

# **Summary Report on Evaluation Findings for the NASW Violence & Development Project**

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National Association of Social Workers  
750 First Street, NE, Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20002-4241**

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**Roberta C. Cronin  
Research, Evaluation, &  
Program Development Consultant  
3618 Porter Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20016  
Tel.: 202-966-4823  
Fax: 202-966-2154**

Points of view expressed in this document are the author's own and do not represent the official position of the National Association of Social Workers or the U.S. Agency for International Development.

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## **I. Overview of the Evaluation**

This report reviews results of the Violence and Development Project (V&DP), a three-year development education effort conducted by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and funded in part by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The overall goal of the project was "to educate practicing social workers and students in the U.S., their leadership, and segments of the general public about the interrelatedness of violence and development and, through this window, to strengthen their support for global involvement, understanding, and collaboration."<sup>1</sup>

The focus on violence was chosen for its presumed ability to attract the attention of social work audiences and also tie in with a variety of development themes. The five themes selected for attention included poverty, family structure, drug abuse, ethnicity, and trauma.

### **Brief overview of project history**

The project was conceived and carried out by NASW's Office of Peace and International Affairs. The original grant award of \$678,134 from USAID covers the period from September 1993 through August 1996. A small continuation grant will support V&D activities for a fourth year.

As described in the grant application, the overall strategy was to involve three primary target audiences for development education--NASW leadership, social work professionals, and students--in implementing the project. The plan called for the establishment of five Resource Centers based in state NASW chapters, each focusing on one of the V&D themes. These centers would help develop resource materials for the project and assist the National Office in preparing for a nationwide teach-in and teleconference on V&D. The project would be assisted by a National Advisory Committee composed of persons representing national leaders in the social work profession. Dissemination of project materials and related information would be a priority throughout, with assistance from NASW's Office of Public Affairs.

In fact, the project unfolded with only minor deviations from the original plan. Instead of five Resource Centers, six were funded. Also, the teach-in/teleconference was moved from October 1995 to February 1996, because the original notion of holding the teleconference in tandem with NASW's Annual Conference was discarded as unworkable. Project leadership changed hands in July 1995, when the original project director moved to a new position in Texas. The transition went smoothly, however, aided by the fact that the new project director came from V&D's National Advisory Committee and the original project director remained on the team in a consultant role. As of July 1996, the team was finalizing V&D curriculum materials and planning how best to continue the work they had started.

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<sup>1</sup>National Association of Social Workers, Grant Application to U. S. Agency for International Development, Development Education Program, February 25, 1993.

## **Criteria for project success**

Three broad criteria for project success were established in the V&D grant proposal.

- Have all of the project's activities been carried out and, if so, have they been conducted effectively?
- Has the project increased the knowledge, interest, and awareness of its target audiences?
- Have these cognitive and attitudinal changes translated into behavioral changes, in the form of active support for or participation in international development or education activities?

## **The evaluation**

An evaluation consultant was retained by NASW to assist staff in documenting the results of the V&D program in these areas, and was involved with the project from its inception through July 1996.

Some fundamental constraints shaped the evaluation approach. To begin with, the effects of education programs are inherently difficult to measure, especially when audiences are large and diffuse and are exposed to many other influences and information sources. This was certainly the case for NASW's V&D project. As the project unfolded, it became evident that many traditional research approaches--such as before-and-after tests of knowledge, or designs that make use of "comparison" groups--would not be compatible with V&D's approach. Also, because the project's most important products (i.e., the teleconference and curriculum materials) would not be delivered until the third year, the evaluation could not hope to look at long-term project effects. This timeframe would leave limited opportunity to examine behavioral changes, such as the adoption of curriculum materials, for instance. Finally, resource limitations would preclude examining the project's effects on all potential audiences.

The resulting evaluation strategy called for concentrating on four focal points of project activities:

- NASW's National Office
- V&D's National Advisory Committee
- The National Resource Centers
- The teach-in/teleconference sites.

These focal points involved a cross-section of NASW leaders, social work professionals, and students--the primary audiences targeted by the project. The evaluator would not attempt to look at effects on the secondary audience, the public.

The evaluator would supplement the routine documentation of project activities by project staff with independent data collection and analysis concerning the project's process and results. The results of interest would include audience appraisals of the quality of project programming and materials, as well as reported changes in behavior or practice, actual or expected.

The evaluator began work shortly after the original grant award and was involved through July 1996. Data collection activities included:

- A "baseline" mail survey of chapter and National Office leadership.
- Two rounds of personal interviews (telephone or face-to-face) with a sample of key National Office personnel.
- Telephone interviews with National Advisory Committee members, plus participant observation in both Advisory Committee meetings.
- Two rounds of telephone or face-to-face interviews with key participants in the National Resource Centers.
- Analysis of a survey of site coordinators from the teleconference sites.
- Analysis of audience surveys provided by the teleconference sites.
- Telephone interviews with a random sample of site coordinators from the teleconference sites.
- Observation of the teach-in/teleconference.
- Analysis of a mail survey of recipients of project materials.
- Participant observation in project activities, such as a USAID Development Education conference and some staff meetings.
- Routine review of project documents, including quarterly reports and products.

V&D project staff collaborated in the design of all mail and teleconference surveys, and handled the administrative work involved in the mailings and the follow-up on nonrespondents.

This report represents a summary of key findings from the various evaluation efforts. It also briefly describes the baseline conditions for the project effort. It does not describe project activities in detail, as these are fully documented elsewhere by project staff.

## **II. The Context for the Violence and Development Project**

This section reviews the context for the V&D Project, focusing on three aspects that we might expect to influence project development and results. These aspects include: NASW's experience with development education; its experience with the specific approaches selected for this project; and the climate of support for development education within the organization. (Sometimes evaluators call these contextual factors "baseline conditions.")

### **History of involvement in international and development education issues**

At the time of the grant award, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) had already established a track record of interest and involvement in the international arena. The organization had officially established an International Affairs Program in 1989, and had received two prior grants from USAID's Development Education Program. The first of these earlier projects, the Family and Child Well-Being Development Education Project, developed a well-regarded curriculum guide for schools of social work, facilitated "twinning" partnerships between NASW chapters and social workers overseas, and undertook other educational activities such as workshops and special mailings. The second project, Global Family Ties, continued the education process with a focus on challenges to families worldwide and issues of global interdependence. Staff also became increasingly involved in exchanges of training and technical assistance with social workers overseas.

### **Experience with specific approaches selected for the project**

While NASW staff had already acquired considerable experience with development education, the new project would involve some approaches and technologies that were new to the project staff and the organization. First, the project structure itself would be unique. While previous NASW initiatives, including the international twinning partnerships, had involved subgrants to local chapters, this would be the first time that local subgrantees were funded to help carry out a nationally directed agenda. Each chapter funded as a Resource Center could develop its own unique flavor, but the National Office would define timetables and product requirements.

Second, the organization and delivery of a nationwide, interactive videoconference would be a new experience for NASW. Not only were staff new to the technology of videoconferencing, but the V&D project would involve an unprecedented level of audience outreach, encompassing the public as well as the social work community. Finally, in terms of content, the focus on five different themes made the project quite ambitious by past standards.

While the project staff had to cope with the organizational structure on their own, they developed new partnerships with organizations that could assist with the educational content and technology issues. To strengthen its content expertise, V&D immediately contracted with the Development Studies Program, a group of development education experts who provided training and consultation to project participants and reviewed products as they were developed. In the second year, when full-scale planning for the videoconference began, the project retained the Benton Foundation, a group with considerable expertise in teleconference development and production for the not-for-profit community. Early in the project, NASW also joined the Alliance for a Global Community, a coalition of humanitarian assistance, relief, and refugee organizations formed by InterAction and also funded in part by USAID. The Alliance was represented on V&D's Advisory Committee and contributed its expertise in media strategies and other aspects of development education at various times throughout the project.

### **Leadership support**

When the project began, the staff of NASW's international program already had established, through previous international projects, a small network of members with a strong interest in development issues. Many state chapters had appointed "international liaisons." Some had also established international committees, as had NASW's National Board. Finally, through the earlier international curriculum effort, the staff had established working relationships with the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and its International Commission.<sup>2</sup>

Early in the new project, two research efforts were designed to look at the climate for the V&D effort among NASW's leadership and help identify key themes that might be important for the project's educational strategy. The first effort was a series of personal interviews with senior-level staff of NASW's National Office. The other was a mail survey of NASW representatives at national and state chapter levels. These efforts were conducted in Winter and early Spring 1994, when the project was still in its early stages.

As summarized below, both efforts confirmed considerable support for international perspectives within the leadership, although there was some concern over appropriate priorities given the level of resources available.

**Interviews with National Office staff.** The evaluator interviewed a dozen of NASW's senior managers in person regarding their knowledge and expectations for the V&D Project. At the time of the interviews, all of the respondents were aware of V&D, but most were not very familiar with the specific activities it had planned. Understandably therefore, these interviewees were reluctant to predict what sort of effects the project might have on the organization or its

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<sup>2</sup>The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is the organization responsible for setting curriculum standards for social work programs nationwide. The International Commission is the section within CSWE that takes a special interest in international curriculum content.

members. There was a consensus among the interviewees that international issues were of concern to a small, but active group of NASW members, many of them academics or living in states with large immigrant populations. For the average social worker, however, they felt that international issues were not central concerns. The rank and file, they reported, were more preoccupied with "bread-and butter" issues.

Given these perspectives, the interviewees did not foresee a major commitment of National Office resources to international activities. On the other hand, they clearly felt it was worthwhile for the National Office to be involved in international activities and expected that to continue. Several mentioned that the National Board had voted down a recent proposal to withdraw from the International Federation of Social Workers, which had been intended as an economy measure. Many interviewees acknowledged the growing interest and importance of global perspectives in the U.S., noting that this affects social workers as much as other groups. Respondents in the Communications Office also reported a good response to recent NASW publications in the international field and considerable growth in their overseas market, even without heavy marketing to international audiences.

**The national leadership survey.** This survey was mailed to 186 NASW leaders, including presidents and executive directors of all chapters, 40 National Office staff, and 38 chapter-based International Liaisons. It had 123 respondents, for a 66 percent response rate. The leadership survey was intended to examine the leaders' level of exposure to information about the developing world, their attitudes toward international development, and how they saw the role of social work in the international arena. The survey borrowed some items from a previous national opinion survey, thereby permitting comparisons with the general U.S. audience.

Among the key findings of the survey were the following:<sup>3</sup>

- Compared with the general public, these social work leaders were exposed to more information about the developing world, were more strongly in favor of international aid, and much less likely to say that we should solve our own poverty, unemployment, and education problems first. Nonetheless, like the public, they showed some ambivalence about foreign aid.
- The overwhelming majority of these social work leaders (93 to 98%, depending on the item) were very positive about what social workers have to offer the development field. They strongly supported the inclusion of information about development in social work curricula (85%).

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<sup>3</sup>This survey and its results are described in greater detail in Dorothy Van Soest & Roberta C. Cronin, "Social Work Perspectives on International Development," Washington, DC: National Association of Social Workers, January 1995.

- Most respondents also thought that NASW should be more active in educating social workers about development at the National Office level (74%) and the chapter level (68%). However, about 10 percent of respondents added comments indicating that they were worried about where the resources for international activities would come from.
- Four out of five respondents agreed that we have as much to learn from developing countries as they have to learn from us.
- Although levels of support and exposure to development information were high overall, there were differences among the respondent groups. Exposure to information about development issues was lowest for National Office staff. Exposure was not strongly related to general pro-aid attitudes, but respondents with narrow exposure expressed higher self-interest and were less supportive of development education for social workers. National Office staff also were somewhat more pessimistic about aid in general and the least supportive of development activities by the association. Although not markedly less pro-aid, people from smaller state chapters were more concerned than those from larger chapters about solving domestic problems first.
- Not surprisingly, international liaisons had the most exposure to information about development issues, were the most pro-aid, were somewhat less likely to put U.S. problems first, and were most supportive of national and chapter involvement in these issues. However, they were more pessimistic about social workers' interest and abilities related to development work, while chapter presidents felt the most optimistic.

Overall, it appeared that these social work leaders were quite receptive to international development messages and supportive of further efforts to educate social workers in this area. The survey suggested that the V&D Project would have allies among leaders in the field, even more so than in the National Office. The results also implied that project staff would need to be sensitive to the leaders' ambivalence about domestic versus foreign priorities and their anxieties about resources for pursuing development issues. Another implication was that linking information about innovative approaches in the developing world with problems in the U.S. might be an effective educational strategy. (This perspective was echoed by V&D's National Advisory Committee.)

### **III. Project Results**

In this section, we review the evaluative information collected concerning the effects of the project in four critical areas of interest: NASW's National Office, the National Advisory Committee, the Resource Centers, and the teleconference sites.

## **NASW's National Office**

The evaluator interviewed senior staff in NASW's National Office during the first few months of the project and again during June-July 1996, to get their perspectives on the V&D Project. About a dozen staff were interviewed each time, with only partial overlap between the two sets of interviews because of changes in personnel. None of these staff were part of the project team. Results of the first round of interviews were discussed in the previous section. Here we focus on the findings from the second round of interviews.

Although only a few interviewees had interacted with the V&D team on project-related business, all were quite familiar with the V&D initiative. The February teleconferences had made a considerable impression on the senior national staff, judging from their responses. About a third had attended one or both teleconference sessions; another third had seen portions of the tapes; and the remainder had heard about the teleconference from others who had attended. Their reports on the teleconference were strongly favorable--featuring words like "marvelous," "exciting," or "great." Staff invariably reported that the teleconferences had been of high quality, reflecting very positively on NASW's National Office and on social work as a profession. Several staff mentioned that they had heard extremely laudatory feedback about the program from members and chapter personnel. In fact, no one reported any negative comments.

Several interviewees were uncertain as to other results of the program. However, those who had followed the project most closely reported several other effects:

- The teleconference had nourished and sustained those who already had global and community development interests. But it also had stimulated much new interest among social workers in global perspectives, community development and community organization approaches, and non-clinical perspectives on violence. Some members were now talking about organizing a community organization section for NASW members.
- The videotapes, the written materials prepared for the videoconference, and the curriculum materials that are still being finalized are unique and likely to be used, because nothing comparable is currently available and interest in international subjects is growing. NASW Press will distribute the materials, featuring them on a single catalog page.
- Independent of the development education content, the project process probably brought some lasting benefits to NASW. First, the project appears to have strengthened traditionally weak relationships between the academic and practice sides of social work. Second, the success of this project may have paved the way for future partnerships between the National Office and state chapters around specific issues of interest. Finally, the project brought the National Office new expertise in the technology of videoconferencing.

- Because of the strongly favorable reactions to the teleconference, the international program had gained additional credibility with the leadership of NASW.

On a more personal note, one interviewee confessed that the videoconference had turned her own thinking around. "Before I had a struggle with it, because violence and development seemed so out of our sphere here. We're so domestically focused. But I thought the videoconference made it universal and helped me see the connections between global and domestic concerns."

### **The V&D National Advisory Committee**

The project's advisory committee was an important part of the V&D strategy. Its members were chosen to represent national leaders in the social work profession who could not only help define the project's objectives and plan its activities, but also "carry the message" to others in one way or another. The group included the chairperson of the NASW Board's International Activities Committee, a representative of the Council on Social Work Education's International Commission, a state chapter executive, the head of another USAID project, and several other academics and practitioners with an interest in international and/or violence issues. They met formally twice during the first two years of the project, but most members interacted with staff or Resource Center personnel on other occasions, at professional meetings or by telephone. Advisors also routinely received copies of all project materials and had an opportunity to comment on them.

The evaluator interviewed seven of the nine advisors<sup>4</sup> in June-July 1996 to determine how the project had affected them personally. (Two advisors could not be reached.) The interviews confirmed that nearly all had stepped beyond a purely advisory role during the course of the project:

- Three advisors had actively assisted in organizing or carrying out the national teleconference.
- Three advisors had helped host the teleconference at their local universities, and two advisors had helped publicize the teleconference throughout their states.
- Three advisors had done presentations connected with the project or used its materials. Two had other presentations or papers planned in the near future.

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<sup>4</sup>Six of the original members remained as advisors throughout, while a seventh became the project director. New members were added to replace those who resigned due to changes in their other obligations.

- Two had already replayed the teleconference tapes for other audiences.
- Two advisors with academic affiliations were trying to expand the international content of the social work programs at their schools, and another had personally disseminated the project materials to other faculty members.

All reported that participation in the V&D initiative had been personally rewarding. While several confessed that they had been uncertain about the potential of the V&D initiative at some points during the project, their current enthusiasm was unmistakable. Some specifically credited the project with teaching them new perspectives on violence and development. Others lauded the impetus it had given to global perspectives in the profession and were optimistic about prospects for usage of the V&D curriculum materials.

Like the National Office staff, those advisors who had attended the teleconference reported that the program had been extremely well-received by audiences and had boosted the credibility of social work as well as the self-esteem of the social workers who attended. Two advisors also echoed national staff in stating that the effort had narrowed the gulf between the academic and practitioner communities. All advisors hoped that the project staff could build on these achievements.

## **The Resource Centers**

A cornerstone of the V&D approach was the involvement of state or local chapters in the implementation of the program. Although NASW's original grant proposal called for five chapter-based Centers, six were funded, with two awards going to sites interested in trauma. Each site received \$17,000 for the three-year effort, with \$8,000 earmarked for the first year. Sites were selected through a competitive process and began work in Spring 1994. The awardees were: the California Chapter, the Florida Chapter, the Ohio Chapter (representing a Midwest Center consortium of Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan), the New York City Chapter, and the Oregon Chapter (representing a Pacific Northwest Center consortium of Oregon, Idaho, and Washington).

The intended role of the Centers was threefold. In their first few months, they were to develop a "backgrounder" containing information and resource materials about their topic area that could be used to educate social workers about V&D. In the second phase of the project, they were to help publicize the V&D teleconferences and recruit prospective sites. Throughout, they also were expected to disseminate information about V&D through involvement in workshops, conference presentations, and other activities. A brief orientation meeting for grantees was held during NASW's Annual Leadership Meeting in April 1994. Thereafter, the project director took advantage of NASW's Annual Conferences and other conferences to meet with project participants. She also visited three of the Centers and in the early stages, dispatched a

development education technical assistant to one site.<sup>5</sup> Beyond that, communication took place by mail and telephone.

The usual Center structure consisted of a part-time paid "project coordinator" and a committee of volunteers, who met periodically to plan and assign tasks. All of the lead chapters had an International Liaison or an International Committee before the grant award (Minnesota and New York City had both). In four of the six sites, these groups or individuals took on a central role in carrying out the project, typically recruiting additional volunteers. For various reasons (changes of personnel, other responsibilities) others took on Florida and Oregon's V&D projects. Chapter executives were supportive but did not take a prominent role in implementing V&D, except in Ohio and Florida. In all locations, the team involved a mix of backgrounds, with varying levels of experience and interest in international issues and varying levels of interest in research versus social work practice.

To get a more detailed understanding of the Center experience and its results, the evaluator conducted telephone interviews with key project participants from each site twice during the course of the project—once in Spring 1995 and again in early Summer 1996. She also conducted face-to-face interviews with several Center participants who attended USAID's Development Education Conference in Fall 1994. (Information from these interviews was combined with that from the Spring 1995 interviews, which we refer to as the "midterm" interviews.) A total of 27 interviews were conducted at midterm and 24 in the final round. Because there was little turnover in the Center participants, except in Florida, most people were interviewed in both rounds. Whenever possible, the evaluator interviewed the chapter executives, the project coordinator, and the chairperson of the project committee representing each center. With the multi-state Centers, she attempted to interview representatives from all the participating states.

Beyond fleshing out the information about activities provided in quarterly reports, the interviews were intended to find out how the Centers felt about the project and the progress they had made, and determine what effects V&D was having. (V&D staff have described specific activities of the Centers elsewhere in more detail.)

**The midterm interviews with Centers.** At midterm, most Centers had completed their work on the backgrounders and were waiting for further direction from the National Office regarding the teleconference effort. At this stage, the evaluator found that:

- In general, the Centers were pleased with the project experience so far. They were optimistic about project outcomes, although they felt it was too early to do more than speculate about most of them.

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<sup>5</sup>All sites were eligible for technical assistance but only one requested it.

- Respondents were quite positive about the role the National Office had played in the project. They felt that the project director had done a good job of communicating with the Centers and providing leadership.
- Respondents reported some problem areas, typically only in response to probing by the evaluator. They included:

*Understanding the project.* Some interviewees reported that initially they were uncertain about what they were supposed to do, they did not understand the timeline, or there were intra-Center differences of interpretation about these issues. The more common experience was that people understood what they were supposed to do in general terms, but found it hard to translate that understanding into a concrete product. For many, the conceptual task of linking violence and development issues in their topic area was a challenge and they reported feeling a bit overwhelmed. Several mentioned that in hindsight, they recognized that all those involved in V&D had needed more time to develop a common language about what they were doing, to learn about development concepts, etc. Nearly everyone felt that they did not have sufficient time to develop their "backgrounder."

*Center networking and communications.* Site representatives regretted that the budget constrained their opportunities to get together with national staff and other centers. Most felt that their few meetings had been extremely valuable in helping to shape their understanding of the project and their role in it. But clearly, some of the more active participants wanted to feel more connected to the larger effort, to know more about what their peers were doing, and perhaps, to be more involved in the decisions made at the National Office.

*Staffing.* Two sites had staffing problems that had delayed their progress. One site had corrected them and participants felt they were now back on track.

*Budget.* Not surprisingly, it was common for people to comment that the Center budgets were very limited, considering their responsibilities. They said they could have used more staff to help pull together their volunteer efforts.

- In spite of the difficulties, respondents generally were very enthusiastic about the project structure, viewing it as a fruitful combination of strong central leadership and meaningful chapter involvement. Some respondents acknowledged that the model was probably more unwieldy and less efficient for generating products than an exclusively National Office project, and commented that it placed a large burden on the national project director. Still, almost all felt that the benefits of the approach outweighed the drawbacks. Among the benefits mentioned were:

*The multiplier effect.* The more people who get involved, the more likely the project is to influence curricula, generate continuing education opportunities, stimulate publications on international issues, etc.

*More chapter ownership of the products.* Because the project incorporates unique state perspectives and problems, chapters are more likely to remain actively involved and more members are likely to take an interest in the results.

*More diverse products, with broader appeal.*

*Provision of a model for regional NASW efforts.*

*A drawing card for members with international interests who might otherwise take no interest in NASW activities.*

**Final round of interviews with Centers.** At this point, the teleconference had been over for four months and the Center grants were winding down. Information about the Florida program was scanty, due to the death of the chapter executive who had overseen the project and the fact that the project coordinator was out of the country. The data available suggest that this Center had been severely affected by the illness and death of the executive director in the period leading up to the teleconference, and its steering committee had been dormant for several months. Therefore, the findings reported below are based primarily on the other five sites.

At these Centers, enthusiasm for the V&D effort remained high. Although the project had necessitated considerable volunteer and in-kind support, every single interviewee felt that their involvement in the project had been worthwhile. Indeed, chapters involved in the two regional Centers felt this way even if their chapter had not received any direct grant funding. They generally perceived that the program had added prestige to NASW and the social work profession, although they could not say whether it would attract new membership. Many Center participants also volunteered that they had learned a lot personally. One interviewee went so far as to describe involvement in the project as "one of the peak experiences of my life."

Most of the centers aggressively promoted the teleconference in their areas, with the result that these jurisdictions alone accounted for 73 primary program sites plus downlinking at 34 Department of Human Service offices in the state of Minnesota. Committee members from all Centers also were involved in organizing local sites, with at least seven Center participants serving as site coordinators. Like the other groups interviewed, Center participants tended to be extremely happy with the content and format of the videoconference. Reaction to the project's written materials was also extremely positive. Respondents recognized, however, that additional activities would be necessary to sustain and build on the interest that the program had kindled.

In response to the question "Where do you go from here?", some respondents were unsure at this stage. Nevertheless, it was evident that the V&D experience, especially the teleconference, had already led to some follow-up.

- In California, some Center participants, along with other students and faculty at one university teleconference site have set up a Task Force to follow up on the conference. Another non-university host site was reported to be organizing a committee around violence issues. In addition, respondents reported that the tapes had already been reshown and that the V&D background papers for the teleconference had been widely disseminated and extremely well-received. Respondents in academic positions reported that they personally intended to use the materials in their teaching. A colleague was expected to use the materials in community-based training. Finally, although the chapter's V&D project committee planned to disband, the group of members interested in international exchanges, known as the California Nicaragua Council, would continue (as the Latin American Council).
- In the Midwest, at least one more committee meeting is planned. The committee is still hoping to enlist some faculty in systematically field-testing some of the curriculum materials developed as a part of the V&D project. Committee members in academic settings also expect to use the videoconference tape and background materials in the classroom. Another member had reshown the tape at the chapter's annual conference and at a tri-state meeting for NASW board members and staff. Others have discussed developing a paper based on some of the materials that the Midwest Center has assembled on substance abuse and development. Finally, the project coordinator reports that students at Ohio State University want to make a hunger banquet, held as part of the teach-in/teleconference, an annual event.
- In Minnesota, the chapter's International Committee existed before the project and will continue to sponsor continuing education programs on international issues for NASW members. The group also expects to work hard to encourage the use of V&D curriculum in the state when the materials become available in final form. They are well-positioned to do so, as the committee includes representatives of the three main master's level social work programs in the state, including a member of CSWE's International Commission.
- In New York City, with the blessing of the chapter leadership, the International Committee plans to develop a formal international exchange program for social workers. (They had abandoned an earlier informal program some time ago.) The chapter executive has also accepted an invitation to lead a social work group on a trip to China in the fall. In addition, the committee hopes to more widely publicize the resource bank it developed on poverty and development and is discussing doing a joint conference with the chapter's Committee on Children and Families. Finally, the project coordinator has been invited to do a presentation on violence and development issues.
- In the Pacific Northwest, the Oregon team plans to continue meeting, although the members are most interested in domestic issues. Using materials developed through the project,

the group will do a presentation on V&D at NASW's Annual Conference, and another workshop in Washington State. The group, which includes several faculty and students from Portland area universities, may also become a formal chapter committee. They are seeking outside funding to continue their activities. In Washington State, the lead committee member organized a day-long event at her university where the teleconference tapes were shown in tandem with a hunger banquet, panel discussion, and other activities. (Because of financial limitations, the university was unable to participate on the live broadcast dates.) Student evaluations, which strongly favored inclusion of V&D material in the curriculum, were distributed to faculty and the tapes are available for repeat use. Some faculty are interested in promoting adoption of an international course. In addition, the committee member hopes to work with the state chapter on a similar event for a community audience. The Idaho team would like to continue to provide programs related to V&D themes, combining them with skill-building opportunities for practitioners. Because of the teach-in/teleconference at Boise State, the chapter also reports that relationships with Hispanic social workers have been strengthened.

In short, while it is too early to judge all of the ramifications of the V&D project for the Resource Centers, there are ample indications that many individuals involved intend to continue the work started.

**The teach-in/teleconference sites.** Several methods were used to assess the process and results of the teach-in/teleconference, including a mail survey of the site coordinators and analysis of audience evaluation forms collected by site coordinators. In addition, the evaluator interviewed a small random sample of site coordinators by telephone and observed the two broadcasts.

Site coordinator forms were returned by 123 respondents, representing 52 percent of the 236 host sites who had some contact with NASW and were believed to have participated in the teleconference.<sup>6</sup> Eighty-two sites, or 35 percent, also voluntarily provided a total of 3147 usable audience evaluation forms. Seventy-one sites provided both site coordinator and audience evaluation forms. For these sites we calculated that the audience response rate averaged about 63 percent, using information on attendance from the site coordinators and comparing it with the number of audience evaluations received.

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<sup>6</sup>The exact number of sites is not known. The survey included the 236 sites with whom NASW had some direct mail or telephone contact. It is possible that some of these sites dropped out and did not offer the teleconference after all. On the other hand, it is known that the teleconference was downlinked to 115 Veterans Administration locations nationwide, only a few of which were on NASW's list. The Minnesota chapter of NASW also reports that 34 Department of Human Service sites in their state participated. Another confounding factor is that the term "host site" is not synonymous with physical location, as a few hosts were known to have arranged to broadcast the teleconference in more than one location. We do not have precise information on how often that occurred, however.

Below we summarize the findings of these efforts. The results of the analysis are described in more detail in a separate report.<sup>7</sup>

### The sites

- Usually the teleconference was sponsored by a college or university, alone (80%) or in collaboration with another organization (8%). One-third of the college-based sites reported that multiple institutions had participated in their programs.
- For programs delivered at a college or university, the primary sponsor was usually the social work department or school of social work (90%).
- While social work faculty were by far the most common group to be involved in planning (at 74% of the sites), social work students were involved at 32 percent of these sites, NASW staff were involved at 26 percent, and social work practitioners participated in planning at 20 percent. Other faculty, community organizations, and "others" (typically the institution's staff) were involved at more than 10 percent of the sites. At least 658 people were involved in the planning process at the 99 sites who reported on their planning teams.

### Level of attendance and participation

- Eighty-five percent (85%) of the sites presented the conference on both days.
- At the reporting sites, the teleconference reached a primary audience of 5729 on the first day and 3403 on the second day. If we assume that these sites are a representative sample of the 236 sites with which NASW had contact, we can estimate overall attendance at 17,562 for the two days.
- A little over half the Friday audience reported that they had also attended on Tuesday. Some sites indicated that academic and field placement schedules made it difficult for their students to attend on both days.
- The audience was primarily made up of social work students, practitioners, and faculty. However, about one-fourth of the attendees were affiliated with non-social work programs or were non-social workers.
- Over half (52%) of the sites scheduled some teach-in activities in connection with the teleconference. The most frequent collateral activities were symposia or panels (at 31% of sites), special classroom activities (18%), or "other" activities

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<sup>7</sup>Roberta C. Cronin, "Evaluation Report on the NASW Violence & Development Teach-in/Teleconference," July 12, 1996.

(25%) such as post-conference discussion groups, video or film programs, special lectures, and displays of materials. About one in five audience members participated in one or more of these activities.

- Sixteen sites (13%) presented hunger banquets. Eleven of these 16 sites provided attendance figures for the banquet, totaling 900 people overall.
- About 60 percent of the sites received some type of media attention for their activities. (Not all sites sought media attention.)

#### Reactions to the teleconference program

- Site coordinators and audience members alike gave the program high ratings. On a 10-point scale where ten represents the highest rating, median ratings for format and content were 8.0 or higher on both days. On average, respondents with social work affiliations gave the program slightly higher ratings than non-social work respondents, but the latter group included some who gave the program very high ratings.
- A substantial majority (82 to 90%) of the site coordinators and audience members found the interactive portions of the Friday session effective and interesting. Over three-fourths of the site coordinators (78%) also thought there was a fair and adequate chance for sites to submit comments for the interactive portion.
- Of those who attended the Tuesday and Friday sessions, about nine out of ten thought there was good continuity between the two broadcasts.
- Ninety percent of the site coordinators said the program met their expectations on Tuesday, while 77 percent said it did so on Friday. The most common reasons cited for being disappointed were that the program had not focused enough on solutions, had not been interactive enough, or had not shown enough of the teach-in activities in the Friday session.

#### Interest in violence and development curriculum

- Eighty-five to 90 percent of the respondents felt that the ideas and concepts in the teleconference should be incorporated into the undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education curriculums for social workers. Most of the others were not sure, with 3 percent or less stating that this type of material should not be incorporated.

### Assessments of NASW materials and support

- By and large, the site coordinators were quite satisfied with the support that they received from NASW in putting together the teleconference. They gave high ratings to the materials, the telephone support, and the overall timeliness and adequacy of information. Timeliness ratings were weakest (although still quite positive), reflecting dissatisfaction in some quarters with the fact that some materials were shipped so close to the time of the conference. (A blizzard in Washington, D.C. had delayed the final mailing.)

### Feedback and suggestions

- Many respondents volunteered additional comments about the teach-in/teleconference effort, the vast majority of them strongly positive. As for feedback and suggestions, the most common themes were: a desire for more information about practical applications and solutions; a feeling that the program had tried to cover too many topics or speakers or was too general; a concern that the Friday broadcast had been more suitable for social workers than for other audiences; a desire for a more strongly interactive format; and a need for more planning time and earlier distribution of materials.

### Follow-up

- Two-thirds (67%) of those who taped the broadcasts planned to show them again or had already done so. Over a quarter of the respondents (26%) also indicated that there would be follow-up activities in the weeks or months ahead.
- Telephone interviews with a small sample of site coordinators indicated that there have already been some concrete outcomes of the program, especially in the form of V&D materials being adopted for classroom use.
- Over half the sites expressed interest in purchasing curriculum materials related to the broadcast.

All in all, these results suggest that the teach-in/teleconference effort was a resounding success with the host sites.

## **IV. Summary, Lessons Learned, and Recommendations**

In this section, we summarize the findings of the evaluation in terms of the project's original criteria for success. We then discuss some lessons that can be learned from NASW's experience and consider recommendations for future development education program at NASW and elsewhere.

## Summary of findings

### ■ Have all of the project's activities been carried out and, if so, have they been conducted effectively?

As for project activities, the V&D Project has clearly achieved or exceeded its original objectives in all areas. A National Advisory Committee was appointed early in the project and most members remained active throughout. Six chapters were selected to take the lead as Resource Centers—one more than originally planned. Although levels of activity varied by Center, all contributed to the development of resource materials for V&D and assisted in recruiting sites for the teleconference. Several Centers took an extremely active role in the latter activity, with the result that about a third of the teleconference sites were in the geographic areas covered by the Centers.

As intended, the teach-in/teleconference appears to have functioned as a "high point" for the V&D effort. The teleconference took place at 236 primary locations and over 100 other places that were part of either the Veteran's Administration or state-based networks. Hundreds of people, nearly all of them volunteers, were involved in the organizing process. All indications are that the program succeeded in attracting a large audience of social workers (students, faculty, and practitioners), as well as a diverse group of non-social workers. Finally, there has been broad dissemination of information and materials from the V&D project by the National Office and the Resource Centers, as well as other state chapters that have taken an interest. Sixty percent of the teleconference sites reported some media coverage of the events, and at several, the coverage was extensive.

Some of the project's curriculum development efforts are not yet complete, but they appear to be on track. Arrangements to publicize and disseminate the products through NASW Press have already been made, ensuring that they will be available to a wide audience.

### ■ Has the project increased the knowledge, interest, and awareness of its target audiences?

The design of the V&D project did not lend itself to direct, systematic measurement of changes in knowledge, interest, and awareness of development issues. Therefore, most of the information we have on this point is anecdotal, but it suggests that positive changes did occur. We know from our early survey of NASW leadership that in some circles, attitudes toward international and development issues were already quite favorable when the project began.<sup>8</sup> However, when interviewed by the project evaluator, various members of the target

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<sup>8</sup>We could have repeated this survey to obtain post-project measures, but decided it would not be a wise expenditure of project resources, given the difficulty of attributing any observable changes in opinion to the project rather than other influences. In any case, the leaders' original views toward international and development issues were already so favorable at baseline that

audiences, including National Office staff, advisors, and Center participants, often volunteered (without prompting, that is) that they had gained new information or perspectives from the V&D project. Those who were faculty members also sometimes mentioned that the program had caused students to think about V&D issues in new ways. In addition, it would be reasonable to infer changes in knowledge, interest, or awareness from many of the comments appended to the videoconference evaluation forms.

Even more important, two other facts suggest that V&D's target audience perceived that the project was communicating something new and interesting. First, overwhelming majorities of the site coordinators and audience members favored adding V&D material to the social work curriculum. Second, the majority of site coordinators said they would be interested in purchasing curriculum materials for their institutions.

**■ Have these cognitive and attitudinal changes translated into behavioral changes, in the form of active support for or participation in international development or education activities?**

**While it is too early to assess the longer-run effects of the V&D initiative, there are numerous indications that short-run behavioral changes have taken place among the primary target audiences. First, data from the Advisory Committee and the Center participants indicate that many members have indeed taken on leadership roles in communicating development education content to social work audiences and they plan to continue doing so. Second, two-thirds of the teleconference sites surveyed indicated that the conference tapes will be or have already been shown again, while a fourth of the sites expect some other type of follow-up to occur at their institution. Thus, although quantifying the effect at this point is impossible, it appears likely that more development education content will find its way into the social work curriculum. In some locations, there have been other effects reported, such as the establishment of task forces around V&D issues and student plans to repeat the hunger banquet.**

For most of the Resource Centers, the V&D project will probably leave an institutional residue in the form of a strengthened international committee (or equivalent) at the chapter level. It is less likely that they will continue to operate as Resource Centers in their specific topic area, although two chapters have some plans along those lines.

At the national level, staff are currently busy planning for the future and seeking funds to carry on what they began under USAID's sponsorship. It is too soon to tell how the project has affected the institutional position of the international program, however, in part because NASW is now in transition to new leadership. Certainly, the project garnered the V&D staff considerable positive publicity in-house and is credited by many with having enhanced the credibility of NASW national with the chapters. The project also forged or strengthened

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there would not have been much room for measurable improvement. A secondary consideration was the fact that the leadership group was not constant over the three-year period.

partnerships with three organizations--the Council on Social Work Education, the Alliance, and the Benton Foundation--which should help sustain the momentum.

Since the evaluation did not systematically measure knowledge or attitudinal changes, we cannot be sure of the cognitive or psychological mechanisms at work in producing the behavioral changes that have occurred so far. At least two interpretations are possible. The first is that the program changed attitudes and interests so as to make people take a more active role in V&D-related issues--getting them to see the relevance of the issues to social work training, for example, and therefore incorporate relevant materials into the curriculum. The second interpretation is that people already had the knowledge and interest in V&D issues, but the project provided a catalyst and a vehicle for putting them into practice. Most likely, both mechanisms were at work.

### **Lessons learned**

Several insights emerge from NASW's Violence & Development initiative, based on systematic data collection, observation of project activities, and conversations with participants over almost three years.

First, on balance it appears that the choice of project theme, "Violence and Development," was a wise one. As intended, concern about violence was a powerful drawing card, as were the five sub-themes. Social workers responded by volunteering for Center committees, organizing local teach-in/teleconference sites, and attending the two broadcasts in large numbers. The choice had a downside, too, in that the V&D theme was ambiguous; no doubt many who attended the teleconferences were more interested in violence than in development and a few came away disappointed with the emphasis. Furthermore, the choice of theme challenged National project staff and Center participants alike to conceive of violence and development in new ways, making conceptual linkages that were difficult and often, unfamiliar to those involved. The Centers could have used more time to come to grips with these issues. Yet, overall, the effort succeeded.

Second, the project structure, involving a nationally directed project with six satellite Centers served the program well. As many of those involved pointed out, the structure was somewhat unwieldy. Probably the National Office could have accomplished some tasks more expeditiously on their own. Sometimes Center participants felt left "out of the loop" or deprived of communication with their peers, as National staff forged ahead to complete tasks on time and within budget. Yet like the choice of theme, ultimately the structure got results. In effect, it recruited a large and diverse pool of people into a giant experiential learning project--with opportunities to learn new content, while pursuing professional goals and becoming familiar with a new technology as well. People became committed to making the project succeed. In the end, they felt that their efforts had been rewarded and they were proud of the results. While this does not guarantee that they will follow through beyond the term of the project, it makes it much more likely.

Third, the data provide some suggestions about how the overall project structure might have functioned more smoothly. There are many indications that the Center participants could have used more orientation and training, more time to gear up for their efforts, and more opportunities to interact with one another and the National Office. Obviously, these features do not come without cost in money and time, but future projects might give more attention to these issues. Perhaps technologies like conference calling or even mini-teleconferences could meet part of the need.

Fourth, the project provided quite a lot of specific feedback about the teach-in/teleconference experience itself. But given the strongly favorable response to the teleconference overall, it would be wise to realize that "fixes" to please some critics (e.g., more domestic content, narrower focus) might alienate others in the audience. No program can please everybody. However, suggestions to show more practical solutions and to allow for more audience interaction occurred often enough to warrant further attention. It also appears that many sites could have used more advance warning about teleconference dates and requirements, if only because it would have provided more opportunity to resolve scheduling conflicts and prepare materials for distribution. Sometimes, it might also have promoted broader local involvement in the planning process and allowed more sites to supplement the teleconference with teach-in events.

## **Recommendations**

For NASW, this project sends a clear message that there is an audience for development education content among social workers and that the organization can play a significant role in meeting the demand for it. All indications are that the medium of teleconferencing was a great success in reaching out to a diverse audience and that many in the field will welcome the forthcoming Violence and Development curriculum. The project also speaks to the wisdom of partnerships between the National Office and chapters, and between academics and practitioners, in carrying out such endeavors. The challenge now is to build on the strong foundation established by the V&D Project.

Perhaps the greatest need at this juncture is to review the project's original parameters and decide whether they need re-definition in the light of what has been accomplished to date. In particular, NASW planners should consider whether "violence and development" and its subthemes remain a reasonable focus of effort. They should also revisit the question of audiences for the international program, in particular the extent to which the audience encompasses non-social workers. Planners should also pay particular attention to the question of what they want specific audiences to know and more important, do, because of contact with the program. Plans should be shaped by these desired results. If, for example, the objective is for social work faculty to incorporate development lessons into their regular courses, staff should identify specific steps that would make this more likely.

A collateral recommendation is to make the process easy for the audience. One strength of the V&D teleconference approach was that it provided an organizing kit for the sites that laid out the steps to putting on a teach-in/teleconference. A similar cookbook approach might be equally effective in encouraging follow-up activities to any teleconferences envisioned for the future.

**For USAID**, the experience of the Violence and Development Project suggests that national associations can be a powerful ally in the dissemination of development education content. Furthermore, there is much to be said for the specific strategy adopted by NASW, which called for considerable participation by state and local chapters and universities in the process of developing and delivering the educational content. No doubt such a participatory model makes for more uncertainty about the quality of the ultimate products and less control over their content, but it has the potential of engendering much more widespread commitment and involvement in development issues over the long term. The NASW experience also suggests that organizations need to plan for a systematic orientation of their "field teams" and support frequent communication among all those involved.

The NASW initiative also confirms that new technologies such as teleconferencing have an important role to play in development education. However, they do not stand alone. As NASW demonstrated, they must be embedded in a broader effort that carefully shapes their content, engages potential audiences, and follows up with products to sustain the message when the broadcast is over.