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Small Farmer Perspectives on Development

by

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Table of Contents

Chapter		Page
1.	Executive summary.	1
2.	Introduction.	3
	The Research Questions	3
	The Research Method	3
	The Researcher	4
	Organization of This Report	4
3.	Design of the Study.	7
	Small Farmer Perspectives: Choosing Indicators	7
	The Literature Review	8
	From Singularities to Synthesis	9
4.	Development and the Small Farmer Economy.	11
	The small farm household.	11
	Small farmer economic activities.	12
	Four sectors of the small farm economy.	14
	Small farmer economic development.	16
5.	Economic Development Goals and Strategies of Small Farmers.	17
	Establishing and then transcending a domestic economy.	17
	The hierarchy of small farmer economic development goals.	18
	Examples of small farmer economic goals in action.	19
	Successful small farmer economic development.	23

6. Implications for small farmer development assistance. 27

Economic growth compatible with small farmer economic development. 27
Small farmers can make development assistance work (though seldom as intended). 28
Subsistance farmers need capital not credit. 28
Small farmer development benefits women. 29
Rural income-generating projects. 30

7. Bibliography. 33

1. Executive Summary

This report answers the questions: What does contemporary research tell us about small farmer perspectives on development? Are there aspects of the small farmer perspective, revealed by research but not generally known to development practitioners, that might be significant for the design of more effective development projects?

The research reported here was a literature review. A computer search dredged seven bibliographic databases looking for reports, publications, or dissertations on small farmers and development. The abstracts or descriptions of the thousands of works thus identified were culled to find 268 empirical works reporting the results of research based on long-term close contact with and observation of small farm families in development impacted environments. The 268 works represent 52 countries in all parts of the world. Most were anthropological or sociological studies, but other disciplines were also represented.

The small farm household was found to be a complex and diversified economic enterprise, engaged in many different kinds of productive activities, of which subsistance farming was only one not necessarily dominant part. These productive activities can be categorized into four sectors: the domestic production of goods and services for consumption in the household (which includes subsistance farming); the commercial production of farm crops and livestock for income generation through exchange out of the household; the home-based self-employed production of nonfarm goods and services for income generation through exchange; and off-farm wage labor.

Small farmers allocate labor resources among the four sectors partly according to the costs and benefits they perceive associated with each, with the frequent result that when the opportunity structure permits, they freely shift labor out of traditional home and farm work. In making these decisions, they are guided as well by their economic

development goals. A hierarchy of six economic development goals is described, each becoming effective only when the one below it begins to be met. Moving through these six goals, small farmers first put highest priority on establishing and securing their household base with its domestic economy. Later, domestic subsistance production takes on a much lower priority, as farmers put highest priority on activities that produce an independent income for all adult household members.

As a result of this increased emphasis on income-earming productive activieties, successful small farmers reaching level six in the hierarchy of economic development goals cease to be small farmers. From the small farmer perspective, economic development ultimately means transcending small farmer status, either by becoming large farmers (rarely), or (more often) by becoming part-time farmers whose primary economic activity is elsewhere.

Among the more important implications for development practitioners of this new understanding of the small farmer perspective on development are these: 1) small farmers at the lowest level cannot benefit from loans or credit projects, since they invest labor primarily in the domestic sector which provide no income with which to repay, but can benefit from projects which increase the productivity of domestic labor ; and 2) small farmers beyond the lowest level can pursue economic development by taking advantage of almost any expansion or diversification in the rural markets for their products or their labor.

2. Introduction

The Research Questions

What does contemporary research have to tell us about small farmer perspectives on development? Are there aspects of the small farmer viewpoint, revealed by research but not generally known to development practitioners, that might be significant for the design of more effective development projects? Are longstanding assumptions about the uniformly positive effects on farm households of increased farm production and income shared by small farmers themselves? These are the questions that this research set out to answer.

The Research Method

To address these issues, a literature review was designed. A computerized literature search, designed to be as inclusive as possible, combed seven bibliographic databases looking for studies in less devloped countries of small farmers and development. Of the thousands of potential studies identified, 268 were selected on the basis of their abstracts or descriptions for inclusion in this review. To be included in this review, a study had to be an empirical piece reporting the results of longterm work involving close contact with and observation of small farmers and their families in development impacted environments. Most of these studies were from the field of development anthropology, but sociology, human ecology, political economics, agriculture, agricultural economics, and political science were also represented.

The 268 studies included in this research represent more than one hundred different regions or cultures in 52 countries in the less developed world. The heaviest concentrations are in Latin America, especially Mexico, and in east and west Africa, but the distribution is worldwide. Also included are the Caribbean, the Middle East, peripheral

Europe, all parts of Asia except mainland China, and the Pacific islands.

The Researcher

An economic sociologist specializing in rural development issues, Ken Kusterer is Associate Professor of Sociology at the American University in Washington, D.C. He has studied agriculture (diploma, CECACH Mexico, 1967), Latin American Studies (MA, Washington University, 1971), and international agribusiness management (diploma, Harvard University, 1978), as well as sociology (BA, Yale University, 1969; PhD, Washington University, 1976). A former extensionist and peasant movement organizer in Mexico, he has from time to time returned to Mexico, Central America, and the Andes over the last twenty years to conduct field studies and evaluations of rural development efforts.

The author of numerous publications and research reports in the field of economic sociology, he has written particularly on the social impact of governmental or corporate activities and policies on the lives of the less empowered people affected by them: lower level employees, women and minorities, the poor. Among these studies are two AID special reports, each based on four months village level field research, on case studies of the social impact of agribusinesses in Guatemala and Peru. Fluent in Spanish and English, his reading knowledge of the other languages represented in this bibliography (French, Portuguese, Italian, German, Dutch) was sufficient to include these entries in the literature review.

Organization of This Report

This report consists of two parts approximately equal in size, the first six chapters reporting the results of the review and the seventh chapter listing the works reviewed. The first three short chapters -- the executive summary, this introduction, and a description of the methods and key methodological decisions of the research -- provide the background for the substantive findings, which are reported in chapters four, five, and six.

Chapter four describes the small farm household as an economic entity. It describes the range of productive activities -- within the household and without, subsistance oriented and income oriented -- carried on by household members to sustain themselves. Finally, it categorizes these productive activities into the four sectors of the small farm economy.

Chapter five presents a paradigmatic perspective of economic development common to small farmers everywhere. Small farmer economic devlopment is seen as a process of first establishing and then transcending a domestic economy. In this process, small farmers aspire to a hierarchy of six economic development goals, each goal activated when the one before it begins to be met. The process is illustrated by examples and comparisons of a number of the studies from various parts of the world.

Chapter six explores some of the implications of the small farmer perspective on development for rural development projects and issues. Special attention is given to the different needs of small farmers at lower and higher levels of economic development aspirations, and to the different positions in the small farm economy of male and female small farmers.

Finally, the bibliography lists the 268 studies included in this review, with information on the data bank that contained them as well as the time and place of their original publication.

3. Design of the Study

Small Farmer Perspectives: Choosing Indicators

The key research decision that more than any other has shaped the course of the research was the choice to infer small farmer preferences by looking at what they have done rather than what they might say to an interviewer. In other words, small farmer actions are taken to speak for them more loudly than words. Why was such a choice made? First and most important, because behavior was taken to be a more valid indicator of personal choices than answers to hypothetical questions about improbable development scenarios in which small farmer opinions would be decisive. In survey research, questions about attitudes that subjects would have in situations that they have not faced are notoriously poor indicators of their behavior when the situation does arise. Thus, market researchers, whose future livelihood depends on their ability to discover real and operant attitudes, have long since abandoned any such technique. Second, it was assumed, correctly as it turned out, that little research asking peasants about their development preferences had been conducted, so that a study based on a review of that kind of literature would be little more than an exercise in frustration.

But the choice to infer preferred options from actual options taken is quite problematic, regardless of whether or not it was the best choice available. Most significantly, it accepts as a given the social and economic milieu within which the small farmer is operating. Small farmer choices are not only an expression of personal values, they are also a considered response to the structures of opportunity set for small farmers by the context of socioeconomic institutions within which they operate, the context in fact which has also served to shape those very personal values themselves. So, it may be argued that their actions are not so much a result of their own preferences as they are a result of making the most of a bad set of choices. Obviously, there

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is truth in this. Small farmers all over the world are operating in a socioeconomic environment that is primarily designed to serve interests of others more powerful than they. Yet, precisely because this is so universally true, and so universally manifest in the land tenure, agricultural credit, and commodity pricing policies that shape the small farmer's world, small farmers have seldom had the luxury to imagine what kind of world they might like to build if the day should arrive when "the meek shall inherit the earth."

So we may infer small farmer perspectives from their visions of a utopian existance which they have never known, or from their actions in a world which they know only too well is one of limited opportunities for small farmers. Neither course is fully satisfactory, neither one promises to tell us with certainty what small farmers "really want," but the latter choice is the better one.

The second important operationalizing choice point lay in setting the working definition of the term small farmer. The research concerns seemed to call for an inclusive rather than a narrow definition, so the choice was to call all poor rural agriculturalists small farmers. Traditional distinctions -- between peasants and farmers, subsistance and commercial, landed and landless -- were noted when they came up in the literature, but not assumed a priori to rule anyone outside the concerns of the research. Farmer is also often used consciously or unconsciously as a gender-specific term reserved to males, with women farmers called farm women or farm wives. The practice makes it harder to understand who farmers are and what farmers do, and is not followed here.

The Literature Review

The research project was conceived as a computer-based review of all available empirical studies of small farmers since the various computerized data bases were put together, most in the mid-1970's. The data bases used were: Dissertation Abstracts International, AGRIS International (the FAO database), Sociological Abstracts, CAB Abstracts (Commonwealth Agricultural Bureau), Dissertation Abstracts Online, PAIS International (Public Affairs International Service), and AGRICOLA (National Agricultural Library). The search design strategy, put together by AID Librarian Karen Keyes, was deliberately inclusive. Basically entries were selected if they referred to small farmers (or smallholders, peasants, etc.) and also development or change.

Because of the nature of the databases, and because (why not admit) of the state of literature in the field of

development, the initial searches were not too useful in finding detailed empirical studies. In the field of development, descriptions of projects, comments on development policies, and conceptual works far outnumber empirical studies of the people actually experiencing the development. The short format of articles or papers precludes the sort of deep information needed for this study, so many of these, even when based on a study that would have been useful, did not contain usable information. With the exception of a few articles focusing precisely on the topic of this study, only books, monographs, and dissertations proved useful in the end.

The anthropology of development, the primary field of most of the research needed, has no computerized database of its own and was peripheral to the central concerns of the agricultural databases. Frustrated over the lack of this kind of work in most of the computer lists, the author finally made a manual search through the abstracts of every U.S. dissertation since 1976 listed in Dissertation Abstracts Online as Cultural Anthropology (a rubric that included many rural sociology, human ecology, and agricultural economics disertations as well). Through this means, and through the traditional precomputer route tracking down the trail of footnotes and references (the source, ultimately, of about 10% of the entries in the bibliography), a reasonably exhaustive literature review was accomplished.

Through the services and resources of the AID Library, the Library of Congress, and the National Agricultural Library, it was possible in Washington to get access to all the items needed either in actual or microfiche versions, something that could not be said of such an international collection in many other places in the world.

From Singularities to Synthesis

The hundreds of local surveys and ethnographies surveyed here tell hundreds of singular stories. In each case, history, culture, and the influence of the international economy vary. Months of reading, noting, rereading, and categorizing these studies produced little but descriptive summaries along the lines of "some studies find abc, but on the other hand other studies find xyz." Eventually, though, persistance paid off and the conceptualization of the small farm economy's four sectors (see Chapter 4) and the small farmers' hierarchy of development goals (see Chapter 5) emerged abductively from the process of poring over the studies. Once this conceptual lens had been crafted, than all of the studies made sense as illustrations, under different conditions, of the same basic principles. The

result, essentially a paradigm of the small farmer perspective on economic development, may seem short and simple, but the route that arrived at it was long and complex.

4. Development and the small farmer economy.

The Small Farm Household

A constant theme running through the recent studies is a call for a more sophisticated understanding of the economic activities of small farmer or peasant households. Typically, this is put in terms of a rejection of the traditional terms of either peasant or small farmer, as misleading oversimplifications of a much more complex economic reality. In a widely cited piece, Smith [1979] rejects both terms in favor of the clumsy phrase, "multi-occupational petty producers." Fegan [1979] calls the small farm household a diversified family conglomerate:

> "I criticize models of the economic behavior of small farmers, and offer up as an alternative a model of a household that is a diversified family conglomerate that allocates its resources between a number of competing income producing uses that have different costs, benefits, risks, etc., with the minimum aim of ensuring the short run survival of the present unit, and the larger goal of acquiring capital and setting up the several households of its children." [362-363]

This perspective on the small farmer household and its economic activity, which emerged in the literature in the late 1970's and has come to dominate current anthropological work, results partly from empirical observation of the income-generating activities of the rural poor and partly from the new WID-oriented focus on the productive activities of women and children in the household. With this perspective in mind, the small farm household in this study will be defined in a way slightly different from the development literature tradition. Small here refers neither to household size nor land extension, but to the scale of economic activity, of income generation and capital accumulation. Small, in other words, means mainly poor, or at least not

rich or middle class. Farm here does not necessarily refer to a piece of independently worked land, although that is usually present, but refers to a household that is physically located in a rural setting and economically located in the agricultural sector. Thus landed and landless cease to be a dichotomy of categories, since all small farm households have access to at least some land (the dwelling site) and no small farm households engage exclusively in farming their own land as their only economic activity. Household, a term natural to societies where the dwelling and consuming units are identical, is difficult to define in other societies, but is used here to refer to the food producing and consuming unit when that unit differs, as it often does in rural Africa, from the residential or sleeping unit. Small farmer in this study will refer to any adult member of a small farm household, without further reference to gender or position in the household.

Small Farmer Economic Activities

Several typologies have been used in the anthropological literature to try and develop meaningful categories of small farm households. Ashby [1980, p 101] presents the following table of the most frequently used criteria for such categorization:

	Stinchcombe 1961	Galeski 1968	Sorokin 1930	Chayanov 1966	Wolf 1955, 1966	Paige 1975
Major Criteria						
Emphasized Labor Use:						
Self-Sufficient	*			*		*
Part-Time		*	*			
Exchange:						
Production for Own consumption		*	*		*	
Market	*	*	*		*	*
Land Tenure	*					*
Agricultural Production Activity	*					*

The authors that she cites have used these criteria, that seem most theoretically and empirically important, to

set up types of peasants (Wolf and Chayanov) or types of small farms (Paige). Ashby herself goes on to use exploratory factor analysis techniques, based on these variables, to create an empirically-based typology of small farms in the hill country of Nepal, where she conducted her fieldwork in the late 1970's. This empirical analysis found that the most important variables affecting small farms were the extent of market integration, and the type of linkage to markets (cash crop production, cash livestock sales, off farm employment). The result was a typology of four types of small farms: large farm commercial (1 Ha or more, 50% or more of income from cash crop sales); small farm commercial (less than 1 Ha., 50% or more of income from cash livestock sales); part-time (33% or more of income from off farm activities); and subsistance (little or no cash earnings). What appears more significant about her work in the context of other work in this review, however, is the fact that her farm types are based on clusters, and that almost all farm units had all types of income and market integration mechanisms present. In other words, almost all farm households had income from cash crop, cash livestock, off farm earnings, and subsistance farming activities. Her typology is based on the relative significance of each income source in the total earning of each farm household. But, her own data more clearly demonstrates the multi-occupational, or mini conglomerate nature of each small farm household than it does demonstrate the existence of clearly distinct types of small farms. For instance, she looked at the speed and extent of adoption of high value hybrid rice and corn seed, and found no greatly significant variation among her farm types. All grew the new varieties, and subsistance farms trailed large commercial farms in adoption of the new seeds by an average of only three years.

Dillon [1983] studied the labor allocations of small holder beneficiaries of a rubber and rice smallholder development project sponsored by the World Bank in North Sumatra. These households were headed either by "former plantation workers" or "former peasants," meaning that project participants had previously received a majority of their income either from off farm wage labor or from subsistance and local-market cash farm production. As a result of the project, male household heads now spent 75% of their time in rubber production and 19% in off-farm labor, leaving only 6% for household work and subsistance rice farming. Women and children likewise spent almost half their time in rubber production, but since they worked many more hours per month than household heads (169 hours for women and 157 hours for children compared to 135 for household heads), almost one third of family labor time was still devoted to rice, livestock, and household work activities. Though it was a much smaller proportion of their total labor time, women also managed to contribute about one-third of the family's off-

farm wage labor work. [p. 78-79] So even these small farmer beneficiaries of a commercial farming project still spent almost half their time in either subsistance farming activities on the one hand or off-farm wage work on the other.

A basis for understanding the small farmers' perspective on development, therefore, is a clearer picture of the multiple occupations that form the economic activities of the members of a small farm household's mini conglomerate.

Four Sectors of the Small Farm Economy

There are four sectors to the small farm economy: 1) household production of goods and services for home consumption; 2) cash crop farming for market sales; 3) extra-agricultural businesses, the self-employed production of goods and services for sale; and 4) off-farm labor. All small farm households engage in the first sector, production for home consumption. It is theoretically conceivable that a subsistance farm might carry on no other economic activity, and first world observors of third world farming carry such a stereotype in their heads, but there were virtually no examples in this literature of farm communities where that degree of farm self sufficiency was the norm. Most farm households engage in all three of the other economic sectors, either as a response to limited opportunities in any one of these sectors or as a deliberate strategy of diversification and risk minimization.

To clarify and specify the nature of the productive activities in each sector, here is a list of the kinds of work included in each. This list reflects the variety of possibilities found in this literature and is intended to be as inclusive as possible, but probably should not be considered exhaustive.

1. Household production for home consumption.

   a. subsistance farming

   b. household manufacturing, food processing, etc.

   c. maintenance and repair of household possessions and domestic capital

   d. supplementary hunting, fishing, and gathering (food and fuel)

   e. personal services, including childrearing

2. Cash crop farming for market sales.

   a. cash crops for extra-local markets

   b. staple or subsistance crops for local market sales or barter

   c. auxiliary non-staples for local markets (livestock, poultry, herbs and vegetables)

3. Self-employed nonagricultural business activities.

Manufacturing

   a. first stage processing of large volume cash crops.

   b. final stage processing of traditional goods for street or market sales to local consumers (e.g., chuno, tortillas, etc)

   c. handicraft production of artisanal goods

Services

   d. front room stores

   e. market trading

   f. transportation services (from backpack to bike and burro to motorized vehicles)

   g. rental of household capital stock (animals, farm equipment, tv viewing, etc)

   h. rental of housing to tenants, boarders, for cash or labor services

4. Off-farm labor.

   a. Nonwage labor to fulfill obligations to landlords, governments, community organizations, etc.

   b. day labor, occasional or seasonal, on other local farms

   c. local household service work

   d. contract or seasonal migrant labor (mines, harvesting, urban domestic service, etc.)

e. local nonagricultural employment (processing plants, etc.)

f. semi-permanent employment on large estates, plantations, etc.

g. educationally qualified nonfarm occupations (teacher, government official, etc.)

Small Farmer Economic Development

From the point of view of a society or community, economic development consists essentially in the increased productivity of labor activity, resulting usually either from increased investments or new organizational forms for that labor to work with. From the point of view of an individual, economic development consists of greater return to labor. The members of small farm households in the developing world are involved in a variety of labor contexts, with varying levels of productivity and varying cost-benefit ratios affecting the individual's return from that labor. This literature review suggest that the assumptions of "homo economicus" or "peasant rationality" are reasonable enough guides to the development preferences of small farmers --nothing new here -- but that the basically patriarchichal internal relations of small farm households and the mini-conglomerate nature of the household as an economic unit make it extremely complicated for anyone, whether outsider social scientist or insider small farmer, to figure out in a particular instance what the most economically rational labor allocation would be for any individual small farm man or woman.

Nevertheless it is safe to say that it is almost always economically beneficial for small farm women in particular to transfer labor from the subsistance sector of the household economy to the other three sectors, and for all small farmers to tranfer labor from inherently risky agricultural production to nonagricultural (or at least not agriculturally self-employed) production. These case studies show that in general, when the structure of opportunity permits such transfers, small farmers are seldom bound by any traditionalistic values that prevent them from moving out of their houses and out of their fields with great alacrity and enthusiasm. But this anticipates the major conclusions of this study, which are demonstrated in more detail later on.

5. Economic development goals and strategies of small farmers.

Establishing and Then Transcending a Domestic Economy

To small farmers, economic development results from two overarching economic requirements. First, they must establish a household as a locus and capital base for their domestic economic sector. When they don't have that established, either because they are a newly formed domestic unit or because they live in circumstances of such poverty or such exploitative economic subordination that household formation has not been possible, than their principle economic goal is the creation of the culturally appropriate household. The historic peasant demands for land and freedom represent the aspirations of small farmers seeking to escape conditions of slavery, peonage or servitude that had made the establishment of a domestic economy impossible.

Once a domestic economy has been established, members of a small farm household have the continuing goal of building up its capital base, to increase their domestic productivity, to raise their material standards of consumption, and to eventually provide for the creation of subsequent generations of household units. But they take on a new goal as well, the historically ironic one of transcending the economic limitations of their own domestic economy.

It is this latter goal, in all its various possible forms, that is so clearly illustrated in the economic strivings of the small farmers described in this recent literature. The progress of this century in the developing world is nowhere more clear than in the fact that conditions of legal servitude and absolute land monopolization that were so general fifty years ago are now rarely encountered. Throughout the developing world, most rural residents now belong to functioning domestic economic units. Problems of poverty are still so severe that it is a lifelong struggle

to establish and maintain a domestic economy, but it is a struggle that most small farmers in most places in the developing world win. The status, autonomy, and economic security that results is a significant accomplishment, one that is often little appreciated by observors journeying from another, richer world of economic and social class position. Because the domestic economy is everywhere more or less patriarchal, its establishment is more of a mixed blessing for small farm women than for men, but the domestic economy contains the sphere of day-to-day economic autonomy for mother-wives, and as such represents an economic achievement for them as well.

But nevertheless, further economic development requires two kinds of transcendance of the domestic economy. The first is a surplus of labor or product available for export out of the household, in order to be able to import the capital goods that will further increase the productivity of domestic labor, thus making available more economic surplus, and so on through a virtuous circle of domestic capital accumulation and economic growth. The second is an income producing activity, outside of the domestic subsistance economy, for household "dependents" -- women and young men -- who cannot achieve a higher return to their labor as long as they remain within the patriarchal social relations of the domestic economy itself.

The Hierarchy of Small Farmer Economic Development Goals.

So the general goals of the small farmer are the establishment first of a domestic economy, and then the transcendance of its limitation by means of outside income from sale of product or labor in the wider extra-domestic economy. It is possible to further specify the goals of small farmers, what they must do to accomplish these two general objectives, while still remaining above the level of historical and cultural specificity that separate the choices of one small farmer from that of another. There are six goals that motivate the economic behavior of small farmers, goals that may be arranged in a motivational hierarchy, in which higher level motives are activated only when lower level goals have begun to be met. These goals are:

1. Escape from totalistic subordination to a single economic superordinate such as a rentier, landlord, or patriarch.

2. Establishment of a viable household economy, once the culturally appropriate age and marital status for domestic economic independence has been attained.

3. Economic security 1: protection of income from capricious forces of nature. Two broad paths are possible here: investment in nature taming agricultural capital (e.g., irrigation); or shift of some labor time out of direct agricultural production.

4. Economic security 2: protection of income from capricious actions of humans. Basically, this means economic diversification.

5. Accumulation of domestic capital sufficient to permit the establishment of the next generation of households ("in the style to which they have become accustomed") and to permit the continuation of the present household beyond the loss of most of its dependent labor.

6. Labor productivity sufficient to permit a forseeable rise in the material standard of living, or at least involvement in some economic activity that makes plausible the hope of this.

This hierarchy of small farmer economic development goals, obviously inspired by Maslow's hierarchy of human motivations, implies a sequence of small farmer economic development. Creation first of a viable domestic economy (Goals 1 and 2) is followed by efforts to fortify and defend that domestic economy (Goal 3 and to a lesser extent 4) which eventually requires the transcendance of the domestic economy by all the individuals in that household (Goals 4, 5, and 6). Some cases of what these goals look like in the economic development efforts of actual small farm men and women will help overcome the necessary abstraction of what has been up until now only an exposition of the theory.

Examples of Small Farmer Economic Goals in Action

One good example is Dillon's already mentioned study of the World Bank's North Sumatra smallholder development project. The existence of these smallholders at all came from their refusal over three generations to become completely dependent wage laborers living and working on the rubber plantations. Instead, they cleared plots on the fringes of the plantations, planted trees nursed from stolen plantation seeds, and established their own rice and rubber mixed farms. They outlasted the plantations, to the point where the World Bank proposed to break up two remaining government owned and now decayed plantations in the area and to operate the rubber production industry primarily on the smallholder model. The plantation labor force, imports from another island, got to establish economically secure and

independent domestic economies, while the original population of the area shifted much of its household labor from rice subsistance to rubber cash farming, while still seeking off-farm employment as much as possible and education for off-farm work for their children.

In an example of the inadequacy of the concepts usually employed to study the rural poor, Berger [1980] studied landless proletarians on the northern coast of Peru. She found that they became landless only after tiring of commuting from Sierra homesteads to seasonal farm labor on the coast, giving up their rights to small plots of Sierra lands in exchange for the greater economic opportunities of the more developed coast. Constantly looking for extra-domestic wage work, they found it an average of 34 weeks a year for men, 18 weeks for women. They supplemented this income with domestic subsistance work, though they had to buy all thier inputs, having no land to grow anything, and with nonagricultural work, men as employed construction laborers, brick makers, etc. and women as self-employed weavers or vendors. Landless by choice and proletarians in name only, these small farmers pursued economic development goals not different from those of the landed, but in an economic environemnt where their best economic strategies involved leaving marginal Sierra lands altogether.

Kusterer's research [1982] in the same area of Peru revealed an interesting differentiation between two sets of small farmers participating in an asparagus farming project. One set, previously subsistance farmers basically without previous markets for cash crops, enthusiastically shifted as much family labor and investment as possible to the new asparagus crop. Another set, recent recipients of a former hacienda which they were legally obligated to farm collectively with cash crops including asparagus, concentrated as much labor as possible within their domestic subsistance economies which they were still just establishing. For this group, it made more economic sense to graze household goats on the asparagus plants than it did to continue investing in asparagus as a potentially profitable cash crop. They had access to wage income by virtue of their membership in the collective farm; what they lacked was a sufficiently capi-

independent domestic economies, while the original population of the area shifted much of its household labor from rice subsistance to rubber cash farming, while still seeking off-farm employment as much as possible and education for off-farm work for their children.

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Kusterer's research [1982] in the same area of Peru revealed an interesting differentiation between two sets of small farmers participating in an asparagus farming project. One set, previously subsistance farmers basically without previous markets for cash crops, enthusiastically shifted as much family labor and investment as possible to the new asparagus crop. Another set, recent recipients of a former hacienda which they were legally obligated to farm collectively with cash crops including asparagus, concentrated as much labor as possible within their domestic subsistance economies which they were still just establishing. For this group, it made more economic sense to graze household goats on the asparagus plants than it did to continue investing in asparagus as a potentially profitable cash crop. They had access to wage income by virtue of their membership in the collective farm; what they lacked was a sufficiently capitalized domestic economy.

Feagan's 1979 study of a Phillipine wet rice village revealed an interesting contrast between leaseholding and sharecropping small farmers. Sharecroppers invested as little labor and capital as possible in their cash crop rice production, preferring to use the sharecropping arrangement as an access to a homesite base for their domestic economy while seeking cash income primarily through non-farm employment, usually on the farms of others, each other if necessary, in fact.

Leaseholders, on the other hand, did view rice farming as a possible source of cash, and minimized nonfarm employment to concentrate on achieving maximal harvests from their rice crops. The goals were the same in each case -- a diversified economy combining subsistance and cash production --but the strategies differed according to the structure of economic opportunities available to each.

Binford's study of the last 50 year's development efforts by small farmers on partially irrigated ejidos in central Mexico tells an interesting story. Small farmers maintained marginal subsistance and local market corn production on nonirrigated plots throughout the entire period, struggled against government credit and water authorities to have as little as possible to do with their officially sponsored cash crops of rice and sugar, and had by the time of the study succeeded in switching their primary cash-earning labor out of these crops, either into sesame and fruit trees (neither of which are government affiliated or regulated) or into off-farm employment, the principle economic activity of 50% of all household heads by 1980 (up from 27% in 1970). At present, the principle economic investments of these small farmers has become the financing of secondary and postsecondary educations for male offspring in expectation of qualifying them for nonagricultural employment.

Barclay's study of the well-known Mumias Sugar outgrowers project in Kenya provides insights into the goals and strategies of the 2000 small farm householders involved as outgrowers in that scheme. The intent was for outgrowers to divide their farming activity about 50-50 between sugar and subsistance crops. Outgrowers were highly satisfied with the project, and it had increased their incomes immeasurably, but it had not otherwise resulted as planned.

For one thing, 90% of male household heads had chosen to work at nonfarm occupations, 27% for the sugar mill or nucleus estate, 11% in distant urban areas, and the rest in local casual labor or self-employed trades. The result was a serious labor shortage on the family farms, both in the sugar and subsistance sectors. The labor shortage was worsened because families were sending older children to school (65% of males, 60% of females, compared to almost none previously), leaving only adult women available as the farm labor force. Since the sugar project would provide laborers for sugar work, paid with credit against the harvest, most outgrowers had gradually shifted to almost exclusive sugar production, because labor was not available for other crops.

Like the Mexican case studied by Binford, then, these outgrowers had rapidly moved to the more advanced goals of

small farmer economic development. With domestic economies well established and capitalized, these small farmers were shifting more and more labor resources into first extra-domestic and then off-farm work. In both cases, the families clearly hoped and expected that farming for their children would be at most a part-time secondary occupation.

Little's 1983 study of Il Chamus herders in Kenya shows small farmers working on lower level economic development goals. A people who used to raise cattle as a cash crop and subsist on finger millet had in the 1930's grown accustomed to eating maize instead of millet, exchanging cattle for maize with farmers from nearby hill country. Deprived of that maize source after 1966 by the government's maize monopoly which bought all maize and shipped it to urban centers, the Il Chamus concentrated their economic development efforts on establishing a domestic maize production in each household, for human subsistance and as a cheaper alternative to buying maize from the government's maize board as a supplementary feed for their cattle.

In this case, what looks like a backward move from cash to subsistance farming is actually a significant step in economic development, substantially raising the incomes and capitalizations of Il Chamus small farmers in all economic strata. Most of the labor for this new maize production was that of women and children, who recreated a separate sphere of female farming activity that had been lost with the previous shift away from millet.

Two studies of small farmers in a highland area of Papua New Guinea [Burkins, 1984; Sexton, 1980] are of particular interest because these people "on the periphery of the periphery" had only come in contact with Europeans and the world market in the 1950's, at the very end of the colonial era. Government economic policies in the area have basically been to protect the farmers from participation in the market economy until an appropriate employment source or cash crop could be researched and planned for. In this environment, the economic development choices of the small farmers can be hypothesized to be as independent and free from outside influence as is likely to be seen in the modern world.

It is striking to see under these conditions how rapidly (within 10 years) these small farmers were attracted to establish a source of cash income to buy things, from cloth to coffee plants. Men, not previously much involved in subsistance agriculture since their previous role was primarily that of a warrior, sought employment (which required outmigration) or sought to buy and grow coffee, a new cash crop which government planners had introduced in other areas but not here, because it was thought that growing conditions

were less appropriate. Women, using existing cultural forms used to save for bride prices, organized huge "wok meri" (pigin English for "work of women") savings networks which collected very small amounts from hundreds of women in many villages at wok meri ceremonies/parties, one in each village in each generation. Interestingly, they invested these large accumulations of capital in economic activities kept totally distinct from their own subsistance agriculture and from their household economies. They started nonfarm businesses, usually by buying a pick-up truck (operated by a hired male driver) to transport cargo and passengers, or by establishing and stocking a general store. For both men and women in this situation, economic development meant first and foremost the establishment of an extra-domestic sector in their households, to serve as a source of cash income.

Kusterer's study [1981] of Cakchikel farmers in highland Guatemala found them highly attracted to participation in a vegetable outgrower scheme, even for vegetables like broccoli and snow peas that were new to the area. They enthusiastically concentrated labor and capital in this new guaranteed market crop, but what did they give up to do so? First, men and women immediately quit seasonal migrant labor for traditional landed elites (the coffee harvest), which they hated. Second, they gave up cash crop production of less lucrative crops and markets, which meant that the men no longer grew these crops and the women no longer hauled them on the bus twice a week to the Guatemala City wholesale terminal.

What they did not give up, and indeed went to considerable innovative lengths to maintain, was subsistance production of corn, a crop which they now planted on rented plots far from home (some a hundred miles away on the coast) and tended only three times a year, to plant, weed once, and harvest. What women did not give up either was their own small scale cash crop production (of chickens, eggs, flowers, herbs, etc.) which they sold in the same local market where they bought their weekly foodstuffs. This was their only independent source of cash and they kept it, even if they could have earned the family more by putting that labor into the main vegetable cash crops. Just before these villages were destroyed by the expanding guerilla war, these small farmers had started the economic development strategy observed elsewhere of educating sons for nonagricuultural employment, the final step in the small farmer development cycle.

Successful Small Farmer Economic Development

Stated succinctly, the successful small farmer is no longer a small farmer. This is not the view of some unem-

pathetic outsider; this is how they see it themselves. The small farmer who reaches levels five and six on the hierarchy of economic development goals has either ceased to be primarily a farmer -- the most common case -- or has ceased to be a small farmer, by almost any definition of small.

Let's review the six goals in the hierarchy, to see how this is so. Escape from totalistic subordination, the first goal, is the world historical accomplishment of the last half century. Fifty years ago, most of the world's small farmers, indeed most of the world's total population, lived as slaves, serfs, or perpetually indebted tenants. Today, few still do. It is no longer the normal lot of the average small farmer in any country covered by this literature, probably in any country in the world. Now this kind of totalistic subordination is experienced primarily by dependent women, usually young, in households in which they are not the first or primary mother-wife. Though slavery, serfdom ,amd debt peonage have been overthrown, the patriarchal household stands hardly challenged. Short of world feminist revolution, the surest route out of this subordination for small farmers is the establishment of their own household with their own domestic economic sector, the second economic development goal of small farmers.

This second level is still common. For one thing, it is constantly re-experienced by each new generation of small farmers as it comes of age. As economic development, the establishment of a new household means primarily the capitalizing of a new domestic economy, a set of capital equipment (land or at least a housesite, a house, a set of domestic utensils) sufficient to permit independent production of use values for domestic consumption. Almost by definition, land reform, resettlement, or colonization projects involve small farmers working at this level of economic development goals. This, by the way, is why the coops and collective production plans so commmon to these projects so seldom work. Participation in extra-domestic cash crop production activities is perfectly feasable with small farmers working at levels four and above, but small farmers first establishing their domestic economies have other priorities, other things to do.

Goals three and four, the income security goals, are the levels where economic diversification efforts become the primary concerns of small farmers. This is where the transcendance of the domestic economy begins, as small farmers seek outside income from a variety of crops or nonagricultural pursuits. Men and women at this level seek, usually simultaneously, to accomplish a number of specific things: to establish and increase an independent cash income source for each individual adult in the household; to use the already established domestic economy as a base for moving

into homebased production of goods or services (agricultural or not agricultural) for market sales; to begin using "unnatural" capital goods in agriculture (fertilizers, irrigation, eventually pesticides) to expand production beyond "natural" limits and to protect production against predictable disastrous natural events (late rains, freezes, droughts, infestations, etc.); to earn at least some income from nonagricultural work, either self-employed (weaving, vending, brickmaking, etc.) or off-farm employed.

These initiatives are all mutually reinforcing, as productivity increases and the potential of surplus accumulation grows, and an optimist might refer to this as the "take-off" stage of small farmer economic development. With farmers at this stage of economic development, almost any kind of rural development scheme is potentially successful, if culturally appropriate and competently or at least noncorruptly executed. Credit, marketing, employment generation projects -- all can be taken advantage of by small farmers in this last stage of small farmerhood. Of course, ten years later, a really successful project is open to the criticism of benefiting middle farmers and not the truly small farmers who need it most. But that's development.

Goals 5 and 6 imply a break from perpetual peasant cycles of household rise and decline over the life cycle of the peasant. With even a partial accomplishment of goal five, accumulation of enough domestic capital so that the next generation does not have to spend a large part of its adult life back at goal 2 and so that the old generation need not return immediately to level two itself with the loss of the children's labor, a decisive break is accomplished from the cycle of perpetual poverty. The key to goal five is an understanding that an increase in the small farmer's standard of living is not just an increase in consumption patterns but also an increase in the productivity of domestic labor. With cash income sufficient to purchase and continue in operation a stove, hours of fuel gathering is eliminated every day; sufficient to pay a nearby mill to grind grain, hours of mortar and pestle work is eliminated every day; sufficient to hire a tractor to till, days of field preparation are eliminated every year, etc. With these breakthroughs, based on more highly productive domestic capital and on access to cash income to pay to use capital too expensive for ownership by every household (like tractors and tortilla mills), the productivity of domestic labor is so enhanced that more surplus labor time becomes available for cash-generating extra-domestic labor, and the cycle of expanded reproduction of domestic capital can continue.

Level six, access to at least some economic activity that promises to return a level of wage or profits income

much higher than subsistance, is the economic development goal that, when accomplished, promises a rise out of rural poverty to middle class status, however that is defined locally. If the economic activity that makes possible such an income is wage labor or self employment in a nonfarm trade, as it usually is, than the small farmer ceases to be primarily a farmer. If the economic activity is commercial farming using some new technology or serving some new market, which it sometimes is, than the small farmer continues as a farmer, but ceases to be small. In either case, the previous small farmer household has worked and saved its way out of small farmer poverty, ready perhaps to embark on new goals and new levels of economic and human development.

6. Implications for small farmer development assistance.

Economic growth compatible with small farmer economic development

The first and most essential implication is that the oft-made distinction between economic development and economic growth does not necessarily apply in the case of small farmers. They want to participate in economic growth, and such participation will make possible the developmental transformation of their small farmer economies. Many development advocates, and anthropologists are especially prone to this, seek some so far unattained new kind of development that permits small farmers to benefit economically without much changing the cultural values and traditional institutions that small farmers have created over time to support themselves in their small farmer status. Small farmers themselves, in contrast, want first and foremost to escape being small farmers, and they voluntarily endure tremendous sacrifices and disruptive transitions towards that end.

In periods of rapid rural development, small farmers cease to be small farmers, and innumerable folk traditions and ways of life move from living reality to museum history. Though it is possible for small farmers to be pushed reluctantly out of their domestic economies, as when their land is appropriated for large-scale export agriculture, there were literally no cases of this in the 200-plus studies reviewed here. Overwhelmingly, small farmers were pulled out of their domestic economies into cash-earning labor by the hope of capitalizing and transcending their domestic economies that these cash-earning opportunities engendered. This is nowhere more poignantly illustrated than in the Papua New Guinea cases [Burkins, Sexton], where small farmer men and women were inventively and unceasingly plotting and working to obtain access to cash income, while government officials dithered trying to figure out an economic development plan for the area that would be feasable while at the

same time easing the transition for these unassimilated small farmers.

Small Farmers Can Make Development Assistance Work (Though Seldom as Intended)

A second implication is that small farmers can use the opprtunities afforded by almost any type of rural development project to further their own economic development goals. Even failed projects, and this literature is full of examples of those, that achieved no self-sustained permancence beyond the life of project funding, offered important development possibilities for their small farmer participants. Farmers in levels three and four, seeking to establish secure sources of cash income and economic diversification, will use to advantage almost any new marketing or employment opportunity that comes along, and will convert that income and experience into productivity-enhancing domestic capital on the one hand, and transferable income-earning new extra-domestic knowledge and skills on the other. Farmers in levels one and two, on the other hand, have development goals less likely to be compatible with the goals of rural development assistance projects.

Subsistance Farmers Need Capital Not Credit

Level one and two small farmers struggling to establish independent households and viable domestic economies do not yet have the luxury of emphasizing cash-earning labor. They are trying to get their households established with the functional minimum of domestic capital in order to successfully produce their own immediate needs. Their immediate need is to increase the productivity of domestic labor to levels that will permit them to survive on the labor available in the household, and they have few labor resources that are surplus to the domestic economy and available for export into extra-domestic cash-earning work. They will invest any credit in domestic capital instead of extra-domestic activity, and will be unlikely, since domestic labor produces goods and services for home consumption instead of for market sales, to be in a position to repay the credit later. Forced to repay, they will liquidate domestic capital to make the payment, which leaves them no better off than when they began. The most frequent mismatch between development assistance intentions and small farmer economic goals occurs when level one and two small farmers are expected to concentrate on cash crops before their domestic economy has been established, and earn cash to repay the costs of the land resettlement or irrigation

infrastructure project that permits the establishment of their new households in the first place. The small farmers invest in "traditional" domestic production, to the disgust of the urban experts, and the project fails in the sense that it can never "pay for itself."

Development assistance efforts that will most directly benefit the poorest of the poor small farmers are grants (not loans) that will result in the increased productivity of domestic labor. The projects that can do this most efficiently, the biggest help to the largest number of level one and two small farmer households, are community infrastructure projects, like small scale irrigation or potable water systems, that create community capital which enhances the domestic productivity of the largest number of small farmer domestic labor. The danger, and it is a real one, is that small farmers will cannibalize capital assets intended for community use by appropriating them directly into their own households. But if a village is a sufficiently established community to create effective peer pressure against this appropriation, then one water tap can directly free hours of labor time spent daily by women walking to the nearest water source, and indirectly increase the productivity of innumerable household tasks where a little more liberal use of water could save much labor time and effort.

Small Farmer Development Benefits Women

In spite of everything, in spite of the patriarchal structure of the domestic economy, in spite of the sexism inherent in almost all planned development efforts discussed in this literature -- like the Mumias sugar project where the contracts and payments were made to men because they had land title while all the farm work was done by women -- small farmer economic development benefits women. The trickle-down from male household heads to female household members has about as high a flow rate as any development trickle-down ever does. Women benefit very directly in the establishment of households in which they escape from subordination to others to occupy the chief mother-wife position in their own household, even though they are usually still subordinated to their spouses. The domestic economy of the patriarchal nuclear household unit is a far better place for women than the domestic economy of the patriarchal extended household with its hierarchies of levels of subordination. This is how economic development goals one and two serve women, and they support these goals even more actively sometimes than their men.

There is nothing necessarily beneficial to women about the economic diversifications of levels three and four. This

is the development stage, when men leave the domestic economy for income producing work, and women are left still doing all the domestic labor but with no direct assess to income, that feminists have referred to as the domestication, or "housewifization" of women. But the literature reviewed here reassures us that small farm women are not that stupid. In case after case after case, women made whatever sacrifices were necessary to ensure that they too had an independent source of cash income from employment, cash-crop farming, or home-based business. They earned less than men, not necessarily per hour of extra-domestic work but in total cash earnings, but they earned. In almost all of the cases reviewed, women emerged from these levels of small farmer economic development less, not more, limited to the domestic economy and less, not more, economically dependent on their husbands for access to cash income.

So small farmer development is also development of women. This is so primarily because of the initiatives of small farm women, not because of anything necessarily inherent in the process. Development assistance projects can assist women as much by refraining from putting additional hurdles in their path as by concentrating on "women's projects." A sensitivity to the needs of women that does not result in creating new exclusively male spheres of income-generating work would be sufficient space to permit small-farm women to benefit from small farmer development.

Rural Income-Generation Projects

Finally and most broadly, the small farmer perspective on development confirms the importance of projects that bring income earning opportunities to rural areas. If they have to, small farmers will split households to send members to job opportunities in urban zones. But the option is one that they would rather not be forced to choose, for the obvious family reasons. Not only is the choice personally difficult, it is also economically wasteful, whether from the point of view of the small farmer who loses time in migration and money in urban room and board, or from the point of view of the society that has to provide the additional urban infrastructure.

Any project that expands and diversifies the income opportunities in the rural areas where small farmers already reside is therefore a small farmer development project. Anything that provides new markets for small farmer agricultural production, new possibilities for expanding small-farm self-employed activities into going microenterprises, or new employment opportunities helps small farmers. Introduction of new markets for nontraditional crops is particularly

likely to expand and diversify income opportunities. Not only can small farmers move into a new cash crop activity (or benefit possibly from increased prices in old crops as other farmers grow less of them), but new crops require new transportation and processing systems. Small farmers can provide the labor for these, whether as employees, as members of coops and collective enterprises, or as self-employed micro-entrepeneurs.

An ideal small farmer development project would be an agribusiness project that links a farming zone to new markets by introducing new crops, buys raw material from small farmers while at the same time offering necessary production credit, needs and pays for household or village level post-harvest downline processing of the product, employs small farmers for further processing in plant, and requires ancillary microenterprises to service its operations. Operations like this have been set up all over the less developed world in recent years, although seldom have they been conceived as small farmer development projects. Nevertheless, after land reform and the abolition of peonage, serfdom, and sharecropping servitude, this is what the next level of small farmer development looks like.

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