on their own organizations and governments to pay attention to women's issues.

Sweden (SIDA): The big project funding is on the basis of government-to-government negotiations. People in both the donor and recipient countries together must persuade governments how to spend money. Sweden asks its bilateral cooperating countries to put women on their negotiating teams, and SIDA places women on its own teams.

Kenya: Women's organizations in developed countries can put pressure on their national governments to put more money into aid for women's groups in other countries. After Mexico City, women began asking their governments for a breakdown of how they were spending their aid to Kenya and other countries--to see what was going to women.

Germany: It was the same for this conference. Our organization in Germany did fund-raising for a women's organization in Upper Volta. We had a long time persuading our government to spend something on a small women's project

there. But then they realized they had to present something at the 1985 conference.

U.S.: Women of the Third World can help donors by pressing their governments for funds for women and be sensitizing the administrative structures. If donors are traveling in your country, you should work to sensitize them.

Germany: This year, about \$3 million was set aside by our government to give for women's projects. The problem is, there is not enough pressure from Third World women to get the money.

Men run the government and they are not convinced that money should go to women's projects. But the money is there! Go on pressing. Make your government present proposals again and again. Without your pressing, I am constantly being told within my government, "Oh, that's your view of women's projects in the Third World. We'll believe it when we hear from from them."

U.S.: You say you need requests from Third World women in order to channel money from Germany to them. But the National Council of Women of Kenya, for example, would never think of you as a source. We funders ought to be thinking more imaginatively. Maybe you could put a staff person into their office, for instance, to document what the needs in Kenya are. Then the women like you within agencies in the West would have an easier time channeling support to women's programs.

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U.S. #2: Pressure must come from women in the community, in the country.

U.S. #3 (AID): We sent a cable out to all our agencies saying, "Be aware of women's projects." I know it's difficult, but we can't do much without pressure from you too.

Great Britain: I pressure our people to see what's happening about women out there, but they come back blaming the male focus on local men in positions of responsibility in developing countries. "The Minister of Agriculture didn't want to talk about it"--that's the kind of thing I hear. We need you out there to put pressure on your ministries.

Australia: The section looking after women's affairs is not necessarily the place where there's the most sympathy for women's projects. For donors who have a big network and a lot of personnel on the ground--like the U.N.--this is possible. For those of us without such a network, we need your help in order to know which are the effective spots within your bureaucracies.

U.S.: And with government programs, women's groups must come in at the design stage in a program so that they can get money before it is all already apportioned.

U.S. #2: Donor agencies could take a more active role as an educator of the local agency and government personnel they have to rely on. Don't just cable your missions--send them new materials about women and the role of women. Send them new research.

U.S. #3 (AID): We do. Give us your materials and we will send them on.

Guatemala: Many projects of big international agencies like the U.N. require that a local women's project go through a local representative, usually a man with no idea of women's programs or their importance. Then he has to get an OK from that government. And government authorities can't take threatening proposals such as ones designed to let women manage their own lives.

Barbados: What if local representatives--whether of governments or NGO's--are MCP's (Male Chauvinist Pigs)? Not even all women are feminists. People who care about women in development should systematically sensitize people in the field.

Denmark: You have to deal with the men. When I go to under-developed countries, I meet men too! It is the men who are running development. I am trying to find women's organizations, but it's difficult. And then, women's organizations sometimes shrink away from us, saying that foreign funds are dirty. But if the women don't take them, the men will.

Getting funds presents a lot of functional problems to women's groups. One woman from Niger complained: "The assistance that exists is not used because the people who need it most don't know that it exists. A list of donors should be made available to women with an explanation of how and where funds are made available!" In fact, several

excellent lists of donors do exist (see "Further Reading" on page xx), but many women do not know this yet. Communication is a real obstacle in the grant-making process--most potential grantees have no idea of how to approach the funders, especially of how to do so in writing. Although funders' demands for written information are sometimes described as excessive, women in Copenhagen acknowledged that the skill to write a good proposal is important--and might be just the area where many women's projects need technical assistance.

U.S.: Grantors must make their procedures clear.

Thailand: There are all kinds of conditions to getting grants; it's just not that easy!

Bangladesh: There's just too much paperwork. I think the donor agencies would rather go through the paper than do the work!

India: I don't like to get money from governments because of all that time spent with the paper when I want to be in the field working. So how can I do these reportings?

Canada (donor): (ur problem is getting reports from recipients.

UNESCO (donor): We must have reports from you--otherwise we can't give grants. You must be articulate. You must tell me about your local set-up or the villages you represent and the needs that we can help on. I am the go-between--give me this information and I can use it to get you the money. Give me materials if you can, and a photograph or two. I must be able to sound convincing when I go to

other agencies, and for that I must have material.

South Pacific: The important thing is to know if the agency is helping in health or income-generating; you then have to find the people who know how to make the proposal, how to translate it into the agency's language.

U.S.: What are donor agencies doing to simplify paperwork?

U.S. (AID): We're trying. Give us your suggestions. All of us in the agencies are trying to learn from each other, trying to work out mechanisms for the small grants.

Fiji: Some people really know how to present their programs to the funding agencies. They're the ones who get the money.

Ghana: It is a problem to get projects on paper so that they can be funded. We need young people trained in proposal writing to help women's projects.

Nigeria: There's a real problem in writing proposals. It involves language--economists' language. We need people to help.

Niger: How can women with little training in project planning and evaluation conceive projects that will be acceptable to donors? Time is needed to sensitize governments and to train women so that they may know how to write projects that can be funded. A ten-day course may teach them some things, but a woman also needs to know the donors.

U.S.: We all think of raising funds as putting in a proposal, but don't forget the informal as well as the formal ways of

approaching an agency. Getting money is still a person-to person process; it's a process of getting to know the funders personally.

Another area of irritation for grantees is time. At the receiving end, adding delay to uncertainty makes getting support a painful process.

Indonesia: Money from grants takes a long time to reach us. We have to take out a loan while we are waiting.

Guatemala: My experience is that a two-month project takes 16 months to do because either agencies have to send staff into the field--which is very expensive--or they have to correspond--which is very time-consuming.

But sometimes it's the recipients who feel pushed for time. Donors are so out of touch with the realities in the field that they have unrealistic expectations and give funds for too short a period, they argue. It takes time to make such basic changes.

India: Some groups need technical assistance, but things have to go slowly because the women being helped are illiterate and have to be trained to some level. This has to be done before they are ready to receive technical assistance.

Upper Volta: Projects have to be put forth stage by stage. It takes three to five years for a project to work. We cannot be concerned with financial accountability before a

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project has really had a chance to work. Donors need to understand.

Banladesh: We want an integrated program--but we still have to go to three different agencies and do triple paperwork to get support. If money is not consistent, it's very difficult to run a project.

In one session of the Exchange workshop called "Getting Assistance to Grass-Roots Organizations," Peggy Antrobus, who led the group, asked participants to divide into two groups, those who represented donor agencies and those who worked for grass-roots organizations. The grass-roots group included women from India, Kenya, Nigeria, Zambia, St. Kitts, and Peru. Donors, from NGO's and government agencies, came from West Germany, Wales, Norway, Canada, Great Britain, Sweden, and the United States. Summing up their problems in the funding process, the two groups reconvened with two lists:

Problems of Grass-Roots Organizations

1. Donors give funds through home governments, which delay payment and impose new restrictions on spending.
2. Donor agencies lay down conditions which grass-roots organizations cannot satisfy.
3. Lack of trained personnel or leaders.
4. Incomplete aid: essential technical assistance and training is often lacking.
5. Insufficient monetary assistance.
6. Lack of continuity in funding.
7. Some required procedures and forms are too complicated.
8. Inability to get direct assistance because some women's organizations are not registered.

9. Organizations' needs are sometimes so small that donors are not interested in dealing with them.
10. Differences in ideological positions of grass-roots organizations and donors.

#### Problems of Donors

1. Organizations don't give them a good breakdown of what funds will be used for.
2. Agencies do not receive good reports on how funds have been used and good accounts. Yet these are essential if they are to continue giving funds.
3. They have difficulty in identifying grass-roots organizations to fund.
4. They have difficulty knowing whether the need expressed by the applicant is a priority.

Together, the two groups worked to draw up a third list:

#### Solutions

1. Donor agencies must know countries themselves.
2. NGO links can be direct.
3. Donors should give training and technical cooperation in preparing proposals.
4. Need for agencies to develop clear guidelines.
5. Information on grants and how to get them should be readily available.
6. Need for a clearing house to gather information on the various grass-roots organizations in each area.
7. Need to resolve differences or familiarize each other with each other's ideologies.

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Jill Kneerim  
Draft 1/12/81

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THE APPROPRIATE AMOUNT

Extract from an Interview with Judith Helzner

One participant at an Exchange Session said, "Some people started a modest project. The donor agency sent down experts and gave four to five times what they expected. Was this really what they needed?" Judith Helzner, Associate in Women's Programs at the Pathfinder Fund, a small American Foundation, addressed this point in an interview with the Exchange.

The donor agency has the responsibility not just to be involved in some problem but to choose the right means to help solve that problem. You can't just throw money at a problem and expect it to go away; and I believe that sometimes donor agencies think that they can do just that-- think that the more money you give, the better it will be and the more progress it will make and the more virtuous you are as a donor.

What I've learned at Pathfinder, which is a place that does very small things and in very efficient ways, is that sometimes the less money you give, the more responsible you are to the grantee and the problem. Just giving the appropriate amount of money and making sure what the appropriate amount of technical assistance is for that level of money is really important. Otherwise you may make people power-hungry and possibly corrupt or else guilty because they can't spend it fast enough to meet the objectives that are so big.

This process is labor-intensive. It takes a lot of the funder's time or a consultant's time or a field rep's time or somebody's time to figure out exactly what the right objectives and the right level of resources to meet those objectives are.

In family planning, which has been around for years, they did all that experimenting fifteen or twenty years ago, and they now have a general idea of how much money is needed to solve that problem. When you do a community-based distribution program, your cost per acceptor should be two dollars to five dollars a person. They have a whole wealth of experience in trial and error that they've collected over time to see what's too much money, what's too little, what's just about right.

Women's programs are really new. No one even talked about women's programs until 1975, and we're just in the

process of doing that trial-and-error right now. We don't have good answers; sometimes we probably do give too little, sometimes we probably do give too much. What's important is for us to look at that issue carefully and consciously.

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## WOMEN'S BUREAUS AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

The World Plan of Action of the Mexico City meeting in 1975 called for the creation of national machinery-- formal offices with a regular place in the government bureaucracy--to encourage women's participation in development. As a result, many women's bureaus were created around the world during the first half of the Decade for Women; Africa and the Caribbean especially have had a lot of experience developing machinery based on the U.N. plan.

Exchange workshops focused on how government women's bureaus can relate most productively to private organizations and on how the two, government and nongovernment, should define and divide tasks. A related workshop concentrated on how women's bureaus could (and should) get involved in government planning. The leaders for both workshops were Peggy Antrobus (Barbados) and Gayla Cook (U.S.A.). Participants at both workshops came from Africa, Europe, Asia, the Pacific, Latin America, North America, the Middle East, and the Caribbean, representing both government and nongovernment organizations. Here is a synopsis of the major points discussed.

### Who Does What

Both government and nongovernment organizations have something to contribute to improving the lives and status of women, and there is plenty for both to work on, from making changes in education to commissioning or doing important research on women to finding funds for women's projects. But which tasks should be carried out by govern-

ment and which by nongovernment organizations? Each has an important role to play. For example, on legislation, obviously, only the government can pass laws, but nongovernment organizations (NGO's) can rouse public opinion and can organize women politically to put pressure on the government. When a law is passed, they can monitor its implementation.

"Without a strong political will and strong organization of women, little will happen. This is not the role of the women's bureau. It is the role of private groups."

Another area of action, and of equally complementary roles for government and NGO's, is in gathering and using data. The government is already sitting on a lot of useful statistics in its other bureaus and agencies. The women's bureau can provide official statistics; NGO's can use them--and thereby gain credibility with other government officials. The women's bureau can persuade the government to support new research; private organizations can conduct it and communicate the results to the government, to the public, and to the women who are the subjects of the research.

### Collaboration

Relations between private organizations and women's bureaus have sometimes been clouded by rivalry or fear. Why? One obvious reason is that when the government agency is created, NGO's may be afraid that their usefulness is

over. This is far from the case; instead their influence is being extended into the government itself.

One of the first jobs of the women's bureau should be to assure these groups of a vital continuing function. In countries with the experience of a colonial past, the government by definition was not interested in the people; the voluntary NGO's were. Now in some countries those politics have changed and the NGO's sometimes seem more conservative than the government. But it is important to remember that both government and nongovernment agencies are trying to define their roles for themselves, during a period of sometimes unsettling and often unpredictable changes.

In the period of transition when a women's bureau is being formed, what is really important is for women's organizations to ask: What are our limitations? Can we work without the government? What kind of government machinery do we need? And, when it is created, the government machinery should reflect the women's organizations.

For the best cooperation, the bureau and the private groups need to stay in touch and work together. One representative from a government women's bureau in North America says that her agency holds regular gatherings, inviting all local NGO's to send a representative. This way, the agency learns what people are already doing, and the NGO's make

good connections with each other. One European reported, on the other hand, that in her country the initiative for cooperation had to come from the nongovernment groups. But wherever it comes from, when cooperation occurs, women can benefit.

Advice to the Women's Bureau: "Don't wait for somebody in an NGO to come in. Maybe they're waiting for you!"

To the NGO's: "But if the government isn't doing anything, you go to them. You have nothing to lose!"

Advice to Both: "Talk to each other. Meet often. Tell each other how you can be useful. In any case, the best way of handling the differences of opinion is not to withdraw. Stick it out and work on it.

#### Creating a Women's Bureau?

Some principles are helpful to keep in mind in starting a government agency that will represent the interests of women.

- o Above all, it is a women's bureau. Women throughout the country should feel that it is for them--that this is their machinery. Women should direct the planning and running of the bureau and its programs.

- o A program of action for the women's bureau should be based on the needs of the country. But remember--you don't have to work on every need.

- o Locate the bureau administratively at a place in the government bureaucracy where it gets the strongest political support. Ideally, this should be as central as

possible: put it in the Prime Minister's office if the Prime Minister is committed to women's issues. And don't locate it in a bureau where only one aspect of women's problems will get all the attention. It was suggested originally, for example, that the Jamaica Women's Bureau be located in the Department of Labor. But that would have linked it to the political ups and downs of that department, and put a lopsided emphasis on issues of women in the labor force. A women's bureau should include in its range of concerns not only employment but health, education, and everything else. It is a holistic undertaking.

- Give the bureau an appropriate name, but one that confers the most power and flexibility. In Barbados, for example, they specifically did not name their agency the "Women's Bureau" because they wanted a name parallel to other government departments. In that case, "bureau" would have seemed less important than "department". So Barbados calls its agency the Department of Women's Affairs.

- Start slowly. You can't go to the government and ask for millions in support right at the start--no one will give it to you. You have to move forward gradually, step by step. So don't take on every problem in the country; keep people's expectations modest and give yourselves a breaking-in period.

- o Get yourselves enough personnel to do the job.

"Start with an adequate staff if you can or you are likely to kill one person off before you get the bureau going."

The head of the women's bureau in Barbados recommends, if possible, a minimum of four to begin with (though several participants stressed that if necessary you should go ahead with fewer people):

--The director.

--An assistant administrator. (The paper work alone, if you belong to the U.N. and other international groups, takes full time to sift and read.)

--A person with social work background. (It would be helpful if she also had community development experience.)

--A research person. (Furthermore, you should be convincing other departments to collect data on the basis of sex.)

- o Finally, expect conflicts--and stick it out and keep working.

#### The Basic Functions of a Women's Bureau

A women's bureau has few functions more important than collecting data. Research is invaluable in making changes for women: good statistics make any cause more persuasive and make it easier to raise funds for research and projects. Already, government files contain useful information to tap; meanwhile, to improve the statistics that are already being gathered by other agencies, the women's bureau should persuade the government to design its data-collection so

that data on women can be separated from the rest.

"I hope this is a major change coming out of this conference, that data be collected by sex--or we will never know what progress we make!"

In addition, a women's bureau should stimulate additional research, both by the government and by the private sector. This means formal studies and informal fact-gathering, much of which the bureau ought to do itself. It is important for a women's bureau to listen to individual women. They have real problems, and the bureau has to hear them out. This is one of the most crucial functions of a women's bureau and some of the most valuable information about women's needs comes from it. The bureau needs staff specifically for this function, especially staff with social work training. Listening to individual women who come in may seem hopelessly time-consuming, but it's necessary. If women get the impression that the department is not meeting their needs, it can be a disaster. Its political base will have eroded.

Having gathered information, the bureau must communicate what it has learned to others. It can hold press conferences, hire people to write articles, circulate memos to other departments. The provincial women's bureau in Alberta, Canada, puts out pamphlets with basic information for women, especially about laws that affect them.

A women's bureau should coordinate between people and programs and, at the same time, act as a catalyst. It should refer people to other government agencies or to NGO's. It should relate to international organizations on data and cooperate with them on projects. Another essential function is just telling other people how they can be useful--people in other government bureaus, people in the women's NGO's, people who may want to give their support but don't know the best way to do so. It is the bureau's job to tell them what it needs from them. If its research shows that in some part of the country only 10 percent of those employed are women, the bureau should ask the Labor Department to do something about it. It can pressure government officials and it can work on new legislation, to redefine or promote women's rights and responsibilities.

One important thing for the bureau to remember is that it shouldn't try to do everything. Other offices will try to pass on all their work related directly to women. But the women's bureau can't--and shouldn't--try to handle it all.

"We have got to make sure and watch that the the other branches of government don't dump every question related to women on us. Politely return them! Of course it's not easy to do--it's a highly political area. Women are afraid of politics, but remember, in every country of the

world, women are over 50 percent of the population. Use the power in your hands for change!"

Summary: The Basic Functions of a Women's Bureau

- \*Collect data.
- \*Disseminate what you learn.
- \*Refer people to the proper agency or organization.
- \*Be a catalyst for the action of other agencies and organizations.
- \*Seek out and listen to individual women around the country.
- \*Keep in touch with international agencies also concerned with women and assist in their projects.
- \*Work with the government's planning agency.

Women's Bureaus: Getting in on Government Planning

Like everything else, women's bureaus can sometimes get bogged down in immediate details and lose the big picture. But women's bureaus in particular should remain aware of how economic and social development is affecting women, because women's bureaus, through their placement in the government hierarchy, may be in a position to make quite a difference in planning on the national scale.

It is now widely recognized that development does not necessarily benefit women. Agricultural aid projects are a classic example; most have completely ignored the role of women. They have trained only men. They have

installed entirely inappropriate Western technology. In other words, they have not gone in with any awareness of the environment or the social structure.

A specific example is a large-scale project in Kashmir, India, where the government, intending to raise the income of wool producers through export marketing, obtained matching funds from UNDP to modernize production and, in the course of the project, put 16,000 women out of work.\* This kind of misjudgment means that "progress" takes place at the expense of women. It happens regularly in the developing world; and the place to change this is in the planning phase.

The women's bureau can and should get involved in government planning as closely and as early as possible. It should close links with the government planning agency so it can review development projects as they are reviewed by that agency, not later. This means that when the various ministries begin to develop their plans, the women's bureau has an effect on them. What the bureau needs to do, in some form or other, is bring those people who have a primary commitment to women together with those who are doing the planning. The major consideration

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\*A slide show and publication on this project, both filled with technical information, are available from \_\_\_\_\_ . See list at end.

should be the structural impact of new planning on women. Development can have a positive impact when men and women plan together.

As of now, most planning and assessing is done by men, even in situations where women will suffer the damages of change.

"When the subject is technological it seems like men's business and it's nearly always a man who is sent over to assess needs--and he ignores the women. This is especially bad when people go to Islamic countries where women retreat out of sight when men planners arrive. I've seen many false statistics due to this kind of thing."

"We must get women into the major development projects and give an opportunity to grass-roots women to make decisions. It's not a question of the scale of the project, it's the whole perception of women as able to make decisions."

### Muoro and Micro

Who are the planners? It's not just that most of the time, in most development projects, they are men; often they are also men with inappropriate training and little knowledge of the places their projects will affect most. It may not be only women's needs they are ignorant of, but the needs of the whole community. The women's bureau can play an important part in improving the planning process dramatically.

Planning done at the national level is implemented in localities, yet there is little attention paid to what

will be the real impact on the people--that is, the macro level does not relate to the micro level in planning. As one workshop participant remarked, "This kind of structural planning will turn women into the proletariat and men into the bourgeois entrepreneurs!" Projects planned without extensive involvement of local people are likely to fall apart the day the bureaucrats leave.

Important as it is to involve local people in the planning, the women's bureau should be aware that local people can't do it alone, either. "The bottom up" is no better a solution to women's problems than "the top down" was. Planning should definitely be a two-way street; it's a mistake to focus on one end or the other. The micro level alone cannot do planning; the other side of the coin, the major systems, is needed.

One simple example of a way to merge both might be to require that all major projects provide for evaluation by local people, on the one hand, and for collection of baseline data on the locality, on the other.

If any large or central agency always works through a local ministry then that community becomes a source of training of other people. Using this model, it is possible to learn much more about rural women--in particular, the person who works with them can learn about them. And then, after the model project is over, the project

itself remains and the people become the trainers--if major projects are developed with local intermediaries.

Various people are working toward this model now, combining macro and micro to best advantage. The U.N. Voluntary Fund supports workshops for training planners to consider the kind of data they use and consider how to include women in the planning process.

"We've talked about how difficult it is to integrate the macro and micro levels. I've had a recent experience in Haiti and actually did this. My logic was, we have to have local people integrated for when the bureaucrats leave. On this basis, I was able to get some funds in the project directly for the community--with lots of benefits. They felt the change, were drawn into it, and now are beginning to plan for it."

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GOVERNMENT MECHANISMS: A FOCAL POINT FOR WOMEN

An Interview with Peggy Antrobus

Exchange: You were the developer of the Jamaica Women's Bureau. Why did you choose this form of working for women? What is the importance of Women's Bureaus?

Peggy Antrobus: First of all, let's get away from using the phrase "women's bureau." It's really some sort of governmental mechanism. It might be called a bureau, it might be called a department or a women's desk or a commission.

But anyway--yes, I was involved in setting up a bureau in Jamaica, and yes, a number of governments are now setting up these mechanisms. Most of them are being set up because governments are carrying out a mandate not only from the United Nations but also from their own people who are now seeing a need to change the situation of women. These units or special mechanisms are being set up to serve as a focal point for women or for the strategies and programs that need to be developed to help women, to help to enhance their contribution to development.

Different countries approach it in different ways. In some countries--many of the developed countries; I think Austria is one of them--you might have special units within the Ministry of Agriculture, special units within health, for women. In Jamaica I tried to establish the bureau as

a monitor, a coordinator, and a catalyst to look at everything happening in all the government departments and try to insure that more women were involved and more women benefited from those departments' programs.

Exchange: Isn't there a danger that the government will come to think that anything having to do with women should be the province of the women's bureau and that anything having to do with the rest of the country is the work of the rest of the government?

PA: That's a real danger, so that means you have to think carefully about the functions and structure of the bureau or the desk, or whatever you call your mechanism. In Jamaica we were constantly trying to guard against the Ministry of Agriculture saying you deal with farm women, or the Ministry of Labor saying you find jobs for women. I think that if we allow women's bureaus to do that, we're not integrating them.

The whole question of integration is more complex than I thought in 1975 when I started the bureau. In '75 I thought that integration and equality were appropriate goals, but now I'm not so sure; now I think that integration into the existing structures may not benefit women at all. The existing structures are man-made and it's often the structure itself that excludes women and makes life impossible for them.

Now when I say "integration" I don't mean buying into the existing structure. On the contrary, I mean that unless we are on the inside we can't transform it. There is no way that we can transform it from the outside.

You see, the women's bureau itself will never have enough resources to do the job for women. Even if it had, I'm saying that then you'd have a sort of separate development, an apartheid where women were develop<sup>ing</sup> in their own ghetto, apart from the rest of society, and the rest of society would just continue in its own sweet way. What we need is to make sure that

the bureau

looks at the government's large programs--for rural development, for vocational training, for education, for literacy or health, for water supplies, for road construction, for housing, for curriculum development--and asks certain questions about them. How are they benefiting women? How are women participating? How are women able to shape these programs to meet their needs? To what extent can women influence the location of health centers? Can they influence the establishment of day-care centers? How can they influence new legislation? How can they influence curriculum?

With access to all of those major government programs, the bureau can ask those questions and work with people in those ministries and departments to change the shape of programs so that women can contribute to <sup>and</sup> influence them.

As a means of operating, the bureaus and desks need to identify sympathetic people, preferably women of course but not only women, at senior levels in each of those critical agencies, and work with them in a liaison relationship. In Jamaica I'm not sure this happened anywhere except at the planning agency, where we actually had somebody whom we considered our liaison officer. Now that person was paid by

and worked within the planning unit. But that person was responsible for providing us with information and statistics and alerting us when there was a project to be considered.

I think it is a very important strategy for any women's desk to find allies within the major ministries and to be constantly in touch with them so that the bureau gets the information it needs to monitor the program of that ministry and in turn can give that ministry the information it needs to shape its programs and policies to benefit women. So it's a two-way street. In Jamaica, having that liaison person at the planning unit is not really an established institution and there's not exactly a women's desk, but there is a person at the social and sectoral division within the planning agency who has specific responsibility for insuring women's participation in development planning. I'd like to see that happen throughout the government system, particularly in places like education and agriculture and industry.

Exchange: What problems did you encounter in Jamaica, or have you heard others talk about, that might be important for the heads of women's bureaus and departments to be aware of?

PA: Well, the first problem I encountered--and others elsewhere may find the same thing--was that the women's bureau in Jamaica was set up with the intention that it should not work. Some civil servants are very happy not doing anything, not producing anything, and would have been happy to go along with that. But as soon as I realized that there was a deliberate plan to frustrate me and to make me give up and go home, I really dug my heels in. I told them that they just chose the wrong person to do the job if they didn't

want it to work.

But on a more general plane, even when governments set up these mechanisms with good intentions, there is the problem of resources. Because they're poor or because they don't really perceive the problem very clearly and don't know what's involved in it, governments may set up a bureau but they don't give it the resources it needs. (That happens also, incidentally, in development assistance, and the American aid is the best example of that. You have all these nice statements in your grant to insure equality or to enhance women's participation, but there's no money in the grant to make it happen--partly because there's no understanding of what needs to be done.) So getting enough resources is a challenge and, for most women's departments or bureaus, a problem, because they haven't succeeded.

Another problem is the receptiveness of the rest of the bureaucracy. Even with good skills or good resources initially, a major obstacle to be overcome is the indifference and lack of understanding of other people in the bureaucracy and the society at large.

Another major problem, which is part of the same thing, is the lack of support and understanding from women in the country. It seems to me that unless the bureau or the department reflects women in the society, unless they feel that it is seeking to represent their interests, then we might as well not have it.

Another problem--again, an extension of the one I just described--is the relationship between women's organizations and the bureau. What are their different roles? The bureau has to have a clear understanding of how it fits in, not

only with the other government departments but with existing women's organizations and also with political parties.

In my own experience there are three crucial aspects of any sort of successful mechanism for transforming or increasing women's participation.

The political realm, I think, is the starting point. There have to be politically organized women who, within their political parties, are conscious of their situation as women and determined to change it. That is what happened in Jamaica with the women's bureau; the women in the party influenced the government to establish it.

But that's not enough. In addition to organized political strength, I think you need effective machineries. You need the bureau or the department. Without a focal point, that political will gets dissipated. You need the ongoing established machinery to do the work because no matter how much political will you have, you can't get effective action without the means for implementing it.

As the third ingredient, I think there is the need for an independent women's movement--even including some of the women within the governing party, but a movement that cuts right across different political parties or different classes. This would be an independent political force with a commitment to women. I'm not talking about a woman's party; I don't believe in setting up a political party of women. As a separatist group nobody would take them seriously anyway. What I mean is a rallying point, a lobby that really represents women in an uncompromising way, a lobby that would allow them to speak up against the government if it is doing things

that are against the interests of women. People within the governing party couldn't do this publicly, you know. Neither could the women's bureau.

So that's it. I think you need those three elements. And each element needs to understand and respect the others, what they can do, and what they cannot do.

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AN ORGANIZATION OF PRIVATE WOMEN'S GROUPS:  
THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF KENYA

One example of a private organization of women was discussed in an Exchange workshop called "Priorities for Development: The Kenyan Experience." This example was the National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK), described by several people including its Executive Officer, Jane Kirui.

The National Council of Women of Kenya was formed 16 years ago, right after independence. It brought together and integrated existing women's organizations to give them a voice and particularly to speak to government for them. We are now about 40 organizations under the National Council and each one has its own membership and its own projects. "As a group of groups, we try to lobby together. One thing is certain: In Kenya, women now know that if they want to be helped, they should be in a group!"

The staff of the NCWK is almost entirely volunteers. We have just four employees--and those are very important, so there is someone in the office to keep things going.

The National Council is very interested in communication. We publish a magazine called Kenya Woman, produced in English and Swahili, which has a wide readership even in rural areas, where illiterate women can enjoy it by having their children read to them. So it is a useful tool in providing Kenyan women with information. The magazine deals with diverse issues from health and nutrition to project funding.

The National Council runs several programs itself, including our water project and tree-planting project. The "Water for Health" program began during 1975. The International Women's Year meeting at Mexico City had been especially concerned with getting water to women, to relieve them of their twenty-mile walks for four gallons of water. And while reducing this work burden, we also tried to increase women's awareness about health issues. When you bring water to a family, you are saving time for the whole family. Many organizations have helped in this water project--NGO's, churches, IPPF, UNICEF, and others.

Because too many trees have been cut for firewood, the forests in some parts of Kenya are being stripped. Our tree program is intended to illustrate the impact of each community on its environment. NCWK plants young trees on public land, to protect the environmental balance. This also provides jobs for the handicapped and elderly

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members of the community, who water and tend the young trees. The funds for this program are raised from sponsors who can have a tree planted in someone's memory for \$5 or \$6 a year.

Obviously, not all the projects under the National Council's umbrella are our own programs. For example, one of our member organizations, Maendeleo ya Wanawake, is an old, long-standing group that directs its energies towards rural women. It teaches soil conservation through building terraces or it motivates women to use available health services and family planning programs. Maendeleo also encourages women to initiate activities that might improve their living conditions or generate income, such as their handicraft cooperative. They draw on the tradition of marketing as a women's sphere in Africa, also remembering that it is a major social event for interchange of ideas and news. Men may become honorary life members in Maendeleo, but though they can participate in the organization, they cannot vote in decision-making. Maendeleo is just one of many organizations that belong to the National Council. We try to help each other in our work, but we all have our own programs, too.

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WHAT A PRIVATE ORGANIZATION CAN DO

An Interview with Eddah Gachukia (Kenya)  
on the National Council of Women of Kenya

A Member of Parliament in Kenya, Eddah Gachukia was originally nominated for this post specifically to represent women's interests by then-President Jomo Kenyatta. She has also maintained a strong interest in nongovernment work on women's issues through her membership in the National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK), an umbrella organization for all private women's organizations in the country. She served as Chairman of the NCWK from 1976 to 1979.

The Exchange:

What have been your main problems in doing work for women?

Eddah Gachukia:

In the women's organizations, especially the National Council, the major problem is that the work is voluntary and we don't have that class of women known as housewives in the organization. Everyone is working. All our women

are working women, either in urban or rural areas. They not only work, they also have to take care of the home. It is therefore difficult to find a program that will fit their schedules. It is difficult to get enough voluntary help.

Another problem is being able to devise programs that will fit not only the schedules of the volunteers who will run them, but also the schedule of the women for whom the programs are designed. There is a real feeling of taxing both types of women. So what the NCWK is trying to do is devise programs that use government employees or full-time employees to run the program.

Exchange:

Do you have a funding problem for hiring people to work full time?

E.G.:

Yes. We have tried to get funds and sometimes succeeded, but after assistance is given for a particular project, it fades out and we have to begin again to look for funds. We are trying to establish our own permanent sources of funds.

Exchange:

What steps are you taking to do this?

E.G.:

We--the NCWK--have requested a plot of land from the government to build a hostel for girls and a block of offices

which may yield some income for us. One of our member organizations has succeeded in building a training center for women that also has offices in it. This is successful, so we could build a hostel to house the women who come to the training center.

Exchange:

What are the needs of the women you are trying to help?

E.G.:

We held grass-roots meetings on that and got a list.

The first need the country women list is water. Women spend a lot of time on the task of fetching water. A better water supply nearby would release more time for other things.

Women also need technology that will make their tasks easier and less time-consuming. For instance, a mud stove that cooks three pots <sup>of food</sup> at the same time with the same set of firewood, or a water jar that costs 1/3 as much as ordinary tanks and stores a lot of water.

Next is education or awareness. They wanted awareness of basic things that matter to them, like their rights under the law or even awareness of government machinery and how it can help them.

Next is income-generation. Women need money to carry out some of the tasks. They need even things as simple as

bus fares to take their children for immunizations. For this the NCWK tried to help them organize into cooperatives so that the government can help them more easily.

Exchange:

What have been your greatest frustrations in working with women?

E.G.:

Things go so slowly! First, as a parliamentarian I have to spend a lot of time explaining to my male counterparts the problems women face. We need a lot of sympathy from people in power.

With the women themselves, the problem is you over-motivate them and then find you have no funds to meet their demands. This lack of funds makes the programs experimental and small, lacking the force of a big impact on many areas. For example, the National Council of Women started a tree-planting drive because when fuel is short women suffer. Now the women are so interested, but we can't get enough seedlings from the government to give <sup>to</sup> those who are interested in participating in the project. So we are trying to establish our own nurseries. But it is slow.

Exchange:

What has been your greatest success?

E.G.:

Government recognition. Government has become so overwhelmingly positive to women's programs that our work has been made easier. Women can go to any government ministry in Kenya and seek assistance, even from government workers in the field. So although things are still slower than we would wish, they are much better than previously. The government gave us money to host two women's conferences. And despite this assistance, we still have our independence in making decisions. The government requests us to set up booths at trade fairs and this boosts our income-generating activities. When the government organizes courses, they ask the NCWK to send candidates. That gives us free training for women leaders.

But our greatest success perhaps is the awareness of women and men even at the grass-roots level that women have a say in what goes on. Women are no longer fighting for recognition the way they were a few years ago. We now have it.

Exchange:

What is your greatest hope?

E.G.:

Kenya women should start taking themselves for granted as participants in the development process. This has been the problem in developing and developed countries. Women have never seen themselves as partners. Society has pushed

them into a subordinate role which has kept them from recognizing their importance.

For instance, women in Kenya fought beside the men for independence, yet only now are we becoming aware of how important a role we played at the forefront.

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JK Draft 12/1/80

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# Exchange Report

## LEARNING FROM RURAL WOMEN

### HOW RESEARCH CAN AFFECT POLICY

It is impossible to make a case for improving women's lives when you do not have the facts about their lives to begin with. But there is very little data on women at all and scarcely any that focuses on that large majority of women in the Third World--rural women.

The typical woman in rural areas of the developing world has no time for anything but survival. Burdened with two jobs, she cares for her family and also works to provide for it. When she reaches the farm gate in the morning, she has already done a whole day's work.

Although rural women are a diverse group, most planners, if they recognize the specific needs of women at all, treat rural women as if they were all alike. Even within the borders of one country or one district, rural women are not homogeneous; there are divisions and differences among them as in all groups--for example, the basic division between landed and landless. The needs and conditions of these two groups are quite different, and further distinctions within each one can continue to be drawn the closer you look. Yet without a grasp of these details and knowledge of these differences, it is difficult to design effective policy.

One series of Exchange workshops, led in alternate sessions by Rounaq Jahan (Bangladesh) and Brooke Schoepf (U.S.), considered both the ethical and the practical questions related to research on rural women. All agreed that such research is essential. The preposition "from" in the workshop's title reflects something that participants said

repeatedly in different ways: The best way to learn about rural women is to learn from them. The group went on to discuss at length how research can be used for the benefit of the women who are its subject.

### How to Do Research on Rural Women

Participants in the workshop generally agreed that current policy and research are both far out of touch with the realities of life for rural women.

#### New Zealand:

I object to the paternalistic attitude of people who say they want to help rural people. Rural people have to decide for themselves.

#### India:

Yes, but researchers and officials still go on seeing women as objects of change rather than subjects.

#### Upper Volta:

It is only possible to learn from women if you know their milieu. You have to have confidence in them and let them have confidence in you.

#### Papua New Guinea:

If you go to them with set questions, villagers always agree--and later when you write it up, or make up a program, it doesn't work. So it is better not to go with set ideas but to live with people and find out what they want and then make up projects.

Jamaica:

If they don't like you, rural people can easily deceive a researcher. Doing research in Jamaica, I went to a meeting. There was a knock on the gate and a well-dressed teacher came in. Young people were gathered around her and starting to talk, when an old lady started to sing a traditional work song that had a message in it--that the young people should not give the teacher the data she wanted. And of course it worked. I've seen this a million times.

The lesson is, don't go straight in. Show respect and give yourself a lot of time. Share experiences with the women you want to work with. Get acquainted with local authorities; they can help you get in contact with people. A questionnaire is no way to get information! It's a matter of time, building up confidence. It's a very good sign, in fact, when people say, "No--I have no time to tell you this now." If they say that, then later they'll tell the truth

Upper Volta:

It's true--not just researchers but all kinds of workers in rural areas are cut off from the people they are supposed to serve. "We are like papaya trees that have grown very quickly, but inside we are hollow"--that's what the old women in the villages say.

Thailand:

The rural women will speak out if we give them a chance.

We have to show patience. Rural women are used to organized workers telling them how to do something, not to speaking out themselves. We talk about participation, but we don't teach people how to do it.

Pakistan:

The whole idea in going to the grass-roots level is this: Take off all your/city clothes! After a day or so, you can make the bridge.

U.S.A.:

Does anyone know a success story about people who learned how to listen?

India:

I was in a village for two and a half years. I went from house to house eating with each family, talking with the housewives. I got the trust of the women this way. And so the women started talking about village problems, asking questions, even asking for advice--about, for instance, the forest. They organized themselves in order to stop destroying their forest by cutting leaves and branches. I didn't guide them; they decided themselves. You have to be like them, live among them. Otherwise they just look at you as different, they can learn nothing from you, and you can learn nothing from them.

Philippines:

The process has a great impact on the outcome.

Kenya:

Another example--I'm here representing an organization of rural women. We tell them to sit down and do what they think is right. For example, women in a dry area: sit down, make a committee, make a report, we'll help you if you need it. They decided themselves on a plan. Somebody will think it's important to learn how to read and write, others that the first thing to do will be to have water. They decide that water is the most important matter. They start to collect money. (The government will give you nothing otherwise.)

By telling women what to do, they'll never do it! You are boring them. You should only guide them, if they don't know how to go on themselves.

West Indies:

We are too action- and success-oriented. We must learn to wait, to relax.

U.S.A.:

Tell that to a Congress!

What Is Research Really For? Whom Does It Benefit?

Australia:

Now researchers are ripping off the women's movement just the way anthropologists have for years ripped off the developing world. How can we arrange it so people can

use research for their own ends?

Papua-New Guinea:

We've been used as guinea pigs for years by researchers from the U.S., Great Britain, etc.--for their purposes. Then if I want their findings, they say, "It's in the files."

Barbados:

That is the source of the schism between the less developed and the more developed countries. Is it a question of ethics? It's really as basic as plain good manners and common sense. Researchers from abroad wander in to your country, do their stuff, and then automatically they become the experts on the Third World. The Third World justifiably resents it. But it's hard to control.

In the course of discussion, the group agreed that local women's groups, through the national council of women or some other administrative body, should undertake to impose national controls on research done on women in their country. This is certainly possible; examples were cited by women from Papua-New Guinea and from St. Vincent. The Papua-New Guinea women's organization fought for access to research findings. After three years, they were finally assured that any research on women done in the country had to be approved by the women's organizations first. This gives them an opportunity to insist not only that they get a copy of the research findings--the most basic courtesy of all--but also, in advance, to ask hard questions about the research plan and other aspects of the undertaking, such as whom the researcher employs.

A women's organization can then oversee research to insure that the researchers are doing what they said they were going to; it can check on the quality of the research; it can ask: Is this undertaking relevant to the women it is going to study? Will there be any benefit whatsoever for the people who are being studied, or for people like them? These rural women are extremely busy; their time is precious. Why should they give it up to help a researcher? What's in it for them, even indirectly?

U.S.A.:

I think that when projects go out, not only should women's organizations get the data they collect, but the researchers should also go back to the village and explain the findings to the women there.

Mexico:

But it's often so irrelevant to them that the villagers really get nothing out of it.

Bangladesh:

We benefit from doing the research--we scholars. It advances our academic careers. But do the subjects of our research ever benefit? We are assuming that research actually has an impact on policy. But does it? And beyond that, does policy have an impact on real life?

India:

Well, we cannot take shelter in the old saw, "My role is just to do research." The only reason we do this is to help.

Australia:

There is a naïveté out there that just because the research exists, people will use it.

India:

Trying to get research into the heads of policy-makers is discouraging. Advocacy alone doesn't lead to a policy change. It requires a new language, I think. We have to find out what will hit them the most.

Some strategies were suggested for reaching policy-makers with research on women:

1. Since policy planning is a political process, and politics is responsive to a constituency, instead of going from research directly to policy-makers, take your research to the people--the people who elect them.
2. Use the media to make research findings on women's issues widely known. Take your findings to the press. Publish them in non-academic language and forms that will help get your message out. The fotonovella, for instance--something like a comic book with photos--makes facts accessible to a large audience. So does videotape.
3. Let other researchers know about your work; make it known internationally through the academic channels.
4. In writing up findings, use language that others can readily understand. Extract all long research reports in brief form--say, 10 pages. Most people just need to know your conclusions, not the whole argument or research design.
5. Make sure that publication and distribution are called for in the original research plan. This will guarantee funds to disseminate what you learn and, even more important, will make it difficult for any findings to be suppressed.
6. Use basic data that exists already. "There is a growing resistance to using existing data from 'boring' sources," said one participant. "Everyone wants a glamorous new research design. But there is no greater tool than data that can be dug up from the policy-makers' own files! It can be thrown down in front of them, and there is nothing more persuasive."
7. Make sure that the government data-collection systems collect data in a form you can use; that is, that they collect data specifically on women.
8. The help of men is important. Identify a key man in the system who is sympathetic and can be used as an ally.
9. Encourage funding for organized women's research groups rather than just for individuals. A single person as a researcher means you will not get the multiplier effects.
10. Design research to attract the available funds.

11. Leave the research behind for the women themselves to make use of.

12. Help form an international watchdog group to monitor around the world for policies that run counter to research findings.

### Designing Good Research

All these effects of research on policy will obviously depend on what research is done to begin with. At this point the discussion circled back to an earlier subject, how to do good research.

### Pakistan:

I think the best mode for rural research is "participative research." The ILO is working on this. It works with the local organizations. The researchers themselves are from that country--wherever they are doing the work. They interact with the people to find out what are the felt needs of the people.

### U.S.A.:

But the question is, who decides what research is done? In "pure" research it is all crazy--it's what the professor you want to work for likes. And so-called political research is usually designed to reach a predetermined conclusion.

### Australia:

You have to work the system, though. We're not powerful enough to change the system.

U.S.A.:

Let's come back to the grass roots. Let's find out what their problems really are and help them.

Denmark:

But it's arrogant to think that a problem can be solved<sup>only</sup> at the community level. And on the other hand, can you possibly change things from the top down? I'm doing research on immigration, but I cannot change something as big as the U.S. immigration system!

India:

But that sort of research does help people become aware of the facts.

U.S.A.:

It does help. People in communities do tend to be parochial. What research can do is help you understand the viewpoint of the people. We're talking about development strategies, and this means you have to talk about connections.

Australia:

Let's stress again--it's great to use existing statistics. A research project is a oncer or a twicer. Put something all of us could work on is the basics of the government data-collection systems. We should start pressuring those systems to collect data that we can use. It's not always collected in ways we can use.

# The Exchange Report

JS Draft 12/1/80

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DETAILED, CAREFUL, ON-THE-SPOT INFORMATION IS ESSENTIAL

An Interview with Rounaq Jahan

Rounaq Jahan, a professor of political science at Dacca University in Bangladesh, has done a great deal of research on rural women. In an interview, she spoke about the problems and pitfalls of this kind of research, as well as its possibilities.

The only way to learn from rural women is by deconditioning yourself from many preconceived notions. The role of the change agent--the person who goes into the field and tries to change either attitudes or organizations--is a catalyst. In this situation, the role is like the role of yeast in making bread. For in changing others, you are changing yourself as well. Many people go out into the countryside from the urban areas thinking they have all the answers. But when they start actually working in the rural areas, they understand the reasons rural women might do certain things. Some of their earlier viewpoints get changed through this knowledge.

If you are interested in reaching rural women, a detailed, careful, on-the-spot kind of information is essential. Given the fact that a woman has to work 18 out of 24 hours a day just to get food and fuel and water, it would be silly for you to go in any way, why not send your child to school. You must have the information to know that these women have no time and that their children may be home taking care of babies or doing something else that is critical to the family's survival. Also, you must understand that rural women's time frame may be very different from yours. They may be working from four to ten in the morning, and again in the afternoon. You must approach them when they are available and to do this you must know their schedules.

You cannot just learn from rural women. You must learn with them. And you learn with them by really being with them for a very long time, gaining confidence and trust. Without this trust, you are an outsider.

This comes up more and more. We get data for ourselves, or maybe for program people, but rural women feel we are experimenting with their lives. When they feel this way, why should they cooperate with us? They often feel that the only way to survive is to hold back on information. It is only when they believe that you are not going to exploit them, that you are genuinely concerned, that they will share.

If at first when you go to the rural people they seem very cooperative, if they answer your questions quickly, they may just be trying to get rid of you. They may not even be telling the truth. But if they don't accept you very quickly at the beginning, if they say come back later, it is possible that they are just checking you out and later perhaps they will talk openly.

You can't have a really honest program of research done on rural women in twelve or eighteen months. Yet this is generally the time frame for all kinds of funding agencies. To go into an area, to gain confidence, you need time. All this rush business doesn't work. If you are rushing, as is so often the case with development planning, then you get a very sloppy job. The time given is always too short; but there aren't any easy short cuts to solving problems and learning from the rural experience.

Let me give you an example. When an Indian woman researcher went into a rural area, the people assumed that she had come to set up a prearranged program. They expected her to build a house to live in. But she said, no, I don't know exactly what I will do and I don't have any money to build a house. So, of course, someone gave her a place to stay. Then she asked if she could share meals with the villagers. They agreed, as long as she would be willing to eat what they ate, from their own kitchens.

There were thirty families in this village, and this woman got to know them all, very intimately. She saw what they ate, and how they ate. And she got to know their problems as well. But it took time.

Perhaps there are certain things you might be able to do more quickly, but this changes from region to region and issue to issue. For example, in Southern Asia, if you go to a rural area and ask if they need schools or health care they may say right away that they need these things. But in other concerns which are very sensitive--such as changing of attitudes, or family planning, which involve someone's person or dignity--changes can't be made simply by an outsider coming in and superimposing other values which, given their life conditions, these rural women do not perceive as good values.

Another important point is that when the development planners come into the rural areas, they assume that farming is everything. So they bring information and technology for farmers. But in large parts of Southern Asia, 30 to 40 percent of the population is landless laborers. All of the help and the know-how for the farmers ignores the fact that the majority are not farmers and are completely cut out. With these new technologies the people who already had a little land are the people

who benefit and the disparities grow more and more.

All this discussion assumes that there is a need for change in the lives of rural women. Is that true? On that question, I think that given the conditions in most of the Third World countries--where, for example, the nutrition level is so very low, the illiteracy rate is so high, where the women have to work so hard to get food, fuel, or water--I think there is no question that some of these things have to be changed, that the life situation of rural women needs to be made better.

When you talk about rural women you find that we go from one extreme to another. At one extreme we have this tendency to romanticize, to say, Leave them alone; they are living some happy idyllic existence. This is not true, however. And at the other extreme, equally unfair, is a tendency to damn them, to think of them as conservative, tradition-bound, and illiterate, unwilling and unable to change. The point that I want to make, though, is that given their life conditions, given the fact that poverty is such a big factor, that they have no access to land or credit, that they have no resources, that they have to spend long hours just to get food-- then what they are doing often is the only way they could

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survive. They are not stupid. Their choices are rational. If we were to suddenly put ourselves into their situation, then we would do exactly what they do.

The important idea is that if you are interested in working with rural women, then you must go and let them define their own needs, so that if certain changes are to happen, it is because they themselves think that the changes are necessary. It cannot be a superimposed change.

In one village, women were walking a couple of hours each day to a well to get water. But the well was also a meeting ground, the location for a whole network of information exchange. When development planners brought in ways to get water closer to home, the women were not very happy. They no longer had a time or place for meeting. I'm not arguing that the women should have to go that far to get water, or that the water should not be cleaned up. We believe that it is much better, for the health of the infants and for everyone, that women get clean water. But we must remember that change has its costs. We must provide alternatives.

This is the point about the adverse impact of development on women. Nobody is arguing that we are against development or that we are against organization. All that we are arguing is that when all these modern techniques came in, women were displaced. We are not against the

coming of modern machines; but we are saying that when women have been displaced, they must be trained in the new skills, with the new machines, so that they are not completely forgotten.

Finally, there is a tendency in development agencies and in development thinking that there should be a focus on setting up small, self-help rural organizations. But no matter how good these projects are, they can barely manage to sustain themselves. Many development agencies talk a lot about income-generating projects. This is very fashionable. And this is fine. But income-generation will only lead us so far and no farther. These women, by organizing income-generating projects, are managing to survive. But for some of the bigger changes, what we need to do is establish linkages from the village level to the next highest level and then to the national machinery. We must not forget the national scene. If it is not favorable to women, then there may be a couple of interesting women's programs at the grass-roots level, but they won't have any larger impact.

The problem with women's politicization is that historically it has been easy to mobilize women in movements around specific issues, but these movements have not been sustained. Women lack organization and leadership. And the reason is that women think that they do not have that much time. A large number of women may get drawn into

a movement and for a while give up their families and other work, but they will later pull back. The key to changing this is to reform the economic structure so that women will have more time.

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# Exchange Report

## WOMEN IN POLITICS

### Who Participates--and How--and Why

Politics is the key to change that will benefit women. One participant at an Exchange workshop put it like this: "As long as we stay at the grass-roots level, the simple level of income-generating projects that just keeps us surviving and not at all involved in making decisions, we will forever be looking for new income-generation or grass-roots organizing methods because we are not up there where the decisions are made. Unless we politicize and organize, we will never progress!"

Women's role in political movements was the subject of one session in the Exchange workshop series on Learning from Rural Women. The session was led by Rounaq Jahan (Bangladesh) and attended by thirty-five to forty women from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, North America, and Europe.

#### Who Participates

If politics is so crucial to women, it is worth looking at how women take part in political movements. What kinds of women join? Why? Do they stay on?

Researchers in the workshop agreed on a number of points: women who participate in political movements the most are the women who, socially and economically, have the most to gain and the least to lose. In fact, these

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women are often more militant than men. "It is the landless and the illiterate women who are most radical and most likely to become politicized," said one person. Older women get politicized more easily; the younger women, with children at home, are slower to take part.

One researcher (XX from India) presented a brief case study of the contrasts between women's participation in a spontaneous grass-roots movement in a tribal area--Maharashtra--and participation in a far more formally organized group formed by the Communist Party among Hindu women in West Bengal. As the presenter of these findings said, "The way women experience oppression is related to how they protest it." The tribal women in Maharashtra have traditionally had more freedom and independence than their Hindu counterparts in the West Bengal group, so they were more willing to protest than the Hindu women. The Maharashtra women their movement by taking dramatic action on issues close to them that they identified themselves. Angry at the effects of their husbands' systematic drinking, which consumed family resources and provoked many men to beat their wives, these women went in a band to the place where the men gathered to drink and smashed their liquor bottles. Action on these immediate, specific issues inspired them to more political involvement generally. In contrast, the Communist Party, like other established parties, has accepted patriarchal values unquestioningly. Refusing to relax sex roles keeps women from being radicalized.

XX's general conclusions were broader. In mass democratic movements that are not centrally organized by parties, she said, women's participation is greater. These

movements focus on social and cultural issues that concern women, not just on the narrow economic demands that the party often establishes as its objectives. In party politics, the issues are usually defined by the party leaders, not the rank and file; and the issues so defined are usually more relevant to middle-class than to poor women and do not challenge women's position in society.

#### What Moves Women to Political Action

It was agreed that in countries that have undergone extended revolutionary struggles women tend to be radicalized along with men, and that women's roles change profoundly in a wartime situation. A researcher from Zimbabwe said, "We are just emerging from a war of liberation that politicized rural women more than any other group in the country. Because both the availability of work and the war situation caused men to migrate to the towns, most of the rural areas are peopled by women. So all through the rural areas, it was a women's war: women raised food, hid the freedom fighters; a lot died and a lot were injured. What emerges from this set of experiences is a highly politicized rural population of women. But the level of commitment often falls when the goal is reached, as if independence is the panacea."

A woman with experience in Guinea-Bissau made similar observations. Women's wartime participation brought them into new and often more powerful positions than before. "I interviewed many women from peasant backgrounds who were working in party structures. They were in a two-way process: the party knew that women needed to be mobilized

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for the war effort, especially for reconstruction after the war; at the same time, women were adamant that their voices be heard. They were very articulate about the need for them to play their own role in development."

### Does It Last?

The problem is maintaining this involvement when life goes back to normal. The Guinea-Bissau reporter continued: "But this was a unique situation. Two-thirds of the country was liberated as much as ten years before independence, and the liberated areas were pretty much cut off from the rest of the world. Things could happen in isolation that had to change when they were re-connected." Then, all agreed, it was quite likely to get back to business as usual; women would have trouble maintaining a public role and a voice in politics.

A Caribbean woman observed: "I think one reason women's political movements aren't sustained is that time isn't taken to heighten their consciousness at the time that a broader political movement that involves them is occurring. If women in the larger struggle start to think of their own specific situation as women, then we might see a new kind of movement, a more sustained movement cutting across class lines."

What about countries that have not undergone an extended revolution that dislocates traditional roles in the society? What have researchers learned about sustaining women's participation in politics under these more normal circumstances?

A researcher from India said: "Anything in the nature

of a movement, be it national liberation or protests against a rise in prices--when support for these is needed, out come the women into the streets. This is without exception in the last 50 years. But the women themselves have told us, "Where there is a movement, we will participate; but this day-to-day work, we don't like it." Especially the landless women--once a movement gets going they take part in large numbers because it is temporary. They won't have to invest a major part of their lives in it, but it will achieve something."

The difference is that such a movement has a definite goal and comes to a definite end. Women will work for that, knowing that their participation makes a difference. Then they can go back to their overwhelming obligations to sustain and care for their families.

As things are now, with the enormous double workload that almost all rural women in the Third World carry, women haven't the time for sustained political commitment; they have far less surplus time than men to give to politics. When they do give time it is out of desperation, and they have to return to their other obligations very soon. It is impossible to sustain a political movement on that basis.

The conclusion is clear: unless women can help each other to emerge economically, there will be no true advance in their ability to organize politically.

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# Exchange Report

OVERCOMING THE COLONIAL LEGACY IN AFRICA

An Interview with Brooke Schoepf (U.S.)

Dr. Brooke Schoepf, an anthropologist now at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, U.S.A., teaches rural development, focusing primarily on Africa but also on the U.S. rural South. Her most recent research was on a maize development program in Zaire, studying the linkages among village, regional, and national levels.

As Schoepf sees it, the major problems of the African women in whom she is interested arose out of the political economy of colonialism. Before colonialism, most African societies were based on a domestic economy, she argues. While traditionally these were not totally subsistence economies, nor entirely free of class exploitation, they moved dramatically away from subsistence and toward class and sex distinctions under colonial rule. During the colonial period in Zaire, for example, women had to neglect their customary family-oriented farming and food-gathering tasks in order to meet the colonialists' demands that they work along with men to build roads and collect wild rubber. Then, with the setting up of a capitalist economy, male labor was moved out of the villages, and the women, who remained behind, were left to reproduce the work of the now unavailable male labor force. Some of the previously male tasks such as hunting large animals could no longer be done at all. Naturally, the family food supply suffered. Villages became repositories for women and for sick and exhausted workers and old people, much like villages in the American South.

It was not just economic. Schoepf maintains that the colonial legal structure, reinforced by practices of the Christian churches, reduced the status of women in societies where they had previously been respected as up-standing members of the community and the effects of this, she says, are still in full force.

The Exchange:

You argue that the lessons of the last 20 years show that growth does not bring development for the masses of women in Africa because of the continuation of a system brought in by the colonial masters.

P.S.:

Yes. And even in those countries where some attention has been paid to women, it hasn't made much difference.

Exchange:

Then what solutions are available to change the situation for women?

B.S.:

A complete social transformation is necessary to end inequality between men and women and exploitation of women at the national and international levels.

Self-help is key, and it's needed on two levels: organizing, and consciousness-raising. Furthermore, all efforts to help women must show concrete benefits for the masses of women or people involved, and they must be self-sustaining and ongoing so the people see them continuing; otherwise people become discouraged.

Exchange:

Are projects a means of getting social transformation?

R.S.:

Sometimes, but the process may be very slow in dependent capitalist countries. And I feel that sometimes these projects may be ill-conceived by the planners, and may even be counterproductive from the participants' side. For instance, women trying to raise maize according to a new method which they've been told is profitable find that given the prices they receive and new inputs they have to buy, their work is less profitable than previously. The merchant or the transformer of the old methods (the project funder, for example) may get benefits from the change, but the participants don't. Or, for example, a new mill that was put in to save time breaks down, there are no spare parts, and women are back to pounding the grain just the way they used to.

Exchange:

If projects are not really a means of transformation, or are so slow, what is the point in having projects at all?

R.S.:

Well, they may teach skills that are needed. They can lead to mobility and travel for some participants, which may expose them to new ideas and help them bring about fundamental social transformation later. But I'm not too hopeful even about that.

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Exchange:

Have you ever seen any real success with this approach?

B.S.:

On a small scale, yes, but the success has not really been generalizable. Most projects have had outside backing and even most of the successful ones have not really undertaken leadership training of those who will carry on. So the projects may flop when they leave. I strongly believe in training as a means to success in any project.

Exchange:

How can American and European women help?

B.S.:

We can give technical cooperation. But this is a difficult role and it has to be done in a collaborative way. Western women often are given a training role; if we are serious, we must work ourselves out of a job. We have to teach in an unstructured, egalitarian way--and given the way we are brought up in our societies (on the male model), this may be difficult. Some Western women do overcome the problems, and their help, their broad experience, is of value. I think First World women have a responsibility to be always looking at international aspects of local problems, both at home and also when we work abroad.

I think it would also be valuable to have Third World women research First World problems.

# Exchange Report

ZIMBABWEAN WOMEN ARE IN A STRONG POSITION  
An Interview with Olivia Muchena (Zimbabwe)

The Exchange:

You are working at the women and development research unit of the University of Zimbabwe?

Olivia Muchena:

Yes. This unit is part of the Center for Applied Sciences, which is primarily a research department in the faculty of social sciences. The Carnegie Corporation in the U.S. funded the project for two years, which will be up at the end of this month. Our brief was to establish basic data about women and fit this data into a pilot women's bureau, a non-governmental body, on an experimental basis.

In terms of staff, there are only two of us, two research fellows. One project we have worked on was a socio-economic survey. There has been no research whatsoever about women in Zimbabwe, so this was a kind of beginning.

establishing basic characteristics about women in the towns. This was during the war and it was impossible to do research in rural areas. The results of the socio-economic survey were published in WOMEN IN TOWN, and there is another of our works being considered for publication, called ZIMPAPWE WOMEN--A SOCIO-ECONOMIC OVERVIEW. We also did research on the legal status of women and put out a booklet entitled "A Woman's Guide to Law Through Life." We attempted to put the legal position of women in a language that is understandable to the ordinary person.

Exchange:

Do you have staff assistance for your field work?

O.M.:

For any given project we train some field workers. We normally like to draw the field assistants from the community that we would be working in, so that we don't have problems establishing rapport, and this has worked very well.

Exchange:

When you talk about women in Zimbabwe, how many women are you actually talking about and what percentage of the population are they?

O.M.:

The total population is about 7.5 million; the women make up about 50 percent of the population so we are speaking of over 3 million women.

Exchange:

What would you identify as some of the major problems confronting Zimbabwean women today?

O.M.:

As the women saw their priorities, long before independence, the major one was economic. The way the socio-economic structure was operating, the majority of women live in the rural areas while the men migrate to urban areas in search of paid employment. The women do the agricultural work to try to supplement the men's income. In the past they contributed significantly to the family income, but the land division policy based on race left black people in the poorest of the land area. This meant that gradually their food-production dwindled; in the end the women became dependent on the men's meager income. So if you ask most women what their number one need is they will tell you, "Increased income." When I asked them how they want this income increased, for rural women, it is improved extension services to increase agricultural production. Women want to learn more intensive agricultural methods. They also want to hear some ideas for income-

generating activities. The majority of those women who come to town are unemployed. Given the prevailing socio-political and economic climate, there were almost no jobs around and any job available was first given to the men.

The second major need of women in Zimbabwe is education. There has been a disparity in the recruiting of boys and girls so that we have very few women whom we could consider as highly educated women in top positions. Third, and this is perhaps an unfelt need though surely it's a need, is the minority legal status of women.

Exchange:

Since the election of a legal and recognized government, what indications have there been of the priorities for women?

O.M.:

The priorities for women at the moment fall in line with the priorities for national reconstruction. For example, one of the priorities is the whole question of resettlement and rehabilitation. A lot of people, especially a lot of women, have to be moved back to their homes, to their fields. At the moment, our preoccupation is with getting re-established and re-located.

We also have the question of education. A lot of schools were disrupted by the war. Before a woman thinks about her

education or her economic growth, she will want to see that her children are back in school. For the time being, women's needs are kind of submerged in the wider issues of their families.

Exchange:

What is the status of the health services in Zimbabwe?

O.M.:

Again, this was drastically disrupted by the war and is one of the priorities of the resettlement scheme. In a way, I think a blessing in disguise that came out of the war was that in a lot of areas there is a good communication system because the soldiers needed to get from place to place quickly. As soon as the roads are mended, it would not be difficult to establish primary health care centers. I think that during the war even though we did not have clinics as such, people were aware of health needs. I think I should emphasize that our people are highly politicized, highly mobilized and organized in the rural areas.

Exchange:

You mentioned earlier the nongovernmental women's bureau. What sort of machinery exists at the government level for dealing with women's affairs?

O.M.:

Nothing exists as yet, but we do have a basis within the government to form something for women. We have nine

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women members of parliament and among them one minister and two deputy ministers. This is something for the government to start building on.

Exchange:

Do you think that the women in Zimbabwe, as opposed to other African women, will take longer to overcome their problems because of the psychological and other effects of years of war and struggle?

O.M.:

No. It's the other way around. I think the Zimbabwean women are in a much stronger position because of their experience. I think the whole process of the struggle will facilitate their liberation. In fact, the women have borne most of the brunt of the war. The majority of them lived in the rural areas and that's where the war was raging most. The women were the first to become politicized. They learned to live under the most difficult of conditions and if that doesn't give you some stamina or fiber I don't know what will.

Exchange:

What sort of relationship do the Zimbabwean women have with other women in Africa?

O.M.:

You must put that question in historical perspective.

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For the past fifteen or so years the country was totally cut off from the rest of the world, including Africa. Therefore, from within our country there has not been any communication or only very minimal. But the women in the struggle who were outside, involved in the organizational work or fighting, had plenty of contacts and I think that positive action will emerge from this.

Exchange:

How aware are the women of Zimbabwe of the kind of assistance and moral support which has been given by many countries?

O.M.:

I think it would be fair to say that for most people who have been inside the country for a long time, there is very little obvious awareness that there were other people crying with us. But the whole world kind of opened to us during the period prior to the election. Then there was the independence celebration, when the whole world converged on Zimbabwe. Watching on television as the leaders of various countries came, our cheers showed that we understood what those leaders did in our struggle; like the Mozambicans, who were the nearest, got the loudest cheer. We felt that the leaders did not come just because it was an independence celebration but because they contributed to and sympathized with our struggle.

Exchange:

What can this women's conference mean for the women in Zimbabwe?

O.M.:

I think that we are fortunate that we have at least seven Zimbabwean women here sponsored by different organizations, attending the NGO Forum. We have given ourselves the task of going to various workshops and meetings and when we get back home we will organize something together to impart what we have learned here. Second, not only the Forum, but the whole presence of Copenhagen is being covered the world over by the press and I should want to believe back home they are reading about this meeting, so that it starts to raise a consciousness in women's minds--that a platform is open for women to express their views and share experiences.

The opportunities for making good contacts have been tremendous. I think that even if we were disappointed by any of the workshops we attended, one good thing that came out of this exercise was the opportunity to meet people from all over the world. No amount of money or time could repeat this occasion, so we are grabbing the opportunities.

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INFANT FEEDING AND NEW ROLES FOR MOTHERS:

GIVE WOMEN A CHOICE

The past generation has seen a significant shift in what infants in the Third World are fed--a shift from their mother's milk to something out of a bottle. In a discussion led by Isabel Nieves (Guatemala), one workshop at the Exchange looked at the political nature of this shift, focusing on how the changes in women's socio-economic roles have forced the changes in infant feeding practices without any concomitant shift in public policy to support mothers in either role.

In an interview, the leader of this workshop said,

"In doing research on the social and cultural factors that influence nutritional status, I always focused on women because I saw them as the prime factors in nutrition and in infant feeding, which is a major factor in nutritional status. Combining this viewpoint with my conviction that women play a vital economic role, I looked at the literature on infant feeding and saw that people who were developing the explanatory models were not social scientists, they were pediatricians, public health workers, nutritionists--people who had either a nutrition-centered or a disease-centered view of the problem, or people who were involved in the fight between the formula forces and the anti-formula group. But none had looked at it from a women-centered model. It is the women themselves who are making the decision. We have to look at their lives and see what is influencing their decisions."

Women in the Third World have two enormous jobs--earning income and raising a family. When one of these functions changes drastically, as their economic role has done under the pressure of development, the other is forced to change as well. The choices women must make in feeding their infants illustrate this vividly--and also illustrate what enormous personal burdens are put on women in their role as mothers precisely because public policy has not recognized or supported their productive role in the economy.

#### Biology Only

Public policy has far too often looked at women only in their reproductive capacity--as breasts, vagina, and uterus. In the development literature, and even in the breast-feeding literature, the many facets of a woman's responsibilities have not been discussed or even defined. Most literature on infant feeding has been written not by social scientists, but by health-care workers who look at the questions from a reductionist point of view--biology only.

This willful dismissal of a woman's other roles in the culture has imposed on women such hardships as sex segregation in occupations or, worse, total exclusion from the labor force; low educational attainment and, as a result, low income. Society then adds insult to injury by berating women for not breast-feeding their babies--

as if the choice were all theirs and they had made the wrong one. In fact, the choice is not theirs, and bottle-feeding is not necessarily the wrong choice. "I may want to breast-feed but I need a socially and economically supportive atmosphere in order to do so. I need a society that won't frown on me for feeding on the bus, that won't dock my pay for taking the baby to work," said one participant. But few such societies exist.

For Third World women, bottle-feeding is often a necessity because they must work. A study done in Bangladesh showed that breast-feeding always declines in the growing season. Evidence from the Caribbean indicates that women choose a mixed feeding pattern--breast and bottle--in expectation of returning to the labor market.

These are not affluent women, who have a choice; these are poor women--the ones most affected by economic development. They are caught in a double-bind; they can't afford formula, but they have to buy it because they can't delegate breast-feeding.

### Hard Sell

Developing countries would hardly seem a likely market in which to sell an expensive substitute for mother's milk, especially where the tradition of breast-feeding is so strong. But the big campaigns for this market began just as the major shifts of development were beginning. Women

were moving to cities, where they were more subject to advertising at the same time that they were losing the support of their old traditions; and they were more often working outside the home in places where they couldn't take their babies. If work increased their income even marginally, they would actually have some hard cash. Of course they needed the cash desperately for a multitude of other things, but if the pressure of their lives was great enough, it might just be that infant formula would become number one on their list of necessities.

Women's choices in this matter have been heavily influenced through unrestricted advertising campaigns run by multinational corporations that are in the business of selling packaged infant formula. The multinationals have used extremely aggressive marketing techniques on a particularly vulnerable population. Sales in the West had declined rapidly and the corporations looked to developing countries to sustain their profits.

"At the time the West put on restrictions, the multinationals moved out to the Third World. There was already a latent market there, and they went in and exploited it. That for me is one form of cultural imperialism. On the other hand, another form is Western groups like La Leche League guilt-tripping people for not breast-feeding-- as if they had a choice."

Is It the Wrong Choice?

If women did have a free choice, would the breast always be preferable to the bottle for the sake of the child's health? Not necessarily.

Most experts agree that, up to three months, an infant is better off being fed mother's milk than infant formula, said one researcher participating in the workshop. After that, mother's milk loses its vitamin C and there is no good data showing that the bottle is worse than the breast. For one thing, it is hard to develop comparative data. The data showing formula as detrimental to children's health is clouded by the fact that bottle-fed babies are often those who failed on the breast. Even if formula is a sound food for infants, this fact automatically puts the sickly ones in the category "bottle-fed."

Much more clear-cut problems with bottle-feeding in the Third World come from another cause. Circumstances force women who can't afford it to buy formula. But because there may not be enough money for food some weeks, they dilute the formula in order to make it last longer. Thus what is in the bottle has often not been prepared as intended.

Or perhaps problems arise because women can't read the label. Some women are illiterate; others can't read the language on the label. Even if they could read the instructions, some have no ready means for boiling water.

Infant formula is a commodity that was developed to be used in a situation where people can sterilize bottles and water, measure ingredients, read labels, and afford to use the full measure. Used in a different situation, there can be problems.

### Policy

One specific policy move internationally has focused on putting restrictions on the advertising and promotion done by the multinationals. Known as The Code (get details from Isabel)

We must restrict the multinationals because their aggressive manipulation of the Third World market has clearly interfered with the free choice of the women there.

What is important is enhancing women's ability to choose for themselves. The code will be an important component in this, but only one component of many. Women's choices are constricted by far more than advertising. For example, medical people, arguing exclusively from the point of view of the health of the child, have insisted that women should stay home and breast-feed--or at most should take the child to work and breast-feed the baby there. Based on this view, the U.S. Agency for International Development is now going to promote breast-feeding around the

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world, creating another kind of pressure that reduces women's choices, not necessarily to their benefit. For development has destroyed the traditional support networks that made it possible for women to breast-feed and care for children. Yet few policy-makers are designing or even thinking about networks that would be compatible with women's lives in the developing situation.

"We've got to force government and industry to provide support for women who are breast-feeding."

"Government and industry should respond responsibly! Women are being asked to be productive in the economy, but they are getting no support for their other roles."