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**THE PARTICIPATION AND TRAINING OF BURMESE WOMEN
IN AID-FUNDED PROGRAMMES IN BURMA**

Seema Agarwal
Women in Development Specialist
Agency for International Development
Rangoon, Burma
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AID's primary objectives for women are (i) to expand opportunities for women to participate more fully in the economy of the country, and (ii) to improve the physical quality of life of Burmese women. AID also recognises the development importance of training women and cultivating female leadership.

The mission in Burma is only at the beginning stages of the full implementation of these objectives. This is mainly because the AID mission in Burma has only recently begun again, and continued attention has not been placed on women's policy issues.

The recommendations presented in this report have been divided into three sub-categories:

A. New women's projects

Project ideas presented in this sub-section are of a preliminary nature. AID/Burma will need to carry out substantial research and feasibility studies before these projects can take shape. I do believe however, that should AID/Burma wish to pursue them, these ideas can evolve as sound projects with increased opportunities and benefits for women. The project ideas are :-

1. Research study on women in development in Burma
2. Cotton production
3. Cotton textile production
4. Milk production and distribution
5. Home gardening/horticulture
6. Weaning food production and distribution, supported by health education
7. Village tract road construction
8. Village forestation
9. Small-scale home industries

B. Women's nominations for overseas participant training programmes

There are no short-cuts to increased nominations of women for overseas participant training programmes. Any actions that AID/Burma can take will become effective for increased nominations of women only over a long time. It can not, hence, realistically be expected that women's nominations for overseas training will significantly increase in the

immediate future. AID/Burma actions that can positively influence women's nominations over time include :-

1. Training opportunities in improving English language capability.
2. Collection of data, disaggregated by sex, for increased visibility of women.
3. Increased participation of women in project design and implementation, as well as a recognition of women's productive role in identification of projects.
4. Additional in-country training programmes, comprised of short-term training courses run by trainers that are flown in from the US.

C. Women's components within AID projects

- I. Recommendations under this sub-category relate to on-going AID projects, and include the following :-
 1. **Oilseed processing and distribution** project should look into inclusion of women's role in marketing; expanding work opportunities for women in oil-millowner families facing possible redundancy; providing opportunities for women's work displaced by upgrading of oilmills; training courses in secretarial and clerical skills for women; in-service training for women officers and deputy officers; on-site laboratories at upgraded oilmills, employing women laboratory technicians; and collection of sex-wise data on population effected by the project.
 2. **Agriculture production and research** projects need to redefine their goals as they effect women. Other actions that can make them more effective for women are : setting up agriculture extension meetings for women farmers; redefining the role of female agriculture extension agents; setting up regional female agricultural extension supervisors, who would provide both supervision and training in the areas of greatest concern to women; provision of adequate training materials for female block supervisors; development of labour-saving technologies that are acceptable to women; greater research and development emphasis on crops that women grow and process, such as cotton, pulses and horticulture, as well as on agriculture activities that are in the labour domain of women, such as transplanting, weeding, thinning, picking and harvesting; dissemination of information on improved farming techniques directly to women; devising a more flexible system for

providing agriculture inputs to women farmers; supporting the recruitment of women into agriculture research and professional posts, as well as into farm management; facilitating the gathering of data on women as well as men farmers.

3. **The primary health care programme** is making impressive progress with maternal health issues, as well as with involving women health workers to the maximum. It can be made even more effective by supporting the recruitment of women as CHW's, and by improving the training received by CHWs; introducing health education and strengthening the capabilities of the Health Education Bureau; expanding nutrition programmes with special attention to maternal malnutrition and maternal anaemia; supporting actions that will increase the availability of food at low prices; and supporting the appointment of women in leadership and administrative posts such as health officers, supervisors, trainers, etc.

II. Recommendations that will enhance sensitivity and action for women within all AID projects (on-going and new) include :-

1. Frequent evaluations to ascertain role of women within project activities.
2. Designing project activities to actively include women, and wherever possible, to encourage projects of exclusive concern to women.
3. Data collection to exemplify women's role in project activities.
4. Increasing women's productivity by improving access to land, improved farming inputs, information, employment, credit, etc.
5. Encouraging consultation with women practitioners in project-related activities.
6. Building in awareness of the nature of women's dual roles.
7. Placing extra emphasis on women's role in agriculture production.
8. Setting up supplementary adult education classes, especially for women.
9. Considering the appointment of a women's officer at AID/Burma for continued attention on women's policy issues.

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is threefold. Firstly, it examines the social, cultural, economic and political aspects of life in Burma which influence the participation of Burmese women in development programmes, specifically those programmes funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development. Secondly, it lists the constraints which limit the number of Burmese women nominated for overseas participant training programmes. Lastly, it makes specific recommendations for AID/Burma actions that can influence the SRUB to increase and enhance participation and training of Burmese women in AID-funded development projects.

This report was written under contract over a period of forty-five days, which included field travel to some project sites for a total of thirteen days. The short period of contract days was a major constraint to the collection of data.

The analysis and findings presented in this report are based on project materials available at AID/Burma, on data that was supplied by project managers upon request, on personal observations in the field, on personal reading and data gathered over the past several months while working on women's issues with UNICEF and AID in Burma, and on a personal understanding of Burma and its women.

Burma has an extraordinary dearth of organised engagement in any form of work with women- developmental, charitable, educational or otherwise, including both domestic and foreign-supported organisations. There is also a severe lack of systematic and comprehensive data in most areas, particularly for women. Both of these have been serious constraints in analysing the extent of participation of Burmese women in the development effort in Burma. The percentages and other figures presented throughout this report should be regarded as crude approximations. As for the other observations, I have often not been able to back them up with references and other evidence. Nevertheless, I have attempted to present only those aspects of Burmese women which I feel are well-informed.

My analysis is mainly based on a review of three AID/Burma projects : namely, a) Edible Oils Processing and Distribution (EOPD), b) Burma Agriculture Research and Development (BARD), and c) Primary Health Care II (PHCII). More generally, it touches upon women's role in agricultural and economic development in Burma.

It is easy to make the case that integrating women into the development process is right and just, or that it reflects the best of the humanitarian values which support a development programme. However, it is equally important to consider the economic development justification for women's programming, especially, in the wake of scarce funds.

I believe that the economic development arguments are at least as strong as the moral and humanitarian ones. First, women are already an important factor of production in the developing world, although their contribution is largely unrecorded in national income accounting. Studies on time utilization of rural women consistently show that the number of hours they spend both in the home on their families, and on activities which either contribute to income or save expenses exceed the number of hours men spend on working. Economic development seeks to change the production function, to make economic production in a country more efficient. Programmes which enhance women's productivity directly contribute to this goal. And a programme which seeks to work with the poorest families in a country while neglecting the production potential of their women overlooks a vital resource.

2. BACKGROUND

Burma's population reached 35.3 million in 1983 (Burma Census Results, April 1983, published in the Working People's Daily, Sept 1983), with an average annual growth rate between 1973 and 1983 of 2.02 per cent. Burma is a union of many nationalities of which the largest nationality is formed by the Burman Burmese comprising about 68 per cent of the total population. Seven other nationalities, major ethnic groups, form the seven States of the Union of Burma.

The Burman population lives mainly in the lowlands of Burma. The two largest cities - Rangoon, the capital and main seaport, and Mandalay, the old capital and centre of inland trade in central Burma - both lie within the Burman region. Burmans have been, and regard themselves as, the traditional unifiers of Burma and the leaders of the nationalist movement against British colonialism, in which both Buddhism and Burmese language issues played a significant role. When members of the minorities have exercised limited power since independence, they have done so by identifying with the Burman majority (see Steinberg 1982).

3. STATUS AND ROLE OF BURMESE WOMEN

For the purposes of this report the term 'Burmese women' refers to the ethnic Burman women of the core divisions, since these women constitute the vast majority of the project beneficiaries in USAID project areas. A vast majority of these women speak Burmese as their native language and constitute the majority (approximately 11 million) of the female population in the country. They are virtually all Buddhist and wear the traditional Burmese female clothing. Thus they are distinguished from the minority groups who are citizens of the Union of Burma, but who speak other languages, may not necessarily be Buddhist, and may have other dress. Detailed studies of minority group women have not been made, and their status varies widely by ethnic group.

Programmers, planners and researchers have found that there is a dearth of reliable statistical information on many aspects of Burma. Similarly, there is a serious lack of both quantitative and qualitative data for a comprehensive analysis of the status and role of Burmese women. The one source that stands out, largely by virtue of being the only recent one, is Mi Mi Kiang's book, published in 1984. Apart from this, and some other fragmented data available, there is however, a great deal of anecdotal information which has a high degree of consistency and thus forms the basis for the following summary comments.

Traditionally the status of women in Burma has been high. (This is not necessarily true for some minority women). The high status of Burmese women has continued to the present and is codified in the laws of the state, including the constitution, and to a large extent in custom as well. The freedom of Burmese women was indigenous, not to Buddhism, but to the pre-Buddhist Burman society itself. That tradition has largely carried over to the present times.

Inscriptions on various monuments of the inland region show that in the 11th to the 14th centuries, women were active in many fields besides the religious. It was not surprising to find women in agriculture, in paddy and cotton fields, or in spinning and weaving, and they also engaged in trade. Their economic role included large-scale purveying and contracting of supplies such as betel, selling of curries and rice, and appointments such as 'keeper of all-important granaries'. Agriculture crops grown by women included rice and millet, sesame, cotton, fruits like banana, mango, jack and

bael, vegetables such as beans, cucumber, pumpkin, spices, sugarcane, tamarind and toddy.

Further, the inscriptions give an indication of the status of women at the time. They had rights not only to own property but also to dispose of it as they wished. Women were also shown in administrative positions. Women 'headpersons' (*Sukhri*) of villages, village elders (*Sankri*) and assistant elders (*Aanlyan*) in charge of community projects were mentioned. At court, women officials are mentioned, women are given titles carrying the royal order, offices such as 'keeper of royal fans' and 'charge of maids of honour' existed for women, and also an 'inner service of palace women', just as for men of the palace. (For a more detailed account of Burmese women through history, see Kiang 1984, pp 1-15).

Three articles of the Burmese Constitution of 1974 relate to women. These are as follows :-

Article 22 : All citizens shall -

- a) be equal before the law, regardless of race, religion, status, or sex ;
- b) enjoy equal opportunities.

Article 147 : All citizens are equal before the law, irrespective of race, status, official position, wealth, culture, birth, religion or sex.

Article 154 : a) Women shall enjoy equal political, economic, social and cultural rights as men ;
 b) Mothers, children and expectant mothers shall enjoy those rights prescribed by law ;
 c) Children born of citizens shall enjoy equal rights ;
 d) Women shall enjoy freedoms and rights guaranteed by law as regards marriage, divorce, partition of property, succession and custody of their children.

The customary law governing Burmese family matters is known as Burmese Buddhist law. According to this law, marriage is a civil and consensual contract. Polygamy is recognised though is looked upon with disfavour. The wife other than the first is called *maya:pruin* (competing wife) and is given equal footing. A subsisting marriage is a bar to a subsequent marriage for the woman, however. A widow or a divorcee is allowed to remarry at any time after the dissolution of the marriage and pregnancy is also not a bar to marriage. Marriage is dissolved by death or divorce. Divorce proceedings can be initiated by both men and women, especially in case of adultery, when both the husband and wife can sue for divorce. Divorce is also recognised in case of abandonment, particularly when the husband becomes a

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monk, thus giving up all worldly affairs. Except in this last case, however, divorce is not regarded in a favourable light and implications can be more serious for women than for men. (For further details, see Aye Kyaw 1985).

In Burmese society there is no family name, hence a married woman always retains her individual name, unrelated either with her husband's name or with her father's name ; therefore the name of a Burmese woman does not show her marital status. In the house the wife is, by law and custom, a sharer.

"Her rights to her own separate property, which she brought to the marital home or acquires later, are well defined, her share in the husband's and the joint earnings is a vested right. When the husband is away or dies, the headship of the family passes to her, not to the eldest son." (Maung Maung 1963)

Further on women and property, Hourihan has pointed out,

"Burman women have been economically powerful by remaining close to their mothers, female relatives, and daughters through the matrilocal residency patterns .. a pattern which has allowed them to maintain strong economic and social support teams. Equal inheritance of wealth with brothers has given them financial power, which is often enhanced by their managing family finances or operating businesses. Through the traditional dowry and present *payin* systems, women have also brought a degree of wealth into their marriages. While this wealth is often invested on behalf of the family, the value of the wealth, and the profit it may gain, are legally considered to remain as the property of the wife." (John J Hourihan. 1985).

In addition to their traditional role of mother, homemaker and child-carer, women are active in other productive tasks both in and outside the home.

Spiro has noted,

"Burmese women are not only among the freest in Asia, but until the relatively recent emancipation of women in the west, they enjoyed much greater freedom and equality with men than did western women. Today -- they control not only the family economy but most retail trade as well -- village hawkers -- amid the proprietors of the stalls and shops in town and city bazaar are predominantly women. Women are well represented, too, in large business enterprises. Moreover, -- women are liberally represented in the professions. In the villages, women participate in the productive phases of the agricultural economy --. Finally, such customs as the veil, purdah, child betrothal, foot binding, widow immolation, -- these, and all the other disabilities suffered by the women of India, on the one side of Burma and China, on the other, have always been absent from Burma." (Melford Spiro 1977).

Indeed, the economic viability of households in the lowest income brackets is directly and significantly effected by the economic activities of the women in these households. These women work in various capacities as agriculture workers and labourers, domestics, load carriers and construction workers, in petty trade and sales workers, etc. Among middle-income and higher income households, women are increasingly participating in blue and white collar jobs as secretaries, clerks, small-scale industry

workers, factory workers, in manufacture and finance and in professions such as doctors, teachers, engineers and lawyers. Due to unavailability of data however, the exact percentages are not known, though their proportions compared to men are thought to be significantly lower except in some selected areas.

As regards political participation, the percentage of women in the Pyithu Hluttaw (People's National Assembly) is less than 3% while there are no women in the secretariat of officials in general administration. Only 18 women stood for election to either Parliament or Chamber of Nationalities in the years 1948-62. From 1960-67 Daw Khin Kyi (Madam Aung San) served as Burmese Ambassador to India. At present, the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) has only one woman in 100 in its central committee. The national assembly has 13 women members out of a total of 449 members.

At the University level one can see a very encouraging pattern of enrollments of women into different disciplines, such as medicine, economics, engineering, agriculture and veterinary science. Despite their high enrollments, there appears to be a rather significant drop in the participation of women compared to men in the professions themselves, once they leave the Institutes.

Lastly, with respect to women in Buddhism, essentially women have the same opportunities as men for religious learning, and for acquiring the spiritual rewards towards their future incarnations. However, females cannot enter *Nirvana* without being reincarnated as a male first. Hence women must accept the superiority of men by showing regard for the male *hpon*. *Hpon* is the male quality which is enshrined in him, in his attaining the peak of being born as a human and a male. Thus women must show deference to males by keeping their heads below their husband's, by not standing or sitting higher than them, or with their feet thrust in their direction, by walking behind them, by eating after their husbands, by keeping their clothes at the foot of the room and specifically by ensuring that no female clothing overlies that of a man. Nevertheless, as Maung has pointed out, that despite the public deference granted to males within the society,

"in the all-important matters of money, of divorce, inheritance, of freedom of movement, the right of giving advice, of transacting business or of putting one's own name alongside a husband's on a shop front, women admit no inferiority. Thus they serve without shackles, and are equal without impairing the pride of masculinity." (Maung Maung 1963).

4. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN AID PROGRAMMES

A. OILSEED PROCESSING :

The main purpose of the Edible Oils Processing and Distribution Project (EOPD) is to increase the production of edible oils in Burma. The project was initiated in 1985 and the length of the project is for an additional four years taking it up to 1990. AID strategy with processing oilseed is to concentrate on the oil-exPELLER mills (both cooperative and private - and, in particular, on the oil expellers themselves). AID plans to upgrade oil presses and related machines for 40 mills over a 4 year period. The upgrading will enable a higher quality of oil to be extracted from the oilseed leaving the cake with only 6% oil content. The most important immediate by product of this processing will be the better quality of edible oil due to the refinement in the heating, pressing, and filtering processes. The larger effort through increased production of edible oils is to raise minimum average consumption of edible oil in the daily caloric diet of the population from 5kg/capita to 9kg/capita.

EOPD was developed as a complement to the Maize and Oilseed Production Project (MOPP) concentrating on the increased production of three types of oilseed, namely groundnut, sesame and sunflower.

No direct participation of women could be observed in EOPD during the course of writing this report. The project is designed around upgrading of machinery and equipment and neither in the workshops nor in the oilmills could there be seen any active role of women. It is not known how many private mills are owned by women, though the numbers are believed to be few. Few have been sold by their women owners to the cooperative societies. In the cooperative sector, no mills are run by women. Men are seen as the leaders of production and the heads of households. Enterprises led by women are very rare and exceptional.

Women do however, have significant roles in the production of oilseed and also in the selling of oil. Neither of these areas are covered by this project, though MOPP is concentrating on increasing total yields per acre of oilseed. When the distribution aspects of EOPD come into effect, the project may address itself to the role of women in marketing, though such a trend could not be ascertained at this time.

As part of the beneficiaries group, women and men would benefit equally from the cheaper price of oil, the better quality of oil, and the higher availability of oil. Benefits of EOPD are generally difficult to assess over a short time as the quantity of oil in the markets will increase slowly and at a later stage. Also higher consumption is a function of various other factors including taste, availability and affordability - factors which as yet have to be analysed in depth before establishing the real impact of EOPD on the beneficiary group. Another area of concern regarding higher efficiency of oil mills for higher production is the limited amount of oilseed available in the market. Even after the oilseed production increases, the total yields will not be enough to run all the oilmills in the country efficiently. Some of the smaller mills, especially private ones may be closed down as oilseeds are diverted to the bigger, more efficient mills. This could hold serious consequences for the smaller mill-owner families who may have to rely on other kind of work including income earned by the women in the family.

It is believed that women have some role in shelling, sorting and sifting of oilseeds before they are run through the expellers. During field trips women were observed performing these activities in some of the mills for a daily wage of around 6 Kyats. However, they were engaged in these activities because the relevant machinery was either not available or out of order. With the upgrading scheme of EOPD, these women will have no work in these areas.

The most encouraging aspect of EOPD for women is the working of the Department of Cooperatives. Cooperative oilmills belong to township cooperative societies which come under Divisional Syndicates of the Department of Cooperatives. 40% of staff in the Cooperative Department and 40% of staff in the Township Societies are women. The officers and deputy officers (exact figures not obtained though believed to be around 25% for women) are usually graduates and their duties cover auditing, accounting, supervision and organisation of production and distribution. The majority of the women however, are engaged as clerks and office workers.

All employees of the Department of Cooperatives at all divisional and township levels go through some training at the Central Cooperative Training School in Rangoon or the five state and division training schools. The length of the courses vary according to type of job and position, ranging from one to six months. The content of the courses are accounting, bookkeeping, financial management, marketing and production management. For junior officers there is an additional intermediate management course, and an advanced management course for senior officers.

In the new oilmill at Magwe, ADB has helped to set up a laboratory adjacent to the mill. The laboratory carries out four main analyses, namely, free fatty-acid content, residual oil content of cake, moisture content, and oil content of seed. The laboratory is run by two women technicians, both of whom are graduates from Rangoon University. Though considered to be an asset, it is not clear whether similar laboratories will be set up at the upgraded oilmills under EOPD.

B. AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION AND RESEARCH :

The goal and purpose of the Burma Agriculture Research and Development Project (BARD) address the need to increase agricultural productivity in terms of per acre yields and total national production. This requires a more intensive use of cultivated land through the development and adaptation of a continuous stream of improved technologies and their adoption by farmers.

The four major constraints to increased productivity are water, seeds, fertilizer and fungicides/pesticides. The major thrust of the BARD project is to strengthen the capability of the Agriculture Research Institute (ARI) at Yezin in Burma, to plan, organize and carry out production-oriented research in the fields of maize and oilseed production. As such, the project complements both MOPP and EOPD. The project was started in 1985 and is expected to complete in 1991.

During the course of this analysis, not enough information could be acquired about this project and especially about the participation of women within it at ARI in Yezin. However, some fragmented information was gathered about the role of women in agriculture and about the areas under research at Yezin.

It was verified that women comprise over 60% of farm workers, most of them in the capacity of hired labour. Women are almost completely responsible for the transplanting and harvesting of rice, the largest crop in Burma. Some recent reports suggest that the yields of rice this year have been substantially low because the minimum pay offered to women hired labour was not satisfactory, hence the transplanting and harvesting was not done in time. In oilseed farming of sesame, groundnut, sunflower and corn, women are responsible for 90% of the weeding, thinning and harvesting.

With cotton, potatoes, pulses and vegetables, they are additionally responsible almost wholly for sowing and picking.

In terms of land distribution, there is little ownership in Burma. The usual practice is usufruct to land which is usually passed on to male children or relatives. Hence daughters seldom inherit land or usufruct to land and at present less than 5% of land is in the hands of women. Even when wives inherit land due to death or divorce, it is the sons and son-in-laws who control the use of land. Women do, however, both as wives/daughters and as hired labour, provide most of the work on the land. In the poorest households this is done by the system of exchange labour, where women help each other out rather than receive pay for their work.

Less than 5% of women are engaged in farm management. During personal interview at the Agriculture Corporation, women in management could be counted - there is one Deputy State Manager (Daw Lay Lay Nyunt), one woman farm manager in Mandalay, few Deputy Township Managers and about 8 (out of 30) Assistant General Managers.

At ARI in Yezin, it was believed that 50% of the labour are women, 25% of the junior officers are women, 10% of the professional senior officers are women, and less than 10% of the research staff are women. Other than the labour women, women in all professional levels go through the Central Agriculture Development Training Centre situated 30 miles from Rangoon.

Between 1980 and 1984, as many as 200 out of 250 BA degree graduates from the Institute of Agriculture were women. These numbers have however now dropped by more than half, since the intervention in policy in 1985 by the Ministry of Education to restrict the enrollment of women into agriculture. Consequently, women graduates from the Institute of Agriculture have fallen from almost 80% to about 30% since 1984. Of the women who do graduate, over 60% join the Agriculture Corporation as extension workers, and about 25-30% take up positions of officers, researchers and planners.

The crop-oriented research at Yezin covers the following crops - rice, oilseeds, cereal, pulses, fibre crops (jute and cotton), horticulture, and industrial crops. The supporting division has departments in Chemistry, plant physiology, entomology, pathology, and economics has been proposed. The adaptive research looks at farm implements and improved technology to obtain higher yields at low cost. None of the areas relate themselves particularly to the role of women in cropping, use of pesticides and other

technology, and there is no specific women's issue that has any bearing on the research activities.

The crop-oriented research on pulses, cotton and horticulture could however be used to the advantage of women. Women are almost completely responsible for the cotton cropping, other than ploughing the field, and 80% of the nation's vegetables and pulses are supplied by the efforts of women, often with horticulture in the household compound. It is difficult to establish at this time how the research activity on these crops disseminates its findings, if at all, to women farmers. Few women are involved or consulted at the research centre. The agriculture extension meetings are always attended only by men, so women do not receive information on new technology or other relevant areas first hand. Fertilizers are seldom available to women for they must be obtained from the cooperative societies by the heads of household, most of whom are men. Lastly, the particular problems of women heads of household (*de facto* or *de jure*) with acquiring credit, hiring labour, with increased costs of production, etc. are rarely thought of when exploring avenues for higher yields in agriculture production.

In order to fulfil the goal of both the BARD project and of the agriculture output for the country as a whole, a critical area of concern would be the role of women in agriculture production, and yet this has not been stressed explicitly in the project document. Given the major contribution of women in agriculture, perhaps the scope of the project needs to be widened to increase training and involvement of women at all levels, including research on crop areas where they have a crucial role - such as cotton and horticulture. Research activities need also to be focused more on the work areas of women, for example, weeding, harvesting, and on improved technologies that can make these tasks more efficient. More women should be recruited for research and other professional posts.

C. HEALTH NETWORK :

The objective of the Primary Health Care Project II (PHPII) in conjunction with Peoples's Health Plan II and III is to reduce maternal and infant mortality and morbidity through the expansion of Burma's primary health care programme in 147 of the country's 314 townships. The principle means for accomplishing this objective is the training and equipping of 9,418 Community Health Workers (CHWs), 1,787 Auxilliary Mid-wives (AMWs), and 4,000 traditional birth attendants (Let-thes, or TBAs). Additional institutional support is also programmed to build up the Department of Health's training and information system capabilities, in particular.

At the time of the evaluation of Primary Health Care I in 1985, the following was the level of achievement regarding training and coverage :

	Planned	Actual
Pre-service Training		
CHWs (4 weeks)	9,418	9,383
AMWs (6 months)	1,787	1,654
Let-thes (30 days)	4,000	5,710
In-service Training		
CHWs (12 days)	21,812	21,748
AMWs (12 days)	6,300	6,300
Coverage of 147 townships		
Villages (CHWs)	55%	54.7% (1984)
Village tracts (AMWs)	100	76.5% (1984)

CHWs, AMWs and Let-thes or TBAs together are known as Voluntary Health Workers (VHWs). An extensive network of hospitals and health centres staffed by medical and para-medical employees exists throughout the country to support the village volunteer health worker programme.

The existing network of health facilities includes referral and general hospitals at national and Division/State levels offering services of medical specialists. There are township level hospitals staffed by general medical officers. Towns and cities are served by urban health centres and maternal and child health centres, while rural basic health services are provided by Rural Health Centres (RHCs) and RHC sub-centres staffed by para-professionals, and station hospitals which are served by medical officers.

Township level health personnel include a Township Medical Officer (TMO),¹⁴ primarily responsible for all health matters of the Township, and a Township Health Officer responsible for the supervision of the MCH Centres, Rural Health Centres, school health and other preventive activities throughout the Township. Except for hospital and nursing staff there are few other additional staff at the township level. The VHWs are supported by the community and their pharmaceutical resupply paid for by community contributions.

Women constitute a large proportion of rural health services' cadre. AMWs, Mid-wives and Lady Health Visitors are the backbone of maternal and child health services. Burmese women prefer to receive health services from women in the rural areas. AMWs and Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCH Centres) provide service for antenatal, delivery, postnatal, infant and child care, nutrition and surveillance, treatment and control of diarrhoeal disease, and any other service they can provide. The MCH Centres are run entirely by women. In addition, AMWs, TBAs, Lady Health visitors and Mid-wives are also all women. Their qualifications and training vary, with AMWs receiving the longest and most comprehensive training.

CHWs traditionally have mostly been men but with the recent increase in their numbers, more and more women are beginning to join this group. At present it is believed that women constitute around 20% of all CHWs. The training of CHWs, however, is shorter than for AMWs, yet their tasks wider. The experience of the past several years has shown that AMWs are better trained than CHWs by virtue of a longer, more practical training (6 months) and are better supervised by virtue of close contact with the sub-centre mid-wife. The CHWs tend to be trained didactically in large groups (fifty or more) for only four weeks. Also their supervision is not as close as that of AMWs. Consequently, CHWs are less effective than AMWs and continue to provide more curative than preventive services. Many have a tendency to become quacks under the pressure to provide medical assistance.

Other than these workers, however, there appear to be few, if any women Health Assistants, Public Health Supervisors, Township Medical and Health Officers, or District Health Officers. Women are hence seldom found in leadership or administrative posts, though as medical professionals their numbers rank at least equal to men.

At least 50% of all doctors and over 80% of all nurses in Burma are women. At least half of all medical students are female. Teachers of medicine in both the Medical Institutes are again mostly women. Yet only limited numbers of women reach the levels of assistant directors or other senior staff in the Department of Health. 15

5. CONSTRAINTS TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT AND AID PROGRAMMES

In the previous two sections I have attempted to highlight two important reasons why women's participation in AID programmes is limited, and in general why Burmese women continue to remain on the periphery of the development effort despite their significant contribution, and their freedom of movement. The first of these reasons is attitudinal in nature. The general dictum on women is that they are "equal" to men. While this may be true in some cultural respects, and certainly more true for Burmese women than for many other Asian women, it does not hold true when it comes to women's recognition as a factor of production. The thinking regarding women's so-called 'equality' permeates attitudes on all levels of the society and administration, within both domestic and international circles, perpetuating a lack of action-orientation to women's "equal" participation in development.

The second reason is more concerned with policy. Integrating women into development is not a national priority. This is true at all levels, but especially on the administrative level. Hence, despite their significant numbers in the lower levels of the hierarchy, few women can be found in senior advocacy positions. The biggest shortcoming of this policy is the overwhelming lack of engagement with women - both as the subject of development projects, or as project managers and staff.

In this section, I will briefly present some other factors running through religious, cultural, economic, social, political and physiological strains which further constrain women's participation in both Government and AID programmes alike. A more detailed examination of these constraints and further verification of them, though desired, has not been possible for this report due to shortage of time. It is hoped that such an exercise will be made possible by AID/Burma in the future.

A. BUDDHISM:

"The only generalisation that can perhaps be made with any validity about the position of woman in Buddhist lands and the role she played and still plays is that neither her position nor her role was ever negligible or trifling", writes Diana Y Paul in her recent book on women in Buddhism. (Though her book relates to Mahayana tradition, the same can also be said for women under Theravada Buddhism). Yet, women have never been accorded the same kind of universal respect conferred upon men. The attitude towards women in Buddhism is hence ambivalent. On the one hand, women are regarded as a danger, potential and actual, to men's perilous progress along the way to welfare; and on the other hand, woman is shown in the image of a Bodhisattva, on a footing equal to that generally claimed by a man, as his special spiritual prerogative.

The first is a notion that the feminine is mysterious, sensual, destructive, elusive, and closer to nature. Association with this nether world may be polluting and deadly for the male and therefore must be suppressed, controlled, and conquered by the male in the name of culture, society and religion. Female sexuality as a threat to culture and society provides religion with a rationale for relegating women to a marginal existence.

The second theme is the notion that the feminine is wise, maternal, creative, gentle and compassionate. Association with this effective, emotional, transcendent realm is necessary for the male's fulfillment of his religious goals and for his release from suffering.

The association of women with the material world, and hence a symbol of destruction, is one of the basic precepts greatly responsible for their low 'status' vis-a-vis their economic importance. One example is shown in the Buddhist denigration of worldly attachment, which has created the tradition of women being more responsible for money. In their economic role, it is the women in Burma who are involved in tasks that deal directly with money (such as sales persons, petty trade, money managers in the home, etc.), whereas men tend to be more involved in the political, bureaucratic, administrative and professional roles.

Another example is the reluctance to appoint women to senior positions of power and decision-making, or in professions not traditionally thought of as 'female occupations'. A stark instance of this practice was the restriction imposed by Ministry of Education in 1985 upon enrollments of women candidates to Agriculture Institute to not exceed 50%. Though this particular policy may well be unrelated to Buddhism directly, the general

principle holds, which restricts women's prominence in almost all occupations.

B. CHILD-CARE RESPONSIBILITIES :

Why do women work for market income, particularly when the costs are high, in terms of their own leisure time, neglected child care, or the time of older children spent at home instead of in school ? Many studies over the recent decade indicate that they do so to increase total family welfare and when the benefits outweigh the costs.

The principal way in which women minimize the costs of undertaking market work, in terms of child care, is by choosing particular occupations. The costs of trading off mother's market work against children's well-being are minimized when mothers choose occupations that allow flexible hours or permit them to bring children along. Hence the incidence of majority women being employed in the low-paying fields of agriculture, cottage crafts, and small-scale marketing. Furthermore, poor women adjust the hours they work in a given occupation as their child-care responsibilities change over their lifetimes.

Income differentials between male and female heads of household suggests that the lower income of female heads is only partly explained by their somewhat lower level of education ; more important is the fact that these women are much more likely to have jobs in the informal sector with flexible hours. The conflict between the need to care for children and the need to bring in income takes women to the informal sector, to obtain the flexibility they need, but this also means that they cannot earn very much. Moreover, children often have to help their mothers, both in market and household work, including looking after babies, which means that they have to give up school. Poor women and children are thus caught in a vicious cycle of a hand to mouth existence.

Child-care consumes most of the mother's time, followed closely by cooking-related work, even when she increases the number of hours that she works outside her home. Hence it appears that working mothers primarily reduce their leisure time rather than time spent for child-care or home production. This has obvious implications for their health, issues surrounding which shall be discussed later.

Household size and age composition appear to be the most important determinants of the number of hours the women spend in non-market production. There is heavy reliance on other members of the family, including older children (especially girls), grandmothers, aunts, sisters and nieces, for child-care responsibilities. Despite this, the number of hours that women devote to non-market production is generally positively related to family size. This suggests that having a large family increases her obligations at home and reduces the number of hours she can participate in market work - an understanding very frequently voiced by women from varying backgrounds, both urban and rural alike. Of course, the causation works the other way too when women who are relatively more productive in the home than in the market choose to have larger families.

C. HEALTH:

Despite possible under-reporting, the decline in maternal mortality over the past two decades is clear. Even so, the national maternal mortality rate for 1985 was estimated at 2/1000 live births. Approximately 2200 maternal deaths took place during 1985, abortions accounting for about 40% of these deaths.

Recent studies on the food intake of pregnant mothers in rural areas found that while calories met 30% of the requirements (2464, FAO 1985) protein requirement (65.1 gm., FAO 1985) was met only marginally. Deficiencies were also found in iron, Vitamin B1 and B2, niacin, and calcium in pregnant and lactating mothers. Perhaps the most damaging taboo for pregnant women is that food is restricted during pregnancy so as to avoid having a large baby. The low nutritional level in pregnant and lactating mothers can be even more precarious in low-income households where the fluctuations in diet due to seasonal and income variations can be quite dramatic.

The burden of women's dual role at home and in the market means that they have little time for leisure, leaving them quite exhausted. This is a compounded effect of their initial precarious health (low birth-weight, differential feeding, undernourishment, etc.), malnutrition and disease, poor sanitation, unhygienic and cramped conditions of living, low birth spacing, lactation, and long hours of tiring physical work. The effect is that a large majority of women become 'at risk'. The implications of poor health of women on their participation in market work both in and outside the home are obvious.

D. EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT :

The traditional assumption in Burma has been that while boys needed education for the religious life, girls did not.

The present day education system finds a high drop-out rate for primary school children of both sexes. A small study conducted by the Burma Education Research Bureau (BERB, 1975) found that only about 27% of children enrolled reached the final year of primary school. Moreover, the incidence of drop-outs among girls is higher than for boys. The most common reasons usually given for the high drop-out rates are inability to buy textbooks, exercise books, school uniforms, stationery, etc., the need to help at home, in the field and in the small businesses, and the necessity to look after younger siblings and the home to enable mothers to go out to work.

Incidence of illiteracy is higher among women than for men. Women constitute over 80% of all enrollments to the mass literacy campaign of the Burma Central Literacy Committee. The campaign was launched in December 1981 to provide functional literacy to all persons in the country by 1990. The task is daunting however, especially as due to lack of reading material in rural communities, neo-literates have a tendency to revert to illiteracy.

On the positive side, it has been noted that girls who manage to continue into middle school generally go on to high school as much as boys do. In fact, for professions such as Medicine, Teaching, and for Agriculture (during the period 1980-1984), the numbers of women graduates are far higher than men. A majority of the teachers in the State school system are women, though their ratio to men declines with headship. A majority of the doctors are women, including health workers at the divisional and township levels of the health network in the country.

Other than women doctors and teachers, and to some extent women in other professions, the majority of Burmese women are however engaged in agriculture, as wage labourers, and as sales workers. In the absence of more recent data, the following table based on the 1973 census gives some idea of women's participation in different occupations for urban and rural areas.

Percentage of females, 10 years and above working in labour force by occupation (major group), in urban and rural areas of Burma : 1973 census

Occupation (major group)	Urban	Rural
1. Professional, technical & related workers	7.33	0.77
2. Administrative & managerial workers	0.62	0.02
3. Clerical and related workers	4.56	0.10
4. Sales workers	44.30	7.58
5. Service workers	2.73	0.14
6. Agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry and fishery	8.18	71.52
7. Production labourers	32.19	19.85
8. Workers not classified by occupation	0.03	0.02
9. Armed forces	0.06	-
TOTAL	100	100

Source : 1973 population census, published by the Immigration and Manpower Department.

As regards labour force statistics, according to the 1973 census, men's participation accounts for 67.8% for the urban areas and 66.1% for rural areas, whereas for women it is only 32.2% and 33.9% for urban and rural areas respectively. Since labour force statistics usually include only formal employment, women, who are primarily engaged in the non-formal sector, may well be excluded or undercounted in these statistics.

Though no data is available on wage levels and differentials between men and women, some reports claim that even though employers are required to pay equal wages to both men and women, in reality the pay received by men and women is quite different (see Khiang 1984, p 140). My own personal observations in the field did not generally show this, though it was noted how women inevitably hold positions of lesser skill, lower pay and diminished power. Furthermore, division of labour between the sexes both within and outside the home assigns women to labour-intensive production which is both time and energy consuming and is characterised by low technology, inefficient production and marginal wages. Women's participation, both in the formal and non-formal sectors peaks at the highest and lowest levels of education.

A recent development noted during the last field trip was that rice yields were low this year because women (who are primarily responsible for transplanting and harvesting) refused to work for a daily wage of K6.50 and some even refused the higher wage of K10 sometimes paid to men for more strenuous and skilled work. If such a trend continues, the fixed low wages for farm workers (more than 60% of whom are women) could hold serious implications for agriculture in Burma.

E. SOCIO-CULTURAL TRADITIONS :

Aspects of constraints within the realm of socio-cultural traditions have been mentioned throughout the report. The main constraint is the perception of women in society - in religion, and in their roles as mothers and producers. In general, they are seldom granted the same respect as is conferred upon men. By contrast to the man, the woman is seen as having a stronger physiological links with the family. She is the earth and the man the seed ; or if he is likened to the rain she is likened again to the earth. Being the bearer of children she is believed to find her pleasures in being able to keep as close to the home as she wishes, while a man can go afield to work.

The same principle applies to women and monkhood. The final destination of a monk's path, the deliverance or cessation from the cycle of lives can be won only by obliterating desire for life and all its worldly bonds. The way to do this is to leave home, become a houseless one, concentrate on the eightfold path and deny the bonds of family, property, love or striving. Women seldom follow this path because of the belief that it is harder for her to deny what must be denied to enter it. Even for children, boys are initiated as novices, but the equivalent ceremony for girls (introduced only in recent years) is the piercing of the ears.

Though the woman in Burma is not restrained by purdah, and is allowed to move freely, she seldom is seen on the same par as men in any profession or discipline. Her virginity is protected with fervour and her primary task is considered to be as mother and carer of children.

Under inheritance law, while no special discriminations are made against girls and women, the inheritance practice is such that usually men (boys) inherit the land. Men are the preferred sex both for inheritance and for use rights of land. When there is no obvious male candidate, the land is usually divided into equal parts for all the children. Thus over the generations, the

total property inherited by women is decreasing compared to that of men. At the same time, the proportions of women in hired labour have been steadily increasing over the past quarter reaching levels up to 75-80%.

The socio-cultural traditions, while do not actually prevent women from being mobile, they do inhibit women's full involvement in development, and do keep them in a subordinate position to men.

F. AID PROGRAMMES :

Perhaps the most obvious constraint to women's participation and training in ongoing AID programmes in Burma is the peripheral nature of concern for women's issues within the projects. It has been my observation, and this I have tried to show in previous sections, that women do participate and contribute more than men when channels are opened up for them. This is in addition to their reproductive role, and despite the odds against them as mentioned through this section. Also their economic needs are indeed strong, the rising numbers of women hired labourers being the clearest indication of this.

I would therefore argue that should the orientation in ongoing AID programmes shift towards involving more women into the project activities, the response from the women will be encouraging. Also, such a shift might influence government policy, at least for some areas, which will further open avenues for women in participatory and advocacy roles.

A few examples may be useful to illustrate this point. A constraint for women as agriculture extension workers was found to be the attitude of the farmers. The farmers - ie. farm heads, almost all of whom are men, though women do most of the work on the land - preferred to take advice from men rather than women. Rather than break down this attitude problem, for women extension workers are just as qualified as the men, a 1985 policy imposed a restriction on total numbers of women graduates from the Institute of Agriculture. Had effort been made to initiate extension meetings for women farmers as well as men, the women extension workers would certainly have been more in demand. Additionally, women farmers would be exposed to information and technology first hand, which would enhance their production capacity. Holding extension meetings for women would begin to draw women farmers from the periphery to the centre, into leadership and decision-making roles. This would give them more recognition in their contribution to agriculture production. Burmese women

do not have the same kind of 'status' problems as women in neighbouring countries. Hence it makes it easier for them to be given due recognition, provided some effort is made to enhance their visibility.

Another example is the women staff in the department of cooperatives. It is believed that 40-60% of the officers and clerks in the Department of Cooperatives are women. The women are usually the junior officers which means that they travel between locations within Townships and Divisions, auditing, supervising and organising the production and distribution of edible oils and other commodities. Some additional in-service training for this cadre of officers would undoubtedly make women's participation visible and more productive. Also distribution and marketing are traditionally thought of as 'women's work', so the project might explore ways to involve women in these activities. Women have little problem with mobility in Burma and their qualified numbers are nearly as high as men's. New ways to utilize these valuable traits should be thought of, such as laboratory technicians, managers of consumer and producer cooperatives, officers of marketing and distribution, etc.

At the Agriculture Research Institute at Yezin, it appears that less than 10% of the research staff are women. More than 60% of the agriculture workers in Burma are women. Yet no specific interest is placed on the role of women in agriculture production, or on ways to increase the productivity of women in agriculture. Some of the ways in which this could be done would include : better definition of programme goals of agriculture development projects as they effect women ; integration of crops women grow as well as process such as cotton and horticulture as options into farming systems research ; redefining the role of of female agriculture extension agents ; encouraging recruitment of women into these jobs, especially in agriculture research, to promote the development of women-specific activities ; providing regional female supervisors and adequate training materials for the female block supervisors ; devising a more flexible system to provide improved agricultural inputs to women farmers ; and supporting the programme with a publicity effort aimed at the men.

So far both the government and aid agencies in Burma have spent little effort in thinking along project ideas that may benefit women more directly, and enhance their participation in the development effort. Women are not generally recognised as significant factors in production, and the women's components thus far have had more of a social than an economic orientation.

6. CONSTRAINTS TO WOMEN'S NOMINATIONS FOR OVERSEAS PARTICIPANT TRAINING PROGRAMMES

It has been AID/Burma's experience that despite their persistent requests, women are seldom nominated for training abroad, except in the field of Health. In my brief two months with AID/Burma, I have come to understand the reasons for this to be the following :-

- a) Perhaps the main constraint to women's training in AID-funded participant training programmes abroad is the hyper sensitivity of the Government to "foreign" exposure. This effects both men and women alike, and takes the form of a rigorous selection and screening process before any Burmese national is allowed out of the country - be it for education or for training.
- b) Women lead a much sheltered life compared to men and social norms of conduct for them are stricter regarding sexuality and mixed marriage (especially with foreigners). The recent suicide of a female PhD student has further worsened the situation, and scholarships for women students, especially on long courses like a doctorate, are seriously discouraged if not outright refused.
- c) The basic requirements for training abroad, especially the English Language, prove too difficult for both male and female candidates. However, here too men have an advantage over women due to their wider exposure to pre-and-in-service training, their mixing with other foreigners, and their higher level of education in most fields.
- d) Women are seldom, if at all found in any positions of management, administration or leadership. They have extremely poor representation in the People's Council. The Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) has only 1 woman in 100 in its Central Committee. A mere handful of women of note are members of the professional community. The national assembly of 1978 saw an increase over that of 1974 in its inclusion of 13 women members over 9 of the earlier session. However, this is out of a total of 449 members. Due to the lack of women in senior administrative and professional positions, there is a lack of advocacy for women's development and increased participation.

e) The negligible numbers of women in management posts within departments and ministries make their selection more difficult. It is extremely pertinent to note that in the two fields where women are valued and participate equal to men, despite their poor representation in managerial and senior administrative posts, candidates for training are almost always women. The two professions are doctors and teachers.

f) Women's main role in society (and this is particularly true for poor rural women) is thought to be as mothers and child-carers. Any activity they do in addition to this is subsumed under their 'household' work. Hence their productive role is made invisible, sealed by the lack of data disaggregated by sex. With more refined data gathering, women's role as producers will become much more visible. This in itself will lead to their increased participation in development projects. Only with increased visibility, can women begin to take prominent positions which will influence positively their nominations for training.

g) AID/Burma projects on the whole have been so designed that women are thought of mainly as beneficiaries, or are left on the outskirts of the main thrust of the programme. They are also left out of consultation during design of projects. No specific women's issue is addressed except maternal health. Hence women's productive role is not given due recognition and little effort is consequently being made to bring them into the development effort. Little data is gathered by sex within the projects. AID/Burma is aware of some of these constraints and some steps are being taken to take actions against their perpetuation. Without the continued attention of a women's officer, however, this task may prove difficult.

h) As long as women continue to remain on the periphery of Agriculture, Industry, Cooperatives management and other key sectors, especially out of leadership roles, their contribution will undoubtedly be undermined and nominations for training abroad difficult. Increased effort for women's participation must and can originate only from specific project activities. The previous section (sub-section F) and the last section in this report make some recommendations on how this could be made possible. With increased participation of women in different projects, women will begin to get more recognition within related fields and it is believed that they will then be nominated for training as they do in the field of health.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

In this last section, I make some general recommendations for 'women in development' activities under AID/Burma. The previous sections have highlighted some specific issues, and I have made recommendations related to those issues throughout the report. I will make some additional recommendations here. I hope these will be useful to AID/Burma in designing projects and activities with and for women, in keeping with their WID policy.

It must be remembered that one of the constraints to any plan developed by the mission of encouraging women to participate in development projects, especially training activities, is the SRUB policy not to encourage private sector development. A substantial proportion of women are employed in the relatively small Burmese private sector, and this limits AID's efforts with furthering women's participation.

AID's primary objectives for women are (i) to expand opportunities for women to participate more fully in the economy of the country, and (ii) to improve the physical quality of life of Burmese women. AID also recognises the development importance of training women and cultivating female leadership.

Though these objectives are held by AID, the mission in Burma is only at the beginning stages of their full implementation. This is mainly because the AID mission in Burma has only recently begun again, and there has not been the continued attention of a women's officer on these policy issues. Also, integrating women into development is not a national priority.

Nevertheless, Primary Health Care II is making impressive progress with maternal health issues, as well as with involving women health workers to the maximum. The participant training programme is looking for ways to increase the nominations of women. It is the first objective, ie. "to expand opportunities for women to participate more fully in the economy", which is lagging behind.

I believe that the way to approach the 'women in development' policy issue in Burma is not necessarily by looking for alternative self-help or income-generating activities for women, or by designing projects of exclusive concern for women. While projects such as these should be planned, emphasis needs also to be placed on activities within the national

production sectors, in which women do already play a significant role. By developing these activities, not only will the total production increase, but also opportunities will increase for women to participate more fully in the economy.

The recommendations presented in this report have been divided into three sub-categories, namely :-

- A. New women's projects
- B. Women's nominations for overseas participant training programmes
- C. Women's components within AID projects

Recommendations under sub-category C, relate firstly to on-going AID projects (in the areas of oilseed processing and distribution, agriculture production and research, and primary health care). Secondly, they include recommendations that will enhance sensitivity and action for women within all AID projects (both on-going and new).

A. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW WOMEN'S PROJECTS

Project ideas presented in this sub-section are of a preliminary nature. AID/Burma will need to carry out substantial research and feasibility studies before any of these projects can take shape. I do believe however, that should AID/Burma wish to pursue them, these ideas can evolve as sound projects with increased opportunities and benefits for women.

1. Research Study on Women in Development in Burma:

Women's role in development must be made more visible, that is, in order to plan and assess women's role in development, an adequate data base must be provided. Major research undertakings are recommended for the collection of basic data. The necessary data belong to two major categories: the economic and social activities performed by women, and women's access to and control of resources and benefits.

The first would include: production of goods and services, women's participation in national production sectors, women's sources of income and its utilization, women's use of time and energy, women's problems with child-care, feeding and weaning, women's level of literacy, education and skill, types of training received by women, etc.

The second category would include a series of socio-economic factors which not only determine who does what, where, how and why, but also influences the flow and control of resources and benefits. Such determinants, often inter-related, include community norms, intra-family allocation of time, food and resources, religious beliefs, legal parameters, demographic factors (including population ratios, household size, migration patterns, etc.), economic conditions (including poverty levels, inflation, expenditure patterns, income distribution, control over income, etc.), access to credit and resources, land distribution, marketing procedures and channels, social services available to women, and institutional structures which influence the availability and distribution of resources and benefits.

Of course, such comprehensive data gathering might be over-ambitious and perhaps should be attempted in stages. Liaison with relevant departments of research under Rangoon University and the various Institutes will be necessary, to set up small-scale studies to fill these information/research gaps.

2. Cotton Production:

The shortage of cotton in Burma is a well recognised fact. This has placed the production of cotton as a national priority on a par with edible oil seeds and second only to paddy. 80% of all work in the production of

cotton is carried out by women. This includes sowing, thinning, weeding, application of insecticides, and picking.

To make cotton production more effective and to utilize the major contribution of women to this crop, the following recommendations are suggested: to expand research into high yield varieties of cotton; to develop pest control techniques; to initiate meetings for women farmers; to redefine the role of female agriculture extension workers; to provide training and information directly to women on use of new technology for pest control, for sowing, weeding and picking, etc.; and to support women farmers with social services to reduce their workload.

The exact goal and purpose of this project will have to be carefully defined so as not to overlap with areas in which FAO is active with cotton production in Burma. AID/Burma must also ensure that the project is so designed as to meet approval by Congressional lobby groups. It is believed that both of these constraints can be overcome. Care must also be taken to ensure that introduction of improved technology for pest control, sowing, weeding and picking does not displace women's work from cotton production. Hence the technology introduced must be appropriate and wherever possible, women must be trained in the use of new technology introduced.

3. Cotton Textile Production:

The association of women with textiles is not new in Asia. Similarly, in Burma, nearly all processing of cotton is carried out by women and at least 60% of workers in textile mills are women. Moreover, at least 10% of the cotton industry is in the home, run exclusively by women.

There is a considerable shortage of home produced textile in Burma and much of it is imported or smuggled from neighbouring countries. Developing the production of cotton textile would not only meet a national need but will also expand opportunities for women. Efficient running of cotton processing plants and textile mills, management training for women in textile production and distribution, improved technology for better quality of textile, are only some of the components in the development of this area. Concentration on operation and maintenance of textile mills and cotton processing plants can increase their efficiency without AID's involvement in capital. Emphasis can also be placed on cottage industry in the home, thereby increasing the total production of cotton textile with relatively small inputs in spinning wheels and handlooms in the home, some basic training in quality control, marketing and credit management, etc. The SRUB policy not to encourage private sector development will undoubtedly provide a constraint, and AID/Burma may have to concentrate on the cooperative production and distribution of cotton textile.

4. Milk Production and Distribution :

Looking after and feeding dairy cattle, milking, selling of milk and the processing of milk for consumption are activities traditionally carried out by women. Due to distribution problems of fresh foods and dairy produce in Burma, recent years have seen the production of processed condensed milk for national distribution. This is a very successful project under the Ministry of Cooperatives. Reports on this project state the major contribution of women to the activities at all stages - from supplying of milk to processing, packaging and distribution.

The further development of this area will bring additional gains for women in at least four ways - it would expand opportunities for women to participate in national production ; it would train women to undertake supervisory and leadership roles ; it would bring income directly into the hands of women ; and last but not least, it would benefit them and their children with better availability of milk.

The initial constraint to this project might be the "political environment" in Congress which is against assistance in the dairy sector. Availability of feed for dairy cattle and possibilities for improved cattle breeding will also have to be explored. Quality control of the processed milk must ensure the nutritional content before mass consumption. Health education will be necessary to inform on the correct use and consistency of the milk. The Australians, who are already involved in aspects of this project in Burma, may provide useful insights into its design.

5. Home Gardening/Horticulture :

There is inevitable preoccupation of the Burmese Government and the donors with the major field crops, which women process but generally do not grow (cotton being somewhat an exception). Yet almost all the vegetables, pulses and beans consumed by over 80% of the population in Burma are grown by women in their household compounds. They grow these with little or no training, few implements, poor quality seeds, no fertilizers or insecticides, and often with shortage of water. The vegetables, beans and pulses grown at home make up most of the nutrition in the diet of the family. Home gardening takes up a sizeable portion of a woman's time, and while it may not directly contribute to income, it does considerably contribute to saving expenses.

For all of these reasons, horticulture (home gardening) would be an excellent area for AID to work with, especially as the inputs initially would not be too large. The Agriculture Corporation sees it as an area which needs developing to increase both the quantity and the quality of the produce. Developing horticulture in the home would not only benefit women by enhancing the quality of their diet, but also through integrating their

agriculture production into farming research programmes and into total national production. Providing training through female agriculture extension workers ; devising flexible systems for providing inputs to female farmers and agriculture production in the home ; studying the commercial potential of home-grown vegetables, beans and pulses ; studying the impact on nutrition of mothers and children ; would be some of the additional aspects of this programme. Horticulture as a cash crop is being expanded by the Japanese in Burma. Nevertheless, the need for increased production of vegetables, beans and pulses in home gardens managed by women, has not diminished, because of prevailing distribution problems, poor availability and high prices of these consumer foods.

6. Weaning Food Production and Distribution supported by Health Education :

Faulty weaning practices are commonplace in Burma, for example, young children are usually weaned too late and they are also weaned on nutritionally inadequate food. Statistics in the Department of Health show that protein energy malnutrition or growth faltering among young children, especially those between 6 months and 3 years, is very high (48%) particularly in peri-urban areas. The major causes of these are the poor income of households, especially mothers ; low nutrition content of weaning foods ; lack of knowledge amongst mothers regarding weaning food practices ; and mothers' lack of time.

The ready availability of nutritionally adequate weaning foods at low prices would greatly alleviate these problems. The Department of Medical Research has already identified a formula for weaning food packages which has been tested and found to be acceptable by mothers and children. The Cottage Industries Department and the Department of Cooperatives are keen to produce and distribute weaning food packages on a national scale. All these reasons make this activity not only viable but also beneficial to women and mothers. Women workers and officers in the Department of Cooperatives and Cottage Industries Department could be utilized on a grand scale in this project with some additional training. Teams of women outreach attendants could be recruited and trained as facilitators and educators for mothers.

The weaning food packages are considered to be more beneficial for urban and peri-urban mothers. In urban and peri-urban areas, working mothers have less time due to inflexible working hours and long distances to work places, and the increasing break-up of the larger families is taking away mothers' support network of grandmothers, aunts, nieces, cousins, etc. Rural mothers generally do not face these problems, but yet do not feed their children on nutritionally adequate weaning food, mainly due to lack of knowledge. Health education may be the more appropriate action for rural

mothers, to educate them to use foods readily available in the home and to prepare and feed them in a nutritionally balanced way to young children.

7. Village Tract Road Construction :

Driving through the divisions and townships in Burma, the observer is struck by the overwhelming numbers of women who work as construction labourers on road and building sites. The problems of communication between villages and township centres could at least partly be overcome if this women's activity could be further expanded to build roads connecting villages to each other and to the township centres. Such an activity would not only open up new opportunities for women but would also help towards alleviating some of the distribution problems within townships.

The suggestion is not for a mass scale capital intensive tarmac road construction project. The idea is to utilize this women's activity in exchange for cash income or income in kind, by encouraging community participation for the construction of simple mud roads. Simple work tools will be needed, some sanitation and basic child-care facilities will improve working conditions, and some basic training will be necessary. Lessons can be learned from the somewhat similar USAID FFW project in Bangladesh, making it more appropriate for Burma. The benefits from such a project will be substantial for better communication, access and distribution. Women will benefit from income earned directly through participation in the project activity. The population in general will benefit from easy access to schools, markets, towns, etc. The project will have to be so designed as to fall under the category of 'operation and maintenance' in order to survive AID/Washington's review, which will oppose a capital project.

8. Village Forestation :

Collection of firewood by women is commonplace in Burma, both in dry and hilly areas. Due to the shortage of other fuel, firewood is the most accessible and affordable fuel for use in the home. The widespread use of firewood however, has led to serious deforestation in many areas of Burma. This has obvious ecological implications, but even more pertinently, the implications of shortage of fuel in the home for cooking, boiling water, etc.

A village forestation project, encouraging the participation of women, would not only open new opportunities for women, but would also benefit them with increased supply of firewood. The distances for carrying firewood will be reduced, the prices will be lower, and women will not have to carry heavy loads of up to 50 kg of firewood on their heads or back.

This project could be supported by installation of flues or chimneys to carry smoke from the home to the outdoors. Exposed to smoke for hours a day, often in a poorly ventilated dwelling, millions of rural women face health risks potentially more severe than workers in many hazardous

industrial occupations, according to various researchers and case studies. Another alternative could be the introduction of better designed stoves that burn material more efficiently. Efficient stoves also would reduce the devastating deforestation taking place.

9. Small-scale Home Industries :

These are both commonplace and advantageous to women. Small-scale home industries enable women to be self-employed and the flexibility in work hours allow them to carry out their other responsibilities in the home to their satisfaction.

Women in Burma work in the home at traditional crafts. Such work includes making food, clothes and *cheroots* (cigars). Women's involvement with textile production in the home has already been mentioned. In addition to garments for wearing, women also make woven shoulder bags which are very colourful and for which there is a great demand by school children, office workers, farm workers, and others. Cheroot-making is the one big home industry associated with women. Processing of seeds, fish products, and husking of grain are the most common of home-based food processing activities.

In addition to these, the small-scale home industries project could explore the possibilities of promoting the production of the widely used *thanaka* (traditional women's cosmetic) in the home. Another possibility could be the raising of poultry (chicken and ducks) for eggs and meat, with some additional training.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WOMEN'S NOMINATIONS FOR OVERSEAS
PARTICIPANT TRAINING PROGRAMMES

There are no short-cuts to increased nominations of women for overseas participant training programmes. Any actions that AID/Burma can take will become effective for increased nominations of women only over a long time. It can not, hence, realistically be expected that women's nominations for overseas training will significantly increase in the immediate future. Nevertheless, following are some recommendations that I believe will positively influence women's nominations over time.

1. Training opportunities in improving English language capability should be provided by AID/Burma. The training courses would have to be fairly intensive and of a substantial length of time, in order to be effective. Fluency in English, covering listening, reading, writing and speaking skills, would increase total numbers of nominees for overseas participant training programmes. For women, acquisition of these skills would further present other opportunities in other fields, such as secretarial/administrative, child care, appropriate technology, etc.
2. Collection of data, disaggregated by sex, should be encouraged in counterpart Ministries through AID/Burma project officers and contractors. With more extensive data gathering, especially on women in management and leadership roles, women's contribution to national production in different sectors (some unconventional ones, eg. agriculture and industry) will become much more visible. Increased visibility will lead to the appointment of women in senior administrative and professional positions. Though AID/Burma can bring no pressure to influence placement of women and men in positions within the departments and ministries of SRUB, AID can support appointments of women through a policy of increasing women's visibility through data gathering. Only with increased visibility can women begin to take prominent positions which will influence positively their nominations for training.
3. Increased participation of women in project design and implementation, as well as recognition of women's productive role in identification of projects, are key actions which need to be encouraged by AID/Burma. Women should be included both as beneficiaries and as participants of development projects. Increased effort for women's participation must and can originate only from specific project activities. With identification of projects and project activities that recognise women's productive role, as well as with increased participation of women in different projects, women

will begin to get more recognition within related fields and it is believed they will then be nominated for training as they do in the field of health.

4. Participant training abroad being problematic for reasons of acquiring clearances, nominations etc., from relevant ministries and departments, it is recommended that the possibilities should be explored for an additional in-country training programme, comprised of short-term training courses. Trainers could be flown in rather than trainees flown out. The numbers of participants to such in-country training could be greatly increased over the ones that are possible for training abroad. Components of training could also be made more appropriate to Burma's needs under this scheme. (There have been numerous complaints recently from the trainees that they found course material to be largely irrelevant in their short-term training in the US). In-country training would hold the additional advantage of being more accessible to women. Due to larger numbers of participants, the competition for nomination will also not be so great. Translating facilities could also be set up to overcome the language problems.

- I Following are some recommendations for women's components within on-going AID projects in Burma :-

Oilseed Processing and Distribution

1. In EOPD's role in the distribution of oil, the project should address itself to the role of women in marketing. Possibilities should be explored for more technical training in marketing skills for women, as well as for engaging women as managers and supervisors of marketing of oilseeds and edible oils.
2. When smaller mills, especially private ones are closed down as oilseeds are diverted to the more efficient mills, the smaller mill-owner families will have to rely on other kind of work including income earned by the women in the family. EOPD should take this into consideration, and avenues must be explored for expanding work opportunities for women in these families. If such opportunities are created now, the effect of redundancy will not be so great when it happens.
3. With the upgrading of oilmills under EOPD, women will probably have no future work in shelling, sorting and sifting of oilseeds. Alternatives should be sought for providing work to these women for much needed income.
4. Possibilities should be explored for additional training courses in secretarial and clerical skills for women employed by the Department of Cooperatives.
5. In-service training for women officers and deputy officers in the Department of Cooperatives and Township Societies should be encouraged, to provide them with equal opportunities for promotion into higher administrative and managerial positions.
6. On-site laboratories should be set up at all mills covered under the upgrading scheme of EOPD, employing women laboratory technicians.
7. The Department of Cooperatives should be assisted in collection of basic data, disaggregated by sex, on mill ownership, education levels of mill-owner and mill-worker families, their other sources of income, the exact contribution of all members of the family to oil-pressing and related work, the seasonal implications for their work and income, wage rates for workers, etc. Similarly, statistics should be gathered on employees of the

Department of Cooperatives, such as, numbers of male and female employees, their positions and wage rates, their education levels, amount of training received by them, etc.

Agriculture Production and Research

1. The active role of women in agriculture production should be stressed explicitly in all agriculture project documents. The programme goals of agriculture development projects should be better defined as they effect women.
2. Agriculture extension meetings should be set up for women farmers, and the role of female agriculture extention agents should be redefined. The agriculture extension metings should be supported by the provision of regional female supervisors and adequate training materials for female block supervisors.
3. Agriculture activities that are in the labour domain of women, such as transplanting, weeding, thinning, and harvesting, should be given equal importance in research activities, focusing on improved technologies that can make these tasks more efficient. While care must be taken that new technologies do not displace women's work, development of labour-saving technologies that are acceptable to women must be supported.
4. Information regarding improved farming techniques should be directly disseminated and discussed with women.
5. The scope of the research project needs to widened so as to include research on crops that women grow as well as process, such as cotton, pulses and horticulture/home gardening.
6. More flexible systems should be devised with the cooperation of the counterpart departments for providing agriculture inputs to women farmers, such as fertilizers, seeds, tools, credit, etc.
7. The recruitment of women into agriculture research and professional posts, as well as into farm management, must be supported by AID, and ways should be sought of to make this more possible.
8. Agriculture projects should facilitate the gathering of data on women as well as men farmers, including the effect/impact on these farmers of project activities. Projects should also collect readily available data on the involvement of women in project activities at each level.

Primary Health Care

1. The recruitment of women as CHWs should be supported.
2. The training of CHWs should be improved by lengthening it, by making it more practical, and by better supervision from rural health centres. CHWs should be informed on the particular health problems of women.
3. Health education should be introduced on a wider scale and the capabilities of the Health Education Bureau under DOH should be strengthened to make it more effective.
4. Malnutrition is now recognised as a national health problem. Nutrition programmes should be expanded, with special attention to maternal malnutrition and maternal anaemia.
5. Food is the greatest single expense of families. Ready availability of nutritious food, health education provision for nutritious diets, better distribution of food (including milk), access to income (especially for mothers) to maintain purchasing power for food, are some of the components that can support the Primary Health Care project.
6. AID should support the appointment of women in leadership and administrative posts, such as health officers, supervisors, trainers, etc.

II There are various other recommendations that I would like to make which will enhance sensitivity and action for women within AID projects :-

1. Frequent evaluations should be carried out, say every year, of ongoing and new country projects with a view to :
 - a) finding their effect/impact, both positive and negative, on women;
 - b) assessing the extent to which women are participating in the project activities at every stage ; and
 - c) exploring possibilities for expanding the opportunities available to women to participate in development activities, increasing the training of women within project activities, and bringing further benefits to women, eg. income, skill development, leadership roles, social services, physical well-being, improved technology, etc.

2. So far projects with AID/Burma have largely been so designed that project activities bring benefits to women but no provision is made for their direct participation ; or project activities are of no immediate interest to women.

As far as possible, AID/Burma should ensure that :

a) projects are encouraged to implement the recommendations made by frequent evaluations;

b) positive steps are taken to design project activities to actively include women as participants, and to bring benefits to them in their specific needs; and

c) wherever possible, projects of exclusive concern to women are also encouraged.

3. On-going and new country projects should gather their own data to exemplify women's role in the project activities. At least basic gender-specific statistics should be gathered, such as, how many women are engaged in the implementation of the project at each level? How many women are trained within areas relevant to the project? What is the educational level of women and men workers? What is the age, household size, and age of youngest child of women participants? Does distance from the project activity affect men and women in different ways? Do women receive the same pay as men? etc. On all levels of the project activity, sex-disaggregated data collection should be encouraged.

4. Aid recognizes that the productivity of women is important to personal, family and national well-being. Women's increased productivity depends on their improved access to resources, eg. land, improved farming techniques, information, employment, etc. The projects can increase women's productivity in the following ways :-

a) ensure that participants to training programmes reflect an acceptable proportion of men and women.

b) ensure that activities that are in the labour domain of women and girls are given equal importance in identification, design and implementation of projects. This would particularly include the types of agriculture-related tasks performed by women, and the crops grown by women.

c) ensure that information regarding improved farming techniques is directly disseminated and discussed with women.

d) support the development of labour-saving technologies which are acceptable and accessible to women, in order to replace inefficient technologies.

e) support efforts to alleviate any existing bias against women in the labour force, through policy reform and/or experimental programmes which demonstrate ways in which women can enter non-traditional types of work.

f) support and develop social service programmes which will reduce the work load of women and will improve the nutritional and health status of women and children.

g) support development of institutions which ensure better access and dissemination of resources, benefits and information to both sexes.

5. In designing of projects, planners should encourage consultation with women practitioners to ensure a sensitivity to women's role in the project-related activities. Such consultations will lead to a recognition of women's productive role, and to the incorporation of activities that will expand opportunities for women.

6. Project planners, designers and implementers should be aware of the nature of women's dual roles and women's responsibility for child-care and family welfare. Possibilities should also be explored for the provision of basic services as a component of projects, to help women with their child-care responsibilities which might hinder their productivity. Female heads of household should be given particular attention here.

7. In the field of agriculture, male and female differentials in access to and control over key productive resources should be understood and planned for in projects. These resources include: land, capital, labour, credit, information, seeds, tools, fertilizers, water and fuel. Additionally, specific farming responsibilities which are uniquely and particularly assigned to female members of the household/ society must receive an appropriate share of attention in project identification, design and implementation. These may include "women's animals", "women's crops", transplanting, weeding, harvesting, marketing, preserving, processing and storage.

8. Illiteracy among women is high. Few opportunities exist for them to increase their literacy skills outside the Burma Central Literacy Committee's literacy activities. Apart from this, there is no formal or non-formal adult education programme where women can learn about child-care, immunization, health and nutrition, household management, sources of credit, marketing, labour-saving technologies, crisis-management, etc. AID/Burma should perhaps explore the possibility of setting up supplementary adult education classes, especially for women, either as a component of their project activities, or as a separate project itself.

9. AID/Burma should consider the appointment of a women's officer as part⁴² of the team, so that continued attention can be placed on women's policy issues and on women's activities within the mission's development strategy for Burma.

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Biodata

Dr SEEMA AGARWAL

Education :-

- PhD in Women in Development from London University (1983-1985).
Issues covered : Women's role in combating rural poverty in Bangladesh with special reference to their training and income-earning activities.
- MA (with distinction) in Equity and Education in Developing Countries from London University (1980-1982).
- BA Hons. in English and European Literature from Warwick University, UK(1975-1978).

Employment Record :-

- Present :** Contractor, Women in Development Specialist
US Agency for International Development, Rangoon, Burma.
- Period : Since September 1986.
- Duties :
1. Examine the social, cultural, economic and political aspects of life in Burma which influence the participation of Burmese women in development programmes, specifically those programmes funded by USAID.
 2. Make specific recommendations for AID/Burma actions that can influence the SRUB to increase the number of Burmese women nominated for overseas participant training programmes.
 3. Make similar recommendations for AID/Burma actions that can influence the SRUB to increase and enhance participation of Burmese women in AID-funded development projects.

Previous Posts :

1. Consultant, Situation Analysis, Programme Planning and Women's Issues
UNICEF/Rangoon, Burma.
- Period : January 1986 - July 1986.
- Duties
1. Coordinate the activities undertaken by six research sub-teams comprising of Burmese researches and Government officials

towards consolidation and finalization of full draft Situation Analysis Report.

- 2. Identify research gaps, women's activities, and possible new programme interventions for women in Burma.
- 3. Organise and participate in inter-sectoral working group meeting for preparation of programme framework 1987-1990.

II. Visiting Fellow on Women in Development
 Centre for Cross-Cultural Research on Women
 Oxford University, U.K.

Period: September 1985 - December 1985.

- Duties:
- 1. Work towards writing of a book on Women and Poverty.
 - 2. Hold and attend seminars on issues related to women in development.

Experience in Burma :-

I have been resident in Rangoon, Burma since January 1986. Since that time, I have been continuously employed as a Women in Development specialist by UNICEF and USAID in Rangoon. Both these posts have involved extensive field travel and collaboration with key personnel in various departments of SRUB ministries. The evaluation of my work at UNICEF was rated as 'excellent'.

At the present time, I have sound awareness of realities and constraints prevalent in Burma. My field exposure has informed me well on the role of women in Burmese society. I have developed numerous contacts with senior Burmese officials who have all encouraged and helped me in my work on women in Burma.