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LOCAL SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS
AND
LOCAL PROJECT CAPACITY

by

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A B S T R A C T

Indigenous voluntary associations in Third World countries can and do often play a vital, but little explored, role in contributing to project capacity in rural areas. These contributions range from countable cash contributions (i.e., cost-sharing for certain projects) to the more intangible contributions of labor and commodities, to the most intangible "contributions" such as organizational linkages and para-administrative functions, and indigenous patterns of service delivery. Typical voluntary associations include age grades, youth work groups, women's clubs, irrigation societies, and various religious organizations. (Formal governmental associations are not included in this analysis.)

This paper examines two case study regions in depth: Mali and Upper Volta in West Africa; and Thailand in Asia. Since the number of cases is so small, few solid generalizations can be built from them to extend to other countries. However, the two cases do provide very provocative insights into how local voluntary organizations can contribute to specific revenue problems of rural development, and the different approaches that are required to better utilize what are unrealized yet rich resources for improved project capacity.

LOCAL SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS AND LOCAL PROJECT CAPACITY

by

Barbara D. Miller

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous local social organizations (LSOs) in Third World countries can and often do play a vital but little explored "self-help" role in contributing to project capacity in rural areas. Their contributions range from countable cash inputs to the more intangible contributions of labor and commodities, to the most intangible "contributions" such as serving as organizational linkages or communication nodes, performing para-administrative functions, and carrying out service delivery along traditional patterns. Typical LSOs include age grades, youth work groups, women's groups, rotating savings and loan associations (RoSCAs), irrigation societies, and various religious organizations (formal governmental institutions such as village councils are not considered in this analysis).

After an introductory section on the ways in which LSOs can and do contribute to improved project capacity and a review of the critical organizational variables of LSOs for this analysis, I examine two case study regions: in West Africa--Upper Volta and Mali, and in Asia--Thailand. Since the number of cases is so small, it is difficult to build any solid generalizations or detailed policy recommendations that would easily apply to other countries as well. However, the cases do provide some very provocative insights into how LSOs contribute to many revenue-related problems of rural development, and some indications of how improvements can be made in the traditional pattern.

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF LSOs TO RURAL PROJECT CAPACITY

There are several ways in which a judicious appraisal and use of local social organizations will improve local project capacity, particularly in terms of enhanced revenue mobilization, administration, and service delivery. The major ones discussed in this paper are:

- general revenue generation
- revenue administration (personnel, management)
- organizational linkages
- service delivery
- project finance (recurrent costs)

Each of these is now briefly reviewed along with examples of relevant LSO activity in different parts of the world.

Revenue Generation

Although discovering new, untapped sources of revenue may not be the top priority for many local governments, if such sources already exist and the apparatus for mobilizing the unrealized revenue already in place, then clearly they should be considered very seriously. At times it could be much more cost effective to tap an indigenously recognized and operating source, than to continue trying unsuccessfully to enforce an outmoded or ill-suited practice.¹ While not all organizations show equal potential for expanding the revenue base of their local governments, many do if only in an informal way. An example of organizations with such potentials is clubs which raise revenue from dues paid by their members such as the National Women's Association of Thailand. Rotating savings and credit societies (RoSCAs) present another possibility if organized correctly. Since these organizations already possess experience in raising funds the major change involved might be instituting new more publicly concerned patterns of disposal of the funds raised. Thus instead of "plowing under" the revenue raised, i.e. returning equal shares to all members, or spending it all on a year-end feast or

dance, some of it could be diverted to support a development project that members collectively support and enjoy. It is indeed possible that such unions and clubs "adopt a project," as is the case with hundreds of women's harambee groups in Kenya (Pala, 1978). Since most revenue raised in this way locally is necessarily small perhaps the central or local governments could devise some system of "matching funds" to reinforce the non-governmental effort.

Revenue Administration

One problem of generating revenue in Third World countries that is often noted in the literature is that of inefficient administrative structures. In spite of the legal power of local governments to raise certain kinds of revenue, and in spite of the ability of the population to pay certain kinds of revenues, the administration is unable to collect. This inadequacy stems from many factors but the lack of trained personnel and the high attrition rate of trained personnel from local areas to cities are the most important. Using local organizations with rather small financial and administrative inputs from the outside can help improve local revenue administration procedures by providing personnel with leadership experience and some training (albeit non-formal) in handling finances, and personnel who may be less susceptible to the lure of the city because they have not become alienated from their local nexus by lengthy training in the city. The role of local social organizations in revenue administration is, additionally, important if one pursues the possibility discussed above of expanding revenue for development purposes via local organizations' dues or contributions, since the instrument for collection already exists in the LSOs themselves. One does not have to create a new structure, though one may wish to improve bookkeeping and administrative skills of

certain members in order to better cope with increased capacity. It is noteworthy here, however, that organizations which favor and promote rotating leadership may be less amenable to this as members might resist ensconcing one or two members as permanent officers.

Organizational Linkages

In terms of the more general problem of making project organization itself more effective, indigenous local associations and organizations can play a very critical role as intermediary between the project and project participants. The local organization can perform a much needed liaison role by providing a forum where project ideas and goals can be discussed and the project participants themselves can express their aspirations and problems.² Thus in the most informal way, as the basis for ad hoc meetings when the need arises to the most formal, as a linkage committee, local organizations can play an important role in information transfer and problem solving. Just as critically, the local organization (depending on several factors such as the broadness of its membership base) can serve as an auxiliary structure, replicating in miniature the project organization and thus helping project goals to trickle through a more elaborate root system.³ This role is especially important when a project seeks to include "hard-to reach" groups like women.

Service Delivery

The fourth major purpose which local social organizations can serve is in the broad realm of service delivery. Throughout the rural areas of the Third World there are examples of "self-help" and "self-service" organizations already performing, as part of their traditional roles, important functions such as road repair, irrigation canal maintenance, and village security. The importance of recognizing and utilizing this local

strength cannot be underestimated, however, only a few countries have systematically tried to tap such service-providing organizations. One critical feature of local self-help groups which has been generally overlooked is that such community efforts (for street cleaning, road repair, etc.) themselves constitute a kind of tax, an informal, locally administered corvee which is not counted in the "revenue" of a given area but may constitute a large proportion of what people are doing and giving for the public good. Local governments should take traditional forms of service delivery via LSOs into account in a positive way by instituting a simple system of reward, such as tax exemptions for members of service organizations.⁴

Project Finance

The above section leads into the fifth and last contribution of local social organizations to development considered here: the provision of financial support for projects, especially in terms of their recurrent costs. Depending on the type of project, and the kinds of recurrent costs characteristically engendered, local social organizations in many countries stand ready, organized, and willing to shoulder much of the financial responsibility.⁵ Of course this is not always as easy as it might sound for the entire process may involve careful selection of projects which motivate the people to accept them and which utilize local social structures in para-administrative functions.

For all of the above purposes, different types of organizations will be more or less suited; some will be shown to be nearly useless without drastic alteration. Certain Third World governments may even feel that local organizations are "backwards," anti-national and promote disintegration.⁶ Such governments must be convinced that many traditional

organizations have very forward-looking, positive developmental potential which should be fostered, not smothered. I will now examine some local organizations of various types and analyze their developmental potential on the basis of several criteria that seem particularly critical.

OVERVIEW OF LOCAL SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

Defining the Data Base

It is a truism that "organizations" exist in all cultures and among all peoples. But for this analysis, it is necessary to draw some rather arbitrary boundaries in order to bring into prominence those organizations which are most relevant or most ignored. In order to begin discussing the parameters of the subject matter, I will review some definitions previously employed in the study of local organizations which are especially enlightening:

Organizations are instruments for bringing together people who see their involvement as a means of achieving their purposes (World Bank/Projects Advisory Staff, 1980, p. 15).

An association is a group organized for the pursuit of one interest or of several interests in common. Associations are usually contrasted with involuntary groupings serving a greater variety of ends, such as kin groups, castes, social classes, and communities (Banton and Sills, 1969, p. 357).

These definitions provide a foundation for defining the corpus of social groupings examined in this paper. First, I am looking primarily at groups based on voluntary membership, that is organizations in which one is not born a member, even though in many cases the circumstances of birth may influence the kind of organization joined (i.e. kin ties, neighborhood, or even occupation may be a basis for membership influenced by birth). Voluntary membership can be a matter of degree, too, as in the case of age sets in which everyone must belong, or the Socialist Malian youth group, the

Pioneers which "required" membership in an ostensibly voluntary organization. Additionally, the group is characterized by one or more goals which tend to be more clearly delineated than those of involuntary groupings such as family or caste. Clearly it is very important to distinguish between the goals (explicit) of an organization and its functions, which may be both explicit (manifest) or latent, to use the terms of the sociologist Merton (1967).

In fact, an organization's latent and manifest functions are a critical categorization used in this paper, specifically when discussing functions related to revenue. Organizations which raise funds, dispense services, or promote managerial skills, whether overtly or not, have the most potential for increasing local project capacity. The continuum of organizations with local revenue roles and potentials stretches from the most directly related, such as the mbabo secret society of some Cameroons villages which collects the annual palm wine tax from landholders (Ritzenthaler and Ritzenthaler, 1962) to the most indirectly related such as women's laundering groups of some parts of Latin America which are loose formations of women who gather at the pila (communal laundry area) for short periods of time, but which are not durable, do not involve dues of any kind, and have no manifest goals beyond cleaning clothes.⁷

A further limitation on the organizations discussed in this paper is geographic. To study all the pertinent formal and informal organizations in the world would take years and result in several volumes. I have selected countries from two different regions for intensive examination: in West Africa--Mali and Upper Volta, and in Asia--Thailand. However, all of my observations are not restricted to these countries since information from other areas help to make the cases studies more meaningful.

Organization Variables

Local organizations vary tremendously in their characteristics. Here only those that appear most germane to local revenue administration and development are considered.⁸

Goals. The explicit, stated goals of an organization have implications related to the organization's development potential. Goals should be assessed as to their degree of public concern compared to those which are more private. An example of an organization with relatively public goals is a woman's club in a poor neighborhood of Paramaibo, Surinam which used some of its funds to build a zinc roof, concrete floor and walls for a meeting place (Erana-Shute, 1976). A more private goal is frequently found in RoSCAs where members tend to use their take-out shares to meet financial needs of the family, such as children's education.⁹ It might appear at first that the organizations with the most public-oriented goals would be the most important for local revenue administration purposes because their focus is already community-oriented, or at least oriented beyond the confines of the family. However, when the question of service delivery and financing service delivery arises, then even organizations with more limited interests may have a part to play if, for example, they function to help families to finance their own health care or education.

When some of the stated goals of the organization are related to finances, then so much the better. For instance, there are charitable organizations whose explicit goals are to raise funds to support a certain cause, such as the Young Muslim's Women's Association of Jordan that plans to build and maintain a junior college for girls (Tutunji, 1978). An organization such as this incorporates both revenue-raising and service delivery roles. On the other hand, street committees in China have service goals but no explicit "revenue" aspect (Sidel, 1974).

Functions. Obviously an organization's goals are often related to its functions; less obviously related however are the functions which are latent, i.e. not explicitly stated as goals or purposes of the organization. It is rarely easy to discern an organization's latent functions without careful observation of its workings over time but, fortunately, some organizations have been subject to such scrutiny and their latent functions reported, such as Meillassoux's (1968) work on voluntary associations in Bamako. For others we can only guess. Another problem area involves the assessment of how effectively the organization functions to achieve the stated goals it has. This is a question of evaluation and is very important. I know of few in-depth, comparative works on this problem for the kinds of indigenous organizations studied here; the excellent report by Green (1975) on four Local Development Associations in North Yemen is one such needed analysis.¹⁰

The most important organizational functions for my analysis are those that involve outright development projects--does the organization undertake projects of benefit to the wider society? Here we can find examples of organizations of all types fulfilling important functions. On the formal end of the continuum there is the example of the Yemeni LDAs mentioned above which implement many important projects, particularly water provision. At the informal end is the example of women's associations centered around saints' sanctuaries in the Maghreb where women pour out their troubles to the saint, but, as they are overheard by nearby residents, also then receive comfort, advice and psychological support from other women.¹¹ This latter case is "service delivery" through the workings of a very informal but effective organization.

Membership base. The membership base of an organization also has implications for how effective that organization is or might be in terms of

LRA goals. Wideness or narrowness is a factor--does the organization include just youth, or members of one sex or class? Regional, neighborhood, and ethnic reasons for group affiliation are important as they help us to delineate the kind of spread an organization has and its power to mobilize resources or deliver services in the wider public sphere; even an organization's public mindedness can be inferred on the basis of its membership criteria.

Revenue base. More explicitly related to local revenue, an assessment must be made for organizations of the nature and amount of revenue they handle, whether that is in cash or kind, or labor. This question has several ramifications. First, there are those, Hirschman (1967) for example, who hold that commitment is greater the more people contribute in dues, labor, etc, to an organization. (I suspect that there is a middle range where the relationship between dues and commitment is very strong, but that things get messy at the upper and lower levels of contributions such that commitment may be very lax, or almost coerced). Another aspect of the revenue potential of LSUs is simply how much there is available for developmental purposes. Some organizations demand no dues or any kind of contribution from members which could be quantified. In others, it is clear that significant amounts of cash are amassed. Although it is not always certain that organizations with the largest revenue pool are the most relevant for LRA, it is certainly an advantage if the group is experienced in mobilizing revenue and handling funds.

Revenue uses. The next consideration is the uses to which the revenue base is put. There is a wide variation again. Rotating savings and credit societies generally allot to each member his/her "share" at a given time, or when a certain person draws the "take" by lot. Or, the revenue pool may be completely consumed by the operation of the organization as appears to

be the case in some "modern" youth clubs in Bamako: dues are paid by the young members, but it takes almost all the time of the meetings to collect the dues and impose fines on those who have defaulted (Meillassoux, 1968). Alternatively, the resource pool may be used for entertainment purposes such as a feast or dance. A critical question here is whether the "take-out" is individualized or communal, something that is obviously related to the goals and functions of the organization.

Political structure. The nature of leadership and decision-making, the entire political set-up of the organization, is very important. Unfortunately few studies have been done on the political organization and process of less formal organizations. One of the primary questions is whether the organization is centralized or loosely organized. If it is an organization with several branches, is the overall structure of the "federated" or "centralized" type?¹² Within each unit of the organization, the development of leadership roles and the process of arriving at decisions is very important, as is the degree of articulation of the organization with the formal political domain. Questions such as these constitute a vast amount of research territory which is now virtually unexplored, from the development angle particularly.

The criteria discussed above provide the skeleton of a methodology for studying local social organizations and assessing their potential as development structures. Although I do not rigorously impose these criteria on all of the organizations presented in the following case studies (largely because there is not enough information given on any one of them), I think it important to have them before us as guideposts to what the ideal analysis would be. Since my goal here is to identify certain local revenue problems and then match up those problems which potentially helpful local

organizations, I give less attention to complete descriptions analyses of the organizations themselves than to pointing to their problem-solving potentials.

CASE STUDIES OF LOCAL SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS AND PROJECT CAPACITY POTENTIALS

Since no country, or often even a region within a country, can be said to be representative of a larger region (i.e. knowledge of Guatemala does not necessarily apply to all of Latin America), the goal of this section is to explore a few paradigmatic cases and their relevance to LRA in the hopes that the countries selected will reflect on many other areas of the world as well. The societies selected are very different in terms of social organization, traditional economy, and role and status of women.

The procedure followed is to first give an overview of the most important LSOs in the region, second to review the most pressing revenue problems (particularly as concern USAID in that region), and then finally to indicate where the greatest potentials for LSO input exist.

Mali and Upper Volta

Varieties of LSOs

Age sets, age grades and work groups. There exists a great deal of variation in the details of social organization between different groups in both these countries, especially depending on whether they are pastoral or sedentary, urban or rural. However some recurrent themes are apparent. The most common, nearly ubiquitous local organizations are age sets, age grades, and youth work groups, though these are less commonly found among the more thinly distributed and mobile pastoral peoples.

But among agriculturalists they are very common being found among Manding tribes throughout much of West Africa such as the Wolof of the

Gambia (Ames, 1959, p. 224-237). Several features of these organizations point to their strong potentials for solving certain local revenue problems in rural areas and are worth considering in some detail here.

Generally there are different age sets for males and females, though opposite sex groups often perform activities in collaboration.¹³ Membership depends on one's circumcision or excision time -- those who undergo the ceremony at the same time form one set (and all village youth do so at one time or another). A youth work group or ton is formed of several age sets. An age grade, also composed of several age sets, is typically a group of elder men who constitute the village political elite. I have found no evidence of an elder women's age grade parallel to that of the men. This may be due to the fact that women are separated from their age mates by virilocal marriage rules, thus their age sets are less durable and do not carry through beyond marriage. There is some indication that larger villages, due to sheer density of population, have more such groups than smaller villages, though the detailed data of Leynaud on several villages of the Upper Niger valley show no correlation between village size and number of organizations (Leynaud, 1961).

The most obvious function of youth work groups is field labor. Depending on the agricultural economy of the area, arrangements for their work schedule vary in detail but most generally the pattern is this: the group works for one or more days in the village chief's fields for no remuneration. Subsequently its leader contract with heads of individual compounds to work in their fields for which they receive food and cash in remuneration. Besides field labor, youth groups also perform very important community functions in the "service" sector (Leynaud, 1961). They maintain public paths and the public meeting area, construct and maintain roads between villages, build and maintain canals, combat brush fires, act as

the village police, maintain and protect orchards, maintain the village mosque, and help keep animals from grazing where they are not welcome. Specific cases of even more innovative functions are described for age grades in some sites in Mali: at Coursale and Kole, the ton imposed a system of "traffic control" making some paths one-way only for bicycles; at Djoliba the ton guards the orchards from those who come to steal mangoes; and at Keniegue the ton is charged with news dissemination, members being ~~a~~ public criers. Thus the West African ton participates in many different types of services: transportation, sanitation, fire fighting, police, traffic control and communications, in addition to their important role in agricultural production.

Physical labor is the most important asset for development that the ton has. Its revenue in cash, which undoubtedly amounts to a fair-sized sum at the end of the year, is completely disposed of in the harvest party and feast, or also on clothing for members. The "take-out" is strictly equalitarian.

Thus while it might not be feasible to expect a ton to contribute money to a development project, though even this is not completely out of the question, it is obvious that ton labor could be tapped for projects, particularly for project maintenance. Just as one day or week a year is donated free of charge to working in the chief's fields, the ton might be convinced to donate work to a project, especially during the slack agricultural season. One of course would have to take ton decision-making processes into account, and the control of the Elder's Age Grade. Knowing the process of how work tasks are assigned to the ton, by whom, and what kinds of conflicts might result from adding on a new task, is critical. Importantly the ton has an air of community spirit and good natured energy,

and signs of maintaining itself in spite of emigration of young males for work in the Ivory Coast and elsewhere: there are fines for young men who miss their work day (J. Lewis, 1981).¹⁴

In addition to the youth groups, the Elder Age Grades are also important as potential "administrators" of projects. Though not formal officials, they have heavy influence on all decisions made in the village council. Since the elders were once members of youth age sets and know how youth labor is utilized, they would be in the best "management" position, as in fact they already are. We would consider the Elder Age Grade as a project management committee in an informal way, for they have already received a good deal of on-the-job training in the course of their youth.

It is noteworthy that secret societies are rarely mentioned in the literature on Mali and Upper Volta as they are in other African countries, such as the Cameroons where secret societies serve many of the same functions as the ton in West Africa in addition to being the tax collecting organization in the village. Nowhere in my readings on youth sets and age grades in West Africa did I find any mention of a tax-collecting function being served by them -- village security, yes, but taxes, no. The only indication of something resembling an indigenous tax structure in the area under consideration is described by J. Lewis (1981), which I review here for it also has important local revenue implications.

The Jooro System of the Jafaraabe Fulbe of Mali. In his research on pastoral herders of the Mopti region, Lewis discovered a very interesting system of herd/land management which involves a social organization of a particular type not found, he claims, elsewhere among pastoralists in West Africa. Among the Jafaraabe, a Fulbe group, there is a polity encompassing several villages headed by a leader called a jooro who presides over the pastures used by the herds of the unit, often ranging near 30,000 head.

His major functions are to protect and "tax" herds which pass through Jafaraabe trekking routes. The jooro, as opposed to the ordinary member of a village, has the public interest of the entire group in mind and thus will never himself steal one of the cattle passing through from another area. He is in fact a range manager, having important control over which herds pass through a given area, when, and how much they are charged to do so. There are important advantages to this type of organization. As described by Lewis, this system of range management is highly sensitive to the ecology of the region. Further, it differs from range behavior of all other pastoralists in the area, Lewis claims, by its articulation with state control -- exactly why this is so for the Jafaraabe Fulbe and not other neighboring groups is unclear.

The precise dynamics of the Jafaraabe management system would need to be known if one were to try to institute it as an auxiliary revenue management system, and, particularly, if one hoped to transfer the system to other pastoral groups where individual lineage corporate interests may be more strongly developed. The uniqueness of the Jafaraabe jooro system may present a problem if that uniqueness is the result of a complex of factors not found or substitutable in other groups. Another problem is that increased sedentarization is eroding the present effectiveness of the jooro system by ruining the ponds and surrounding areas. This creates timing problems for the jooro by forcing him to leave a certain area and enter another before it is actually best to do so, and thus undermines the basis of his entire management role.

Autonomy versus the Public Good Among Pastoralists. What the jooro system of transhumance points to is very interesting and vital: there is a strong tradition of coordination and cooperation (often several jooros

hold meetings to discuss the best timing for moving their herds) which is often not believed to exist among pastorals. Of course such cooperation is not automatic, but depends on the functioning of several sociocultural factors promoting cohesion in the face of potential conflict.

Leaving the Jafaraabe aside for now, let me review some relevant parts of reports on other pastoral peoples in the wider Mali-Upper Volta region. One writer, (Hopen, 1958), describing the Fulbe/Fulani of the far north of Nigeria, stresses the autonomy of the "family group." Another, (Riesman, 1977), talks of the "freedom in social life" of the Fulbe of an area on the Mali-Upper Volta border region near Djibo. The key characteristics of these pastoral groups, according to these two studies are fluidity of groupings beyond the "family," mobility, and proud autonomy--certainly features which must militate against any concerted group action or durable responsibility vis-à-vis development goals. Though Hopen (1958, p. 105) alludes to the existence of men's age sets in his work on the Fulbe, it is only to note the difficulty a man has in finding an age-mate at the camp with whom to spend his leisure time, a difficulty at least partly caused by the increased rate of dispersion of this group in recent years. In Riesman's work, there is no mention of age sets, age grades, secret societies, etc. I doubt that, if they existed, he would have failed to notice them. It seems much more likely that, again due to reasons of sheer population density, such do not exist or are very ephemeral if they do.

Riesman's discussion of Jelgobe Fulani "freedom" is most interesting. Among these herders/agriculturalists, there is the practice of constructing barriers of thorny branches around one's fields to protect them from possible trampling by cattle. Each farmer builds such barriers and also depends on his neighbor's building and maintaining barriers so that there are no

openings. One might see in such a practice an informal association, a cooperative endeavor undertaken in the spirit of the public good in addition to one's personal interests. Riesman himself says that this situation is ". . .important because it is the only piece of work I know of in which the Jelgobe give evidence of a certain cooperation" (1977, p. 15). He also insists, however, that this work of building thorny fences is not collective work undertaken in the spirit of the public good, but is "rather an undertaking in which each does his own work in his own way with a result which turns out to be beneficial to all the owners." Thus, Riesman makes a subtle differentiation between work done collectively for personal ends versus work done collectively for the public good. However, this differentiation may be too fine-grained for our purposes for it will never be easy, or rarely even possible, to assess people's motives for any given undertaking. One could even question whether the work done by ton youth groups described above is done in the public interest -- certainly it has public benefits, but in the main the youth are recompensed for their efforts, and certainly enjoy their year-end party and feast, so there are personal motivations and rewards, too. This is a fascinating problem but one which we must leave aside for now in order to further explore aspects of Fulbe organization and the imputed lack thereof.

Almost in passing, Reisman describes for the Fulbe an interesting practice found elsewhere in the world and often considered a part of the "culture of poverty,"¹⁵ a way in which poor people cope with their needs: a vast and vital network of swapping goods and services among people. If one needs string, one simply asks someone for some, knowing that in the future that person will need to ask for something back. This system is highly dispersed, a "dense" (Bott, 1971) network in which there is little organization, no hierarchy, and no "membership" per se, but which does

function to serve certain needs (cash?) and spread out capabilities and assets among those who temporarily "have" and those who "need." This is the kind of system that, though it works quite well on its own, would be very difficult to tap into or to "mobilize" in any way for it is too dispersed and unstructured.

There is a more formalized feature of Jelgobe life which Riesman denies has any public meaning--this is the practice of alms giving, a Muslim trait, in which alms are given to either a man of God, his student, or a person in need (especially an orphan or old woman). There are set occasions every year when each family gives a certain number of measures of millet (no information is provided on who gathers this contribution or who distributes it). Riesman claims that these alms are given selfishly because the act of giving alms brings merit to the giver. Further, the author claims, there is no "latent" public good in the donations because they do not serve to reinforce bonds between people, nor do they amount to enough to really provide for the survival of the poor, nor do they function to redistribute wealth for in fact alms often serve to make religious leaders more wealthy than they would be otherwise.

Having presented all these arguments demonstrating that there is no concept of cooperation for the public good among the Jelgobe, Riesman almost sheepishly admits that perhaps there does exist among them one clear example of cooperation "in the Western sense." This is the practice by which each family sends one or more men to participate in a day's work on the Sheeku's fields, an event which draws hundreds of people together. Similarly, labor is donated for construction and repair of the village mosque, though these tasks draw a smaller crowd. These are clear examples of cooperative labor donated for a public cause, very similar to what will

be discussed below for Thailand, and which has been used quite successfully there for promoting local development projects.

Before turning to specific recommendations for linking with local social organizations, I wish to discuss one last aspect of the general picture of local social organizations in French West Africa, "the woman question."

Women's Local Social Organizations. The relevant question here, "how can women help contribute to the project capacity of local governments?" is difficult to answer, partly because of the extreme scarcity of information and also because of lack of interest in the question on the part of many Third World policy makers. In terms of the subject matter of this paper, local social organizations, little can be said definitively about their existence among West African women, their nature, and their potentials.¹⁶

One thing is clear: if we search the literature for mention of age sets, age grades, elder sets, or secret societies composed of females in Upper Volta and Mali, whenever such are found to exist they tend to do so in a less durable fashion than those of males. In most cases, wherever youth groups exist, there are groups for both boys and girls, and those composed of girls sometimes perform similar functions to those of the boys (working in the fields) but also more "auxiliary" functions to the boys' groups. For instance in Meillassoux's (1968) description of Bamana youth groups in rural Mali, we learn that the boys' group earns money through agricultural labor while the girls' group does so by ginning, spinning or hairdressing. Sometimes the girls' group helps the agricultural work of the boys by preparing food for the teams, an important auxiliary function. In the urban situation, there are coed "dance clubs" which actually seek out pretty girls as members in order that the "best" males will then join (Meillassoux, 1968, p. 139). This represents a stage in the evolution of

traditional entertainment clubs which performed dances for the neighborhood's enjoyment and had certain "public good" aspects, but the present urban dance club has no direct public benefit at all and certainly no project capacity at this point (though one might want to levy a luxury tax on the club's activities!). Another example of females' "second class" membership in youth associations comes from Hammond's work on the Mossi of Yarenga, Upper Volta. Bond friends among the Mossi are among the most intense personal relationships one ever has, and among males, the relationship is given a special name (dao menga). While the relationship also exists among females, it is not given a special name, which Hammond notes is "probably a manifestation of the fact that the lesser social and economic mobility of women makes reliance on any associational ties necessarily less intense and sustained" (Hammond, 1966, p. 133).

Thus while girls often have similar associations with similar leadership patterns within them as boys do, there is less elaboration, less durability, and less intensity (apparently) in girls' organizations. The factors behind this difference are many and complex: no doubt, as Hammond notes, bond friends may not be as critical for females as males because females less often participate in urban migration for work (in which case bond friends generally go together for mutual support). Additionally, marriage is a critical factor in dissolving female ties of solidarity where virilocal residence after marriage is the practice, because such a residence pattern serves to disperse girls from their age mates. Further, since the average age at marriage for girls is generally several years younger than that of males, girls' groups are broken up sooner than the corresponding boys' groups. While I cannot make a definitive statement for Upper Volta and Mali due to a lack of descriptive evidence on marriage patterns and girls' age sets themselves, I have no evidence of a female counterpart of

the males' elder age sets, or of women's age sets enduring through marriage as documented by MacCormack (1977, p. 93-100) for the Sande society in Sierra Leone.¹⁷ There is some evidence from the Gambia and Senegal of greater organization and durability of female associations than what appears to be the case further east. Among the Wolof in the Gambia, Ames found a spectrum of female groups: the most typical is that of young unmarried females and those who are married but have not yet taken up residence with their husbands; then a separate group of young mothers; and another group of prepubescent girls, too.¹⁸ However, not all villages have such an elaborately defined structure and, if very small, may completely lack any such groupings. Another case of an adult women's association comes from the far south of Senegal in Casamance where mothers form day care cooperatives; they take turns staying in the villages caring for the children of the mothers in the group while the other women work in the rice gardens (Basta, 1980). Obviously the type of work that women do has a bearing on the nature of the organizations they form.

Marketing has its own special pattern of problems and potentials for women's organizations. As portrayed in the literature, the competitive nature of the marketplace makes it difficult for market women to form associations with other women with whom they are in daily competition.¹⁹ As described by ^{B.} Lewis (1976), market women in Abidjan (mainly two groups were studied, the Northern Manding clusters and the Southern Lagoon peoples of the Ivory Coast) even RoSCAs do not survive among market women due to tensions between the women, instead most women resort to using an "ambulatory" banker with whom one makes regular deposits and then later collects a lump sum. Unfortunately such a system mitigates ^{against} ~~possibilities~~ for collective action which is needed among the women to help them achieve goals such as protesting rent raising of market stalls by the local authorities (again

we have a conflict between what the authorities may wish to do and the strength of local groups to contest that, in this case one must wonder if in fact local authorities are not content with a situation in which groups of women have no collective force).

In terms of the nature of women's traditional organizations in Upper Volta, I can bring only indirect evidence to bear on the problem such as occasional statements referring to their existence, for example that of Madame Mariam Thiam (1979) in a brief article written for the Union des Femmes in Mali, that women "can be members of various associations and groups, and even secret societies in which as "witch doctors" they have great influence over their fellow citizens because they are feared." This statement is confusing when compared to Eskilinen's comment that in Mali women's indigenous organizations have been outlawed in favor of the National Women's Organization, on whose behalf Madame Thiam was speaking (1979, pp. 245, 270). "Modern" women's groups do exist in Mali under the auspices of the National Women's Organizations but are reputed to be poorly organized in the rural areas and their activities designated by the local government. The author advises that, to reach rural women, one should bypass the women's group entirely and appeal to the women through their husband's mosque or church group. I think the situation is not as bleak as that. According to the Mali Country Development Strategy Statement FY 1982, the Mission is working with the Union des Femmes on "small community projects" and a "training project" to encourage women to see and appreciate their role in development. It would be helpful to know more about how these projects are proceeding; indeed, a full study of the organization, functions, and goals of the Union des Femmes in Mali (and its counterpart in Upper Volta, the Fédération des Femmes Voltaïques, the FFV) would be very useful to assess their capabilities for assuming project leadership, management and

cost-sharing. Of course beyond the women's formal groups, there is the potential of working with informal groupings, such as neighborhood associations; this is being done on one project run by the World Bank in Upper Volta -- unfortunately details are not available on the nature of the project (Scott, 1979).

More detailed evidence as to the nature of the indigenous organizations comes from ^BLewis' study of Manding women's associational activities outside the marketplace in Abidjan, which probably are somewhat similar to those of Manding women further north (1976). She describes several RoSCA-like organizations which appear to be very popular and effective: the furu moni (a marriage association to cover costs of one's daughters' marriage; there are several varieties with varying degrees of centralization), the djigi moni and safina moni (birth and soap associations in which one contributes either cash or soap drawn on by members when they have a baby), and the diaou moni or wari moni (commerce or money associations in which capital is saved and drawn on for the satisfaction of individual needs), and the pilgrimage association (both men and women belong, giving monthly contributions; the winner is chosen by lot each year and "wins" a trip to Mecca). In all of the groups there is a leader, but depending on the group the leader has more or less strength (one of the most powerful leaders is that of the pilgrimage association).

The most relevant piece of information on women's RoSCAs comes from Rupp's work on the Dilly area in Mali where she reports that Peul (semi-nomadic) women frequently organize pari, a rotating credit union (Rupp, 1975). In this case "sizable sums" are amassed and generally used for important ceremonies (marriages, funerals, baptisms, circumcisions, and excisions). It is obvious, therefore, that women in many villages of Upper Volta and Mali have traditionally formed financial groupings in order

to satisfy their needs.²⁰ It is unfortunate if official policy seeks to stifle that behavior rather than foster it. Research is needed on both the local level of activity and the official perception of such action in order to help formulate a more effective plan than abolishment of a traditional form before a viable substitute can be put in place. It is to the related questions of integrating local organizations into the development process in Mali and Upper Volta that I now turn.

Local Revenue Administration Problems and LSO Potential

Both the Mali CDSS and the Upper Volta CDSS emphasize the urgency of finding ways to cope with skyrocketing recurrent costs of projects and also the broader problem of project capacity--which the Mali CDSS (USAID/Mali, 1980, p. 33) terms "absorptive capacity" or "the broad limits to the effective use of development assistance" including skilled management and trained personnel. Another major problem which the two countries share is that of infrastructure, particularly the lack of an adequate road system; roads are critical because they complement so many project goals. In the eastern ORD of Upper Volta (USAID/Upper Volta, 1980, p. 40) there is a great need for a good road (two-lane, paved) connecting that area with Niger to the east. The special problems of small herders could be helped with the improvement of such "collective capital" as animal vaccination centers and well-placed watering holes.²¹ Both countries are also interested in improving the collection rates of their current direct tax systems and the GOUV has initiated a study to see how that could best be done especially of individual income, small business profits and property taxes (USAID/Upper Volta, 1980, p. 13). However, the Upper Volta CDSS does point out that project benefits cannot be fully recovered through taxation in the foreseeable future (it is not clear whether this is the case given

existing or improved rates of collection) and most everyone would agree that something beyond (instead of ?) taxation must be done to help ensure the continuation of necessary projects. It is my contention that a careful assessment and integration of certain local organizations and their leaders into development projects has a great deal of potential for helping to solve all of the problems discussed in the preceding paragraph. Let us look first at improved project capacity.

General Project Capacity. Project capacity is the ability to carry on an effective project and thus includes much more than the financial questions of outset and recurrent costs. It is, in the words of the Mali CDSS writers, "a human and management problem that goes back at its heart to how people organize themselves to accomplish what they wish to do" (USAID/Mali, 1980, p. 33). Both skilled management and capable personnel are as important to project success as financial resources.

In this respect, many of the organizations described in this section (not to mention more strictly governmental structures such as local councils) have rich potential for contributing to higher project capacity rates. For instance, the Malian joro is in fact a "project manager" already, the project being range management. An added advantage of the joro pattern is that joros from many areas sometimes meet to discuss range use so there exists a certain degree of centralization and articulation with higher authorities. The combined efforts of elder sets (as counsels) and youth work groups form an indigenous management and implementation team already; the projects with which they are involved are quite diverse, and probably quite easily altered to include more formal project work if that were presented correctly to the decision-makers and youth workers. In fact, integrating traditional activities of youth work groups with more "modern"

goals might help stimulate greater commitment of the youth to their home areas and stem the tide of youth emigration which, according to Rupp for the Dilly area, is partly prompted by the desire of youth to escape from what they view as the tradition-bound, dull, elder-controlled village scene. Thus it might be important to try to give youth more of a say in what tasks they would undertake in order to make them feel more autonomous from the control of the elders (Rupp, 1975, p. 76). Incentives are as always a delicate issue, but given the Malian propensity for voluntary action, perhaps they would not even be necessary. Certainly the kinds of incentives used in some youth schemes, which are really scarcely incentives at all but means of indebting the youths so that they cannot leave, should be avoided.²² The esprit de corps of those youth groups extant in Mali and Upper Volta is an important element of their success and must be maintained, therefore the youths' commitment to the tasks must be ensured. One way of doing this is to get them to do things like those tasks that they already do but for more "modern" reasons. Entertainment functions as secondary to the worktasks of the groups appear to be another important element in their success, so they should be encouraged, too.

Clearly it is just as important that projects strive to be self-managed as self-financed. Each project should include plans for bringing in and training (when necessary) local people to take over managerial posts. While this may sound like an "easier said than done" suggestion, but if one starts with the available local talent (of which there is much in Mali and Upper Volta), then there is not so far to go. In these two countries the local situation fosters leadership and organizational skills in both males and females of each age cohort through age grade activities and training, though of course there are important village-to-village and tribe-to-tribe

variation in the existence of such which must be taken into account. For example, it was discovered in the process of implementing the women's education project in the Kongoussi area (northwest center, predominantly Mossi) of Upper Volta, that many villages had no women's group or "female dignitary" (McSweeney, 1979, p. 39).²³ Also, with pure pastoralists the pattern may be somewhat different from that of settled villagers. It is impossible to say at this point whether successful local organizations among one group are transferable to another group which does not possess that organizational pattern traditionally. It would be better, certainly at the beginning anyway, to work with those organizations which show the most potential for being integrated into project work, such as the ton.

Project Finance. Local social organizations can make a significant contribution here in several different ways, particularly in terms of voluntary labor contributions for construction and physical maintenance of certain kinds of projects, sometimes also financial contribution (cost-sharing is highly feasible in such instances).

Much labor is already donated in many rural areas of French West Africa as part of a traditional "nonformal" revenue system. Because it is nonformal, there is no way of including the contribution and its worth in public "accounts."²⁴ We do not know how much "labor revenue" is collected in any area, nor can we assess the worth of the labor and compare its effectiveness to a purely monetary scheme. However, there are several indications that labor donations are effective, and even more so than would be the case if they were replaced by taxes and revenue-supported services. First, there is obviously a great deal of surplus labor to be tapped, far more surplus labor than cash particularly of males. Second, there is already an extant system of collection with its own system of enforcement and regulation. Even though this may seem inefficient at times, the fact

that it is working and accomplishes its tasks is a sign that there is an indigenous management set-up. Third, the costs of this indigenous system are low because many of the "administrative personnel" work for free, or for very small amounts of pay. Thus costs of informal administration compared to that of formal administration are ridiculously low, and tapping into the indigenous system would help to lower recurrent costs of project personnel.

In terms of the services that can help shoulder some of the recurrent costs of projects, there are certain tasks that local groups such as the ton seem particularly well suited for. The most important of these in West Africa is road repair and maintenance. Village youth groups are already accustomed to maintaining village paths and routes between villages. True, maintenance of a two-lane black-topped road is a somewhat different matter in technical requirements, but some on-the-job training of slight magnitude would be sufficient. A more delicate issue is the proper contacting of the village elders and work groups leaders, and the organization of different village tons to work on different parts of the road. Organization could best be done in a segmentary fashion as has worked so well in Thai villages for irrigation maintenance (see following section on Thailand). All that is required is a further articulation of groupings that already exist, using leaders who are already in place. Inter-village relations should be studied carefully because if there are strong rivalries and antagonisms then problems may arise (in the case of Thai irrigation organization, inter-village hostilities were one of the few major recurrent dilemmas). Another hurdle would be the feeling of commitment of a ton to a section of the road if it did not appear to directly benefit their village -- here we have a case of the problem of "project ownership." Instilling a sense of responsibility for a section of road that is somewhat distant from the village will take imaginative planning. Perhaps a more direct benefit perceived to

be of value to the community could be "traded" for work on the road, such as teachers' salaries, or something else that the villagers want but have a difficult time providing for themselves.

Voluntary associations can make more direct financial contributions to development projects, too. A major example of this financial role is the regional association, a type of voluntary association which has been defined as a group". . .formed by migrants in towns who come from a common area of origin and who group together to form a club which is identified with their particular home area" (Skeldon, 1977). Sub-types of regional association can also be delineated depending upon their goals -- those concerned primarily with the uplift of their home areas have been called "development" or "progress" associations. They are very common in Latin America, ~~as will become apparent in the section below on Guatemala~~, and are also to be found in towns and cities of French West Africa. One example is the Association Amicale des Maliens in the Ivory Coast town of Gagnoa studied by B. Lewis (1971). The group consisted of 35 members recruited regardless of cultural-linguistic group origins which bespeaks a certain liberal tendency in terms of Malian "joining" behavior which overrides any strong ethnic feelings.²⁵ In one instance the association donated 25,000 cfa to help construct a radio transmitter in Bamako of which the total cost was 100,000 cfa, all collected in the form of donations from Malians both within and outside Mali. Expatriate concern and donations are important present and potential sources of revenue for local projects which are currently undertapped and under-appreciated in the overall development picture.

Improving tax collection rates. In countries with dispersed populations, particularly nomadic groups, the collection of taxes is especially difficult due to the ease of evasion. Two experts on the Malian cattle situation

suggest that the current high rate of cattle tax evasion could be lessened if collection took place more "locally" than is presently the case (Beazer and Stryker, 1976). Localization of collection, they reason, would help to overcome the problems of sheer distance and the wide dispersion of the tax base caused in large part by the nature of the pastoralist tradition. Interestingly, the solution to the problem seems also to come out of the pastoral tradition and the social organization it engenders. If we look at the social organization of such pastoralists as the Fulbe described by Lewis with their cattle manager, the jooro, it is clear that there already exists a structure which could be used for revenue collection at the local level. The joor's present function incorporates revenue collection on a small, but efficient and socially sensitive, scale. The major problem that would arise immediately is that the jooro's loyalty lies with his tribe and any change which would also make him equally responsible to local authorities might throw the faith of his tribesmen into doubt. However, if as the experts suggest, the taxes collected by the jooro were firmly tied to a visible service that is needed, then the attitude problem could be kept in check. The most important service needed is better, more, well-placed water holes to which the jooro and his followers would have defined rights. According to the experts cited above, if cattle tax collection were improved by only a small margin, then recurrent costs of the Malian Cattle Project could be met. This seems to be a case where a small amount of effort, a slight shift in tax collection procedures, could make the difference between financial success and failure of the project. And, in this case, using an indigenous organization would be the most logical way to make that shift.

All of the above doesn't necessarily help solve the problem of tax collection among the settled population for in the settled village

situation a different pattern of revenue problems and potentials exists. Here both land and cattle are the primary taxable property. Improving the assessment and collection on these could also be done by incorporating an indigenous system: the "administration" of village elders which seems to be a ubiquitous pattern throughout West African villages. Currently it is the village elders and work group leaders who decide how "labor revenue" is to be "collected." There is no reason why the same system could not be applied to the collection of monetary taxes. The council could be involved in assessment procedures, too, as has been done in some former British colonies of East Africa (Scovill, 1975). The youth work groups could form an important auxiliary force in the assessment process and also perhaps in collection, too. Any problem and complaints would be subject to review of the village elders/village council as is the present case with other intra-village disputes. Obviously proper recognition of these para-governmental services would be required, whether in the form of salaries (percentage of what has been collected) or more traditional remuneration in the form of harvest time feasts and parties.

Though clearly many pastoral groups of French West Africa such as the Fulbe do not appear to be "joiners" in the Western sense, if one looks closely, certain patterns do emerge which can be tied to specific local development problems more effectively than is the present case. The nature of that connection will have to probably be on a "project-by-project" basis due to the "localness" of the groups discussed above, their lack of an overarching, coordinating hierarchy, and the slim possibility of success in creating such a hierarchy at this time. However, this need not be taken as directly opposed to the strategy proposed in the Upper Volta CDSS (USADI/Upper Volta, 1980) which suggests that, to solve the huge problem of recurrent costs, there should be a centralized fund, not tied to individual

projects. The proposal I am making could be used to supplement the idea of the mission, perhaps for now on an experimental basis in order to explore the demands on administrative³⁴ capacity the more localized approach would make. It appears that in the short run it would take more effort to launch the local effort but that such would become largely self-sustaining and self-regulating in a much shorter time than the CDSS proposal could ever hope for. Further, the idea I put forth has the side benefit of strengthening local skills, talents and development potential instead of simply finding a new source of income from the outside, which is more or less what the CDSS plan entails. (Unfortunately my idea does not help the U.S. sell commodities to Upper Volta).

The comparison between the French and English colonial heritage is important for understanding the kinds of potentials in West Africa that have been left untouched there. The French were more reluctant to tap into local structures for fear of local strength countering their attempts to spread French culture throughout their colonies. It is strong possibility that the English colonial heritage is partly responsible for the greater vitality of local self-help efforts in East Africa than Francophone West Africa which only emphasizes the rich potential for self-help efforts and improved project capacity at the local level in West Africa (Barclay, 1979).

Thailand

Moving half way around the world from West Africa to Southeast Asia, we encounter a strikingly different picture of local revenue problems and prospects, and a rather different pattern of local organizational input. Another difference is the abundant literature, both ethnographic and developmental, at the village level, describing the decades of in-depth experience with development projects of many types including local

government reform. The USOM's Accelerated Regional Development Program (ARDP) instituted in the early 1960's in order to promote political stability and counteract insurgency in the border areas (particularly the Northeast) spawned a large number of local level studies on such issues as irrigation, road-building, local perceptions of national identity, etc. (Scoville and Dalton, 1974).

In Thailand the problems of local-level taxation and administration are also rather different from those in Mali and Upper Volta. As it now stands, the only tax which the local authorities (at the tambon level) are empowered to levy and collect is the house and land tax which provides only a very small amount of revenue for the local bodies to work with (Yothapibal, 1970). The most pressing problems of administration are the lack of administrative training and experience of officials in working together as a group. There are also political problems involved in the attempt to develop greater local government strength at the tambon level because officials higher up feel that they themselves will lose power in the change. Additionally it has been posited that cultural values on the part of villagers are deterrents since there exist strong feelings which "stress the passing of responsibility and decision-making to higher levels" (USAID/Thailand CDSS, 1980, p. 16). While this may to an extent be true, there is ample evidence on the other side, too, demonstrating that villagers often take an active interest in determining which types of projects they would like to have implemented and how they would like to have those projects financed (Blimes, 1979; Yatsushiro, 1966).

USAID in Thailand is concentrated in the areas of the North and the Northeast, the poorest regions of Thailand by most standards. Major strategies for development as described in the CDSS (USAID/Thailand, 1980)

include: providing cost-effective services to the North and Northeast, and the strengthening of local government ability and local capacity to plan and carry out small projects. The focus in terms of specific support is directed toward irrigation: rehabilitation of existing systems, completion of those which have been started, and research into effective organization of farmers for better water use and maintenance of extant systems. Local social organizations in rural Thailand have a great deal of relevance to all of these problems and goals. Here I will first review the major types of local social organizations and their current functions, and then move on to an appraisal of their roles vis-à-vis development needs of the rural Northeast and North.

Varieties of LSOs

"Loose structure" or structure? In order to put the entire issue of Thai local voluntary associations into broader perspective, I must mention the long-standing and still quite prominently featured characterization of Thai social organization as "loosely structured."²⁶ This was first applied to Thailand by the anthropologist Embree in a publication of 1951 and was based on his fieldwork in the village of Bang Chan in the central region near Bangkok. The concept of loose structure inspired many other researchers and colored many other researchers' findings; it still echoes in the work of Ingle (1974) who states that "relatively few indigenous rural associations exist in rural Thailand." Additionally, Uphoff and Esman's (1974) comparative analysis of local organizations for rural development in more than a dozen Asian countries found a very small number of associational organizations in Thailand. Out of 18 countries, Thailand was next to the lowest in number of associational organizations. Indeed, in the overall analysis Thailand falls into the "less organized" in category, as

compared to the "more organized." All of which would lead a researcher interested in local organization in Thailand to expect a rather grim situation in which people are autonomously and independently floating in individual social spheres. However, the recent work of Potter (1976) who lived in Chiangmai village of Chiang Mai Province in the North exposes a strikingly different pattern in which villagers are involved in many different types of local organizations serving many different purposes.

Potter's Findings in Chiangmai Village. In the following discussion of the types and functions of associational groupings in rural Thailand, I draw heavily on Potter's description of groups in the village he studied, but will add details provided by other researchers from other areas. Let it be noted that there is always the possibility of regional variations in the existence and viability of certain organizations, for example local irrigation associations will exist only where local irrigation systems exist, but by and large the supposed "lack" of local associations in rural Thailand seems to be more a problem of analytical definition of what is a local association worthy of the name rather than of a lack of functional groupings. However, one would do well to keep in mind the possibility that nearness of a village to Bangkok could have a deleterious effect on the viability of village groups, and thus "modernization" in general should be viewed carefully in terms of its effects on local groups. Obviously in the process of social change, some groupings fade away and others grow in strength. What is critical is that rapid social change may bring the destruction of certain forms of organization before a viable replacement develops. In terms of the specific regions of Thailand in which USAID is active, they seem to be the areas where there is least break-down of traditional forms and where indigenous organizations are thus still the most active.

The first point Potter makes about village organization itself is revealing in its counterthrust to those before him who have emphasized the lack of group cohesiveness, responsibility and cooperation among the rural Thai. Potter contends that the village itself is a corporate group, owning corporate property which is maintained through labor and funds donated by the whole village. Corporate village property includes the temple and its grounds, the temple library, the monastery and school, the irrigation canals which crisscross the villages, the cremation grounds and the village roads. He states that, regarding such corporate goods, "Everyone uses them, and everyone helps maintain them. All citizens of the community must contribute labor to repair the public property when called upon to do so by the leaders of the village; this is one of the obligations of citizenship" (1976, p. 37).

Within this broad village corporate structure, there are several more focused groups. There is the temple committee, the members of which are elected by the villagers; it manages the operations of building new pavillions and arranges religious fairs. The school committee, among other things, organizes village labor to build the village's new school, a project funded with government support. There is a Young People's Club to which all youth from about the age of 15 up to their marriage belong. This combined service recreational club has an elected leader and performs important assistance to the village during all major ceremonial occasions by setting up chairs, serving food and refreshments, and managing the parking lot.²⁷ The village dancers are a group of about a dozen young unmarried women which acts as the host for intervillage affairs, a sort of welcoming committee; the group is supported by the temple which purchases costumes and instruments for them. The funeral society is an important voluntary

association and every village family belongs to at least one, usually more. Its purpose is to provide financial aid for funeral services and cremation costs, however, since the bereaved household always receives more than it needs for those costs, it is also a kind of "life insurance society." The funeral society has a fairly well developed administrative structure: it is run by a committee (how many members we do not know) whose members receive compensation for their efforts, oversee the collection of the original initiation fee and the 2 baht donation upon a death of a family member, and also hand over the collection to the recipient family. (One latent function of the funeral society is inter-village cohesion as membership often spreads to other villages). Another village organization, though less formal than the one discussed above, are the neighborhood divisions organized for the purposes of sending food to the temple for the monks.²⁸ In this village arrangement, each neighborhood takes turns preparing food and taking it to the temple. Each section has a leader usually a woman from a major matrilineage of that part of the village. Cooperative labor exchange groups are also pervasive. Each household participates in many such groups for rice agricultural tasks, thus the groups have highly overlapping member-

the type of the network engendered. Perhaps the most important organization in the village Potter studied is the irrigation association to which he devotes a separate chapter and which is worth discussing at some length here as the structure and workings of the irrigation association are a model of administrative efficiency.

Irrigation Organization: the Chiangmai Model. In the area where Potter worked there is a traditional local irrigation system operated and

maintained by the villagers (this system, according to the author, is replicated in hundreds of other localities in the Chiangmai watershed).

The traditional system appears to work quite well:

The Thai government has been satisfied with building large concrete weirs and water gates on the main river channels and has not yet interfered much with the internal operation of local systems, probably because the government officials recognize that the systems are managed quite well by long-established principles (Potter, 1976, p. 82).

The social organization of the irrigation system is very important for our discussion here. In terms of maintenance of the traditional system: every year the main weir across the Ping River is washed away by floods and must be rebuilt, a task which takes "two weeks of concentrated labor by all the farmers who use the system" (Potter, 1976, p. 88). (One wonders in this case if women, who constitute a large proportion of the farmers of Thailand, especially in the North and Northeast, also help in the rebuilding or if they have to hire a man to take their place.) Also the entire length of the earthen canal has to be cleared at least once a year and the smaller ones more often, which takes several weeks all told. All of these tasks require a good deal of cooperation and organization. Personnel involved include: the headman of the entire irrigation system, chosen by the three kamnan (heads of tambon) served by the system. The current head of the system described by Potter has been headman for about twenty years, is a wealthy man of high social status commanding "the respect necessary for the head of an entire irrigation system." The headman has two assistant heads (one is himself a kamnan, the other a village headman). These three officials constitute the major decision-making body. The second level of leadership consists of the heads of each major canal in the system (how many we do not know). At the next level are the village irrigation headmen, chosen by the village farmers, and often the same person as the village

headman. At the lowest level of administration are the assistant village irrigation headmen who largely serve as message runners between villages. Additionally, there are two gatemen who guard the water gates and regulate the flow of water under orders from the officials. (For a representation of the various levels, see Fig. 1). Irrigation officials have many duties and responsibilities including the keeping of rather elaborate records and the arbitration of disputes. For their services they do receive certain benefits such as exemption from furnishing irrigation labor, or payment of taxes on a stipulated portion of land, or keeping some of the fines levied against those delinquent in providing labor.

The Farmers' Group: A Modern Organization. Another important organization, though of more recent origin, is the Farmers' Group or Farmers' Association which is primarily a buying club; the members join together, each paying a certain amount yearly as membership fee, and then are entitled to buy fertilizer, insecticide, and farm implements at lower prices than would otherwise be the case. It is this organization which one author, Ondam (1970) thinks has the greatest development potential at the local level. In a case study he does of the Ban Nayom Farmers' Group in Changwat Ubol Rajathani in the far eastern portion of the country, Ondam found that the organization took on additional developmental functions such as lending money to members at no interest, purchasing a water pump for group member use, building a rice bin, and beginning to plan for the provision of electricity to members. Few of these projects are financed from the accumulated dues of the members, which are not substantial and are generally used to transport the executive members of the organization for occasional meetings with the Rice Officer. The rice bin, for instance, was purchased with special contributions from the members. In addition to these direct functions, Ondam views the groups as important because they help people

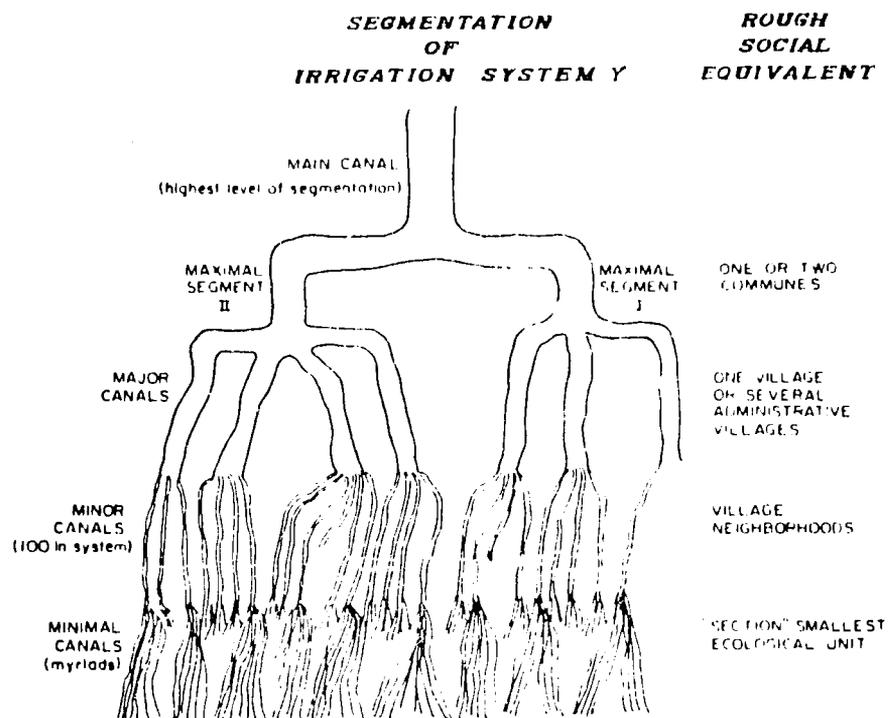


Figure 1. Segmentation pattern of traditional irrigation system in
Chingmai village. After Potter 1976, p. 97.

learn how to organize themselves and work together for group improvement and to learn self-government more or less "automatically." The main problems, he points out, are the need for more funds to work with and the members' lack of managerial skills. Again, I am curious as to whether farmers' groups include women in a representative way, and if women are included, whether they have an equal voice.

The question of "female status" in Thailand is complex. Obviously rural Thai women have much more domestic authority than do rural women of Bangladesh, for example. S. Potter's research on women in Chiangmai village clearly demonstrates the domestic importance of northern Thai women which stems, in the main, from their central role in rice production. In comparing the status of women in Thailand and Bangladesh, one author has gone as far as stating that in Thailand women's position is equal to that of men (Haque, 1977, p. 74). This assertion is a bit extreme and any attempt to characterize the "Thai women" in general will be inadequate due to striking regional and class differences yet to be explored by social scientists.

A related and important issue here is the role of women in public affairs--a subject which also raises disagreement. Keyes, on the basis of his experience in the Northeast, states that women there are rarely "elders" of the village unless they are teachers, something which he interprets "as being correlated with a fundamental division in peasant social structure whereby women are expected to manage internal affairs of the families while men handle the external relations. . ." (Keyes, 1970, p. 96). However, in a footnote on the same page, Keyes records a comment from Saisth Pornkeuw (former District Officer and Assistant Governor of Ubon Province, also in the Northeast) that women who are spiritual mediums (mophifa) are often influential in village affairs. Regional variations in the public power

of women in rural Thailand are without doubt significant, but have not as yet been "mapped."

Another aspect of women's role in local social organizations and leadership involves the degree to which they exercise influence in groups depending on whether the groups are female-only in membership or mixed male and female. It has been hypothesized by one scholar that women tend to have less voice in sex-mixed organizations so that, in Thailand, where women do participate in many public organizations as members, we still need to know if the nature of their participation is equal to that of the men. For a cogent discussion of this problem (see Staudt, 1979, p. 55).

Mobilizing Thai LSOs for Improved Project Capacity. Though one may argue as to which are the most effective or promising local organizations for development purposes in rural Thailand, one cannot argue that there is a lack of such organizations. There seem to be highly developed patterns of cooperation including substantial contributions of labor and money for local projects. Indeed, such has been long recognized by the Thai government which has tried to utilize and enhance local efforts and patterns of participation. There have been attempts to mobilize youth groups and involve the national women's organizations in development concerns, in addition to organizing credit unions, farmers's groups and irrigation groups.

Information on the rather extensive efforts to mobilize youth for development in Thailand can be found in Moore (1974, p. 423), Ackerman (1970), Muecke (1980), and UNESCO (1979). In the last source it is mentioned that the Thai government is particularly interested in developing youth programs which are both based on local initiative and financially self-supporting. Muecke (1980) gives an account of the Village Scouts, a country wide organization established to promote nationalism and combat

"subversion." In 1978 its membership numbered about 2.5 million youths (all boys, I assume). The Girl Guides Association of Thailand (GGAT) is active in funding projects concerning human development and simple vocational training for girls from low-income families. As recorded in a file of projects involving women kept by the New Transcentury Foundation, the GGAT contributed \$22,845 to a project (total cost \$55,845), which is a sizable sum in Thailand; I am not informed as to the sources of GGAT funds.

In terms of women's organizations, it seems that the National Council of Thai women is concerned and involved with development-related work, as witnessed by their shared funding of the Survey Report on the Status of Thai Women in Two Rural Areas (National Council of Women of Thailand, 1977). Again, just as in the cases of Mali and Upper Volta, a study of the National Council of Women of Thailand would be very useful, as there is little in the literature which informs us about the goals, structure and revenue base of the organization (we do know that it has 91 local branches which means, on the average, at least one per changwat, but we do not know the actual location of the branches).

Unfortunately there is one major problem in tapping into local organizations, that is, government "suspicion of any effort of minority members to group together, be it at the provincial or village level, unless under the control of the government; for the government fears that these groupings will either be created or later taken over by separatist or irredentist elements among the minority and used as a tool for detaching the minority area from Thailand" (Thomas, 1970, p. 146). This is especially true of organizations in the four southern, Muslim districts. So, obviously, government attitude stands as one problem in the use of local social organizations for development -- the organizations must pass approval as being non-subversive or else their activities will be squelched. In order to

put the potential of local social organizations into sharper perspective in Thailand, I will now describe the major problems there, especially those in which AID is interested and possibilities for use of local organizations.

The Land Tax and the "Labor Tax." In order to strengthen the budgets of local authorities especially of the tambon, a major option being considered is that of increasing the land tax. As pointed out by Nilpanch, one of the problems of local level finance is that there is nothing left for the local authorities to tax because almost everything (but the House and Land Tax) is in the control of the central government (Nilpanch, 1976).²⁹ Revenue generated from the land tax is devoted to local development projects, but of course the amount is very small.

There are several features of the Thai land tax system which should be reviewed here. First, according to one estimate, the land tax is slightly progressive, as compared to the clearly regressive indirect taxes, primarily the rice premium (Salkin, 1974). However, the burden of the land tax is miniscule compared to that of indirect taxes. In the North the annual per capita hidden tax burden has been estimated (for the rice premium) at 77 baht while that of the Local Development tax (the same thing as the land tax) is 5 baht (Trent, 1969). Attitude surveys have shown that villagers are by and large unaware of the burden they bear indirectly, but that they are very aware of even slight changes in the rate of the land tax (Yatsushiro, 1966). Other experts insist that the land tax is too light, that it could be increased without attitudinal resistance because villagers pay the current land tax with a "high degree of equanimity" (~~Von de Meulen~~, ^{Neher} 1970^a, p. 31). The same author recommends that the land tax exemption structure be modified so that instead of 5 rai of land being exempt, only one rai would be exempt. This however, would certainly remove the slight degree of progressivity of the tax. Further, such a blanket change fails to

respond to great variations in the productivity of land. For instance, the same number of rai of irrigated rice land may be able to support a family of a given size with a certain amount of surplus (perhaps) much better than would the same number of rai of unirrigated land. Although everyone knows this in both rural Thailand and the tax-levying government bodies, it is seldom recognized in tax policy by the latter. Here is an opportunity to devise a crude tax classification scheme whereby those with more productive holdings are subject to a different exemption rate than those with less productive holdings. While this introduces a certain degree of complication into the system it also introduces some much needed flexibility and sensitivity to local conditions. As is discussed below in reference to the "Chiangmai model" of irrigation organization, many rural villagers have a very precise idea already of who owns how much of what kind of land. The advantage of developing local taxation powers should be to allow flexibility in the taxation system such that the one developed for Chiangmai may be substantively quite different than one developed for Khon Kaen in the Northeast, but as long as each is locally valid then there is no reason why they cannot be couched in different terms.

Besides the potential attitudinal resistances to raising the rate of the land tax and lowering the exemption status of land-holders, there is another problem: the current lack of identification of many properties and the lack of a complete cadastral survey for many areas (Sanguanruang, 1976). It would be helpful to know which regions are most deficient in this respect; I would hypothesize that the most difficult area to cover would be the tribal regions of the North and the Northeast where there is still a great amount of tribal migration (even across national boundaries) and shifting patterns of land use (Dessaint, 1972). Also, the lands closest to Bangkok would be the most in need of updating the existing surveys due to

the no doubt rapidly rising land values. In the former case, there is no easy answer to the question of how to run a cadastral survey in a region characterized by extreme fluidity of property ownership and where "ownership" itself is weakly defined. Here one might opt for a different system of revenue assessment altogether, dispensing with land as the important criterion and instead taxing produce (even labor would not be easily taxed here as one is never sure who is a "resident.") By taxing produce, one follows a pattern similar to that of levying a head tax on the cattle of a West African pastoralist who is only temporarily residing in a particular settlement while on the trek. In the Thai case, one would set a certain time of year (a harvest time) and collect from whoever is resident. Certainly this not a precise and predictable revenue source, though it could be in times of peace as swidden agriculturalists do move about in a fairly patterned fashion, but it is responsive to the facts of agricultural life at the local level. One thing is clear, whatever system is applied, it should not be done so by a staff composed of only central Thai whom the northerners resent (Potter, 1976, p. 31). In fact, the best procedure would be to use local organizations and leaders whenever possible and to strengthen the linkages between them and the central government.

As opposed to regions where there is no fixed property ownership and thus barriers to the achievement of cadastral surveys, there are areas where the opposite situation prevails: very well defined concepts of land ownership and detailed knowledge of who owns how much. The village of Chiangmai described by Potter is such a case, as are probably also all other Thai villages with a traditional irrigation system which prompted such organization. In describing the arrangements by which it is determined how much labor a given farmer should contribute to maintenance of the

irrigation system, Potter informs us of a very sophisticated, yet purely traditional, quasi-cadastral system which accounts for size of land owned which is served by the irrigation canals:

The traditional northern Thai measures used in calculating the appropriate work load per farmer are the "waa" and the "soog." The waa is the distance from fingertip to fingertip of a man's outstretched arms. A soog is one-fourth this, or the distance between the fingertips of a man's outstretched arm and his elbow. When the canals are being dug, a bamboo pole is brought by one of the irrigation leaders, and in front of the assembled men a young man of average stature stretches out his arms to measure a waa, and this length is cut on the bamboo pole, with the soog also being indicated. Then the distance that people have to clean is measured off with the bamboo measuring rod, one waa or soog at a time by the irrigation headmen on the ground along the canal.

To determine the length of canal to be dug and cleaned by each farmer in any particular segment of the canal system, the villagers divide the total number of tax raj of land which this length of the canal supplies with water into the length of the canal. This gives them the length to be dug per tax raj owned. Then they multiply this figure by the number of tax raj worked by each farmer who draws water from the canal; this gives the length of the canal to be dug by that particular farmer in that part of the canal. The obligations per tax raj do not change much from year to year, since the amount of land farmed has been constant for some time now, and most farmers know what their obligations will be on any given segment of the canal. Since the lengths of the different segments of the canal are fairly well known, calculations and measurements do not have to start from scratch each time the canals are cleaned.

Nevertheless, the exact length that each farmer is to dig on any particular day is measured out with the bamboo rod by the irrigation officials at the bank of the canal. The leaders of any given unit have a paper with the names of the peasants who have obligations to clean this part of the canal. Beside each man's name is the figure indicating the amount of the man's land which uses water from the canal. After determining, by formula, the length of canal to be cleaned per unit of land, the irrigation leader reads off the man's name and his helper marks off the appropriate distance. The man then enters the canal at the point and starts shoveling out mud. Everyone crowds around the leaders at the beginning. As places are assigned the crowd gradually thins out as men enter the canal and begin shoveling mud at a prodigious rate.

Unfortunately, marking off equal lengths of canal does not always ensure an equitable amount of work per unit area of land. The depth of the canal, its width, and the amount of tree roots and vegetation to be cleared away vary at different points along the waterway. The further upstream one goes toward

the river, the deeper the canyon cut by the canal becomes, and the more difficult it is to clean the mud from the bottom. To allow for this variation, adjustments are made in the length of the traditional measures; in some places a waa for a difficult stretch is only half or three-fourths as long as a normal waa.

Another method the villagers use on some sections of the canal is to divide the length of canal into the same number of sections as there are groups participating and then draw lots to see which groups clean the difficult highland sections and which clean the lower, less difficult sections. In still other parts of the canal, the order in which the various village groups dig is fixed by tradition. On one segment of the canal dug by Chiangmai villagers, the canal length is always divided into three sections: Chiangma digs the lowest section, another village the second, and a third village the furthest upstream. This arrangement is an attempt to compensate for the additional length of canal that the villages further downstream have to dig (Potter, 1976, pp. 93-95).

Clearly the local irrigation organization has achieved a very effective "cadaster" which determines how much labor-revenue is owed per family. In areas where such nonformal land registrations exist, they should be recognized and tapped into when attempting to make a more formal survey. Again there arises the question of possible transferability of "the Chiangmai system" to villages without an irrigation heritage; it is hard to say.³⁰

All of which has taken us from the major problems involved with improving the revenue from the house and land tax toward some of the potentials. The major potential for improving tambon revenue is to recognize, and better employ and deploy, the major current source of local revenue: local labor which is donated in what could be called a "self-help" fashion.

It may well be the case that labor contributions are more, much more, important than financial contributions to local revenue. However, we know very little about labor as a form of revenue in rural Thailand. Such questions as to whether some regions are relatively "richer" in this

resources than others, better at mobilizing it, and more effective in its use than others, are critical and at this time unanswerable. The answers would provide important clues for self-help development project launching and maintenance. In project work, labor revenue has other advantages over financial revenue, though there are disadvantages which must also be addressed.

Consider first the transferability of labor revenue as opposed to monetary revenue. Labor revenue tends to be tied more securely to the local area for it is simply difficult to move about without a great deal of supralocal organization or even coercion. Thus, whereas monetary revenue from better-off tambons can be easily transferred to less well-off tambons (something which is of course practiced in Thailand),³¹ there is little possibility of doing this in a formal way for labor revenue. However, in an informal way, such actually does happen as described, once again, by Potter for Chiangmai village (1976, Ch. 5). In that case, due to excellent hierarchical organization uniting three tambons in the collective care of the irrigation system, labor was mobilized to work on sections of the canal that are outside the workers' home village but contribute to the entire system. In this case the organization spanned three tambons and is thus obviously a good example of supra-village cooperation for the common good, and a good example of the feeling of "project ownership" extending beyond the village confines. Although I have not read of a similar situation being applied to roads, perhaps it could be. The major problem would be that the benefits of a road are not so directly perceived by the villagers as irrigation water is.

Though lack of ease of transferability of labor revenue may appear as a disadvantage to planners, it is actually an advantage to villagers in

regions with a rich heritage of self-help through labor mobilization because that local asset cannot be siphoned away as can monetary revenue. The best way to achieve a quasi-transferability without draining the areas which are better-off is through training, which would function to help the less well-off areas learn how to mobilize their resources in a more effective way based on their fellow citizens' models.

While much of rural Thailand presents a clear illustration of active voluntary contributions to development goals and, more specifically, projects, it is very difficult to assess and evaluate those contributions in a quantified way. If we counted all the hours and days of work contributed, or collected information on the amount of fines levied for missing a day's work of canal repair, that would be a start but it would not come close to a complete picture. Can you imagine trying to evaluate the "costs" borne by village women who contribute to feeding the village monks as compared to the "benefits" accrued to the entire village from the monks' many services? All that can be said with surety is that local organizations in rural Thailand do contribute critical resources to important "projects" such as road building and repair, canal construction and repair, and even law and order. This can be argued on the basis of the fact that there are such infrastructural features and other "services" in existence (even though they are not sophisticated or very modern) and they are obviously not supported through the local development tax which is far too insignificant to do much more than help with a small bit of road repair costs every year, according to one case study from the North (Neher, 1970^b).

Recognition of the importance of local organizations in rural development by Thai officials has led to a proliferation of such groupings with resultant confusion as to goals and diminution of impact. Several different problems merge here in thinking about creating a more streamlined

"organization of organizations." First, as the Thailand CDSS (USAID/Thailand, 1980, p. 21) mentions, there is a problem of coordination regarding the mix between traditional and modern organizations. Second, there is the need to develop stronger linkages between the local organizations and higher levels of organization, for as Uphoff and Esman note, "local institutions which are separated and isolated from other levels are likely to be impotent developmentally" (1974, p. 12). Third, there is the problem of consolidating splintered organizations at the local level. One recommendation made by Haque in his discussion of a village in Central Thailand is to consolidate the credit unions and the farmers' buying club into a single body with a combined managing committee which, he suggests, would in time become a nucleus for a "village committee," a major developmental decision-making body of the village (Haque et al., 1977, p. 79). Upon the foundation of such a powerful village organization then, the same author continues, could be built a federation of village committees to undertake such critical tasks as rice storage, processing and marketing.

Single-function projects, particularly irrigation. A second major concern of USAID is to find cost-effective ways of maintaining and expanding small-scale irrigation facilities in the North and the Northeast. The "Chiangmai model" again presents intriguing possibilities. It is obviously a cost-effective system. Could not organizational structures like that portrayed in Fig. 1 be transplanted to other villages and regions where new irrigation facilities are being constructed or where such facilities exist but need improved management for repair and maintenance? Could not local irrigation leaders with their vast experience be brought into a training program for other local leaders? It would seem that with moderate care to inter-regional sensitivities and variations that transplantation and training could help make other irrigation projects much more successful.

And here, as is so often the case in Thailand, the most important form of revenue required would be labor revenue, something which is relatively abundant and happily donated by the local people. Hopefully consideration is being given to the use of local skills and association in a USAID-financed project involving irrigation tank rehabilitation in the Northeast scheduled for a 1980 start-up (USAID/Thailand, 1980, p. 45-46).

What about women? Although the Thailand CDSS does not specifically mention problems of women in development as one of its major concerns, USAID is currently financing several different projects directly involving women in rural Thailand. One project is training women in several villages in northeastern Thailand in modern methods of sericulture as a source of increased employment and income (Secretariat for Women in Development, 1978). In this case, though the information on the project available to me is scant, it does seem clear that one reason for the need for employment opportunities for women in the northeastern hill tribes is the present attempt by the government to get swidden agriculturalists to assume permanent settlements. Since swidden agriculture is fairly demanding of female labor, there was no problem of female employment per se under the traditional system. However, under settlement schemes the role of women changes drastically. Helping them with income generating activities seems a good plan, especially if the women are also being provided with some organizational and marketing skills so that they can maintain some control over the fruits of their production and do not become immediate victims of the vagaries of a situation which is beyond their control and understanding. In terms of this latter problem, the National Council of Women of Thailand could become involved in some linkage work, helping to develop more local women's organizations, something on the order of the notoriously successful Mothers' Clubs of Korea (Kincaid et. al., 1978) but not specifically

excluding non-mothers, which would have a savings component, too, so that the increased earnings of the women from the silk cultures could be better used.

One need of women, from both the North and Central regions of Thailand, that came through loudly from the survey taken by the National Council of Women is that of water (National Council of Women of Thailand, 1977). Surprisingly water for agricultural pursuits was the recurrently stated need of the great percentage of women. Given the convergence of USAID's interest in small-scale irrigation schemes and rural women's concern for improved access to water for cultivation (and no doubt family domestic needs, too), it seems clear that women should become involved in a formal way in irrigation improvement schemes. Depending on cultural rules involving the division of labor by sex (which may forbid actual physical participation by women in the digging of canals, etc.), women could become involved through voluntary contributions of food to work teams (as they contribute food to the monks in Chiangmai village), or even small monetary contributions for supplies using a RoSCA-type organization found in many villages to help fund funerals and cremations.

Given the facts of social life in Thailand such that there is a very high female labor participation rate in agriculture, a high number of female heads of household with a great degree of decision-making power, females must not be relegated to a secondary place by development schemes as has happened in so many other places of the world.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

All countries of the world possess local social organizations, but the variation in their structures, functions and degree of articulation with government programs is tremendous. Between countries major variation

exists depending on the colonial heritage with former British colonies exhibiting greater mobilization of local groups for "development" than former French colonies. Within countries there are also important variations by region, ethnic group, and sex as to the nature and functions of local associations. Even when such important variations are taken into account, there is still the question of whether it is better to employ traditional organizations for development purposes than to create modern structures. Obviously there is no simple formula that can be applied to all situations. This paper has examined some local associations in two areas, their current structures and functions, in light of particular development problems with which USAID is concerned.

The two case study areas provide an interesting contrast. For in West Africa, the predominant theme which emerges is that of the great untapped reservoir of project capacity via local social organizations, while in Thailand the picture is quite the opposite. There for almost two decades, AID and the Royal Thai government have made efforts to incorporate some traditional organizations (the monkhood, for instance) into their development plans, and also to create new institutions (farmers' groups, buying clubs).

Thus, while it is true that LSOs with great project capacity exist in both areas major problems involved in utilizing that capacity differ to a degree. In West Africa, problems revolve around the following:

- recognition that local organizations have very positive contributions to make by proper ministries, also rewards perhaps in the form of tax breaks, or festive affairs.
- acceptance of small, project-by-project, self-help style financing in many cases.

- inspiring local administrators in the formal apparatus to work together with "nonformal" administrators, such as the Jafaraabe jooro.
- devising plans and projects which attract youths to stay and participate in rural areas.
- getting women to work together more in the harambee style of Kenya so that their small resources may be better mobilized for both family and public betterment.
- improving the organization of the organizations - a federation of tons in one culturally and economically defined "region" would allow for transfer of resources and knowledge to weaker groups.

By way of contrast, the most striking problems of LSO contribution to project capacity ^{in Thailand} are:

- recognition that some organization forms have been overworked (Farmers' groups) while others have been relatively neglected (irrigation associations). The former may require some reorganization and revitalization, or may merit disbanding in favor of alternate structures.
- greater value placed on flexibility of local project finance to better employ the great variety of organizations with project support potential (for example, the women's neighborhood networks in the North).
- better understanding needed of regional variations in organizations and problems of transplanting. Could the Chiangmai irrigation structure be successfully replicated in the Northeast where a different ecology and variant social structure are found?

·promotion of greater number of "self-help" type projects among rural women, particularly in the realm of water supply.

Obviously, the major difference is that in West Africa much potential exists unused while in Thailand much has been over-worked or sloppily used. Similarities, interestingly enough, mainly involve problems related to attitudes in the administration and ministries regarding the proper use of LSOs. Tackling the first problem area involves "institution building," or "institution destruction." It is not an easy problem, as remarked by one writer:

What are the ethics of tampering with traditional cultural forms? If one tilts the functions of an indigenous medium too far do you run the risk of destroying the cultural form itself? What is the best way to discover which elements of a folk culture are capable of adaption for a specific set of development problems? (Colletta, 1977, p. 15).

The major recommendation relating to the second point which I wish to make is that local governments and policy makers should view local associations in Third World countries in the same way they now do PVOs (Private Voluntary Organizations) such as Care and Oxfam: as alternate and very viable sources of development support to that of government funding. In cases where the local association is formalized and hierarchically organized, with recognized headquarters, officials and regulations, then such recognition is more easily given. This is the case with the National Women's Organization of Thailand with which USAID has shared costs of specific projects. However when the organization is less formal and is very decentralized, then no doubt there will be reluctance on the part of policy makers to accord an organization (such as the tons of West Africa) a quasi-PVO status. Nevertheless such organizations do perform important services and project functions, and their recognition as doing so is an important step toward their improved performance for development goals.

As development experts search ever harder for sources of project funding and management, they should be careful not to ignore local project capacity that already exists, even though perhaps in forms that are not easily recognizable to Western eyes. One role of anthropology, with its cross-cultural vision, is to point out such possibilities to development experts and help to show how the possibilities can become realities.

NOTES

1. Several analysts have addressed the question of whether it is more effective and/or efficient to use existing social institutions for development purposes rather than creating new ones: Uphoff, Cohen and Goldsmith (1979), Siebel and Massing (1974), World Bank/Projects Advisory Staff (1980), Bouman (1977), and Missch and Margolin (1975). The specific question of improved local revenue administration and project capacity in terms of finance and management have not, to my knowledge, been explored.
2. Much of the inspiration for this section derives from Smith, Lethem and Thoolen (1980).
3. One case of using an indigenous organization as a para-governmental structure is the colonial French incorporation of marabus, Islamic religious leaders in the governing of Senegal described by Lucy Behrman (1970).
4. This was the traditional reward for those members of the community in many Guatemalan villages who took turns performing roles at the several levels of the civil hierarchy, often a personally costly social responsibility, see Wagley (1949, p. 80).
5. See Heller (1979) for a preliminary attempt at categorizing projects and their recurrent costs.
6. Indigenous women's organizations in Upper Volta, for example, have been outlawed (Eskelinen, 1979, pp. 224-320).
7. However, the pila's latent functions especially as a communications node are very important for some kinds of projects, see Colle and Colle (1979).
8. Related lists of criteria for the study of political organizations have been developed by Smith (1975, especially Chapter 6) and Tiffany (1979).
9. A recent study of such can be found in Okonjo's analysis of rural women's credit systems in Nigeria (1979).
10. An additional source on Yemen LDA's is D. Lewis (1980).
11. Mernissi (1977). In a different publication Mernissi (1975, p. 70) mentions a similar female communication node when discussing the hamman (women's Turkish-style bath).

12. Sills, in Banton and Sills (1968) provides a brief discussion of the federalized and centralized patterns of voluntary organizations.
13. Some of the major sources on the ton in West Africa are: Meillassoux (1968); Ames (1959); and Leynaud (1961).
14. Nevertheless, there is still a seriously high rate of male youth emigration from rural areas of West Africa.
15. For an excellent review of the subject, see Eames and Goode (1973), especially Chapter 5, "Coping Responses of the Urban Poor," pp. 157-216. The landmark study of such cultural coping in black urban America is Stack (1970).
16. References to female counterparts of the male groups discussed above include: for the Mossi of Upper Volta, Hammond (1966, pp. 136-137); for the Wolof of the Gambia, Ames (1959, pp. 226-227); for Bamako and its rural hinterlands, Meillassoux (1968); for the Dilly Region of Mali, Rupp (1975); for Dugukolamba of Mali, J. Lewis (1979, pp. 11-12).
17. She states that similar groups are also found in areas of Guinea and Liberia which neighbor Sierra Leone.
18. Ames (1959) states at the beginning of the articles that the solution to problems by communal effort is typical of the Wolof.
19. A major article on problems of female solidarity among market women is that of B. Lewis (1976). Reference to a similarly competitive situation is made in a report on a training program for women dyers in which women who knew the best methods were reluctant to share their valuable knowledge as it would only lower the value of their own products, see Caughman (1977).
20. It is difficult at this time to say much about the situation among pastoral women, but it is possible that the women might be more "organized" than the men as they, unlike the men, do not leave on the long herding treks so might be able to develop some more lasting ties at the camp. This is nothing more than a tantalizing hypothesis.
21. This problem is also discussed by Rupp (1975) for the Dilly area of Mali.
22. There seems to be a propensity for many youth schemes to take on an aspect of bondage, see for example, youth land settlement projects in Malaysia as described by Keong and Hock (1978).

23. One would think that the involvement of women in most projects would proceed more easily if extant lines of affiliation were followed; I am curious to know, for instance, on what basis women were recruited to participate in the Upper Volta forestry project described by Hoskins (1979).
24. Nellis (1972) reports on a case of attempting to formally account for voluntary contributions to self-help projects in Kenya. He feels that such are probably inflated.
25. Nicholas Hopkins (1972) also refers to the comparative weakness of ethnic affiliation among Malians.
26. The concept of loose structure in Thailand was first presented by Embree (1950). Potter (1976) provides an excellent review of the theory and a thorough expose of its limited applicability to much of rural Thailand.
27. This youth group was "mobilized" as part of the ARDP in 1972 under the direction of the Thai Community Development Corps which was represented in the village. As Potter notes, "The Thai government was attempting to utilize a traditional basis of village social organization for development purposes, and succeeded at least partly in doing so" (1976, p. 38).
28. Though such an organization does not exist in all villages in Thailand, it is one of the prominent formations in this area.
29. Though Ingle (1974, pp. 63-64) reports that according to a 1972 decree, the Tambon Council also should receive a proportion of residence/structure taxes, slaughtering, house revenue and gambling permit fees (it is unclear whether the first of these is the same thing as what is elsewhere referred to as the House and Land Tax).
30. See Coward (1976) for a good discussion of irrigation systems and projects in several Asian countries.
31. A description of budgetary transfers between some northern districts is provided by Neher (1970b).

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Cameroons	China	Guatemala	Jordan
East Africa (as a whole)	Thailand	Surinam	North Yemen
Gambia			
Ivory Coast			
Mali			
Sierra Leone			
Upper Volta			

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