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EVALUATING SMALL GRANTS FOR WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

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JANUARY, 1980
AID-otr-147-79-43

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OFFICE OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT
AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20523

This paper has been prepared pursuant to Purchase Order Number AID-OTR-147-79-43 with the Office of Women in Development of the U.S. Agency for International Development. The author is employed at The Pathfinder Fund, Boston, Massachusetts. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy either of The Pathfinder Fund or of the Agency for International Development, and no official endorsement by either organization should be inferred.

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SUMMARY

This paper proposes means by which a donor could evaluate an investment in funding small grants for women in development, made as one part of an overall women in development strategy.

Descriptions of the grants, the projects they make possible, and programs clustering the projects are followed by a discussion of their objectives. Two sets of objectives are necessary, with women in development objectives considered to be as important as general development objectives.

Existing efforts to evaluate women in development activities are reviewed for their applicability to small grants. The need to determine a small grant's impact at the level of the women's group that receives it leads to a selection of five categories within which a group's activities can be examined for change. These transition criteria are: personal versus task orientation; external versus internal motivation; informal versus formal structure; social welfare versus self-help philosophy; and the degree of orientation towards women in development concepts, or ideology. The application of the criteria is considered for two types of women's groups - "local" and "elite." The hypothesis is that small grants can help women's groups to become more involved as participants in and beneficiaries of development by producing changes in one or more of the five categories proposed as criteria for evaluation.

Evaluation can be done both at the level of the individual grant, and at the level of the program which clusters the grants. In each case, the strategies proposed combine the adaptation of standard evaluation practices to the size and purpose of the grants, with the use of the five transition criteria.

The four methods described for project-level evaluation are: before-and-after comparisons, reporting during the project, case studies, and "exchange of experience" workshops. At the program level, the adaptations proposed are making comparisons among individual grants, and using the four methods above to assess the program as a whole.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people and experiences have contributed to this work. I must first thank The Pathfinder Fund, its Boston and International staff, the grantees with whom I have come in contact, and the Board of Directors for having decided that Pathfinder would pursue activities in the challenging area of women's programs. Particular thanks must go to Freya Bicknell, Marianne Burkhart, Richard Gamble, Isabel Nieves, John Paxman, and Ron Waife for their helpful comments on earlier drafts. Gloria Nelli patiently and cheerfully typed and retyped the paper at each stage.

Others helped by their discussions of the issues involved. My deep appreciation goes to Kristin Anderson, Robert Berg, Mayra Buvinic, Lucy Conger, Patricia Haggerty, Isabel Nieves, Katherine Piepmeier, Marilyn Richards, Manuel Rocha, Vicki Semler, Ann Van Dusen, Anne Walker, Glenn Westley, Ieda Wiarda, and Nadia Youssef.

In October, 1979, I visited Honduras and the Dominican Republic and received a great deal of useful input. For their comments and assistance during the trip, I would like to thank Sonia Andujar, John Clary, Celina Kawas, Hayde de Martinez, Concepcion Mejia, Norma Munguia, Rina de Pineda, Elizabeth Ramos, Ivelisse Russo, Daniel Salcedo, Julio Schlotthauer, and Anita Siegel.

In addition, all members of the Working Group on Women's Programs have helped me, both as individuals and as a group; they have, in several very real ways, made this paper possible.

The staff of the Office of Women in Development at A.I.D., which funded this work, has been helpful during the course of the contract.

The final opinions expressed, however, are my own. Nothing in this paper should be construed as the official opinion of any organization or agency, and any errors, inaccuracies, or inconsistencies can only be attributed to me.

I. Introduction

This paper is a first attempt to suggest a methodology for evaluating projects made possible by small grants that are given for the general purpose of promoting the incorporation of women into the socioeconomic development process of their countries. It does not describe the evaluation of any actual ongoing projects or programs, but proposes a framework for thinking about the effect of those small grants.

The most that can be done in this short work is to begin to identify the questions that need to be addressed. Raising certain issues about small grants for women in development is intended to lead to further discussions among donor agencies, and perhaps eventually to further methodological work and practical applications of the concepts suggested here.

Several important points must be noted at the outset. It is a crucial assumption behind this work that the donor's rationale for making these grants explicitly includes the desire to incorporate women further into the development process - it need not be the only goal, but it must be specifically included. Many development efforts with other primary objectives may have supplementary effects that benefit women, or unintended effects that set women back. But these projects are not considered here.

Equally critical is the caveat that small grants for women in development be considered as only one small part of a complete women in development strategy. They cannot, by themselves, be responsible for significant progress towards overall women in development goals, any more than small grants for community development can alone achieve significant progress towards broad development goals. The framework proposed in this paper concentrates on the strengthening of women's groups, on the assumption that this is a small but important component in the total women in development picture.

Since this paper draws upon material from many disciplines and is an initial foray into basically uncharted areas, the definitions of the terms used are important. First, by "small" grants, we mean amounts in the range of $500 to a maximum of $5,000 each. Second, the word "grant" will be used throughout the paper to describe these expenditures, although it is most likely that in some cases the funds will actually be loans to the recipients rather than outright grants.

Third, the defining of "women in development" has purposely been considered in its broadest sense, i.e., achieving greater involvement of women as both participants in and beneficiaries of all facets of social and economic development. Although many of the grants made might be expected to help increase women's income, the scope of "grants for women in development" is not intended to be limited to economic or even material criteria alone. If a project can be said to increase women's participation or status in the community, improve their health or nutrition levels, or save their time, it will fit into the broad definition of "women in development" used here.

Fourth, the definition of "evaluation" can vary, according to one's purposes, from the simple phrases of a dictionary (e.g., the American Heritage Dictionary's "to fix the worth of, to examine and judge") to the complex conditions that must be met in order to approach scientific rigor in an assessment of "value": explicit and justified assumptions, clearly stated objectives, systematic data collection and analysis, appropriate indicators for measurement. In this paper, the emphasis will be on establishing a precise statement of objectives before a project is funded, and the subsequent determination of whether those objectives have been met.

Since the paper argues that what is unique about a small grant for women in development is the effect that the grant can have on the recipient women's group, the focus of the evaluation is the group itself, rather than individual members or the process by which funds re spent and activities carried out. The small size of these grants makes it very difficult to do process evaluation, or even to do routine

administration. Because of this, grants may often be clustered according to geography or purpose into a program managed by a single intermediate agency. In this paper, therefore, attention will be paid to ways of evaluating both specific local projects and multi-grant program clusters.

II. Description of individual small grants and program "clusters"

Effective evaluation requires a clear idea of the context, structure, and objectives of the activity to be evaluated. Context and structure will be addressed in this section, objectives in the section that follows.

The type of project being considered here is the relatively small-scale effort made possible by a grant in the $500 to $5,000 range. The group receiving the money (or an in-kind contribution purchased with it) might be located in either rural or urban areas, and might be of any socioeconomic level.

The activities supported by these grants would often be likely to help generate income for the women participating in the project, but other purposes could easily be imagined, such as holding a festival, building or improving a school or community center, or purchasing labor-saving devices for grinding corn or gathering water.

Men, and youths or children, are by no means excluded from participating in a meaningful way in these activities. Their support and efforts are in many ways crucial for success of some projects. Nevertheless, one of the definitions used here to identify a women in development project is whether the women themselves control the funds, plan the activities, and decide on the division of labor.

A program, for our purposes, is essentially a cluster of small women in development projects. An agency handling a program would have some standardized requirements and procedures for the soliciting and approval of applications, the disbursement of funds, and the monitoring of grantees. Specific staff would be assigned to handle these administrative duties, on at least a part-time basis. By definition, there would also be a conscious recognition within the administering agency that the small grants so "clustered" are similar or complementary in purpose, and thus do form a cohesive program.

Though these features apply to all programs, there may be tremendous variation not only in the types of agencies which are selected to administer programs, but also in the contexts within which they are run. For example, the program could be located at some level of a host-country government (national, provincial, or city). A host-country private women's organization, some other local private voluntary agency (PVO), or even a profit-making consulting firm in the country are among the possible intermediaries.

International women's organizations with local affiliates in many countries, regional development agencies, or international PVOs based in the developed world might also be responsible for administering a grant-making program. Multinational donors and governments with large bilateral assistance programs could work with any of the above agencies, viewing a program of small grants for women in development either as a discrete undertaking, or as an integral part of a specific foreign aid package.

The section on program-level evaluation will address the issues of how clustering small grants can improve evaluation of the impact of individual grants, as well as some ways to assess the program itself. In any case, the concept of clustering is important since it is one way of assuring that donors do not fall into the pattern of considering single small grants as a sufficient strategy for women in development when, as mentioned above, even programs of small grants can be only part of a total approach to achieving women in development goals.

III. Problems in defining objectives of small grants and grant programs

The definition of evaluation used in this paper places primary emphasis on whether a project or program is successful in accomplishing its objectives. Thus, a clear statement of realistic objectives for small grants for women in development is a prerequisite to the elaboration of an evaluation strategy. This is a task which raises a variety of problems.

The fundamental common denominator of the projects and program under discussion is their intention to involve women as participants in and beneficiaries of development. Because of this, we need to expand our definition of intended effects to include intangible benefits, which can lead to problems in the setting of clear objectives. The simplifying assumption suggested in this paper is that certain changes in the women's groups receiving the grants can be considered as "benefits," both to the groups themselves and to the women in development effort in general. Section V discusses the five categories of change proposed as relevant evaluation criteria.

Once criteria are accepted as valid, one must develop techniques for measuring the changes that occur. Specific means of measuring are beyond the scope of this paper, but if these criteria are accepted, and grants actually made, it may then be necessary to design instruments for use in the field. Since in the case of small grants the funds for evaluation will probably be very limited, one key question is proposed in Section V for each of the transition criteria, to be used as a rough evaluation indicator.

A third problem is the need to distinguish between "development" and women in development objectives. Since the condition of women is different from that of their community as a whole, the questions raised about women in development must be different from those raised about development in general. In the past, the effects on women of general development efforts have been mainly unintended effects, and it is a demonstrated fact that in many cases they have set women back. Often this is because women's interests are simply ignored in the planning and implementation stages. Yet, as the Population Council's Nemow case states, "(T)here is no necessary trade-off between achieving development goals and raising the economic,

social, and legal status of women," (p. ix). Small grants for women in development will often try to demonstrate some point about the involvement of women in the development process. The following evaluative questions point out the differences between general development and women in development objectives:

> General development objectives: Have human and financial resources been invested wisely? Has the project produced a change in social or economic terms?
>
> Women in developmnet objectives: Has anything been demonstrated about the abilities of women (e.g., participation in non-traditional activities, cooperation, management skills)? Has the project produced a change in the condition of (including attitudes about) individual women and/or the group of women?

Of course, development objectives and women in development objectives can and should complement each other. But when the key reason for funding a project is specifically to "benefit women," that objective, and not general development, should be the evaluation's focus.

The fourth problem in defining objectives is that the range of possible activities is so broad that it is impossible to list all of the potential development impacts. An investigation of development activities by sector (agriculture, literacy, etc.) will usually describe project outputs as concrete, tangible results which relate directly to the inputs provided. Results are then evaluated based on traditional measures of performance, efficiency and/or production.

This leads us to the fifth, and perhaps most difficult problem - the smallness of these grants, which may make standard evaluative measures difficult or impossible to calculate. It may simply not be worth the trouble to collect the appropriate data, since the expenses involved in doing so could well cost more than the project itself.

For these reasons, standard evaluation practices must be adapted to suit the special challenges presented by the funding of small grants for women in development. Before going on to some suggestions of how to carry out these adaptations, it is important to look at previous efforts in the field.

IV. Existing strategies for evaluating women in development activities

Evaluating women in development activities requires overcoming two separate problems: difficulty in evaluating development activities in general, and difficulty in determining the effect on women.

The former problem has received a good deal of attention from the U.S. Agency for International Development (Project Evaluation Guidelines), and other agencies involved in the field. Also, Francis W. Hoole has explored possible evaluation research methodologies, and the adaptations required to apply them to development activities (Evaluation Research and Development Activities, 1978).

AID's "logical framework" describes the development assistance process as "a series of hypotheses or causative (means-end) linkages which will trace the transformation of resource inputs into planned development change." (p. 5) The linkages proposed are those that connect, in hierarchical fashion, Inputs, Outputs, Purpose, and Goal. The linkages, or hypotheses, are what are being tested in this particular application of evaluation research methods.

According to Hoole, "(t)he main concern of the evaluation research methodology is obtaining objective empirical evidence regarding the actual effectiveness of social action programs." (p. 18). The conditions required for evaluation research are: (1) a "clearly stated hypothesis regarding the impact of a social action program," and (2) the ability to obtain "relevant and reliable data for the specified variables," (p. 19). Each of these two conditions may be difficult or impossible to meet in the context of development activities. Hoole's excellent chapter on "Applied Research Problems" discusses how the realities of the development field serve to further complicate certain evaluation issues such as determining the appropriate impact hypothesis, collecting and analyzing data, designing projects and selecting measurement techniques. The main point is that planning, executing, and evaluating development projects demands flexibility and creativity on the part of all concerned. In Hoole's words:

> ...while it is apparent that the evaluation research methodology is scientific, it is apparent also that overcoming applied research problems and using the evaluation research methodology in meaningful ways in the development field will be an art. (p. 135)

This conclusion is even more true when a special concern for women is added to the development picture. Previous efforts to examine the evaluation of women in development projects have been of fairly recent origin. Each attempt is in some way difficult to apply to small grants for women in development.

The Subcommittee on Women in Development of the Committee on Development Assistance (ACVAFS, 1975) identified five criteria for evaluating development projects involving women: initiation and leadership; participation and control; benefits (to women); social change; and process. They applied the criteria to six sample projects, and found that:

> (1) the criteria seem to be valid, that is, the "good" projects involving women fulfill the requisites of the criteria; but that
>
> (2) none of the projects yielded enough information to answer all the questions posed by the criteria - perhaps because we were too removed from the project environment, perhaps because these questions had not been asked before. Therefore, much remains to be done, especially in generating information about successful types of programs, and in using the criteria to improve programs involving women. (p. 25)

While useful to some extent in stimulating thinking about women in development as a separate concern, the criteria as proposed by the Subcommittee are difficult to apply to actual projects in a meaningful way.

Three organizations in the Dominican Republic prepared a document in 1977 describing a proposed program of small loans and social services for rural women in that country. This plan identified a long list of objectives for its work. Their list (translated from the Spanish) is as follows:

(1) Program level objectives

a. Make specified number of loans each year
b. Meetings of a loan committee
c. Selection of community "delegates"
d. Training of local administrative personnel

(2) Community participation

a. Responsibility
b. Autonomy
c. Initiative
d. Distribution

(3) Social goals

a. Accessibility
b. Potential for negotiation
c. Legitimization
d. Status
e. Critical analysis
f. Creativity

(4) Economic goals

a. Income generation
b. Vocational/technical training
c. Food production
d. Family planning
e. Maternal and child health

(5) Institutional collaboration

a. Private
b. Public
c. Business

This is an ambitious categorization, but with too many criteria for use in any single small project. In the loan program as it currently operates, only a small proportion of the list of objectives is evaluated in any systematic way. A careful selection of the most relevant objectives for any particular project before it is funded would help to set evaluation priorities and improve results.

Elliot and Sorsby (1979) prepared a report on what "evaluative information" exists on projects that benefit women. They pointed to how useful such information would be to policy makers, but concluded that actual project evaluations so far have yielded little guidance on the design of projects intended to benefit women.

The authors also identified a number of constraints which reduce the likelihood of these evaluations being carried out. Confusion over the specific goals that might distinguish a women in development project, a general lack of enthusiasm over evaluting development efforts, and the relatively short time that women in development has existed as a separate concern, all contribute to the dearth of relevant evaluations.

According to Elliot and Sorsby, the belief exists in some quarters that women in development activities are not worth trying to evaluate separately, and this may stem from either of two radically opposed arguments: that women in development concerns cannot make much difference to overall development goals, or that such concerns are so completely integrated into broad development goals that they cannot be separated. From the point of view of AID and other large donors, there is another problem:

> Most women in development projects are relatively small-scale. Many have been implemented by private and voluntary organizations, and, although they may be funded by major donors, these donors rely on the implementing organizations to monitor and evaluate their own activities. Small scale projects of this kind are unlikely to be evaluated until the donors require and support more rigorous and comprehensive evaluations. (Elliot and Sorsby, p. II-3)

On the private voluntary organization level, the questions of how to evaluate women's projects has been addressed by a group of project administrators which comprises the informal Working Group on Women's Programs. The group's discussions on the subject led to the identification of three general goals which women's projects should be directed at achieving:

1. Enable women to exercise more control over their lives;
2. Provide services which are more comprehending of and responsive to women's needs;
3. Enable women to participate more fully in, and have access to the benefits of, development. (Working Group on Women's Programs, September, 1978)

The Working Group has also attempted, to a limited extent, to distinguish between goals of women's projects and the assumptions that lay behind them.

All these previous efforts have in common the conclusion that developing and/or adapting evaluation indicators to express the results of women in development projects is difficult. After all, in what way can projects that benefit women be said to be essentially different from similar projects that benefit men? One response might be based on the following statements by Clark (1979) concerning the evaluation of adult education programs for women:

> It is important to note here that (these) indicators of success are in no way gender-specific; their achievement is as important to the advancement of men as to the advancement of women...With the exception of giving birth, which is a privilege and hardship reserved for the female, (these) differences between men and women are not the result of genetically determined abilities that would require that certain tasks be performed solely by one sex or the other. The differences are, instead, the result of how individuals, who happen to be men or women in a given societal context, learn to view themselves, their role, and their abilities. (p. 49)

The "given societal context" for women is substantially different from that for men, even within the same community, income group, etc. Thus, indicators that attempt to show changes -- in attitudes, levels of participation and organization, distribution of benefits, and other features -- must, to be valid, be adapted to take these differences into account.

Reviewing these previous efforts at evaluation of women in development activities, and development projects in general, teaches that the evaluation criteria used should be a careful <u>selection</u> of objectives that are <u>meaningful</u> to the women in development field, and <u>applicable</u> to small projects. The next section outlines five criteria proposed as useful for this task.

V. Transition criteria for women's groups

In order to be able to formulate objectives for and evaluate the results of small grants for women in development, we need a way of describing what can happen over time to women's groups that are involved in carrying out the projects made possible by the grants.

Women's groups are a critical element in any women in development strategy. This section first examines the type of women's groups likely to receive small grants, and some ways in which they can contribute to a society's socioeconomic development. Five key criteria are then proposed as appropriate for measuring the progress of women's groups towards fuller involvement in the development process.

A. Primary women's groups

The study of social groups has produced both theory and empirical evidence concerning many aspects of groups. The "small group" has been an object of study both by sociologists concerned with the groups as "building blocks" of society, and by psychologists concerned with the patterns of relationships among the individuals that make up the group. The basic conditions for a "group" to exist are considered to be: contact among the members, awareness on the part of the members of some interdependence, and recognition of one or more common feature(s) that they believe to be significant. A small group is usually considered to have a maximum of 30 members.

One major distinction in social group theory is between "primary" and "secondary" groups. The primary group -- a concept introduced by Charles Cooley in 1909 -- is defined by Dunphy (1972) as:

> ...a small group which persists long enough to develop strong emotional attachments between members, at least a set of rudimentary, functionally differentiated roles, and a sub-culture of its own which includes both an image of the group as an entity and an informal normative system which controls group-relevant action of its members. (p. 5)

Olmstead (1959) contrasts primary and secondary groups as follows:

> In the primary group, members have warm, intimate, and "personal" ties with one another; their solidarity is un-selfconscious, a matter of sentiment rather than calculation. Such groups are usually of the small, face-to-face sort, spontaneous in their interpersonal behavior and devoted, though not necessarily exclusively, to mutual or common ends. The friendship group, the gang, and especially the family are usually cited as the foremost examples of primary groups (p. 17)...The characteristics of the secondary group are the opposite or complement of those of the primary group. Relations mong members are "cool", impersonal, rational, contractual, and formal. Examples range from the professional association to the large bureaucratic corporation to the national state itself. (pp. 18-19)

Another distinction is between "small" groups and "primary" groups. Olmstead states:

> Most primary groups are small (except for monasteries and similar communities where large numbers of persons live, presumably, in intimacy and brotherhood), but not all small groups are primary. (p. 23)

However, it can be assumed that the women's groups receiving small grants will generally be both small and primary. If the prerequisites for a "small group" are not even met, there is no way for the grant solicitation to be made or the project executed. (The grant itself may be the factor that tips the balance from small group to small, primary group.) If the recipient group is bureaucratic or very large, then we must assume either that some small (primary) sub-group will actually have responsibility for carrying out the project activities, or that the entire group is so cohesive as to qualify as a primary group in and of itself.

For the purposes of this analysis, two particular types of small women's groups can be distinguished. The term "elite group" will be used to describe groups of educated, usually urban, relatively wealthy women, whose first contact with each other is based primarily on social needs (luncheons, charity balls, etc.). The term "local group" will be used to describe groups of non-elite women, in either rural or urban areas, whose first contact with each other is based primarily on daily subsistence needs (doing laundry, gathering water, shopping in a market).

Although it is possible that the two types of groups may have links to each other at some stage, the assumption here is that each group type is homogeneous. That is, within a given group, there is assumed to be no distinction between the recipients of a grant and the participants in its activities. This assumption will make it possible to use the changes that take place within a group as a principle way of evaluating the effect of the small grant received by the group.

Besides meeting the basic human need for social relations with others, primary women's groups can serve as "change agents" within a society in many ways. For example, they may provide leadership training opportunities, help members to absorb new information and values, and even affect (consciously or not) a larger group. Many factors determine the extent to which any of these functions can be filled by a particular group. The transition criteria described next are especially important in determining whether or not a given women's group can contribute to an overall women in development strategy.

B. Key transition criteria

The goal of women having greater participation in and receiving more benefits from the development process cannot be reached without the involvement of women's groups. What characteristics make women's groups more likely and better able to help in reaching this goal? In particular, which of these characteristics can be affected through the funding of small grants for women in development?

We can expect that a group which takes on the responsibility of handling a grant (or loan) of funds will not remain exactly the same. Changes will occur in certain categories of structure and perspective. The five categories proposed by this writer as the most useful evaluation criteria for small grants made to primary women's groups are: orientation, philosophy, structure, motivation, and ideology. The rest of this section will define and explore these five criteria further, with special attention to the type of women's group for which each is most likely to be useful as an evaluation concept.

1. Orientation: personal versus task

Each of the transition criteria can be considered a continuum rather than a dichotomy; this is perhaps most true for the orientation transition. Most primary groups will combine the purely personal or emotional with the achievement of a specific goal, or task. However, it is still possible to distinguish the two poles, and to try to locate the position of a women's group on the spectrum. The key question is: to what extent is the group involved in more than social activities? In other words, to what extent does it have a common goal that makes it more than simply a friendship group?

Taking the two types of small women's group described in Part A above, it is clear that, by definition, this transition would be more likely to matter in elite groups than in local groups. The basis for the former to be in existence at all is social, while the definition of the latter includes contact based on subsistence tasks.

2. Philosophy: social welfare versus self-help

This transition contrasts a social welfare philosophy with a focus on the concept of self-help. Perhaps the best known paradigm is "Give someone a fish and she will have fish for a day; teach her how to fish and she will have fish for a lifetime." The key question, then, would be: what is the commitment to palliating present hardships compared to the commitment to finding means of permanently alleviating that hardship?

Again in this case, the criterion would be better suited as an evaluation measure for elite groups than local ones. Local groups can be assumed to hold a self-help orientation, except in rare cases where they are sitting and waiting for their problems to be solved for them. Elite women's groups that consider doing charitable work for others less fortunate than themselves the height of public

service have not yet made the transition to a self-help philosophy that will eventually mean greater involvement in true development activities.

3. Structure: informal versus formal

This transition marks the full recognition by group members that the interests of the group transcend those of a collection of individuals in some crucial way. There is no single mark that distinguishes the formal from the informal group: it could be a group name, the selection of a delegate to represent the group's view to some other body, the election of officers, or even the seeking of an appropriate legal status. The key question to be asked is: has the group recognized itself as a formal unit in some way?

While this transition can occur in either local or elite groups, it may be more relevant for the former. The concept of formal organization will presumably come relatively easily to elite, educated groups of women, and thus evidence of a formal structure would not stand as an equal achievement in the two types of groups.

4. Motivation: external versus internal

There are two possible motivating forces for the deliberate gathering of a group. The meetings are initiated either by an outside organizer (e.g., government promoter, representative of a foreign private voluntary agency) or by one or more potential members of the group. In each case, there may be a progression from clear domination of the group by the initiator(s) to a democratic decision-making process. The key question to be asked concerning this transition is: to what extent is the presence of an outsider necessary to the continuing existence of the group?

This criterion can apply to either local or elite groups. In some regions of the world, however, "grassroots" women might feel less comfortable with the concept of their group's autonomy than educated women. If this were true, then this transition would be more useful in evaluating local groups than elite ones.

5. Ideology: group as end versus group as means

In Section II, the distinction was made between "development" objectives and "women in development" objectives. Each of the four transition criteria mentioned so far could be thought of as purely "development" issues. This last criterion is the most difficult to define and measure; the important question to be asked is: to what extent is the women's group committed to promoting women as participants in and beneficiaries of the development process? In other words, do members view the group and its activities as ends in themselves, or do they see the group as a means of achieving "women in development" objectives?

This criterion can apply equally to local groups and elite groups, as examples in the next section show. As we will see in Section VII, it can also apply to the donors that fund small groups and to the intermediate agencies that administer them.

The five transitions described in this section are suggested as evaluation criteria for small grants made for women in development. Not all criteria will be applicable to every group. Also, though it would certainly be possible to develop an intricate measurement scale for each transition criterion, the size of the grants being considered mean that this level of detail would constitute "overkill" in the evaluation. The measurement of the transitions hypothesized here should be kept as simple as possible, given the financial, time, and other constraints inherent in the evaluation of small

grants. For this reason, it is suggested that the key question given for each criterion be posed, and a qualitative answer be made, in the context of the evaluation method selected. The next two sections describe adaptations to standard evaluation methods and suggest ways in which the transition criteria can be utilized.

VI. Project level evaluation

A. Difficulties

The question of how best to evaluate the impact of a small grant for women in development is a difficult problem for a variety of reasons. Added to the inherent difficulties of evaluating any development project is the lack of an exact definition of "women in development" concerns. (See Section IV.) The very size of the grants under consideration is another complicating factor.

Since any evaluation is based on comparisons of actual against proposed achievements, in order to generalize about evaluation of these small grants in development, we must first generalize about the expected goals, objectives, and activities that might characterize these projects.

There is such diversity in the situations, priorities, and needs of women's groups around the world that it is extremely difficult to establish a general listing of the types of requests that might be filled by such small grants. As mentioned earlier, there is a good possibility that many requests will involve the supplies, equipment, training, or advice needed for women to successfully carry out income-generating activities: animal raising, sewing or handicrafts, etc. Separately, or combined with the income-generating objective, one might expect to see requests for labor-saving devices or "appropriate technology" innovations. Educational materials and/or meetings, assistance in constructing community centers or other needed facilities, or health-related improvements might be first priority in certain areas. Other possibilities include the running of seminars or training workshops, a visit to or from another group with similar interests and activities, or technical assistance in setting up a cooperative or some other specialized area. In some cases, a small grant could serve as the catalytic or completing factor required for further progress. In other cases, the grant might be enough to cover the entire cost of the desired object, service, or activity.

The broad range of possible requests is only one of the reasons why setting up a methodology for evaluation of these grants is difficult. Some other problems also stem from the nature of these particular

grants. As we saw in Section III above, each of these grants will have two different types of objectives - general development and women in development. Since there are few clear and simple indicators for some key women in development concepts (such as "status"), and since the ideal would be to obtain qualitative as well as quantitative information about the project and its results, one might at first consider using detailed survey and observation techniques. But this would probably bring the cost of the evaluation to several times the cost of the grant itself - an unhappy and paradoxical situation.

Other problems in evaluation would be applicable to any small amounts of funding. For example, setting realistic objectives for the expenditure of a small amount of money will necessitate removal by several levels from any overall development goals. Since the funding may be one-time or very short-term, or may provide only one key element in a larger picture, attributing change to the grant will be nearly impossible in many cases.

Given all these difficulties, what positive recommendations can be made regarding the needs and means of evaluating small grants for women in development? Two strategies are suggested: adapting standard evaluation procedures, and utilizing one transition criteria described in Section V. These are complementary, not mutually exclusive suggestions.

B. Suggested solutions: adapting standard evaluation methods and including transition criteria

There are many similar yet distinct frameworks for describing evaluation. One relatively simple one considers process (inputs and the activities carried out using them), outcome (the concrete product and also the intangible attitude changes that result), and the impact (planned and unplanned effects). A variety of methods and instruments (forms, questionnaires, site visits) can be used to gather the information required for this framework.

1. Before-and-after comparisons

Ideally, in order to attribute impact to the project activity, the situation of the project area and group before the project

begins should be determined by means of a survey. Simultaneously, the situation in a similar "control" area and group not receiving the grant should be tested. Their respective situations are compared after the project's completion. This is too sophisticated a procedure for the type of grants under discussion here, however, and except for adaptations made possible by "natural experiment" situations, it will not ordinarily be used. (See Section VII, program-level evaluation, page 31.)

However, there are ways to adapt the method of before-and-after comparisons so that they will be useful for small grants. Data can be collected in one of several ways. Leaders of the recipient groups could be trained to administer simple questionnaires to members, or at least be asked to answer certain questions about the group's "baseline" situation. Trained outsiders could make observation visits, or could administer questionnaires themselves. The questions to be asked from the general development point of view would depend on the type of project being requested: current income levels and distribution for an income-generating project, health status for a health-related grant, etc. If transition criteria are to be used in evaluation, questions and/or observations should also cover this aspect of the group's situation before the project begins.

Since many of the changes resulting from the grants will affect individual members at least as much as they affect the group as a whole, one possibility for evaluation is the selection before the project period of a few individuals in the group who would be followed, throughout the course of project activities and beyond, to see if changes occur in their attitudes, income, participation in the group or community, or other aspects related to the project. The danger here is that self-selection might bias results, since the group members who were friendliest, or most at east with an interviewer (and thus most likely to be selected for this method), might also be the ones who would participate most fully and be most likely to reap benefits from the project; this would have to be avoided by the selection of several different types of members. Also, merely knowing of the interviewer's interest

might affect the member's attitudes; preferably, the one or two individuals selected as "indicators" would not be the only ones with whom the interviewer speaks during each visit.

As the project activities (of which the small grant is either the unique or partial sponsor) conclude, there are more evaluation questions and steps to be considered. Again, through simple surveys, observation visits, or questioning of selected individuals, one would want to try to determine the grant's impact in terms of both its general development and its women-in-development objectives.

2. Reporting during the project

During the course of the project, regular reports should be required to assess project process. Were the funds granted actually spent as had been proposed? Were the scheduled meetings held, purchases made, services performed, skills learned, income earned? Were other elements of the project (besides the small grant) available as expected? If the grant covers such items as salary or fees, travel costs, education, expenses, etc., the performance questions to be asked will be clear. A distinction must be raised at this point, however. If the small grant is made, for instance, simply to purchase a piece of needed equipment, and the activities to be carried out are not directly dependent on the grant, then the donor-grantee relationship may or may not be assumed to continue past the time of purchase. If the donor wishes to maintain contact in order to allow for some evaluation of the expenditure, this should be made clear from the beginning of the grant-making process.

Even if the funds are granted for long-term (rather than one-time) expenditures, the small amounts involved will generally make process concerns difficult and costly to evaluate. Inexperience with complex forms on the part of the recipient group, and/or the great distance and infrequent contact between the group and the donor agency, can mean that only the most essential data about project process should be requested on reporting forms.

Transition criteria can still be included, however, through the use of questions specifically designed to elicit information about the progression of the group from one point to the next. In fact, the very act of including such questions in the reporting requirements can serve to introduce the concepts involved to those responsible for completing the forms and writing the reports.

3. Case study

Since it makes sense from an administrative point of view to have one intermediate agency making small grants to local groups (rather than having each small grant be administratively separate from every other one), the questions of evaluating the impact of individual small grants will also be discussed in the program-level evaluation section below. Adapting the case study method of gathering and assessing information about a project provides a good example of the benefits of looking at more than one grant at a time. Any individual grant could serve as the focus of an effort to show the history, internal dynamics, and external environment of the recipient group through a case study. However, if there are other, similar grants (or groups) within a program, the conclusions of the case study can be strengthened by broadening its scope to include the similar grants. Case studies are very appropriate for the small grants under consideration. They can be carried out by members of the group themselves, staff members from the program in which the grant is found, members of the funding agency, outside consultants hired for this purpose, or some combination of the above. The important feature of this method is that it allows, and in fact, encourages, the inclusion of factors not under the direct control of the group.

The questions of whether the group has experienced changes in any of the five key transition criteria would make an appropriate focus for a case study covering small grants for women in development.

4. Exchange of experience workshops

In theory, the general criteria on which the impact of a small grant for women-in-development may be evaluated include:

continuity of activity after all funds have been expended; spread effects, either within or outside the community in question; potential for replication; and effect on policy.

One particularly good means of both encouraging and assessing progress in each of these directions is the concept of an "exchange of experience" workshop. This would involve bringing together at a central location representatives of groups that are at some stage of the process of receiving a small grant for women-in-development. One might consider it valuable to mix representatives from different stages: the experiences of the groups that have completed their activities can be useful to the groups whose projects are still in progress, those groups just starting out can learn from both of the above, and groups at the point of considering what type of proposal to submit would be greatly aided by hearing about the ideas that have gone before. Inviting policy-makers to this type of meeting provides an excellent setting for two-way exchange. (See the IPPF/WHR Exchange of Experience report for a good example of this concept.) As an added feature, the very process of a local group's selecting a representative to attend such a meeting will in some cases affect its progress in the transition to a higher level of organization, and the mixing of representatives from elite groups and non-elite groups may help the former in their transition to a new self-help-oriented philosophy.

The importance of careful planning and the selection of sensitive people to act as facilitators for this kind of workshop cannot be overemphasized. Information relevant for every level of evaluation -- process, outcome, and impact -- can be solicited from even the most unsophisticated group representatives at the workshop if strategies and materials are thoughtfully prepared. The same is true for information about the transition criteria issues raised in Section V.

C. Two examples of use of transition criteria

An essential requirement for the success of the evaluation methods described is that the goals, objectives, and activities expected to

result from each grant be clearly specified and distinguished from each other before the grant is made. The small size of these grants, far from obviating the need for this clarity, makes it all the more crucial. For instance, it is far too easy to allow a listing of the training meetings to be funded by a grant to slip by as a simple statement of objectives for the grant. However, when the time comes for determining what participants actually learned during the training and how they are putting it to use, the standard that should have been set in the statement of objectives is missing, and evaluating achievement at that level difficult or impossible.

This is one area where the transition criteria for women's groups described in Section V can be of use. The criteria proposed can serve as a means of setting objectives that are clear, related to development but independent of the specific sector (agriculture, literacy, etc.) involved, and standardized even for groups that are very different from each other in location and composition. The following examples are intended to indicate the usefulness of transition criteria in evaluation.

One objective of making small grants to local women's groups might be to help the members begin to earn money of their own for the first time, say, by raising and selling rabbits. But what if a dreaded rabbit disease reaches this village, and wipes out every animal? Is the project automatically judged to be a failure? Yes, if earning income through raising rabbits was considered the sole objective according to which achievement is measured.

However, it is possible that, before the rabbits died, the activities required for getting the project underway were the catalytic factor in the group's decision to elect a president, secretary, and treasurer, and that after the disastrous conclusion to the rabbit-raising activity, the group went on to take up other, more successful ways of generating income. This happier conclusion using a structural criterion demonstrates the need to recognize progression from one stage of organizational development to the next as a valid objective of small grants for women in development.

To take a second example, this time with an elite women's group, we might imagine an urban-based organization made up of twenty or so educated, relatively wealthy women who have been meeting for several years. They have a group name, letterhead stationery, and regularly elected officers. Their main activity, in the past, besides meeting in each others' homes, has been the distribution of toys and clothing to needy children during holiday periods. Two of the members attend a short training course, during which they design a proposal for the group to obtain a small amount of funding for the purpose of teaching mothers in poor slums the basic principles of nutrition. The project is funded, and all the group members participate enthusiastically. The door-to-door visits to poor areas are carried out, during which brightly-colored educational materials are distributed. They are placed in a prominent spot on each recipient mother's wall; many refer to them often, and use them to plan food purchases and meals. It certainly seems that the project is a success from the standard point of view, but what has happened to the women's group? In their attitudes they have increased the distance between themselves and women who are less well off, rather than breaking down those mental barriers. This women's group has not progressed to a commitment of self-help philosophy; indeed, its small grant has probably entrenched it even more deeply than before in the social welfare mode of thought and action This will not, in the long run, help a country to reach its broad women in development goals.

The women's group in this last example probably would have eagerly adapted its project proposal to reflect more of a self-help attitude if the funder had engaged in some tactful negotiation. Showing others how to grow hardy vegetables adaptable to an urban environment might have made an appropriate complement to the project, for example, as would helping the mothers organize to buy in larger quantities at lower prices. This could have helped to instill a new set of attitudes in the elite women about their less privileged sisters, and might have led to other self-help activities in the future, and even to an understanding of the women in development ideology.

At the level of each group and its activities, the evaluation should also consider this ideology criterion -- that is, whether the grant brought to the group and its members a greater degree of orientation to the needs and contributions of women in the development process. As mentioned in Section V, this is a concern that is independent of the stage of development of a women's group. In the rabbit-raising example, the women's group may have received technical assistance from a government agricultural specialist for the first time, and then realized that they had the right to other services from which previously only the men in the community had benefitted. In the nutrition education example, the elite women may have recognized for the first time the high proportion of woman-headed households among the families they visited, and become concerned about the implications of that statistic for policies in employment, training programs, and so on.

The point to be made with these examples is the importance to the donor of specifically including the transition criteria in the objectives and the evaluation of small grants. These women in development issues can be raised for individual grants through one or more of the evaluation methods described in this section. We will see in the next section that they also apply to program level evaluation.

VII. Program level evaluation

A. Difficulties

Making grants of very small amounts within the range proposed here ($500 to $5,000) does not necessarily imply to the funder a proportionately small amount of work. For reasons not only of administrative convenience and efficiency but also those of evaluation strategy, it is a good idea that at least some small grants for women in development be clustered into a program rather than handled individually. (See Section II.)

The ideal is always for evaluation to be an integral part of any project. For example, the AID Project Evaluation Guidelines (page 36) describes evaluation as "part of a continuing management process consisting of planning, implementation, and evaluation," and states that it:

" - questions the relevance of the project itself;
- challenges all aspects of the project design;
- examines performance and adequacy of inputs and implementing agents;
- measures actual progress toward outputs, purpose, and goal;
- results in redesign and replanning actions."

This management process, and the feeding back of information gained from project-level evaluation, will be facilitated when the grants are linked to each other administratively.

Some problems involved in evaluation at the program level are the same as those at the grant level highlighted earlier: two sets of objectives to specify, intangible effects to consider, and adaptations to be made to standard evaluation methods. So many variables will be operating simultaneously with the program that it will not be possible to attribute to the program any progress noted toward some major development

goal (for example, improvement in nutrition levels or changes in fertility-related behavior).

Another important question to be raised is who is (are) the audience(s) for evaluation results: the small grant recipients, the program itself, the donor agency, academic researchers? It will not be possible to please all audiences at once, or provide relevant information to each of them with the same procedures. Decisions will have to be made about the priority of each potential audience and the level of funding available for evaluation before a final decision can be determined for any particular program of small grants.

B. Suggested adaptations of evaluation methods

1. Making comparisons among individual grants

It is possible to take advantage of the clustering of small grants for evaluation. This requires attention not only once the program is in full operation, but also during the design stage and during the approval process for individual grant requests. The idea is to adapt evaluation research methods by setting up a "natural experiment" situation.

Comparisons among grants can provide useful information if the grants are not too dissimilar. Lessons may be learned about points specifically related to development, such as the optimum number of beehives that a group of twenty rural women with many other duties can manage efficiently.

Issues relating to the transition criteria can also be investigated, such as how to facilitate a group's transition from external to internal motivation.

The use of true "control" groups, which do not receive any grant, is only possible if the need to evaluate carefully is so great that the extra expense would be worthwhile. (For a good example

of the pre-test, post-test control group design as applied to a slightly larger women in development project than the ones described here, see the Final Report on the Audio Cassette Listening Forum in Tanzania by Stanley and Lundeen.) The community characteristics, leadership personalities, etc., will never be exactly matched in any two project areas. However, the careful selection of grants for approval and subsequent inter-group comparisons can definitely improve evaluation results.

2. Assessing the program as a whole

The second question with respect to program-level evaluation is how the program itself (as distinct from its component grants) can be evaluated.

Each of the four methods given in the previous section can be applied to the program level. Progress reports might include performance information such as the number, amounts and purposes of grants made. A case study or exchange of experience workshop could either include program-level concerns alone, or could be combined with the use of these methods for the grant level.

Before-and-after comparisons of the agency administering the program can utilize the transition criteria in some cases. If the administration is done through a women's organization, the question is whether its involvement in the program is affecting its structure, philosophy, or degree of commitment to women in development concepts.

This last factor can be applied even when the administering agency is not a women's organization. For example, a consulting firm or private voluntary organization, selected to run such a program on the basis of its efficiency with community development efforts in the past, may not be particularly aware of the contributions that women actually make and the potential for further progress when women are included as both participants in and beneficiaries of

development projects. The experience of working with women's groups in running the program might lead the agency's staff, leaders, and members to recognize, rather than take for granted, the important roles that women play. This aspect of the program could be evaluated through efforts to examine the record of the agency's involvement in other women in development projects during a specified period before and after this program, and by careful questioning of selected individuals in the agency or organization before, during, and after the program's execution.

VIII. Conclusions

Funding small grants for women in development can be one part of a donor's overall strategy for promoting the goal of incorporating women into the development processes of their countries.

It is necessary to explicitly take into account the women in development objectives of the grants as well as the general development objectives.

Since the small size of the grants makes process evaluation difficult and since the most appropriate level for examining the impact of the grant is its effect on the group that receives it, the evaluation criteria and methods proposed focus on the recipient women's groups. Previous work on evaluating women in development projects is not directly applicable to the task of evaluating small grants.

Five criteria are proposed for setting objectives and determing change in women's groups that receive grants. The transitions to be encouraged by the grants are: from a personal to a task orientation; from a social welfare to a self-help philosophy; from an informal to a formal structure; from external to internal motivation; and from a lesser to a greater degree of orientation to the women in development ideology.

For each criterion, the answer to a simple question can serve as a rough indicator of a group's progress towards the later stage of the transition. More refined measures may be developed in the future if necessary.

The transition criteria questions can be posed using standard evaluation methods adapted for use with the small grants. Any of four methods may be valuable for individual grants: before-and-after comparisons, reporting from the project, a case study, an exchange of experience workshop. At the program level, both comparisons among the individual grants in the "natural experiment" situation formed by clustering grants, and an assessment of the program as a whole, are valuable strategies.

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