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# Bringing Women Into The Community Development Process: A Pragmatic Approach

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1981 SAVE THE CHILDREN FEDERATION, INC

Save the Children is a nonprofit, tax-exempt charitable agency dedicated to improving the lives of needy children wherever they may be.

Save the Children believes that the needs of children are best met when the needs of their family and community are taken into consideration. The agency's programs, therefore, stress community projects which build self-help skills and group cohesion. One key aim is to help people build a better life for themselves and their children.

Save the Children is a member of the Save the Children Alliance, Private Agencies Cooperating Together (PACT), the American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies. The agency holds consultative status with UNICEF and the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

Save the Children has been helping the underprivileged in the United States and throughout the world since 1932.

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# **Bringing Women Into the Community Development Process**

## **Introduction**

### **Mid-Decade for Women**

Women have been the single most overlooked and undervalued factor in the development process. There is, however, growing evidence that programs designed to raise the skills and opportunities of women are making a noticeable impact on the economic and social life of families and communities. The movement by many governments and agencies to increase the participation of women in training programs and community activities, signals the realization that development efforts cannot succeed without women's strong involvement. The United Nations Decade for Women, inaugurated in 1975, was sparked by a worldwide Conference and Tribune for Women in Mexico City. The gains that have been made since 1975 — especially for women from the developing world — were evident at the recent United Nations Mid-Decade Conference on Women, and its companion Forum, held in Copenhagen in July 1980. This appraisal of the status of women, five years into the Decade, showed that an increased number of women have gained in skills, education, experience and training. Certainly more women are appearing on government delegations. But in many rural, small communities where most of the world's women — and men — live, development efforts are just beginning to make an impact and great discrepancies continue to exist between the opportunities and access to resources open to women and those available to men.

Save the Children, a child-focused community development agency working in 26 countries, is particularly concerned about the participation of women in development activities. This is not only because the family and its well-being is a priority for us, but that we wish to maximize to the fullest the resources within a community. The Mid-Decade for Women provides us with an opportunity to review both our own programs and the challenges of change in the lives of women in the developing world.

## Reviewing the Role of Women in Developing Countries

Reports and statistics from the Mid-Decade Conference show that women in most developing countries of the world;

- Receive less education and skills training than men.
- Receive almost no agricultural training, though they are extensively involved in agriculture.<sup>1</sup>
- Have less access than men to income producing activities, new technologies, and resources — especially credit.
- Participate far less than men in community activities and decisions including those that directly affect them.

And yet it is equally evident that:

- Women have the primary responsibility for the nurture and well being of their children.
- Women are the first and sometimes only teachers of their children.
- Women increasingly need to earn income for family survival or betterment. Income earned by women is most likely to be used for children and home.
- Women are becoming heads of household for extended periods of time as an increasing number of men leave the rural areas for jobs.<sup>2</sup>
- Community development projects can be aided by the active participation of women or undermined by their lack of support and labor.

To be aware of these factors in women's lives is to take the first step in understanding the components that must be part of a realistic development program.

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<sup>1</sup>"Yet it is in the area of home management that most 'vocational' programmes for rural women are directed. This should be viewed against the background that women continue to produce more than half the continent's food, most often with primitive tools" — from a report by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. The situation is similar, though to a lesser degree, in other areas of the world.

<sup>2</sup>"Economic development both has stimulated male labor migration and weakened traditional support systems for women 'left behind' in the village. The economic activities of women become increasingly important as they become heads of households and farm managers." from a report of the International Center for Research on Women, 1979.



## **Save the Children and Women's Role in Development**

Because the primary goal of Save the Children is improvement in the lives of children, their families and communities, we have naturally been concerned with the roles and activities of women in our program areas. As the agency moved toward a community based integrated development model in 1974, we became increasingly aware of the need to draw on the resources of women. The worldwide attention focused on women at the Mexico City Conference stimulated our efforts to articulate a program for women. In the development of this strategy, we have acquired a few important insights, extensive field experience and several hard learned lessons.

This paper is an effort to review the path we've taken, evaluate what we have learned and consider what remains to be done. We hope that like-minded individuals and agencies will find value in sharing the exercise with us.

# Save the Children

## Strategies and Assumptions

Save the Children provides technical and financial assistance in over 400 communities on five continents. The philosophy of the agency is based on the principle of self-help and is implemented through community based integrated development programs. Field offices in each of the 26 countries are staffed by personnel predominantly indigenous to the country if not the actual region. Trained field workers act as community facilitators, generally working through community committees. They also provide services in the area of training, education, technical assistance and guidance.

In the process of assisting communities to initiate development programs, we have first had to look carefully at our own cultural assumptions. What values appropriate to one community but not another does an agency and its personnel have? Who decides what constitutes community improvement?

An essential part of the agency strategy is that community people themselves must determine their own needs and define their own solutions. Only then can they proceed in the direction and at the pace most in accord with their traditional values and current goals. This is an important understanding for development agency personnel working with communities, even when they are from the region. Such an approach attempts to protect to the maximum degree the integrity of the community.

Secondly, the people of an assisted community must be willing to commit themselves to a common effort to address the needs and problems they have identified. The agency then acts as a catalyst, supplementing the community's resources to the minimum needed level for an agreed on period of time. In newer country programs, the projected time span is from three to eight years.

More directly concerning the issues in this paper, Save the Children also expects the committees with which it works to be representative of the widest range of residents of the community, including the poorest, the landless — and the women. Frequently these are not the groups that are part of community councils. We do then attempt to broaden the base of participation and decision making, and to persuade the leadership that such a broadening best serves the community's long range interests. The inclusion of women, therefore, in development projects in some communities has presented the agency with both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is to help the field staff explore, within the cultural sensibilities of each community, ways for women to acquire necessary new skills and learning. The opportunity is, of course, to enable a community to double its resources.

Along with self-determination of needs and the broadest possible community participation, the integration of development efforts is another essential tenet of this approach. We believe that people can best improve the conditions of their lives when they are able to respond to a broad range of community needs in an integrated effort. Thus a community that chooses to improve its water supply will be helped to examine the impact on health, child care, agriculture, home gardens, sanitation, etc. It will also be encouraged to formulate plans that include projects in related sectors in order to capitalize on the cumulative effect that a multi-faceted development effort provides. Such an integrated approach supports broad community participation and reflects the varying interests of diverse groups.



In summary, the agency philosophy holds that people themselves must choose how -- or if -- they wish to change their lives; that as many groups as possible in a community ought to be represented in the process of deciding; and that community life must be viewed in the broadest perspective.

## **Assessing the Role of Women in Save the Children Programs**

Working within the context of Save the Children methodology, we set out five years ago to expand its programs related to women. We had to acknowledge the relative lack of specific development assistance given by us or others to that important segment of the community. However, no broad assessment had been done about what was happening in field programs. We undertook to learn the perceptions of field staff about activities for women in their communities and how agency-supported projects were affecting women.

An appraisal of existing projects, often by informal report of staff, gave an impressionistic sense of how the agency was impacting on women's lives. Since programs are primarily child focused there were -- and are -- nutrition activities in many villages. This, of course, involved the women who participated in nutrition demonstrations and projects. In some of the older programs, there were health services for children that sometimes included the mothers. Any effort to increase water supply for home or agricultural use or to provide access to clean water directly affected women and children. When water was made available close to people's homes there was the additional benefit of eliminating the arduous labor of carrying it for long distances -- a time and energy consuming task for both women and children in many rural areas.



As more men from rural subsistence communities sought and found paid work on larger farms, or in factory or service jobs, the cash economy made an increasing impact on village life. One effect noted by observant field workers was the advantage the new income gave men. Now they had money to buy things whereas many women did not. In the old subsistence economy, men and women had had a tradition of shared labor for more equally shared benefits. It also became increasingly evident that the new income earned by men was not necessarily used for the family.

In looking at who was receiving agricultural training in the communities we recognized that in most programs the training was going to the men. Not surprisingly, the community committee, that underpinning of Save the Children methodology, was almost always made up of men. Perhaps only in some American Indian programs with a tradition of matriarchy, were there significant numbers of women on the community council.

The baseline surveys of communities done at that time did not represent the full range of activities going on in the villages since women were rarely involved in the surveys. Men tended to describe women's work as primarily related to home and children. We did not have a clear picture of the division of labor in a village — who was responsible for what tasks and had access to what resources. It is true that the gathering and use of baseline information was not widely applied as a tool as it is now. Nevertheless, where there was such information, it was limited on issues that touched women's lives.

Another critical point in attempting an appraisal of women's activities was that almost all field staff in Save the Children programs, as in other development and government agencies, were men.

In general, there was a minimum of specific information available, from field offices. More community women did seem to be expressing an interest in learning new skills — especially in home improvement and agriculture. From a headquarters perspective, viewing all country programs, there were changes occurring that were transcending national borders and were affecting women in many parts of the world. The changes were related to such disparate elements as government revision of legal codes for women, spurred perhaps by the United Nations Decade for Women; development efforts themselves; the communications revolution (the transistor radio was everywhere); increasing use of contraception<sup>3</sup>; urbanization; the migration of men to places of economic opportunity; and the increasing number of women who were heads of household. Although these currents were slow to reach the most traditional, rural communities — and in some instances, of course, have not — there were evident stirrings of change.

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<sup>3</sup> "Women everywhere seem to want fewer children than they did only 10-20 years ago," according to findings of the World Fertility Survey (1980) a result of interviews with more than 350,000 women in over 60 countries.

## Evolving a Strategy

The initial steps in evolving a strategy to upgrade the role and participation of women were threefold: fostering awareness; establishing criteria; and encouraging field office evaluation. The process of sensitizing agency staff started with informal meetings of headquarters personnel and reached out to field offices. At this time, (1975) program staff were reacting to and refining the recently evolved community based integrated rural development model. It was a natural time to examine women's role in agency plans.

The need for evaluating the role and participation of women in projects had been recognized by a group of voluntary agency representatives. The Sub-Committee for Women in Development of the American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service undertook this task and published their proposed criteria in December 1975. This booklet was distributed to the field programs of most of the participating agencies. The response was not encouraging, however, perhaps because the criteria were too sophisticated for field office use at that time.

Since little baseline information was available about the lives women were leading and the particular problems they faced, (fuel gathering, food production, health care, child mortality, frequent pregnancies, lack of opportunity to learn new skills or earn income, etc.) evaluation criteria seemed somewhat premature. However, the expressed interest of the agencies in having field offices evaluate projects related to women was in itself helpful, both as a statement of concern and as an encouragement to such activities.



The lack of baseline data for use in evaluation underlined an increasingly evident fact — there would have to be women staff in the field to ask the questions and to work with village women in identifying problems.

This perception coincided with Save the Children's growing interest in the social aspects of development. Women program staff at headquarters were assigned the responsibility of developing an appropriate strategy.

It is important to emphasize the development philosophy that community people themselves must identify their needs, determine the projects or activities that will answer them, and proceed in a direction and pace of their choosing. Since women have the greatest (and sometimes only) access to other women — especially in traditional societies — women field workers were needed to reach the women.

## **The Social Development Coordinator**

As part of the plan to foster women's programs — and also to expand social development projects — Save the Children proposed to its field offices in 1976, that they consider adding to staff a woman who would coordinate those activities.

The role and responsibilities of a social development coordinator were designed with the active participation of program staff and were directed toward health, child care, home improvement, nutrition, family planning and agriculture. (see appendix A) The field offices were encouraged to consider the responsibilities of such a person, assess whether those responsibilities were being carried out by other staff, and report on the number of women on staff and the kinds of jobs they were assigned. The point was to determine field office attitude toward the development of women's programs and to review the steps already taken. Was the job being done or was there need for additional staff? The latter was certainly the assumption of headquarter's program staff.

The response from field offices about the social development aspects of their programs (i.e. women related projects) indicated a growing awareness of the value of such a direction. It also revealed an encouraging amount of activity in particular country programs, basically health and agriculture connected. There was, in general, a moderate interest expressed by some field offices in expanding the scope of their women's programs.

## **Advocacy and Training**

Concurrent with this exploratory effort on the part of the agency headquarters during 1976, there was a series of conferences and workshops for Save the Children international staff. These provided a useful forum to discuss and promote the importance of women's role in programs, and to get field office response. Sensitizing workshops were run with country directors, field workers and support staff. They were encouraged to analyze the situation of women in their particular communities. Field staff had to consider if the constraints to the development of women's programs came from themselves (either from lack of time or

interest), from the communities, or from the limited resources available.

Not only was the goal to engender a fuller understanding of women's role in family and community life but, in some instances, to persuade staff that this was an issue worth pursuing. The contention that women as a group ought not be singled out for attention was frequent. There's much to be said for the fact that community improvements in water supply, roads, schools, etc. help women too.<sup>6</sup>

However, the fact remained that development workers tended to know what men did in a community, but relatively little about women's responsibilities. Without a strong incentive to examine women's role and engage their interest and energies, field workers might be ignoring whole areas of community life. This was a continuing theme of the training effort.

From these discussions grew the awareness that most field offices simply did not have the staff or resources to develop a systematic women's program. What's more, no single strategy was appropriate. Each country, if not each community, was an individual case. It was also apparent that the agency should continue to expand the horizons of staff — providing them with the opportunities to participate in broader development goals.

How does advocacy conform to a development philosophy that values self-determination and a community's traditional ways? We felt that in most communities where we worked, proper heed had not been paid to a major segment of the population. That segment was not part of the process of self-determination. Who knew what women wanted? Moreover, within each traditional system, there were ways in which women could be helped to gain greater skills and knowledge which the community as a whole would consider in its best interests. Not only advocacy was needed but so were additional resources.

The functions of advocacy, training and resource identification were being carried out at headquarters by a recently appointed Women's Program Coordinator, (a Matching Grant from the Agency for International Development 1978 supported that appointment) and by a Health/Nutrition Coordinator. Also, a major grant for health and nutrition activities greatly enhanced agency capacity to provide assistance to field offices in program planning, funding, training and some staffing. Since health and nutrition programs primarily involved community women, an important impetus was given to activities for women in these sectors. At the same time, the Women's Program Coordinator was refining the agency strategy for women and helping individual country programs develop implementation plans and seek resources.

As the agency strategy began to evolve and a clearer reflection of field and community needs became apparent, the Save the Children Board of Directors took the opportunity in May 1978, to articulate a policy in

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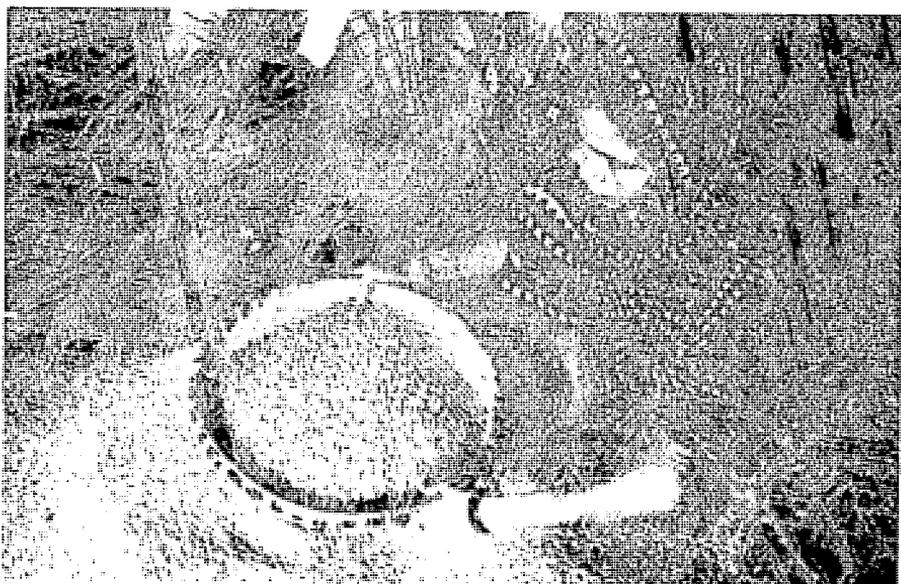
<sup>6</sup>AID, *Women in Development* cites the "women walk our roads too" syndrome.

support of increased program emphasis on women. (see appendix B) In short, the policy recognized the limitation of resources for women, advocated a careful appraisal by all Save the Children field offices of the role of women in the community, and offered guidelines. The policy had the long range effect of marking the agency's commitment to women and establishing some broad goals against which particular programs might be measured.

## **Implementing the Program**

The strategy to upgrade women's participation in agency programs required that more women be added to the staff at all levels. This took several years to accomplish and a strong agency investment in training and funding. With the advent of social development coordinators came the essential task of providing training for them. In many communities, women field workers were an innovation. The social development coordinators not only needed training in field workers' skills, where they lacked them, but particularly in group leadership, resource management, needs assessment, and program planning.

An essential component of the strategy was the fostering and development of women's groups in each community. There were, in almost every community, a traditional grouping of women — whether formal or informal. In many communities the women gathered to wash clothes, to process grain, to draw water or to attend a religious ceremony. There were also more formal groups and clubs, often devoted to sewing or household improvements, or serving as mutual assistance societies.





Strengthening and developing those groups therefore became a cornerstone in the program. The agency was aware of the effectiveness of existing women's groups in providing a setting in which women best learn to upgrade their skills and knowledge. Not only is the group usually the best mechanism for training, but the mutual encouragement that women give each other as they change their traditional ways of doing things is often essential to that process. For many women too, the group becomes a window to the world beyond their homes. Through the skills that women learn within the group about leadership and working together with one's peers, they are preparing themselves for greater participation in the community itself. This process has certainly been paralleled in developed as well as developing countries.

The belief held by some staff that by encouraging women's groups, the agency was inadvertently perpetuating the isolation of women from the mainstream of community participation and decision making was almost always false. The women's groups were often related to the community committees and the women leaders, with agency advocacy, took their places on the committees. Membership in the women's association gave them a legitimacy. There were other special interest groups of women, the Colombian Amas de Casa and Indonesian Credit Associations,

for example. There were also women who joined together to prepare school lunches for their children, or learned to sew, make fish nets, organize day care. This natural grouping of women is as common in developed as developing countries and does not, in itself, preclude women's involvement in community decisions.

## **A Look at Case Studies**

In order to assess how the strategy is working in actual field programs we examined four country projects. Four had active social development coordinators and three had interested, vigorous women's groups. Only one of the project areas had existing baseline information useful to the review. Sufficient periodic information on the projects had been sent to headquarters to supplement field visit observations by the women's program coordinator and others, thus making an appraisal more possible.

The following case studies from Colombia, Honduras, Indonesia and Upper Volta are examples of the agency approach.

# Case Study of SCF Women's Programs in Dori, Upper Volta<sup>1</sup>

Today, as in the past, Save the Children/Dori views its women's programs as part and parcel of all development spheres. The Dori bureau has not separated its women's programs into an insular sector. We have witnessed the advantages of integrating women's projects directly into each sectoral plan. As a result, each sector is responsible for and directly involved in upgrading the participation of women in all SCF development efforts.

Although most women's projects fall under the Social/Economic Development Sector, much consulting, collaboration and future planning is done with the Health and Agriculture Sectors.

## Approach of Women's Program

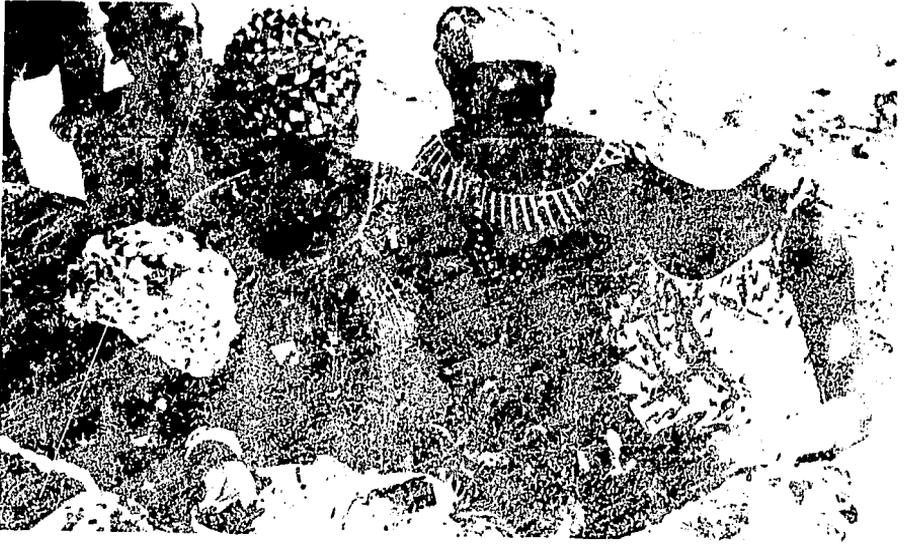
Upon entering a new village in Upper Volta, the agency approaches the community leaders to discuss formation of men and women's committees. Women's committees and subcommittees are organized so that the women have the opportunity to define their own needs and participate in the village decision making process to determine specific projects.

Active women's committees are presently working in 8 villages with Save the Children field agents in the following areas:

- Women's Fields and Sewing Projects intended to increase the women's skills and resources needed to clothe and feed their children;
- Cotton Spinning Projects which will increase the possibilities for income generations

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<sup>1</sup>From a report by Susan Corbett of the SCF Upper Volta Field Office.



- Small Gardens which help increase food availability for the family and provide additional revenue through market sales.

Cooperative work methods constitute an ongoing part of all projects in the form of group decision making and communal fund management.

In general, we see our role as somewhere between a facilitator and a director. The women's groups demand both flexibility and a semblance of professional direction. As expected in a tenuous balance such as this, our efforts with the women have occasioned both positive and negative results.

Thus far, the women's response has been positive; they have shown enthusiasm in attending village meetings and take an active (if not boisterous) role. Initial attempts to organize meetings in the first three villages in the area were met with demands for food gifts in exchange for the women's participation. This attitude grew out of the distribution of relief food by other development agencies during and after the drought. However, the women of these three villages, along with the women of the five newer villages, are coming to understand that the agency's purpose is not to provide handouts, but to increase their skills and responsibilities so that each woman may be a *recognized* productive member of her village.

### **History:**

Save the Children/Dori has not been without its problems during its four year history. Originally, women's projects were an integrated part of the health sector which covered everything from nutrition to income generation. Just in the past year, Integrated Health was divided into two separate sectors, Health and Social/Economic Development. All income

generation, appropriate technology and agriculture projects concerning women were given over to the Social/Economic Development sector. The following project descriptions will include problems encountered, successes, and future directions.

Income generating projects were developed around the traditional practices of cotton spinning, sorrel and tobacco processing. All of these projects were originally identified by the women themselves as a needed means for increasing revenue. Originally, credit was provided to women in the form of cotton. The agency was to be reimbursed after the cotton was spun into thread and sold. Local cotton was not available, thus processed cotton was purchased which required use of a comb to separate the cotton. Many of the women were unwilling to pay the added expense of the comb and dropped out of the project. Follow-up for reimbursement posed difficulties since market outlets had not been adequately studied to determine saleability and the women had difficulties in selling the thread. Reimbursement problems were also due to the practice of distributing the cotton. Distribution was seen by many of the women as another "handout" which reinforced the "cadeau" mentality. Many of the women did not fully understand or accept the credit reimbursement conditions and much misunderstanding and hard feelings resulted when the time came for repayments. As a consequence, there remains an underlying sentiment that the agency is acting as a police-person to ensure repayments rather than as a facilitator trying to increase development opportunities.

Despite these setbacks, there were successful aspects. A strong basis for group formation developed and the practice of collecting dues to form communal cash funds was established. A secondary project resulted from the cotton project when the women decided to utilize their communal fund to purchase sorrel seeds to make a fermented seed cake which preserves well and is in high market demand. This project proved very successful and was planned and implemented solely by the women using their own resources.

The sewing project, directly requested by the women to enable them to make clothing for their children, is proving very successful. It is the project most enthusiastically attended by the women. A sewing teacher hired by Save the Children, began giving lessons in 2 villages and has recently expanded the project to include 4 more. The teacher spends one week of every month in each area giving lessons and supervision on hand sewing methods. Monthly dues are collected to form a communal cash fund used to replenish needed materials. Future plans are to continue lessons until the women reach a specified proficiency at which time hand crank sewing machines will be made available on a credit basis. Small business cooperative methods will be integrated into the training with hopes that some of the women may begin a small enterprise for the sale of clothing. Unfortunately, the tobacco processing project did not prove successful. Village



women requested a loan to buy raw tobacco which they processed for sale in the market. However, inputs and benefits were not adequately calculated and very few women realized a profit while the majority took a loss. Consequently, reimbursement was not realistically possible. At the time, however, Save the Children decided to require reimbursement to emphasize the importance of repaying loans. Over the past year the reimbursements have been slowly paid, but again, the feeling of being policed rather than aided has dampened the womens spirits.

Learning from these past mistakes, the agency is now developing a new approach to income generating projects. Firstly, more research has been done on market outlets and cost/benefit factors. Secondly, to ensure fuller comprehension of credit, village meetings are being held to discuss how the project will work. Credit/reimbursement conditions are being discussed before the project begins. Thirdly, the method of distribution is being changed to avoid giving the impression of making handouts. The agency will pilot an artisan center with a program integrating the women's cotton spinning project with income generating projects for the men. In this manner, we will be utilizing the existing infrastructures to ensure project longevity. When the actual artisan center presently being planned by local organizations is established, pilot center participants will transfer their business and become members. The purpose of this proposal is to support existing structures and to integrate men and women into all stages of the project.

As a means of training the women in group management, the women — or a group representative -- will take part in the purchase of center

materials, organizing artisan group needs, procuring materials on credit, distribution, reimbursement, and communal fund management. In this manner, all responsibilities for group organization and reimbursement follow-up will be placed directly on the women (an agency field worker will work with them in all stages.) In the future, women will learn management skills through Small Business Training and will play an important role in the dissemination of Smokeless Mud Stoves which are being introduced to conserve wood — an increasingly scarce resource.

## **Case Study: Women's Fields**

When the village women were first approached by Save the Children, committees were formed and meetings programmed around the women's busy schedules. Our philosophy was to begin by meeting the needs expressed by the women. Two of these were opportunities to increase income and provide greater food availability.

Women usually plant peanuts, okra, beans, and sorrel during the time that their husbands plant the millet. However, access to these seeds is always limited, especially since the drought of '73 which began a seven year sequence of poor harvests.

With the aid of field agents, the women organized into groups, paid dues to form a community cash fund, and received different seed varieties on loan. The agreement was that the seeds would be reimbursed in-kind after the harvest and placed in a grain storage fund to be planted the next rainy season. The organization and dues collection went well and the planting and care of crops was successfully completed. However, over the past three years of the project's life, the rains have either come too late, or come on time with an interim dry period, or ended too early, all resulting in a poor harvest. Full reimbursement into grain storage funds has not taken place due to low production. The past year, the women used their own money to buy seeds in the market in order to reimburse the funds. Save the Children supplemented their stock and the project was undertaken again. However, this year's harvest has been a total failure and we are all faced with the question of whether or not to continue taking losses. The project, in itself, is a very good one supported by good group organization and increasing participation. Unfortunately, the weather is not cooperating.

After a series of meetings with the women's groups to evaluate the harvest, the Health, Socio/Economic Development, and Agriculture sectors began a plan of collaboration to develop a nutrition/small gardens program for one of the villages which faces a serious food shortage. This project will involve research in water sources, gardening methods and natural fencing development. A project concerning both income and nutrition will be organized with efforts to increase livestock productivity,

which would require research in animal husbandry. Women are responsible for small gardening and also own their share of the cattle. Women would play a prominent role in increasing income and developing new sources of nutrition.

Three of the village groups working on the Women's Fields project wish to try again next year and have agreed to utilize their communal funds to buy seeds for next planting season. Because there are not enough seeds in the local markets, the women are electing representatives to accompany agency field workers to Niger to purchase seeds. We will match the amount of seeds purchased by the women. By the next harvest, with the collaboration of all sectors, alternative projects in cattle productivity and small gardens will be developed to replace the Women's Fields project if once again, the Sahel experiences an erratic rainy season.

This case study provides a good example of inter-sectoral collaboration and close communication with village groups. Women's groups are defining their own problems and needs and seeking appropriate solutions and choosing alternative routes accordingly. Save the Children/Dori facilitates by furnishing technical advice and offering access to materials and loans.

# Case Study of the Training and Development of Village Women in Sibundoy, Guadalupe and Ubaque, Colombia

## Background of Project

The training of village women club leaders in selected rural areas in Colombia is a project that grew from the convergence of interests of Save the Children, Colombia; the Federacion Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia (FNC); and, not least of all, rural women themselves. This interest, with support and assistance from Save the Children headquarters and technical assistance from World Education (a non-formal education and training agency) culminated in a program aimed at developing and expanding the isolated training experiences of a small group of rural women into a network of training, organization building and income-producing capacity. Specifically, the program would focus on:

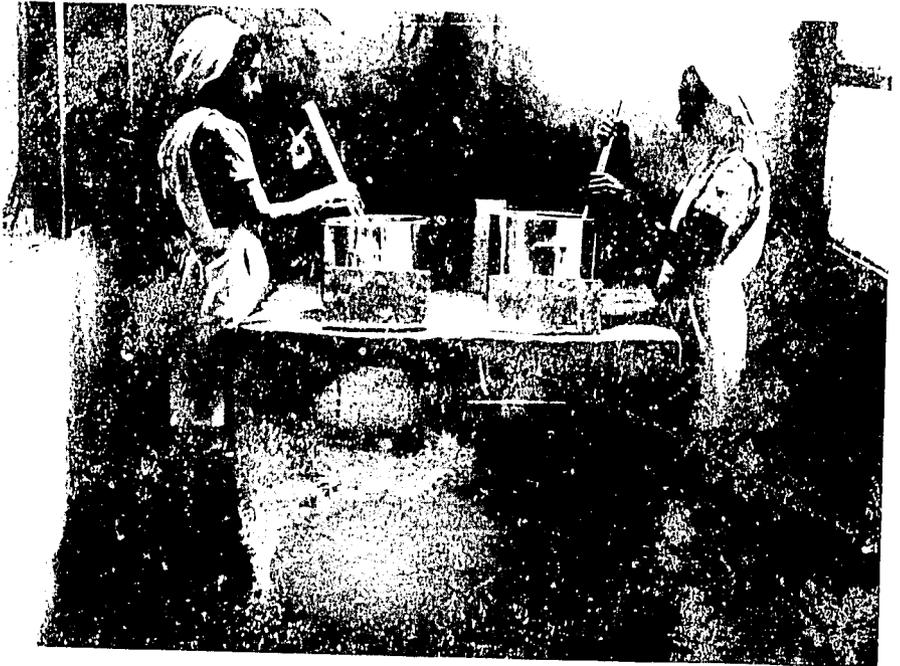
- the training of rural women leaders in group development and communication skills
- the formation and support of village women's clubs (Clubs de Amas de Casa)
- the careful needs assessment of the women's clubs
- the selection and development of income-producing or home improvement projects
- the establishment of loan funds for women's projects
- training for the women's clubs in the management of credit.

The program received funding and began, in January 1979, with the selection of potential rural women leaders from Sibundoy, Narino, Guadalupe and Ubaque, Colombia, and 91 women were enrolled in the training courses. Three courses of four weeks each were held from January through September at the Nokanchipa Training Center in Sibundoy. The courses were taught primarily by the trainers of FNC with help from SENA (Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje) and INCORA (Instituto Colombiana Reforma Agraria).

Of the 91 rural women leaders trained, 82 received diplomas for completing the course successfully. The number of leaders trained exceeded the proposal estimates which were between 60 to 75 women.

### **Starting Women's Groups**

After the training course, the women leaders returned to their villages to work with—or organize—women's clubs. In some villages, there existed active women's groups, interested primarily in home improvement, sewing and cooking. In others, the leaders had to use their newly learned skills to



motivate the women to join the groups. Since an integral part of the program was the access of club women to a special loan fund, this factor encouraged membership. An assumption of the program was that the newly

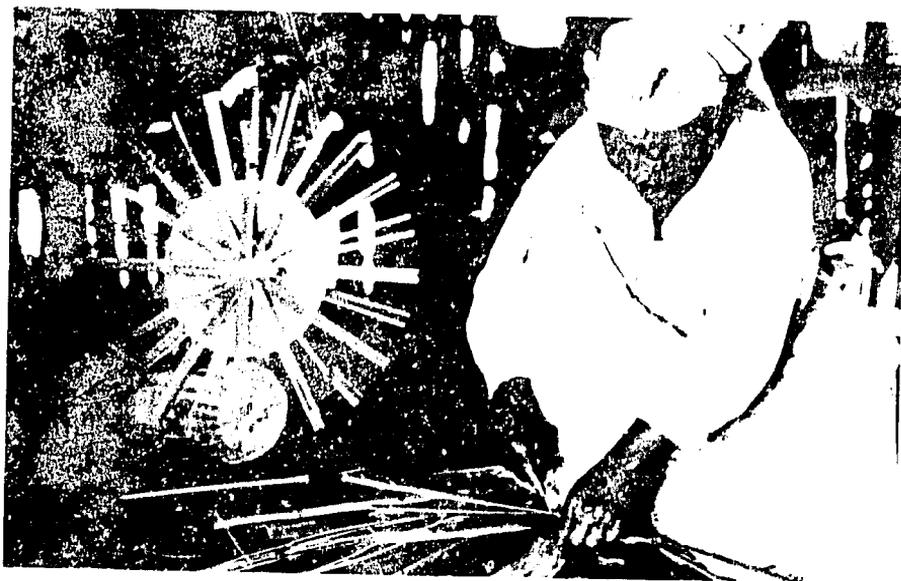
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<sup>4</sup>From PACT (Private Agencies Collaborating Together)

trained women leaders would pass on what they had learned during their training course to the women in their villages. Along with leadership, communications and group skills, the women had acquired basic information about health and nutrition, first aid, child care and agriculture (home gardens). They had also worked with loan applications and discussed possible income-producing activities for women's clubs.

The development of women's clubs went well in the initial stages. In the first year, 54 clubs were formed and 21 of them had achieved legal status, making them eligible for loans under the terms of the program grant. Legal status also enhanced the clubs' potential to enter the established credit system as they developed experience with loans and repayment.

Another feature of the program was the selection by each of the clubs of particular projects that had income producing potential. The projects generally selected were those in which the women had already had some experience — e.g. pig raising, potato growing, basket weaving, sewing. When the club agreed on a project (or projects by small groups of women), for which they wished to apply for a loan, they were then expected to receive special training or "short courses" in their chosen activity. This was to be done by local government agencies or by skilled field workers from Save the Children or FNC in order to expand the skills of the women and give the projects a better chance of success.



The working out of loan fund guidelines was done by the agencies in collaboration with the women leaders and clubs. This process took almost a year to complete and the guidelines were relatively rigorous.

During this period with the development of clubs, short courses, loan

guidelines, project selection, etc., field workers from both agencies gave continuing support and training to the women leaders and to the clubs. The agencies also made funds available to the clubs for demonstration materials and for the start up of some non-income producing activities. (Many clubs wished to have their own first aid kits since they learned first aid techniques from the leaders.)

In reviewing the first year and a half of the project a number of useful observations can be made. On a specific level, the short courses were hard to provide to the extent needed, and at the time and place most appropriate. In some cases, training in a required skill was not available. Or, a government sponsored course of great interest to the women was four weeks long and given in a district center. This excluded the women who could not leave their families and villages.

The loan fund guidelines were perhaps the greatest constraint to the program. As the agencies and groups of women leaders debated the issue, they tried to devise guidelines that would balance the traditional, structured requirements with those that were more flexible. The terms had to meet the needs of rural women, who are most often closed out of the credit system for lack of the necessary guarantees. On the other hand, the guidelines had to insure adequate safeguards so that the loans would be repaid. The program was to be designed so that the women's clubs could manage the loans. The women generally had limited experience handling money, but that was to be compensated for by extensive training of club officers in loan fund management. In addition, field coordinators from both agencies were to make major efforts to help the women develop sound projects for loan submission and provide continuing support for managing the funds during the first year.

The initial requirement that the clubs receive legal status before becoming eligible for a loan caused serious delays and was, in the end, only partially observed. The delay in receiving the loan funds, for women's clubs that had gone through the organizing and project selection steps was dismaying and demoralizing to some. A response to this problem was the proposed organization of three regional associations of the women's clubs which would receive legal status in the name of all the member clubs of the region. It could also serve the need to bring together the individual leaders for reviewing and assessing the needs of their clubs. This is still in the process of organization.

As the field workers and representatives of the women's clubs met to review the first year, the need for more extensive training for all groups was evident. Neither the program itself, the funding requirements or the evaluation system were adequately understood. The group also pinpointed other difficulties: in some communities, the leaders' enthusiasm disappeared because the community as a whole was disinterested; some leaders never received the necessary support from field staff or needed

materials; in a few areas, the men did not support nor understand the women's activities.

After identifying the major constraints, the group asked for an intensive workshop for a week, reviewing project needs, clarifying goals, and setting up a series of training meetings for field workers, the women leaders and the clubs. They also determined to work with the men's groups in the community to gain their support for the projects. Lastly, they asked for more training in administration of the loan funds.

Loans have now been made to more than 40 clubs. The success of the projects and the rates of repayment are still not known but many of the clubs themselves seem to be developing vigorously and have stimulated community activities not related to loans. In spite of the setbacks to the program, the planning group decided to go ahead with the training-for-trainers workshop scheduled for early 1981, for all Save the Children social development coordinators from Latin America, F.N.C. national training representatives, and government and other agency personnel dealing with women's programs. The workshop agenda includes a discussion of the Colombia project.

Whether the clubs will be lasting; whether the women will have access to the greater resources of the regular credit structure after their experiences with these loans; how long clubs will need a support structure and training, are still questions to be answered. At this point, however, the field staff consider the women's program one of its strongest components.

# Case Study of Two Income Producing Projects for Women in Honduras

## Rosquilla Project

In the village of Esquimay, in impoverished south Honduras, a group of local women came to Save the Children seeking assistance for a project they had in mind. They explained that the primary source of income in Esquimay was the sale of rosquillas, a hard biscuit made from corn and cheese. Grinding the corn was a long, laborious job, so time consuming that the women were never able to produce enough to make as many rosquillas as they could sell.

A housewives' club in the community, headed by a particularly dynamic young woman, had heard of Save the Children and thought it could help. The agency asked for a meeting with the entire community — men and women — to appraise whether an integrated community based program would be feasible and of interest to the community. Since it was, a community committee was formed and the process began. Although there was some reluctance on the part of men to have women participate in the meetings, it was, after all, the women's club that had brought in agency assistance. After careful needs assessment with community leaders, it was decided that a motor driven corn mill to increase production of corn meal and reduce women's labor would be the most beneficial first project for the entire community. The agency donated the down payment for the corn mill and made a loan to the community committee for the first payment. From the proceeds earned by the mill (each woman paid a small sum for the use of the mill) the loans were repaid and rosquilla productions and sales increased. Additionally, women had more time for child care and household tasks.

Encouraged by their success, the women decided to form a baking cooperative to produce rosquillas more efficiently. Although it started well, it was soon apparent that the women really preferred to work in their own homes as they always had. For whatever reasons of individual differ-



ences or family demands, the women of this community were not inclined toward a cooperative project. However, the mill continues to serve the community and the women appreciate their additional income and time.

### **Making a Cooperative Work**

In the village of San Juan Bosco, site of a second project, the agency assisted a group of village women to do a feasibility study for a canning cooperative.<sup>5</sup> The challenge was what to do with a very plentiful crop of mangoes that were available only during a short period of the year. Moreover, when they were in season, many of them spoiled on the ground — this, in an area of great poverty and malnutrition. Making a mango puree seemed feasible, so a project coordinator helped villagers start a cooperative to produce and can the puree.

Their first year's production of mango puree was completely sold, but the second year's sales dropped to half of production. The next year the group produced none because they had so much left over. Also, there were almost no mangoes that season since mango trees in that area "rest" every seven years and produce no fruit.

Obviously, some new initiatives were necessary to revitalize the project. Although everyone recognized the difficulties, there seemed to be a sense that those difficulties could be overcome. That was perhaps the most positive aspect of the project at that time.

In examining why the puree was not selling, the group identified three reasons: the jars were probably too large and people tended to buy only as much as the family would eat in one day (and all a family could afford to buy at one time); the glass jars themselves were expensive, thereby making the product expensive; puree is not a traditional Honduran food.

The cooperative members attacked their marketing problems by

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<sup>5</sup>From a report by Kimberley Conroy, the project coordinator.

studying product diversification in a course given by professors from the PanAmerican Agricultural School. Through this they learned new methods of preparing and processing various mango and papaya products. They also took courses on the processing of fruit products in vacuum packed plastic bags, which offered the most interesting possibilities for the project.

In addition, they learned about fruit tree planting and grafting. Subsequently they planted about 700 mango and papaya trees, which provided them with improved varieties of fruits. This latter project was done with a special grant from the Agency for International Development.

The next step was to gain legal status from the government, done only after great effort on the part of the women. Legal status gave them the added benefit of being able to apply for bank loans.

The project reflects the careful study the women did. They have now diversified their products to include jams and candy and have experimented with different packaging. More recently they devised a biscuit cone that is filled with mango puree and sold for a few pesos. This has become a very popular item in the village and neighboring areas and given the project an important boost. The women are also planning a food cooperative that could operate in the cannery during the non-harvest months. The food cooperative could provide villagers with less expensive foodstuffs and give members an opportunity to earn income other than at the fruit season.

In a meeting with agency staff, the women discussed the effect of the project on their lives. They believe that it enabled them to provide better food, clothing and medicine for their children and had earned them respect from their families and communities. In addition, the cooperative experience fostered in them a greater sense of their worth and of themselves as women.

Although the project is in many aspects successful, nevertheless the women express a need for continuing technical assistance and for encouragement.



# **Case Study**

## **Women's Credit Unions in Aceh, Indonesia**

Aceh Territory in north Sumatra, Indonesia, is the site of several successful credit programs for women. The cultural setting seems particularly conducive to their development. The men of the area are accustomed to working for wages in places away from their homes and sending income to their families. Often men spend only the month of Ramadan back in their villages with their families.

Houses are inherited through the females of a family. A woman's parents may build a house for her as a wedding gift, or might make an addition to their house for the new bride and her husband. The women then have a continuity of home and village. They also manage the households, the income received from their husbands, and the family agriculture, unless the land is sufficiently prosperous so that the man stays to work it. Women are therefore trained for financial responsibility and have a culturally encouraged sense of independence, community and sharing.

### **The Development of Credit Union**

The original Save the Children activity for women in selected villages of Banda Aceh was the weighing of babies to determine their nutritional status. Linked with this was a project to prepare and encourage the use of tofu as a weaning food and as a protein supplement to the diet. Tofu had been made by a few village women, but Save the Children aided in the development of its production and distribution.

In the village of Pulo Mesjid II, the women who came together for the baby weighing project and subsequent nutrition demonstration programs decided to form a credit union. Their reasons centered on the seasonal nature of their income which depended on the harvest of rice and coffee. Their family's need for money, however, was not seasonal — especially

monthly school fees, books and medical costs. Families were known to pawn zil their belongings to meet the costs of medical care for a sick child. Other expenditures considered essential by village women were for holiday and religious observances and for household repairs. In order to meet these needs, the women decided to begin a credit union. Save the Children contributed a small amount of capital and the interested women paid a membership fee of 1500 rps. (or \$2.50) to join. There were 35 members at the onset — there are now 100 — and the women devised a progressive lending system. A woman can first borrow \$5.00 and when repaid, then \$10.00. The loans are given for any purpose and the repayment rate is close to perfect. If a woman does not repay her loan, the other members of the group visit her home to find out why. Theoretically, this could mean that 99 women might appear at the home of the defaulter. Whatever the number, the group pressure is sufficient. The women's group enjoyed its successes and decided to take over the tofu making project, and sell the product locally. They also took responsibility for the nutrition lessons and began a day care project.

By contributing one handful of rice per month per child and giving this to the village health center, along with a small registration fee, the women initiated their own form of health insurance plan. The children of each member were entitled to receive needed treatment at the health center at no cost.

For the women of Pula Mesjid II, the next project was day care. The children under five years old who were not in school were often crawling around in the rice fields as their mothers worked — an often unhealthy when not actually dangerous activity. The women found a lean-to near



one of the fields that could be used for the children. A teacher was located and village girls volunteered to help out. When the women wished to turn the informal center into a kindergarten, Save the Children offered help by providing cement and a small grant. The women and men of the community provided almost all of the labor.

The women next decided that they wanted a women's center. When the government gave the village a grant of approximately \$400 for building a road, the women hired themselves out as roadworkers and earned most of the \$400. They put that sum into buying a piece of land for the center, and have supplemented it by selling vegetables and corn. First they will pay off the land, then build the center. They have said that they want no further help from Save the Children since they want the project to be completely their doing.

This same group has played an active role in assisting women in other villages to form similar associations. They have helped them to learn how to get groups started, how to manage loans, how to organize classes in embroidery and cooking, etc. The same technique of saving handfuls of rice to provide initial funds has been adopted by some of the new groups.

There now seems to be an informal network of about eight women's groups — mostly credit associations — throughout the district. The women say that they need more management training and Save the Children assistance for another one or two years.

In analyzing the unusual success of these groups, several points are made by the staff. The very smallness of the credit unions may actually be what makes them work so well. Also, women have a long history of managing resources. The communities are supportive of the women's efforts and there is strong natural leadership. One limitation is the lack of assistance to the groups as they plan productivity projects. If increased credit were available for larger productivity projects, the women would need more sophisticated production, marketing and managing skills. As the agency encourages the development of the credit associations, it must be particularly sensitive to the implications of increasing the funding beyond the current capabilities of the women. The women might well be able to handle the challenge, but the projects should develop in the way and at the rate they choose.

# Assessing the Case Studies

In reviewing the projects described in the case studies, we believe that each one has contributed to our understanding of the dynamics of inaugurating women's programs.

As an initial observations, we should note that in each of the communities described, there were either positive supports for, (or at least no constraints to) the development of women's groups and activities. They were different in nature, of course, in each project. An interesting comparison can be made between the women in Indonesia and those in Colombia in their confidence in handling loan funds. Experience in financial responsibility and community support for the Indonesian group was evident. There are also strong movements within Colombia, Upper Volta, and Honduras to help women (especially from rural areas) to upgrade their lives.

This climate of support by government and other agencies and groups is a significant contributing factor to the development of programs involving women. From a Save the Children perspective, an important variable in the success of women's programs in our project areas lies in the interest and commitment of our own field office staff. Although women's groups and projects can obviously exist and grow without agency support, in villages where we work such programs have not flourished without the interest, training, technical and minimal financial support of the field staff.

The Colombian project experienced resistance from some of the men in the villages. It seemed to be expressed primarily as resentment that the women were away from home, but it was not considered an important constraint by most project participants. The leaders felt that they could take particular steps to remedy the situation. This social resistance is not always so benign and is an issue that demands sensitivity and flexibility from the field workers. In general, we have found that working within the



parameters of what women's groups think appropriate for them to do, provides reasonable assurance of community acceptability for the programs. It is also helpful if the groups include the older, respected women of the community.

Save the Children considers that the growth of loan funds for women is a significant development. We also find that when women make an investment of their own resources — whether a handful of rice, a minimum fee, dues, or their efforts to raise money through a community fair — the loan fund is more successful. The women treat the fund as their own money and have greater incentive to pay back loans and to see that their peers do. Moreover, it is a healthy step away from the initial "handout" syndrome described in the Upper Volta Case Study.

In three of the projects described, the critical elements for success were continuing training and technical support over a period of several years. In assessing all agency women's programs, this pattern would be corroborated by the evidence we have. In communities where women have not had experience in making decisions or managing activities outside their homes, they look to training and education to reinforce their confidence and to give them the skills they lack.

## **Continuing Training as an Overall Strategy**

Examining the last five years' experience with the development of women's programs at Save the Children, we would probably identify training as the greatest need at every level of the program. As a result of an increased emphasis on training by the agency, almost all new field program

personnel attend orientation sessions at headquarters. During the orientation, the trainees receive information about women's programs and discuss planning strategies. Through this we hope to demonstrate how the development of women's activities and skills impacts favorably on the total development program.

Most training naturally takes place in the field and here where the agency is placing major emphasis. The training for social development coordinators is of great importance to the women's program. As described earlier, the woman field worker is a new phenomenon in many countries and she needs continuing training experiences in leadership skills, organizing women's groups, planning and managing projects, the development of demonstration materials, etc.

We have found it particularly useful to train government and other agency personnel along with our own staff. Through such collaborative training, a support system is reinforced and a network established of co-workers. In Indonesia, the agency is teaching community development at the local government training school to whole departments, including the police and army. Reciprocally, our personnel are frequently involved in government training programs. The health and nutrition team at Save the Children has done substantial and successful work in training village health/nutrition workers in most of our program areas. Most often, local government personnel is included and workshops have been specially organized at the request of governments.

A particular training project in Tunisia was co-sponsored by Save the Children and the Union National Des Femmes de Tunisie. It involved government workers from all over Tunisia. The workshop groups tackled the problem of how to make contact with village women and how to introduce new skills and information.<sup>7</sup> The training was to be followed up by workshops in each province for the field workers there, although this has not yet been done.

At the community level, there is a great scarcity of training for women, especially for those who cannot leave the villages. The training of group leaders as done in the Colombia project or by the health/nutrition workers in projects in Indonesia and Mexico, can make an important impact on the skills and knowledge available to other women.

Many mothers have used to dramatic advantage the information and skills they've learned about child care and family health. An indicator is the number of household vegetable gardens in many villages.

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<sup>7</sup>A favorite activity was role play and was most successful when participant worker and village women — then reversed roles. One vignette, made up by a village woman, had a field worker who only wished to talk about family planning visiting a village woman who only wanted to talk about her sick cow. The impasse was a source of amusement and recognition by the other field workers. They resolved to listen more carefully during field visits and gave that the highest priority. While making

Another is the emphasis given to obtaining clean water.

Also, as projects develop, training needs change. A common request now in almost every women's project in which the agency is involved is the need for skills related to project management — whether simple accounting, keeping books and records, or planning. This is the training least available for village level women and, as projects develop, the one that is and will be most needed.

## **Project Selection by Community Women**

The interest in income producing activities by many women in the poorest agency assisted communities is widespread if not universal. That is not to say that child care, health, family life, home improvement and nutrition are not high priorities. For many women though, the added income has to precede such interests. Most women's groups are able to carry on both kinds of projects simultaneously. Thus, the women who gather to do cotton processing in our project area in Bangladesh, learn about health care and family planning.

An important consideration for the viability of projects is how carefully they have been identified and selected by the women and how realistic the guidance of the field workers has been.

Certain projects for women seem especially popular among development workers and communities. Sewing projects are a good example. In some of our village programs, sewing classes were either the first tentative idea of women unused to options, or the suggestions of field workers who decided that women like to sew. The major problem growing out of this was the assumption that sewing would be an income-producing project. In one village in Bangladesh, for example, the women who finished a class organized by us felt betrayed when they found that there was little market



for their products. This scenario has been repeated with variations in many communities by other development groups. Relatively few women become sufficiently skilled in sewing or knowledgeable about marketing to earn income -- especially when so many are engaged in the effort. Here, development workers have been quick to make assumptions about what projects are appropriate for women. When dressmaking is taught to women so that they can make clothes for themselves and their families, their expectations can more often be realized than when it is proposed as an income-producing activity. Other forms of sewing, embroidery and crafts are also fostered as sources of income for women without proper attention being given to marketing possibilities. The Upper Volta case study illustrated this point several times over especially when the women could not sell the cotton thread they spun.

In the agency's program in Tunisia more women were learning to process wool for sale than the market could support. In the Honduran Case Study, when the women were faced with a diminishing market for their mango puree, they themselves undertook to explore new product possibilities. They also learned marketing techniques. They are perhaps among the relatively few rural women to have both the access and freedom to participate in such courses.

We, as development agents, need to expand our sights too so that assistance offered to women will not only respond to their interests and needs, but will offer realistic options for income production. This thrust would necessarily include expanded focus on basic managerial skills and marketing strategies.

In selecting four case studies from Save the Children women's projects that we felt had particular interest for program planners and our own field offices, we of necessity slighted others. An interesting agricultural training and loan program for women is taking place in agency assisted villages in the south of Lebanon for example. Those villages also engage in health programs involving women, family planning and day care activities.

In Bangladesh, the field office has drafted a comprehensive program for women. There, the development of women's groups has faced stronger resistance in some villages and from individual field staff than elsewhere. In spite of that, many of the women are determinedly learning new skills and taking on new responsibilities to an extent that would have seemed unlikely a year or two ago. In Sri Lanka and the Dominican Republic, the women's groups are a strong part of community activities. Other programs are still new enough that adequate information is unavailable. The four country programs selected were those we felt best illustrated the things we've learned.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A slideshow called "Women Working Together in the Developing World" was made by the United Nation Mid-Decade for Women Meetings in Copenhagen, showing most of the agency's women's programs and some of those of Save the Children Alliance members.

# Understanding and Measuring Change

Measuring change is, perhaps, most important to community people themselves. Certainly a development agency needs evaluation information for program purposes and as a form of accountability to its funding sources. In such documents as Operational Program Grants from the Agency for International Development, indicators relate to the number of women's groups, training activities and projects in a community. These are important indicators that measure both the direction and efforts of an agency involved in community development work. There is other information though that particularly serves the purposes of the program participants.

When village women in several Save the Children programs undertook an evaluation of their own activities, with the help of social development coordinators, they prepared very detailed questionnaires. The answers to the questions were to provide the baseline data against which the women would measure the effectiveness of their projects. In Colombia, for example, far more information came from women leaders and clubs than could be digested. However, from it the women had a very good sense of the conditions in their villages, which was as useful a reason as any for doing the surveys. As their club projects for community improvement progress, they will have a record of their starting point. The surveys are providing the collaborating agencies with additional information for making an evaluation of the project. Again, in Cameroon, agency staff worked out a survey with village women that was sensitive to their special concerns and engendered considerable interest.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Many agencies are aware that there are inadequate tools to measure the "process" of development — the social and attitudinal changes, rather than the projects completed or activities undertaken. This is a lack for women's programs too, which needs to be further explored. Community self evaluation, when it can be done, is most effective.

Although the question of evaluation is an essential one for development efforts, the data base relating to women is not yet strong enough to make important separate evaluations of women's programs. As suggested, the broad outlines for evaluation exist in Save the Children programs, but relatively little that is country or community specific.

A goal for the agency is the development of just such data. This will not only encourage women but help the community to appreciate the impact of their efforts. It is even possible that as men see a cumulative record of the contributions that women are making for family and community good, they will be more supportive of women's efforts to gain skills and opportunities.

An evaluation of the integration of women into development programs in each country is also a necessary step. Save the Children is proposing that each country program develop its own indicators for the effectiveness of women's programs in the communities in terms of its own stated goals. Additionally, the field offices themselves should evaluate the role of women on staff as to responsibilities pay, training and resources. It may well give an indication of their potential impact on field level programs.

## **Observations on Five Year Review of Women's Programs**

We have learned useful lessons about women's programs during this particular five year period. The "we" includes Save the Children field and headquarters staff, as well as the women involved in the projects and their communities.

Summarized briefly, we believe that

- Women's groups are the most effective mechanism through which to encourage and support women's activities
- Women are not represented significantly on most community committees. They often choose to work outside this structure through their own committees and groups and the agency helps them in this effort
- There is a great reservoir of interest — if not determination — among the women to learn new skills and have access to new opportunities
- Women must determine the projects they wish to undertake. Sensitive field workers can help them understand the responsibilities involved and the skills needed to bring projects to successful completion
- Continuing training and field office support is essential to the development of strong programs, especially in their initial stages.

# Designing Programs for Women

As women's groups become more active and their projects develop, particular programming needs for this stage are being identified. Community women have requested access to appropriate technology, family planning, child care and child development projects, loan funds and expanded opportunities for earning income. A very brief review of the probable direction of future programs follows.

## Appropriate Technology

It was apparent in the Case Study about Honduras how important the corn grinding machine was to the women of Pespire, and indeed, to the whole community. It is representative of the needs of almost all SCF assisted communities. We have been actively involved in testing technologies that particularly affect women. Potable water and water for farming are, of course, important priorities for any community, and we have been deeply involved in these projects. Fuel exploration is a new direction for the agency. One proposed project would involve women in Upper Volta in a reforestation program. Fuel saving stoves are another major contribution to women's lives and those that control smoke are a household blessing.

Simple equipment for traditional tasks, such as looms for weaving projects in Tunisia, a hand mill for grinding millet in Upper Volta, raised cooking surfaces in the south of Colombia, food drying frames in Lebanon, are examples of just some of the technologies that women are seeking. There is much to be done, however, in appropriate technologies for food storage, production and preservation that could make a significant difference in improved food supplies for families and in income for women.



## Family Planning

Save the Children has consistently supported the right of families to choose the number and spacing of their children and to have access to information and services, as appropriate to the cultural context. In Bangladesh this has taken the form of an intensive agency supported effort to provide family planning motivators and contraceptive services for all villages in the program area. In other country programs, all Save the Children field staff have received training in family planning and the agency has participated in motivation and training programs with government health workers. Training traditional birth attendants in Indonesia in the fundamentals of family planning has also been an agency undertaking. In addition all field staff going through headquarter's orientation receive family planning information.

Even where family planning is an acceptable cultural value, there remains a not unnatural reluctance of field offices to become involved in what might be a controversial issue to some elements in the community. In such areas it is difficult for the agency to respond to the need for information and services of those who seek it.



In other areas, community groups give it a low priority, although that judgement does not necessarily represent the opinion of women.

There remain field level problems in supporting family planning activities. Most often contraceptive services are not available on a consistent basis or in an accessible location. It is our observation that young women in our program areas want fewer children than their mothers had and many young men share that value. We hope to be able to respond to their preferences, assuring the availability of services.

The agency has received a grant for family planning and is exploring different program approaches in Mexico, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The emphasis is on information and education with close collaboration with local health and family planning clinics for actual services. We propose that agency health/nutrition workers receive family planning training wherever it is culturally acceptable so as to integrate these inter-dependent sectors. Additionally, we are working with women's groups to develop awareness of the relationship of fertility control to health and child development needs in addition to family and personal goals.

## **Child Development and Day Care**

Day care, especially of the seasonal and informal variety, will become a more important activity in women's programs. Multi-purpose community centers, such as Save the Children programs have in Sri Lanka, the Gaza

Strip, and Korea are being used for child care activities. Community people sometimes tend to think that they need a day care "center" – with all that implies in terms of cost, equipment and trained teachers in order to provide for the basic day care needs of children. There is growing awareness, though, that flexible, low-cost facilities appear more feasible.

The agency is also exploring child development projects that will combine a form of day care with training for parents and appropriate community people in children's developmental needs. The Dominican Republic program is planning a project with women factory workers which will combine these factors.

### **Loan Programs for Women**

The case studies on the Colombian and Indonesian projects dealt in some detail with loan projects for women. There are expanding loan projects for women in our programs in Lebanon and Bangladesh and others are developing. The goal, of course, is to provide women with the skills, resources and experience that will give them access to established credit markets. An issue to be resolved, probably on an individual community basis, is what is the minimum agency contributed funding necessary to get a project going, while maintaining the maximum participation and initiative on the part of the women.

# Conclusion

A most hopeful sign for women's efforts in development work is the growing number of women's associations. Case study examples cited the alliance of eight credit associations in Indonesia and the regional associations of Amas de Casa in Colombia. At a national level, the Copenhagen meetings for the Mid-Decade for Women revealed the growing number of women's organizations committed to development work within their own countries. The popular term at Copenhagen was "networking" to describe the collaborative efforts and exchange of information and support between women from all parts of the world.

The move to link resources and to develop networks of women and women's groups has significant potential. Training opportunities, funding, information, program ideas will all come increasingly through these channels. Moreover, the associations act as advocates in their own communities for the greater inclusion and enablement of women.

Again the Copenhagen meetings highlighted for all those present, including representatives from 152 governments, that the condition of poor rural women is growing worse. They are falling behind in income, literacy and resources. Since rural women continue to comprise the majority of the world's women, the magnitude of the situation is evident.

At a time when governments of most third world countries are trying to bring all possible resources to the service of development, the vast resource that women represent should be utilized to the maximum extent.

There is an awareness growing from village meeting place to government office that women have higher expectations for themselves. Women sense their potential. Those governments and agencies committed to support and develop that potential have a rewarding path ahead.

# Appendix A

## Selecting A Social Development Coordinator

The consensus of Save the Children staff is that the proposed Social Development Coordinator should be:

1. A national, preferably from the region of the agency impact area, who can work on the village level and is committed to community development principles.
2. A woman with strong motivational and organizational skills.
3. A trainer who can help develop skills and find the sources for additional training
4. A facilitator who can tap into available resources.
5. At the minimum, a high school graduate with extra skill training, or a university graduate. She can be a generalist, who knows how to work with people — or she might be trained as a teacher, community development agent, home economist, rural extension worker, paramedical, nutritionist, etc. She probably ought not be a nurse since she will find it difficult not to be relegated to health care alone.
6. Able to travel. Making the rounds of the villages regularly, not only in the earliest and developing stages of the social development projects, but on a continuing basis.

### Proposed Goals For Social Development Coordinator

1. Formation in each area of a women's committee which will direct its energies toward the resolution of social problems in the community.
2. Encouragement of maximum participation of women in the community and in the community decision-making process.
3. Development of the structure of women's groups in such a way that these groups can eventually assume responsibility for the social development activities in the community both during and after the involvement of the Social Development Coordinator.
4. Increase women's skills related to participation in community activities.
5. Measurable improvement in the diet of women and children, and encouragement of home gardens and small scale animal husbandry.
6. Measurable improvement in the basic health and hygiene of the community.

# Appendix B

## A Policy on Women

At Save the Children it is an article of faith that the well-being of children and their communities depend to a large degree on the role, skills and participation of women in the agency's development activities. Therefore, it is Save the Children policy that each of its field offices:

- Makes a general appraisal of the condition and needs of the women in the communities in which it works.
- Assesses how those needs are being met by the community and by the agency.
- Develops plans for addressing the problems within a proposed period of time.
- Examines its own office operations and staffing to determine if women are full participants in the program.

Field staff are in a unique position to encourage young women to attend school and to share equally in health, recreational and training opportunities.

# Appendix C

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