

Women in Development
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INTEGRATING WOMEN AND WOMEN'S ISSUES IN LARGE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS:
DEVELOPMENT OF COEXISTING BARRIERS AND SUGGESTED GUIDELINES
Source: -----

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A. Existing Barriers

The integration of women and women's issues in large development projects is problematic because of a number of existing barriers. First, many of the large development projects deal with subjects which have been traditionally stereotyped as "masculine" concerns such as, the construction of rural roads and/or bridges, irrigation, the introduction of HYV's and modernizing agricultural inputs or the supply of rural water. They are, therefore, stereotyped as falling outside the realm of women. Furthermore, sex stereotyping of development projects often takes place according to Western conceptions despite the reality of the roles played by men and women in a particular society. For example, livestock projects emphasizing meat production ignore women despite women's involvement in dairy production (Horowitz, 1979) or in the raising of other types of livestock and community fuelwood programs are aimed primarily at men and not the women who (except Central America) are the main participants in wood collection, distribution, and consumption (Wood, et al., 1980).

A second even more important factor is the usual absence of social scientists from the technical teams in charge of designing and implementing large development projects. Specialized engineers, geo-

logists, agronomists, animal husbandry experts and even economists are not aware or interested in social issues which are perceived as "fuzzy" only muddling and/or complicating efficient technical designs and plans. The resistance to considering in any way social issues is usually justified by the fact that the main goal of the project is the technical quality of the road or the yield of a particular variety. The fact that a road, regardless of its quality, has consequences for the lives of men, women and children has not yet been accepted by many natural and technical scientists. Therefore, even when large development projects are submitted for comments and suggestions to organizational social scientists, their comments are often disregarded or only nominally taken into consideration. In addition, the social scientists consulted are not always sensitized to the important social issues in the country in which the project is planned and even less so to social and economic issues pertaining to women. Thus, the first important battle is lost.

Third, issues relevant to women tend to be ignored because families rather than individuals living in family units are considered to be the beneficiaries of or actors in development. This is probably due to the simpler model of analysis represented by the family unit rather than by different family members as well as to the assumption that a family tends to maximize benefits for all its members. All available evidence, however, points to the fact that the family is not a monolithic institution but rather an organizational unit for individuals with very different roles, privileges, access to resour-

ces, rights and obligations according to their age, sex, and productive role (Safilios-Rothschild, 1980). The degree of intra-family inequality in the access to resources (food, health care, education) as well as in labor obligations is more acute among low-income families at the edge of survival, hence among the families which are the prime target of development. It is not, therefore, meaningful or valid to stop the collection of data at the household or family level with regard to income, labor, nutrition, or productivity.

Turning first to income, a great wealth of data accumulated on family income have only limited usefulness. This is so because they do not allow to identify the multiple sources of income which help low-income households survive (Evenson, Popkin, and King-Quizon, 1979; Sant'Anna, 1974; Safilios-Rothschild, 1980) and the monitoring of changes in each of these incomes and their consequences for the different members of the family. The lack of disaggregation of family income by age and sex masks important patterns such as that: (a) wives may contribute from one-third to one-half of the family income, the latter being more often true among low-income families and adolescent sons may contribute one-third of the family income (Cain, 1977 and 1979; Evenson, Popkin and King-Quizon, 1979; Sant'Anna, 1974; Rush, 1974); (b) development projects can affect differently the income-generating abilities of different family members and bring about different consequences for the welfare of the family as well as for the power relationships within the family according to which member's income is curtailed or increased. The classical example of the Mwea irrigated rice settlement scheme in Kenya showed how the introduction

of rice cultivation as a cash food crop led to an increase in the husbands' income but to a decrease in the wives' income and status. Wives had a difficult time meeting their responsibility to feed the family and became financially dependent on their husbands as they had to ask for cash to make up for the food deficits as well as to buy fuel. This loss of income controlled by women had serious consequences for the nutritional status of the family; the status of women who were no longer independent partners in the family; and for the availability of women's labor for cash crops (Palmer, 1977; Hanger and Morris, 1973; Rural Development Projects: A Retrospective View of Bank Experience in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1978). The adverse consequences of wives' income losses for the nutritional status of the family, even when the husbands' income increases, have been documented for other than Sub-Saharan African countries in which the provision of food is the wives' responsibility. In Kerala, India it was found, for example, that in landless families the aggregate household income was a weak and statistically insignificant predictor of child nutrition. Increases in maternal income, on the other hand, were significantly associated with children's nutritional status but when women did not work for wages, increments in the husbands' income were not associated with improved nutritional status for the children (Kumar, 1977).

In the same way as the disaggregation of family incomes can show the crucial importance of women's income especially for the nutritional status of children, the disaggregation of "family labor" by age and sex can provide data about the prevalence of female labor

and the differential rate of its absorption after different types of development interventions. In Indonesia, for example, some agricultural economic studies of the impact of new harvesting methods and of the introduced new rice husking technology (steel roller hullers) show that the demand for hired labor has sharply declined bringing about serious income losses especially to landless rural families but do not provide breakdowns of the displaced labor by age and sex (Utami and Ihalauw, 1972). Other studies, however, which differentiated hired labor by age and sex showed that the large majority of displaced hired labor in rural Indonesia were women. Also older women were more often left without income by the new harvesting methods (Collier and Soentoro, 1973; Collier et al., 1974; Stoler, 1977). The specification that the displaced hired labor was predominantly female has significant programmatic and policy implications for the design of appropriate development programs in the area aiming to develop stable and continuous income-generating opportunities for landless women aiming to restore their income to its earlier level.

Furthermore, the disaggregation of data on family labor by age and sex would provide specific data about the nature of the prevailing division of labor in the family which is often quite different from the Western model of division of labor, especially in low-income families. Such data would show that the "family labor" often assumed in development programs to be available for the implementation of modernizing agricultural systems is predominantly made up of women and children who may require specific provisions before they are able and willing

to make such labor available. In the case of female family labor, for example, needed for the cultivation of cash crops women may need appropriate technology to free them from housework overload before they are able to provide additional labor (Safilios-Rothschild, 1980; Carr, 1979; Whiting and Krystall, 1979).

An important difficulty in sensitizing policy makers and development program designers to the importance of female labor in rural as well as in urban areas is the serious underestimation of women as agricultural laborers, as unpaid family labor directly involved in agriculture or as workers in the urban or rural informal sector in the available Census statistics of many LDC's as well as in statistics collected by international agencies and organizations (Recchini de Lattes and Weinerman, 1979; Youssef, 1980; Youssef and Buyonic, 1980). The reasons for this underestimation are often the utilized definitions of work which exclude many types of work in which women are involved (Connell and Lipton, 1977) as well as the combination of the manner in which the questions about work are asked and women's definitions as to what is "work" and what is viewed as an integral part of their role as wives and mothers. This underestimation of women's participation in agriculture and the market economy increases their invisibility and diminishes their chances to be included as beneficiaries in the design of different types of development projects including training, credit, and other forms of technical assistance.

Fourth, the growing numbers of female-headed households in urban as well as in rural areas are most often ignored by teams designing

large development projects. Since this information is not usually available in official Census data, the tendency is to think of female-headed households as "deviant" cases which tend to become male-headed as soon as it is possible and as existing only in Latin America and the Caribbean due to prevailing consensual unions and marital instability. There is increasing evidence, however, that female-headed households represent a sizeable percentage of households in most LDC's, especially among low-income urban and rural households and that migration, widowhood, higher marital instability and the weakening of kinship ties and responsibilities are causes for this increase (Buvinic and Youssef, 1978). The available data from small surveys show that the percentages vary from 15 to 50 or more of all households from one LDC to another and from one region and socio-economic group to another and they tend to be higher among low-income households. What is of particular importance is the fact that female-headed households are appearing for the first time in Muslim countries such as, Morocco, Syria and Jordan primarily because of higher divorce rates, the percentages being as high as one-third of all households (Buvinic and Youssef, 1978). The neglect, therefore, of the reality of female-headed households leads most often to structural discrimination against women as only male heads of households are designated as beneficiaries of projects or indirectly through the availability of agricultural or technical training available only to male farmers or entrepreneurs or through the dissemination of necessary

technical information through male agents.*

Fifth, the prevailing powerful sex stratification system and sex role stereotypes held by many planners, members of the development community and experts from different disciplines constitute important barriers to the incorporation of women in development programs and activities which have not been traditionally viewed as appropriate or relevant for women. The same factors are also responsible for the fact that the specification of equal participation of men and women in income-generating and development activities and of equal access of men and women to resources or to benefits resulting from development projects is not a sufficient condition for the achievement of such equal participation and access. The prevailing powerful sex stratification system that is, laws and policies that spell out and legitimize men's privileged and dominant status and rights with regard to all valued resources as well as informal discriminatory practices of implementers at all levels justified by religious, traditional, moral and/or pseudo-scientific ideologies and beliefs permeates all activities and interactions (Safilios-Rothschild, forthcoming). The existence of a sex stratification system is often responsible for women's actual lesser access to valued resources and development benefits unless specific measures are taken to counteract the consequences of multifaceted

*for example, the dissemination of agricultural information as well as of information concerning agricultural training and credit through male agricultural extension agents in Tanzania and Kenya has been found to lead to fewer contacts of these agents with women than men farmers, and lesser access of women farmers to training and credit as well as to information, especially among poor, small-scale women farmers (Staudt, 1979a; Fortman, 1978).

discrimination. In Honduras, for example, the law extends the same rights to women heads of household with children, as to men with regard to land title and full membership as socias in the asentamientos created through the agrarian reform. During the asentamiento formation, however, female heads of household were either not accepted from the start or cooled off later on by the male farmers. Similarly, the provision of equal access to agricultural training and information within the context of large development projects cannot be achieved unless the necessary measures are taken facilitating and encouraging the implementation of equal service to men and women as well as appropriate changes are made in the occupational reward structure of these agents so that they are rewarded for contacting and working with women farmers.

Powerful sex stratification systems in LDC's and sex role stereotypes held by policy makers and development people in international organizations, donor and recipient countries are also responsible for inadequate monitoring systems ensuring the implementation of equal access programs as well as for evaluation studies which collect inadequate data concerning women's access to services and resources.

Sixth, there is a tendency to view women as a population apart from others (namely, men) for which special, "appropriate" components may be built in large development projects. This tendency clearly detracts project planners from integrating women into the mainstream of development targets and plans. Furthermore, the assignation of women in special components most often implies that only small sums are earmarked for them. This is often due to the fact that these

special women's components are usually added later on to the larger project after funds have been allocated to the "main" development goals and as a response to the vague concern that "something has to be done about women."

There are, however, some cases in which special components regarding women's needs are very appropriate and necessary for the very success of large development projects. Such special components, however, are justified only when women are fully integrated in all development activities through equal access and participation and the purpose of the special component is to enable women to make up for existing deficiencies due to different socialization experiences and/or discriminatory practices so that they can take full advantage of the development benefits.

Seventh, the small number of in-depth social impact studies and the lack of detailed data about the different members of the family in the existant ones makes very difficult the task of sensitizing and even more of convincing technical development planners and experts of the need to specify women as beneficiaries in addition to men and to take into account that women may experience significant socio-economic consequences from development which are different from those experienced by men. Many of the existing impact studies deal only with economic issues (Johnson, et al., 1979) or when they deal with social issues they do not disaggregate the findings by sex (or age or class) reporting, for example, "children's" better school attendance or performance (Dworkin, 1980; Dworkin and Pillsbury, 1980) or referring

to children as beneficiaries of rural water projects while in fact girls are the main beneficiaries (Dworkin, 1980). Furthermore, in most impact studies "farmers" or traders are not sometimes differentiated by sex even in Sub-Saharan African countries in which it is well known that a sizeable percentage of farmers and even more of traders are women (e.g. Sierra Leone - Anderson, 1980). But even when the impact of a particular project on women is included in the evaluation study, it is sometimes dealt with in half a page in a separate section on "Impact on Women" without connecting these data with evaluation data gathered on other important areas. A good example of this tendency is an impact evaluation of a small scale irrigation project in Philippines which discusses in a half page the project's impact on the successful employment of women as institutional officers (Steinberg, 1980). No attempt was made, however, to evaluate the potential impact of the considerable presence of women in an important position in the local community on girls' school attendance, intra-family food distribution, or young women's age at marriage (Safilios-Rothschild, 1980.)

Recently, however, data about the impact of large development projects on women are becoming available from some evaluation studies integrated throughout the different impact areas and usually in comparison with the corresponding impact on men (Cobb, et al., 1980; Rural Development Projects, 1978), and from studies undertaken by social scientists with a special focus on women (Elmendorf, 1976; Hackenberg, 1978; Devres, Inc., 1980; Palmer, 1979).

B. Suggested Guidelines

Several measures are necessary in order to facilitate the integration of women and women's issues in large development projects. The acceptance of these measures may be greater if they are proposed and justified in terms of the need to assess and understand the different roles played by each member of the family as well as the different effects of large development projects on different members of the family. These measures would include:

1. The sensitization of development planners, technical experts, and policy makers in the development community, the international agencies and organizations, the donor countries as well as the recipient countries with respect to: (a) important social issues and ongoing trends and changes taking place in different regions and countries which affect family structure, the division of labor, and the roles of men, women, and children; (b) the differential impact of development projects on men and women (as well as on boys and girls) and the economic and social consequences of this differential impact as well as the nature of safeguards and correcting mechanisms needed in order to balance the beneficial effects of development for all members of the family; and (c) how class and sex stratification operate in different societies and levels formally and informally, directly and indirectly to give low-income women lesser access to valued resources or to exclude them altogether, even when the development programs include men and women and the nature of safeguards that must be built into development programs in order to neutralize the adverse effects

of class and sex stratification. Overall, the sensitization process can be much more successful if: (a) the argument "for women" is not made in terms of equity and justice but rather in economic, labor, and nutritional terms which cannot be ignored or refuted; and (b) the emphasis is not put on women but on each member of the family, including women and girls.

2. The above sensitization training can be facilitated by the availability of relevant data which can be readily achieved if all statistics and data gathered in LDC's are disaggregated by sex and class as well as by age. Furthermore, the requirement that evaluation (or impact) studies of all development projects include a detailed social component and would disaggregate all data and effects by class, age and sex would provide the development community and planners with a great wealth of data which could play a crucial sensitizing role (Staudt, 1979b). Special attention should be paid to the fact that the effects of development projects on women are not examined separately but are integrated throughout all sectors of the evaluation study; that women as well as men are interviewed during the evaluation; and that information about the impact on women is not obtained from male heads of household. The use of anthropologists and sociologists in evaluation teams would greatly facilitate the process as well as the development of evaluation guidelines with respect to specific large development projects. Some beginnings in this direction must be signalled with regard to evaluation guidelines of rural roads (Devres, Inc., 1980), fuelwood programs (Wood, et al., 1980) as well as Dixon's

general impact guidelines (Dixon, 1980) but many more and even more detailed and focused evaluation guidelines must be developed.

3. While it is true that some planners and development experts have still to be convinced about the importance of making resources equally accessible to men and women, it has to be recognized that others are already convinced and need concrete and specific guidelines as to how to integrate women and women's issues into development projects. For both categories, urging them to "integrate women and women's issues into development projects" is a meaningless mandate unless it is accompanied by specific guidelines as to how this can be accomplished in specific large development projects from the design throughout the implementation and evaluation stages. In addition, the availability of a social scientist who is familiar with the research in the particular country and/or region and who could with the collaboration of local social scientists advise early in the stage those who design or are about to embark in a large development project would be invaluable.

4. Since, as we saw earlier, the specification of men and women as equal beneficiaries of development projects is not sufficient for men and women to have equal access to valued resources, some type of monitoring has to be set up to assure the implementation of the desired goals and to assess the different types of social and economic impacts of development projects. This monitoring could include indicators assessing directly men's and women's extent of participation in development activities and access to valued resources as well as more broadly assess changes in different aspects of men's and women's

lives. To this end, it is of utmost importance to develop indicators which are sensitive to changes in men's, women's, boys' and girls' lives and status in their family as well as in the local community and to use these indicators over time for the assessment of more direct short-range as well as indirect, long-range impacts and changes.

5. A difficult issue to handle is the extent and appropriateness of small women-specific projects. While, as it was said earlier, is preferable to integrate women and women's issues throughout large development projects, in some situations it is desirable to fund small women's projects if they aim to facilitate the integration of women's issues in large development projects. In some countries, for example, it may be useful, if not necessary, to demonstrate through a small pilot project that rural women can get organized, function well as a collectivity, pool and manage their funds as a group and put them to a productive use before women's groups which fulfill certain requirements can have access to well-financed credit schemes for rural development. Furthermore, while it is important to provide funds to women's organizations and newly established women's bureaus in LDC's, such projects should not replace their own governmental commitment to them or become the easy way out for bilateral donors and international organizations for fulfilling their mandate of showing development activities for women.

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