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The "Working Group" Approach to Women and Urban Services

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## THE "WORKING GROUP APPROACH" TO WOMEN AND URBAN SERVICES

## Women and Urban Services

Gender bias in the distribution of urban services is rarely recognized. Yet, women in urban areas, particularly those in low-income households, have a special stake in the form and quality of city services. This is important since women constitute a high proportion of the poor in Latin American and Caribbean cities, and head as many as one-third of all households. Moreover, the critical role they play in family survival means that poor women carry a large share of the burden of negotiating and managing necessary services. In most cases, however, urban projects remain insensitive to the constraints women face, and to the contributions they make to their families and to the urban economy in which they take part.

The activities carried out by low income women in Latin American and Caribbean cities tend to be invisible. Indeed, the conventional concept of "work" overlooks many of the tasks women perform to keep themselves and their families afloat. In addition to the domestic chores we think of as "housework", this also includes subsistence-oriented work. Women tend kitchen gardens and domestic animals, clothe and care for family members, manage and stretch small budgets, negotiate exchange networks of kin, neighbors and patron-client relationships, and engage in income-earning activities. These multiple responsibilities define the central role women play in the survival strategies poor families devise to overcome restricted access to employment and resources. A significant proportion of women in these households not only contribute to but also bear the primary financial responsibility for their families.<sup>1</sup> In other cases their income is supplementary to their husband's or to that of some other male relative who retains, as household head, decision-making power over the allocation of household resources and labor.

The structure of the labor market, and the prevailing definitions of gender

roles, shape the income-earning alternatives available for women. "Sex-typing" in certain sectors and occupations means that women workers are concentrated in a small number of "female-dominated" jobs. In some cases this works in their favor, as in the growing demand for educated women to fill professional and clerical positions in industrializing Latin America. Poor women, however, are concentrated in low prestige, low mobility, low-paying "female-defined" occupations. Domestic service, petty vending, and the majority of "casual" jobs in the "informal sector" are held by women. Men often move in and out of - informal employment in an overall pattern leading to upward mobility. For women, on the other hand, casual work is mostly an intermittent refuge, a dead end. Women's "work" thus encompasses a range of activities and functions that differ in quality and quantity from men's employment.

The same is true when we focus on the consumption and management of urban services by low income populations in Latin America and the Caribbean. The concept of "collective consumption" is typically used without regard to its gender content. Yet it is most often women who function as the daytime managers in low income communities. And it is women who have the most immediate stake in securing access to water, sanitation, housing, health and education for themselves and their families. Their management of basic urban services is one more indication of the active role women play in the process of socioeconomic development.

Inadequate planning and project designs that overlook the importance of women's role in the family and community can lead to inequitable outcomes for women and men and also to diminished returns on project investment. There is, therefore, an economic argument to be made in favor of adjusting urban plans to the reality of gender roles to improve the chances of project success. This argument is increasingly convincing as economic and environmental crises further constrain the options open to developing countries. All too often the fiscal

crisis has led to trade-offs in which women's needs are given low priority while, at the same time, low income women are called upon to play an ever-growing role in making ends meet for their families. Work burdens may increase for women as they are forced to compensate for reduced services, and as more intensified survival strategies are devised to make up for falling real income. Available evidence suggests that women often serve as principal "crisis managers" to take up the slack in family needs. Resources specifically targeted to programs that support women's individual and collective capacities to deal with economic stress are therefore especially crucial under present conditions.

Currently, however, there is little information to guide such an effort and even less incentive to pursue policy goals related specifically to women. A great deal of high-quality research has been carried out on the urban poor, but little of it has made any impact on the way urban planning is carried out. Instead, political factors and bureaucratic imperatives often dictate policy choices. In particular, planning carried out on a sectoral basis often misses the important connections between aspects of the complex lives led by the urban poor. "Participative" planning is often advocated but few successful models have been developed. Even planners sympathetic to women's issues related to urban services have trouble identifying a constituency to support new initiatives.

#### The Working Group Approach

Some of these obstacles can be overcome by increasing the links between those in planning, those in research, and those involved in community work. This approach is based on a model of social change that recognizes the multiple levels of intervention and impact and the need to strengthen mechanisms linking these distinct levels (Figure 1). The model does not presume that effective change depends on adequate technical skills and information alone. Instead, it emphasizes the need to use such resources more effectively in an integrated

fashion. That is, training and information generated from different forms of intervention need to be brought together in an innovative way using an approach that recognizes the interaction of political, technical and socioeconomic forces. Discussions of new ideas in public media provide a favorable climate for pressures for change at the grass-roots level and in the public sector; social movements of low and middle-income urban sectors serve to alter the priorities and modes of delivery of state-provided services; national policies define the context and limits for demands and for research priorities. This integrated model of change is especially important in addressing women's issues.

Figure 1 about here

The "working group" approach described here illustrates one experience in seeking to develop new modes of contact between planners, researchers and community development workers. It stressed the need for "information brokers, translators and disseminators" in order to increase the use made of research data and to sensitize government functionaries and the population at large to women's issues related to urban planning.<sup>2</sup> Remaining pages describe the project's design and steps in the working group process. Examples of results accompany the text.

The project entitled "Women, Low Income Households and Urban Services in Latin America and the Caribbean" began in July of 1981 through a Cooperative Agreement between The Population Council and the United States Agency for International Development Office of Urban Development. Funds from USAID's (now-defunct) Integrated Improvement Program for the Urban Poor were provided to support the project. Recognizing women's critical role and their organizational potential and in light of the declining budgetary resources of most Latin American municipalities, the Council sought to bring low income women's concerns into the existing urban planning and service delivery process. The mechanism designed for achieving this was the creation of local working groups in three

metropolitan areas.

These working groups were composed of urban planners, government researchers and statisticians, practical development workers, and social scientists doing research on and familiar with the urban poor, particularly poor urban women. Working group members were convened around their common interest in improving the living conditions of the urban poor. The working group forged links between persons influential in the government bureaucracy, in academic circles and at the community level. The sustained pressure-free interaction of monthly meetings had varying benefits for different members. Planners were frequently looking for assistance in how to integrate women into their projects but were unaware of academic resources and had little contact with community action groups in the low income areas of the city. Researchers had conceptual and analytical advantages in data collection yet often had little idea of the kind of information planners needed or at what point this information would be strategic. Similarly, those who executed small scale action projects often had a wealth of descriptive information about life in poor neighborhoods and the capacity of community groups to deliver critical services; however, they often lacked the skills and the means to systemize and disseminate the information at hand.

The working group established connections between these groups, often for the first time. Information about the urban poor, which is often compartmentalized, was pooled. Realistic priorities for action were distilled out of wide experience - transcending any one group's bounded perspective and narrow self-interest. These working groups have become unique local resources of substantive knowledge about low income women and their families.

The specific objectives of the project were:

1. To increase the flow of information on living conditions and specific problems conditioning the access of low income urban women and their families to

critical services.

2. To identify and help initiate or demonstrate optimal approaches that would help low income women and their families gain better access to basic resources and services.

3. To promote collaborative efforts between planners, government-based and university-based researchers, managers and community leaders to identify policy and program factors limiting access to services and to design solutions.

4. To build a local resource group with the capacity to provide information, technical assistance and policy advice on urban services for low income women and their families.

The project consisted of three interrelated activities. First, the Council stimulated the establishment of working groups in Kingston, Jamaica, Mexico City, Mexico, and Lima, Peru. These groups served as a primary mechanism through which problems were defined and actions taken. Second, the Council provided to these working groups an action/research awards fund which supported relatively low-budget projects such as documentation of the work of action projects, the piloting of new service approaches, the reanalysis of existing quantitative data, and the generation of new qualitative information. Finally, information and policy advice were disseminated locally by the working groups, and more broadly via the Council's extensive network, through a series of local working papers in Spanish and English, individual meetings and seminars to share the results of specific studies as they bore on crucial policy issues.

Aside from these concrete products, the project also had a strong emphasis on the process of group interaction as a model for improving the application of knowledge to practical problems. The process of group consolidation during the project's history created a momentum that led the groups to gradually take on a more outwardly-oriented role based on their growing consensus about goals and strategies for action.

## The Working Group Process

Figure 2 about here

### 1. Forming the Working Groups

In consultation with the funding agency (USAID), the three sites for the working groups were chosen. The first step was then to become familiar with institutional and human resources in each site and to select a local coordinator (a key decision). During the project's first six months, coordinators and project co-managers interviewed potential group members from the community of planners, researchers and community workers in each city. The proper selection of group members took somewhat longer than had been anticipated, yet this stage was crucial to the project's enduring success.

A careful balance was sought among participants of varied perspectives, skills, experiences and links to relevant institutions. The most important selection criteria were a willingness to work with other people with different orientations, and a personal involvement in concrete work related to the issue at hand. Members chosen included men and women in a variety of professions, from both in and outside of government, and aligned with different political parties. The Lima working group, for example, includes a city councilman who directs municipal services, a social worker who specializes in business self management, and a transport consultant. In Jamaica, members come from a local social assistance organization, from the Masterbuilders Association, and from the National Planning Agency. The careful selection period paid off since it produced a stable yet diverse group of talented people with strong personal commitments to working group goals.

During the project's second year the working groups greatly expanded their outreach to persons and institutions beyond the membership of the groups. For example, the Jamaica working group has been addressed by representatives of the national Women's Bureau, the United Nations Development Projects, the USAID, the

Small Business Association, and the University of the West Indies. The Lima Mission of USAID requested a review by the Peru working group of its planning document for future women's programs. Group members have been consulted on several new urban programs in the Municipality of Lima. In Mexico, a subset of group members was drawn into the consultative commission that developed policy suggestions for the new President with regard to the distribution of urban services. The Colegio de Mexico's Permanent Seminar on Research on Women invited the working group to present a series of talks based on their work.

## 2. Managing the Working Groups

Social scientists with experience in government social or economic planning units were hired on a part-time basis as local coordinators. Their political openness and abilities with people were qualifications as essential as their professional experience. The coordinators' tasks were manifold. They helped to select group members, organized the meetings, developed the agenda, and invited policymakers - such as World Bank or housing trust or other key government planners - to address the working group. They served as a conduit for written materials bearing on the group's interests. The coordinators were in charge of overseeing the groups' publications describing both their policy views and the substance of the awards made in key areas. They also proved invaluable in making the interdisciplinary process work and in keeping members' commitments high. Further, they were essential to the process of influencing government policy. They took a great deal of time to regularly visit key governmental offices and make them aware of the work the group was doing.

Management of the project was decentralized in structure and flexible in style. The division of labor between co-managers in general allocated to the New York partner primary institutional responsibility (Population Council-USAID relations, financial and bureaucratic requirements), the task of overseeing publications, and a continuing role in technical assistance. The New York

co-manager's close ties to the development community and awareness of issues in other regions of the world helped to keep the project focused on problems of interest beyond the local settings. The other co-manager, an anthropologist working as a consultant to the Council, was responsible for the operations of the groups, relations with local coordinators, routine reporting, and for development and supervision of each of the project's fourteen sub-awards. Her familiarity with the language and culture of the region was essential to smooth communications between New York, Washington, and the three local sites. Frequent contact was maintained between project co-managers and local coordinators, by correspondence, telephone and cables. Each site was also visited once or twice a year by the consultant. On these occasions she attended working group meetings, worked on individual sub-award proposals, assessed progress with coordinators and other working group members, and evaluated achievements and goals with each working group. Finally, the co-managers, local coordinators, and the Council's regional representative for Latin America and the Caribbean met twice at the Council's Mexico City office.

In late 1981 and early 1982, the three working groups began meeting on a regular basis. In the original project plan meetings had been proposed for every one to two months. In practice they were generally on a monthly or more frequent basis throughout the intervening three years. Meetings last several hours. Despite the fact that most are very busy persons and they were not paid for attendance, working group members had remarkable attendance records. For example, attendance rates for members of one group ranged from 53% to 94% of the first seventeen meetings, with an overall average of 72%.

### 3. Setting Priorities

During the first year or so of meetings, each group worked together to identify issues and priorities and focus their attention on specific geographically and demographically-defined target groups. These discussions

served to form the basis of the heterogeneous group's collective identity. The starting point for these substantive discussions was the concrete work carried out by individual members and invited outsiders. The groups constructed an annual agenda in which each meeting was devoted to a sectoral focus such as employment, housing or transport. During this period the groups developed a consensus on priority areas that included income generation, shelter (housing and basic services), and food distribution. The definition of each group's own agenda pointed to criteria against which the relevance of specific issues and projects could be judged.

This collective sifting of priorities generated the criteria used to judge proposed awards. Thus, the granting of awards was far different than a simple research competition in which individuals with special writing skills and academic backgrounds articulating personal research agendas have an advantage. Rather, the awards were a group product, each benefitting from an internal review, abiding technical guidance and a commitment to promote policy applications.

#### 4. Awards

The award process had a number of stages. First, initial project ideas were discussed in the working group and with project co-managers. If the idea seemed promising and relevant to the project's goals and philosophy, it was developed further as a pre-proposal. At this stage technical feedback from other group members and from co-managers was incorporated into a full proposal format, and eventually approved by the Population Council and USAID. Each proposal in its final form therefore bore the imprint of a pool of expertise, although functional responsibility for carrying it out lay with one or more individuals. In some cases these persons became regular group members as a result of their involvement in a specific project but for the most part the fourteen sub-awards were proposed by group members.

Several projects were carried out by teams involving persons with very different skills and backgrounds. For example, one project report was written by a high-level government consultant, an architect who had designed a new waste recycling system, and representatives of two cooperatives in low income communities who managed the system. Another study was jointly carried out by an anthropologist and a transport engineer. Most projects involved direct inputs from the low income client populations, a factor which often modified the project's design. Because planners and community workers were drawn into projects directly, their results have been of immediate use.

#### 5. Disseminating Results

The goal of making information easily available to planners, community workers and academics is built into the working group approach. Aside from their own (often multiple) institutional ties, group members encourage participation in their regular meetings by invited outsiders who share the groups' concerns. They also actively seek opportunities to discuss the groups' work on an individual basis with people in their professional networks. Furthermore, each sub-award is designed to maximize the involvement and consultation of planners and community workers in project implementation and dissemination. The results of each sub-award were disseminated locally through diversified strategies. These have included written reports in comprehensive and summary form, popularized booklets accessible to low income populations, and coverage in newspapers, newsmagazines, radio and television. Seminars and workshops have been presented to audiences of academics, community organizations, and development workers. Individual interviews with key planners to discuss project results have been a key element in strategies for all sub-awards.

The working groups have produced a series of more than twenty working papers of different types (Figure 3). These include comprehensive and summary

reports on sub-projects; compilations of data on key variables; and analytical papers that have emerged from group discussions. Highlights of project results will also be presented in a monograph for wider distribution. The volume will bring together articles based on the findings of selected sub-awards, analytic pieces discussing urban services for poor women and their families, discussions of approaches to training and to influencing policy, and invited articles sharing the findings from similar work on housing, food distribution, and urban services. The monograph will provide a synthesis of current learning about women's roles in urban projects in Latin America.

Figure 3 about here

#### Generating Information to Influence Policy

In evaluating the experience of the project, working group members cited pragmatic, task-oriented nature of the group as a key element in drawing together a heterogeneous group and transcending both political and professional differences in the interest of common goals. The groups function as resource and information networks for members and, increasingly, collateral relations. The opportunity for cross-fertilization of ideas was recognized as particularly useful in dealing with the complex and intractable problem of improving the conditions of the urban poor. The value of the working group, said one member, was in providing a "pool of expertise and experience by which solutions and strategies can evolve."

To succeed, the working group model requires a heterogeneous but experienced and committed set of individuals, skilled coordination, and an interest in the process of collective learning that takes place over time. The central management of the overall project has been sufficiently flexible and invisible to encourage a strong sense of autonomy and local identity. At the same time it has helped to maintain the common focus of project activities and to provide an additional source of technical assistance that will enable project

results to be disseminated to a broader audience.

The working group approach has been a successful strategy for integrating low income women's concerns into the existing urban planning and service delivery process. The method used emphasized a holistic view of the reality of urban planning. Working group members have learned to function as information brokers, translators and disseminators. They have also been able to go beyond the limits of a sectoral division of urban problems, to work in teams with others of different backgrounds, and to avail themselves of diverse data sets and methods in order to capture the complexity of poverty in the urban setting. Because the "planning-centered" research they have promoted drew in project beneficiaries, intermediaries and planners from design through implementation stages, dissemination of results was more efficient than in standard research projects.

After functioning for three years, the working groups reached a new phase of existence. They recognized their ability to influence specific policies and programs. Attention turned to the need to formalize the group's identity and goals, both for internal clarity and to facilitate fund-raising for future activities. In both Spanish-speaking sites, working groups chose their own group names: in Peru, "Servicios Urbanos y Mujeres de Bajos Ingresos" (SUMBI); in Mexico, "Mujer y Cuidad". The groups were committed to continuing their meetings and projects, to expanding their membership, and to disseminating the results of their work more broadly.

## Examples of Results

### 1. Women and Housing in Jamaica

Two sub-awards focused on issues related to women and housing in Jamaica. One was a study of a small group of elderly persons in western Kingston whose residences were to be relocated as part of the West Kingston Market Redevelopment Plan, being carried out by the Urban Development Corporation. More than half of the survey population was women, and a higher proportion of these elderly women lived alone compared to their male counterparts. Most had no other contributors to their meager incomes and many supported other dependents outside their own household. Forty percent had no children to help them financially, and 65% were unemployed. Virtually all of the women had previously been employed as either higglers (informal salespersons) or domestic servants. Despite the strong ties of the elderly to the West Kingston community (average length of residence was 24 years), their needs were not necessarily taken care of by relatives or by other community members. Based on these and other findings, the project produced a set of detailed recommendations for the relocation process, including social as well as architectural aspects of needs of the elderly population. These were discussed with the relevant planners at UDC. The study was important beyond the local setting for its focus on a population sub-group (the elderly) whose service needs are often overlooked. In societies with a relatively young age structure, as in most of Latin America and the Caribbean, it is often assumed that the elderly are cared for by the extended family. The study indicates that such assumptions are not always warranted.

A second study analyzed data on 9,702 recipients of mortgage loans from Jamaica's National Housing Trust, the major source of loans for low income populations in Jamaica. Background information was also collected from NHT reports and other secondary documents, and interviews were carried out with NHT

personnel, especially mortgage and collection officers. Women were found to be especially disadvantaged on the housing market due to their extremely low incomes. Over 75% of working women were ineligible for mortgage loans at private financing institutions due to their low earnings. Unemployment rates for women were more than twice as high as those for men, reaching 62% for women aged 25 to 34. At the same time, nearly 40% of Jamaica's households are headed by women, and an even larger proportion of women play a central role in the maintenance of their families.

Interviews revealed a widespread impression on the part of NHT personnel that women constituted a majority of their beneficiaries, a pattern that was not borne out by the data analyzed. The study indicates that economic constraints most likely discourage many women from applying for mortgages. A high proportion (84%) of both male and female loan beneficiaries were found to be in arrears, especially those in the lowest age and income groups. The most significant problems leading to delinquency in loan repayment were found to be unemployment and inadequate income. Yet despite women's relative economic disadvantages, the data indicated that women in nearly all categories of age, income, occupation and program type performed somewhat better than men in repaying their mortgage loans. In interviews, NHT staff reported perceiving a greater sense of responsibility for repayment of loans by women, compared to men, as evidenced by their greater willingness to appear at NHT offices to discuss their financial problems. This behavior lent a higher visibility to female beneficiaries and contributed to the mistaken impression that women represented a majority of loan holders. The findings of the study suggest that planners in housing and housing finance consider measures that cater directly to the needs and constraints of low income women, as a means of improving the cost effectiveness of public housing programs.

## 2. Women and Self-Help Housing in Mexico

A study in Mexico analyzed factors influencing women's participation in self-help housing projects in two low income cooperatives, one created through government initiative and the other spontaneously. In the non-official cooperative clearly-defined self-help objectives led to community goals that transcended the act of house construction. Women held their own land titles, and participated extensively in suggestions about house design, in building their houses, and in providing leadership in community affairs. The official cooperative, by contrast, was formed on the initiative of community outsiders who defined the project's goals more narrowly as providing houses. Women in this community had fewer opportunities to participate in the process of generating self-help housing and in other organized community efforts. The study stressed that while women are always present in self-help projects, this presence is not synonymous with participation. While women alone, or with their partners, usually take the initiative for starting a self-help building project, their participation is sometimes limited by men's perceptions of women's proper roles and by other demands on their time. Recommendations included training for women in relevant skills and the development of channels of communication between housing institutions and low income women. Self-help housing projects that increase women's skills and leadership abilities can have benefits for development in other sectors.

### 3. Women and Waste Management in Mexico

A project in Mexico documented the social complexities of new waste management technologies in two low income urban communities. The system provides a low-cost service and also the potential for recycling of wastes for re-use or sale; it requires community management and labor input. An engineer and high-level government consultant coordinated the study, with the active participation of both the implementers and the users of the technology, who collaborated in writing the report. In one community, the question of women's

central role in waste management had never been an explicit focus of attention, and the project helped to highlight their relative exclusion from decision-making positions. The second case provided a contrasting example because here women dominated community decision-making based on their role in waste management. As the system is currently being rapidly expanded to other urban communities the study was timely in examining some of the key socioeconomic aspects of technology adoption and suggesting both technical and institutional modifications in order to facilitate women's participation.

Figure 4 about here

#### 4. Communal Kitchens in Lima

A study of the growing phenomenon of communal kitchens in Lima was a part of the Lima working group's explicit focus on women and food. In these kitchens, low income women work collectively to prepare meals for their families using U.S. surplus food channelled through local charity organizations. The research was carried out by a social scientist, but communities and local development workers were drawn in from the start. This led to a modification of the research design to include a focus on institutional factors. The study found that communal kitchens improved nutrition and were qualitatively superior to programs in which food was distributed on an individual basis. Women's participation was both personally enriching and time-saving, as it freed housewives from the seclusion of their kitchens and provided them with experience in collective work and training in nutrition. Policy recommendations called for diversification of sources of food supplies and suggested that kitchens worked best if they were small in size (roughly 25 families) and linked through larger federations.

Shortly after the study was finished, the Principal Investigator presented her findings first to consultants and promoters for communal kitchens, then to the participants themselves, in a series of four meetings divided according to

geographic zones of Lima. These sessions led up to a meeting of 175 delegates and representatives of communal kitchens from all of Lima, the first time they had ever come together. They discussed the economic and institutional problems faced by the kitchens, the need to diversify sources of food supplies and the desire to preserve their autonomy while centralizing coordinating functions. This led to the creation of a municipal-level Coordinating Committee. The research also stimulated the creation of new kitchens (23 in one area), and some of the kitchens reorganized their operations based on the study's findings.

Aside from the seminars, the dissemination strategy also called for individual consultations with planners. Publications will include a commercial academic book, a booklet aimed at low income communities, and the project report that was circulated. Results were also reported on the radio and in a video presentation. The availability of systematic information about communal kitchens is particularly crucial now, since their number in Lima appears to have doubled since the study began.

##### 5. Women in Construction Work in Jamaica

Another success story, from the Jamaica working group, began with a plan for women to enter construction work at the trade level through a pilot training and employment program. The project was designed to respond to several factors identified through previous research: steadily rising female unemployment rates and correspondingly high rates of fertility; a demand from employers for trade labor; and a contraction in training opportunities for women in the building trade. The project design included inputs from both industry and local communities. The training and employment model focussed on an industry rather than a welfare base: training was designed for and targeted at identified needs in the industry and particular job openings.

Figure 5 about here

Ten women were initially trained, and commitments were secured from

contractors to place them on sites on a trial "job audition" basis. Every woman who auditioned was subsequently hired as part of the full-time labor force. Soon after, an additional small grant from the local Grace Kennedy Foundation supported an expansion of the original training group, which now calls itself the Western Kingston Women's Construction Collective. Support in different forms was also elicited from the Construction Research and Development Centre, the Women's Bureau, the YWCA, UDC, the UN Voluntary Fund, and the VTDI and HEART (vocational training programs). A full-time project manager was found, first on a volunteer basis with symbolic contributions from the women themselves, then with support from a larger grant that was subsequently obtained from Canada's CIDA. This grant allowed the group to expand training to reach thirty-four women from three communities, to support management training for collective members, to hire an outside evaluator and to thoroughly document the project. Over ninety percent of the women trained have been placed in employment in one of the six main construction trade areas - plumbing, masonry, carpentry, electrical installation, painting and steelwork. Ten women have received further specialist training in skills ranging from driving to blueprint reading.

These young women trained in construction skills can act as future role models for women with similar backgrounds who have not been exposed to the benefits of female entry into non-traditional occupations. This is especially important in a small island face-to-face society like Jamaica. By providing employment alternatives the project can potentially lower the fertility of its participants. The women's families and communities will benefit from increased family income (current earnings average J\$200 a fortnight). Within six months after initial training each woman can earn enough to repay the investment in her own training and tools, and can invest in the skills development of another woman. Women can further capitalize on their basic training according to their work performance. Women participating in the project have shown that they can

be mobile across political territorial lines without difficulty. Feedback from employers has been good and there have been requests for more women workers. Contractors employing women have reported less violence and pilferage on site as well as raised productivity, indicating that the presence of women has a positive influence on the implementation of building projects.

The Collective has taken on a more formal structure, with officers, financial management systems and a test developed by the women themselves for selecting new members. The severe contraction in the construction industry has provided the Collective with new challenges. Efforts now concentrate on achieving placements in building maintenance and repair rather than on scarce new building sites. They are studying the feasibility of a building repair and rent-a-tool business. The Collective has also identified a number of other women already working in the industry and decided to form a National Association of Women in Construction. Their goal is to provide public education on the roles and potential of women in the building and construction sector and to lobby for equal access to training.

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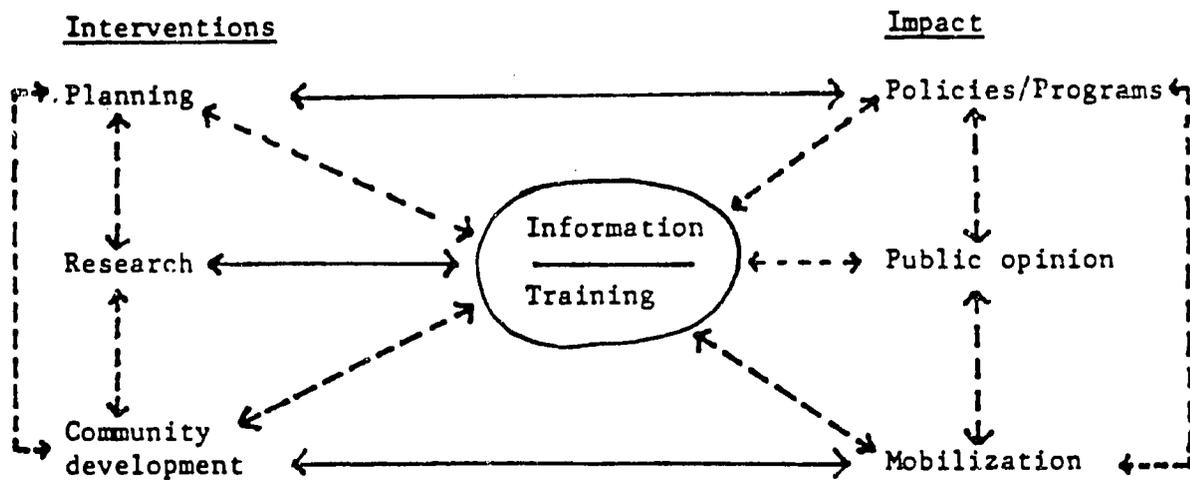
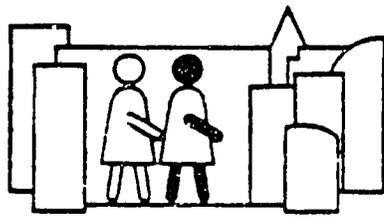


Figure 1: An Integrated Model of Social Change

Adapted from Marianne Schmink and Carmen Barroso, "Women's Programs for the Andean Region and the Southern Cone: Assessment and Recommendations," consulting report submitted to the Ford Foundation, Lima office, March 1984.

1. Forming the Working Group
2. Managing the Working Group
3. Setting Priorities
4. Awards
5. Disseminating Results
6. Consolidating a Group Identity

Figure 2: Steps in the Working Group Process



**Women, Low-income Households  
and Urban Services**

**Mujeres, Hogares de Bajos  
Ingresos y Servicios Urbanos**

Figure 3: Project logo used on covers of working papers



Figure 4: Mexican women packaging the fertilizer they produced from recycled wastes  
Photograph by Charles H. Wood



Figure 5: Jamaican woman learning construction skills  
Photograph by Marianne Schmink

## Appendix I: Summary of Projects

### 1. Housing and Service Needs of the Aged (Jamaica)

Survey of target population of elderly women and men and assessment of their needs and capabilities. Recommendations for the process of relocation of the target populations, to be presented both to the working group and to planners. Project completed December, 1982. Principal Investigator: Karlene Evering, Operation Friendship. Budget: \$6,243.

### 2. Urban Services for Women in Mexico City (Mexico, No. LAC/83.401A)

Overview of institutions that target their services to low income women in the Federal District and evaluation of their implementation. Recommendations to planners to improve effectiveness of service provision. Project completed September, 1983. Principal Investigator: Lourdes Romero Aguilar, Centro de Estudios y Programas Sociales. Budget: \$2,433.

### 3. Waste Management (Mexico, No. LAC/83.400A)

Documentation of technical and social aspects of the "Integral System for Recycling Organic Waste" currently being used in a community in the Valley of Mexico, with emphasis on the role of women. Preparation of pamphlets and reports for dissemination of the experience. Project completed September, 1983. Principal Investigator: Fernando Ortiz Monasterio, Human Settlements Secretariat. Budget: \$4,315.

### 4. Communal Kitchens (Peru, No. I83.13A.)

Study of forms, locations and beneficiaries of existing communal kitchens. Analysis of role of women as consumers and service providers, and of effects of communal kitchens on consumption patterns and the division of labor within the domestic unit. Recommendations for the design and functioning of communal kitchens. Project completed February, 1984. Principal Investigator: Violeta Sara-Lafosse, Catholic University. Budget: \$9,625.

### 5. Women Street Food Vendors of Prepared Foods (Peru, No. I83.14A)

Survey of social and economic characteristics of street food vendors. Recommendations of actions to improve their work conditions. Participative pilot training programs followed by a public seminar to discuss results. Report due April, 1984. Principal Investigator: Estrella Picasso, Instituto Peruano de Empresas de Propiedad Exclusiva de Trabajadores. Budget: \$9,910.

6. Transportation and Physical Security (Peru, No. IB3.21A)

Study of limitations posed by transportation and physical security considerations on the use of urban services, and of the informal means used to deal with these problems. Recommendations for the design of support services that can increase real access to existing services. Report due March, 1984. Principal Investigators: Jeanine Anderson Velasco and Nelson Panizo Vera, Peru-Mujer. Budget: \$14,910.

7. Food Preparation Outlet (Jamaica, No. IB3.34A)

Feasibility study of employment creation for women in marketing of prepared foods using surplus market produce. Initial skills training, market testing, identification of sources of technical assistance and credit, assessment of costs. Project completed January, 1984. Principal Investigator: Sonja Harris-Williams, Cultural Development Institute. Budget: \$8,850.

8. Self-Help Housing and Basic Services (Mexico, No. IAB4.02A)

Study of women's role in management, design, financing and execution of self-help housing. Comparison of women's participation in a government-controlled and a spontaneous community. Analysis of mechanisms to support women's participation in self-help housing and management of basic services. Report due July, 1984. Principal Investigator: Genovevo Arredondo F. Budget: \$6,033.

9. Repayment of Mortgage Loans (Jamaica, No. IB3.33A)

Study of data at National Housing Trust on mortgage loans awarded since 1976. Documentation of socioeconomic characteristics of female loan recipients as well as their repayment performance compared to men. Focus on the problems leading to women's delinquency in loan repayment. Project completed October, 1983. Principal Investigator: Florette Blackwood, Women's Bureau. Budget: \$3,300.

10. Booklets on Training and Work (Mexico, No. LAC/B3.403A)

Evaluation of existing services and opportunities for training and employment for low income women. Compilation of two pamphlets to orient women in their use of these services and in decisions about income-generating activities. Recommendations for up-dating and dissemination of information. Project completed November 1983. Principal Investigator: Melba Pinedo Guerra. Budget: \$3,300.

11. Self-help pamphlet (Mexico, No. LAC/83.404A)  
Design of pamphlet containing information to serve as a basis for self-help health care. Focus on most common health needs of low income women and their families, how these problems can be prevented and treated, and available health services. Dissemination of pamphlet to public health education institutions and programs. Report due January, 1984. Principal Investigator: Elsa Rodriguez Rojo. Budget: \$4,866.
  
12. Child Care Strategies (Mexico, No. LAC/83.405A)  
Study of informal means of child care, their effectiveness and possible ways to support them. Estimation of supply and demand for institutional services. Evaluation of existing services and suggestions for integration with other programs. Report due January, 1984. Principal Investigator: Maria Luisa Acevedo. Budget: \$7,621.
  
13. Higglers (Jamaica, No. IB3.49A)  
Study of the informal commercial sector in Kingston, including historical and socioeconomic characteristics of higglers and their enterprises. Recommendations of policies to improve their economic activities. Report due March, 1984. Principal Investigators: Alicia Taylor, Elsie LeFranc, and Donna McFarlane-Gregory, Institute of Social and Economic Research. Budget: \$19,300.
  
14. Women in Construction Work (Jamaica, No. IB3.50A)  
On-the-job training of ten women in construction work and continued skills upgrading. Documentation of women in the construction trade. Recommendations to the public sector concerning the provision of training for women in construction skills. Reports due December, 1983 and December, 1984. Principal Investigator: Ruth McLeod, Building Research Institute. Budget: \$8,255.

## Appendix II

### List of Project Documents February, 1985

1. Second Annual Progress Report, October 1983 (36pp; includes overview of project, description of progress and sub-awards)
2. "Women in the Urban Economy in Latin America" by Marianne Schmink, June 1983 (61 pp.; overview essay also available in Spanish)
3. "Perfil de la Mujer de Bajos Ingresos en el Area Metropolitana de la Ciudad de Mexico" by Liliana Kusnir, October 1983 (47 pp.; compilation of available data on low income women in the metropolitan area of Mexico City, in Spanish, by project local coordinator)
4. "Ciudad de Lima, Perfil de la Mujer de Bajos Ingresos y su Acceso a los Servicios Urbanos" by Amelia Fort (approx. 50 pp; compilation of available data on low income women in Lima, in Spanish, by project local coordinator)
5. "Characteristics of Male and Female-Headed Households in Selected Areas of Western Kingston, Jamaica" by Alicia Taylor (23pp.; basic data from selected areas analyzed by project local coordinator)
6. "The Performance of Men and Women in Repayment of Mortgage Loans in Jamaica" by Florette Blackwood, October 1983 (86pp.; preliminary project report with summary, for internal distribution)
7. "Documentacion y Evaluacion de Experiencias Tradicionales y Alternativas para el Manejo de Residuos Urbanos en Zonas de Bajos Ingresos en el Valle de Mexico" by Fernando Ortiz Monasterio, Josefina Mena, and Angel Parada, October 1982 (107 pp.; "Documentation and Evaluation of Traditional and Alternative Experiences for Management of Urban Wastes in Low Income Zones of the Valley of Mexico" project report in Spanish with English summary)
8. "Community Management of Waste Recycling: The SIRDO" by Marianne Schmink (preliminary text of a SEEDS publication based on above project)
9. "Programas Institucionales Dirigidos a las Mujeres de Bajos Ingresos en el Distrito Federal" by Lourdes Romero Aguilar, September 1983 (276 pp.; "Institutional Programs Directed at Low Income Women in the Federal District" of Mexico, project report in Spanish with English summary)
10. "Housing and Service Needs of the Aged, Salt Lane Community, Western Kingston, Jamaica" by Karlene Evering, April 1983 (37 pp.; preliminary project report with summary)

11. "Informe Final sobre la Elaboracion de los Folletos Hablemos de Trabajo y Hablemos de Capacitacion," by Melba Pinedo Guerra (104 pp.; "Final Report on the Elaboration of Pamphlets Speaking of Work and Speaking of Training," project report in Spanish with English summary, and appendices including preliminary design of pamphlets)
12. "Servicios Urbanos y Mujeres de Bajos Ingresos: Apuntes para una Definicion" by Maruja Barrig, November 1983 (29 pp., "Urban Services and Low Income Women: Towards a Definition", position paper in Spanish by Lima working group member)
13. "Feasibility Study of a Food Preparation Outlet in West Kingston" by Sonja T. Harris, January 1984 (35pp., preliminary project report with appendices)
14. "Los Comedores Comunales en los Barrios Populares de la Ciudad de Lima" by Violeta Sara-Lafosse, February 1984 (54 pp., "Communal Kitchens in the Popular Neighborhoods of Lima"; project report in Spanish with tables and graphs)
15. "Reporte sobre la Elaboracion del Proyecto 'Folleto sobre la Mujer y el Autocuidado'" by Elsie McPhail and Elsa Rodriguez Rojo, April 1984 (21 pp.; "Report on the Elaboration of a Booklet on Women and Self-Help Health", project report in Spanish with appendices containing bibliography, design of pamphlet and survey instruments used)
16. "Propuesta Metodologica para la Elaboracion de Historietas Educativas" by Elsie McPhail, Melba Pinedo and Elsa Rodriguez, April 1984 (22 pp., "Methodological Proposal for the Elaboration of Educational Story Booklets", summary report based on projects described in documents nos. 11 and 15)
17. "Los Servicios del Sector Publico en el Distrito Federal en la Atencion de las Mujeres de Bajos Ingresos" by Lourdes Romero Aguilar, April 1984 (13 pp.; "Public Sector Services in the Federal District Attending to Low-Income Women", summary report with appendices based on project described in document no. 9)
18. "Experiencias en el Manejo de Tecnologias Alternativas para el Tratamiento de Desechos Organicos: La Participacion de la Mujer y la Comunidad" by Fernando Ortiz Monasterio, April 1984 (47 pp., "Experiences in the Management of Alternative Technologies for the Treatment of Organic Wastes: The Participation of Women and the Community", summary report based on project described in documents nos. 7 and 8)
19. "Limitaciones para el Uso de los Servicios Urbanos por Mujeres de Bajos Ingresos: Transporte y Seguridad" by Jeanine Anderson and Nelson Panizo, May 1984 (109 pp.; "Limitations on the Use of Urban Services by Low-Income Women: Transport and Security," project report in Spanish)
20. "Metodologia Utilizada en la Elaboracion de los Folletos

Educativos para la Mujer de Escasos Recursos de Zonas Marginales" by Elsie McPhail Fanger, Melba Pinedo Guerra, and Elsa Rodriguez Rojo (43 pp. plus appendices; "Methodology Used in the Elaboration of Educative Booklets for Women of Scarce Resources in Marginal Zones")

21. "Servicios Espontaneos e Informales de Cuidado Infantil en los Barrios Populares de Lima" by Jeanine Anderson, June 1984 (43 pp., "Spontaneous and Informal Child Care Services in the Popular Neighborhoods of Lima", revised research report)

22. "Analysis de la Participacion de la Mujer en la Autoconstruccion en Sectores de Bajos Ingresos del Area Metropolitana de la Ciudad de Mexico" by Carmen Largaespada, July 1984 ("Analysis of Women's Participation in Self-Help Building Projects in Low-Income Sectors of the Metropolitan Area of Mexico City", project report in Spanish with 32pp. English summary)

23. "Estudio de las Estrategias de Cuidado Infantil en el Area Metropolitana (Informe Final)" by Maria Luisa Acevedo, Jose Inigo Aguilar, Luz Maria Brunt and Maria Sara Molinari, July 1984 (93 pp.; "Study of Child Care Strategies in the Metropolitan Area of Mexico City (Final Report)", project report plus appendices)

24. "The Women's Construction Collective. A Jamaican Experiment" by Ruth McLeod, October 1984 (21 pp. working paper)

25. Comedores Comunales: La Mujer Frente a la Crisis by Violeta Sara-Lafosse. Lima: Grupo de Trabajo, Servicios y Mujeres de Bajos Ingresos. (Communal Kitchens: Women Confront the Crisis, 100 pp. monograph)

26. "Todo es querer" by Fernando Ortiz Monasterio ("Everything is wanting", 8 pp. illustrated pamphlet about SIRDO)

27. "Limitaciones para el Uso de los Servicios Urbanos por Mujeres de Bajos Ingresos: Transporte y Seguridad" by Jeanine Anderson and Nelson Panizo, October 1984 ("Limitations on the Use of Urban Services by Low Income Women: Transport and Security", 107pp. working paper with methodological appendix)

28. "Estudio de las Estrategias de Cuidado Infantil en el Area Metropolitana" by Maria Luisa Acevedo, Jose Inigo Aguilar, Luz Maria Brunt and Maria Sara Molinari ("Study of Child Care Strategies in the Metropolitan Area", 29 pp. summary working paper)

Appendix III: Working Group in Peru  
"Servicios Urbanos y Mujeres de Bajos Ingresos"

A. Working Group Members (Peru)

<u>Name and field</u>	<u>Institution</u>
Amelia Fort (Coordinator) sociologist; research/planning	Population Council
Jeanine Anderson anthropology; research/action	Peru Mujer
Vilma Vargas de Balmaceda sociology; research/planning	Ministry of Labor
Maruja Barrig journalism; action/research	
Willy Bezold architect; action/planning	UNICEF
Susana Galdos action/planning	Center for Initial Education
Ana Martinez social-work; action/planning	Ministry of Health
Estrella Picasso social-work; action	Peruvian Institute for Self-Managed Businesses
Violetta Sara-Lafosse sociology; research/action	Catholic University
Alicia Sebastiani sociology; research/planning	Ministry of Culture
Nelson Fanizo Vera transport; planning/research	
Alejandro Icochea de Vivanco architect; planning	
Mario Zolezzi sociology; research/action	Municipality of Lima

**B. Working Group Meetings (Peru)**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Major Discussion Themes</u>
December 8, 1982	Introduction to the project and to group members
February 5, 1982	UNICEF/Health and Education Ministries integrated services project; urban problems
March 12, 1982	Urban planning and housing; future agenda
May 7, 1982	Evolution of women's employment
June 11, 1982	Family survival strategies
June 18, 1982	Project proposal review procedures
July 16, 1982	Ambulatory sales; domestic service; pieceworkers; artisans' cooperatives
September 3, 1982	Project proposals; women in urban food services
October 22, 1982	Conceptualization of urban services
November 26, 1982	Urban transport
December 17, 1982	Health services supply and demand; state policy
January 21, 1983	Co-education policies
February 25, 1983	Evaluation of working group
April 29, 1983	Project progress reports; agenda for future meetings
July 1, 1983	UNICEF services planning; AID document on training and education for women
August 12, 1983	Evaluation and future prospects
September 2, 1983	Continuation of theme of previous meeting

on urban services

November 11, 1983

Transportation and physical  
security study; continuation  
of theme of previous meeting

December 16, 1983

Communal kitchens; continued  
discussion of position paper

January 27, 1984

Solanda Urban Development  
Program, visitors from  
Quito, Ecuador

Appendix IV: Working Group in Mexico  
 "Mujer y Ciudad"

A. Working Group Members (Mexico)

<u>Name and field</u>	<u>Institution</u>
Liliana Kusnir (Coordinator) sociologist; planning/action	Population Council
Maria Luisa Acevedo sociology; research/action	Center for Eco-development; National Institute for Anthropology and History
Lourdes Romero Aguilar research/action	Center for Social Studies and Programs
Maria de los Angeles Leal architect; planning	Human Settlements Directorate
Jorge Legoreta architect; research/planning	Center for Eco-Development; National Council for Science and Technology
Larissa Lomnitz anthropology; research	National Autonomous University
Fernando Ortiz Monasterio engineer; planning	Colegio de Mexico
Margarita Nolasco anthropology; research	Center for Eco-Development; National Institute for Anthropology and History
Ely Rayek psychology; planning	Ministry of Education
Alvaro Sanchez architect; planning	National Autonomous University
Elsa-Rodrigues communications; planning/action	Autonomous National University of Mexico
Jorge Arango architecture; research	Autonomous National University of Mexico
Melba Pinedo communications; action/planning	Labor Secretariate
Maricarmen Elu de Lenero sociology; planning/research	Secretariate of Health and Assistance
Norma Samaniego planning	National Commission on Minimum Salary

**B. Working Group Meetings (Mexico)**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Institution</u>
March 10, 1982	Introduction to the project
March 30, 1982	Typologies of low income women; definition of priority groups
April 27, 1982	Basic profiles of low income women; critiques of existing service coverage; priority service needs
May 25, 1982	Education, water and transport services
June 17, 1982	Costs of services; vocational training
July 29, 1982	Project proposals
August 11, 1982	Project proposal preparation
September 14, 1982	Urban ecology; community participation (held at the Human Settlements Directorate)
September 30, 1982	Non-formal adult education
October 7, 1982	Education policies for low income women
November 9, 1982	Project administration; child care
January 31, 1983	Project administration; pamphlets for low income women
March 22, 1983	Family planning manual for rural Mexico
April 26, 1983	Political participation of low income Mexican women
June 28, 1983	Project progress reports
July 19, 1983	Evaluation and future prospects
August 30, 1983	Continuation of theme of previous meeting

October 31, 1983

Publishing and dissemination  
strategies

November 21-22, 1983

Evaluation meeting; group  
research proposal

December 6, 1983

Group research proposal

January 31, 1984

Dissemination strategies

February 28, 1984

Group research proposal

Appendix V: Working Group in Jamaica  
 "Urban Development Corporation"

A. Working Group Members (Jamaica)

<u>Name and field</u>	<u>Institution</u>
Alicia Taylor (Coordinator) sociologist; planning/research	Urban Development Corporation
Florette Blackwood planning	Women's Bureau
Karlene Evering social work; action/research	Operation Friendship
Sonja Harris-Williams sociology; planning/research	Women's Bureau
Daphne Hurge social work; action/research	Urban Development Corporation
Lorna Leslie social work; action/research	Urban Development Corporation
Donna McFarlane-Gregory economist; research	Paul Chen Young & Associates
Hermione McKenzie sociology; research	University of the West Indies
Dorian Powell sociology; research	University of the West Indies
Gloria Royale sociology; planning	Urban Development Corporation
Blossom White sociology; research	University of the West Indies
Ruth McLeod journalism; action	Building Research Inst. Masterbuilders Assn.
Ann Hodges architecture; planning	Urban Development Corporation
Affette McCaw planning	National Planning Agency
Amy Lee medicine; research/action	University of the West Indies

B. Working Group Meetings (Jamaica)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Major Discussion Themes</u>
November 10, 1982	UDC West Kingston Market Redevelopment Plan
December 10, 1982	Higglers (street and market vendors); employment generation for women in food preparation at the market site
January 14, 1982	Continuation of themes of previous meeting
February 11, 1982	Proposal review process; housing and services for the elderly
March 16, 1982	Proposal review and preparation; housing and services for the elderly
June 24, 1982	Ministry of Construction procedures for allocation of housing and collection of arrears; project proposals
September 2, 1982	UDC income-generating project with seamstresses; UDC community organization project; self-employed women
October 7, 1982	Higglers project; ISER study of women in the Caribbean
November 4, 1982	Small Business Association; income-generating projects
March 17, 1983	Women in construction work; National Family Planning Board fertility study
April 21, 1983	AID shelter projects; group projects in housing
May 19, 1983	Women's Bureau plastics recycling project for women
June 16, 1983	ISER study of women in the labor force in Jamaica
	Project progress reports;

October 13, 1983

UNDP projects for women

December 1, 1983

Trainees in construction work

February 2, 1984

Trainees in food preparation

~~Return to Gramma~~

"Women, Low-Income Households and Urban Services"

Information Packet

Attached is an article by Marianne Schmink, co-manager of the Population Council/USAID supported project, "Women, Low-Income Households and Urban Services in Latin America and the Caribbean." This article, prepared for Ekistics, provides an overview of the working group approach to providing low-income women with effective access to urban services.

Expanded information on the project is provided in the form of four appendices:

Appendix 1: summary of projects funded

Appendix 2: list of project documents, February 1985

Appendix 3: Peru working group: "Servicios Urbanos y Mujeres de Bajos Ingresos", list of working group members between 1982 and 1984 and a list of working group meeting topics between December 82 and January 84.

Appendix 4: Mexico working group: "Mujer y Ciudad", list of working group members between 1982 and 1984 and a list of working group meeting topics between December 82 and January 84.

Appendix 5: Jamaica working group, based at Urban Development Corporation, list of working group members between 1982 and 1984 and a list of working group meeting topics between December 82 and January 84.