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AN EVALUATION OF THE
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS
WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT DATA PROJECT
(Amendment 2 to RSSA BuCen, March 1980)

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ABBREVIATIONS

AID	Agency for International Development
BuCen	Bureau of the Census
CDDS	Country Development Strategy Statement
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization (of the United Nations)
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank)
IDDC	International Demographic Data Center
ILO	International Labor Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
POP	Population
POPLAB	International Program of Laboratories for Population Statistics
PRB	Population Reference Bureau
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFS	World Fertility Survey
WID	Women in Development

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Women in Development (WID) Office of the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) commissioned Kathleen Newland, a social scientist, and Nancy E. Williamson, a demographer, to evaluate the Women in Development data project carried out by the Bureau of the Census (BuCen) under the joint sponsorship of the WID Office and AID Office of Population. The purpose of the evaluation was to assist these two offices in making decisions about future work on a WID data base and, specifically, to advise on the proposed continuation of the BuCen WID data project.

In assessing the BuCen WID data project, the evaluators were asked to consider three sets of questions:

1. Are the data provided by the Bureau of the Census of high quality? Are they the best available in terms of timeliness, reliability, and comprehensiveness?
2. How well does the data set provided by the Bureau of the Census meet the needs of various users of WID data? Are other data sets available that are more informative and more easily accessible?
3. What are the most appropriate next-steps toward strengthening the data base for women in development issues? Does the BuCen project have a further contribution to make to this process, and, if so, in what form?

The evaluators met in Washington on July 31 and August 1 for discussions with AID and Bureau of the Census staff members and others concerned with the WID data project. Additional interviews were conducted subsequently. (See Appendix A.) On August 8, the evaluators gave an oral briefing to AID staff and presented a preliminary review of their findings.

The Office of Women in Development provided a number of reports, memoranda, and related documents to the evaluators, as well as the available products of the BuCen WID data project. In addition to these materials, the evaluators examined a quantity of statistical and analytical documents produced by other organizations. (See Appendix B.)

Background to the Issue of WID Data Availability

Recognition of the need to develop a sound data base on women stems from two overlapping concerns: the concern with women's roles as contributors to (and sometimes victims of) the development process, and the

relatively new focus on equity and basic human needs in foreign assistance programs. Women make up a disproportionately large portion of the poorest of the poor, and they commonly bear the major responsibility for supplying themselves and their families with food, water, fuel, health care, sanitation, education, and the like. Women are, in effect, the "frontline" providers of basic needs. Development projects that overlook or misconstrue their capabilities and contributions run the serious risk of being ineffective, or worse.

Planners and administrators who have recognized the need to take women into account are often frustrated by the lack of solid, accessible statistical evidence of women's situation. In the absence of reliable data, decisions must be made on the basis of impressions, hunches, even prejudices. At stake are substantial investments of both human and financial resources. Statistics that are not disaggregated by sex provide little guidance for policy planning and little basis for judging the results of initiatives taken to further women's integration in development. Hence, the crucial need for a reliable, up-to-date, accessible data base on women in development.

II. REVIEW OF THE WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Amendment 2 to AID/Bureau of the Census RSSA 3-78 was signed at the end of August 1979. Work began in September on two products: a computerized file of 19 data tables for each of the 69 countries that are recipients of U.S. foreign assistance, and case studies of additional available data in three countries (Bolivia, Kenya, and Indonesia). Agreement was reached at a later stage on a third product: an illustrative booklet entitled "A Statistical Portrait of Women in Selected Developing Countries." All the products had been completed by the beginning of August 1980, except the data file, which did not contain data for six of the 69 countries. The file was expected to be completed within the month.

In evaluating the quality of the data file, the evaluators were handicapped by not being able to examine the actual product, since some of the data were still being posted and verified. The evaluators had a sample printed copy of the completed file on one country, Costa Rica. Their assessment of the file is based on this example and on interviews with those who compiled it.

The Census Bureau staff identified the sources for the data file as national censuses and surveys, statistical abstracts, and publications of international agencies, such as the International Labor Organization (ILO), the World Fertility Survey (WFS), the Latin American Demographic Center, etc. A primary concern was the quality of the data. Projections were not used, and great caution was taken in using estimates. Census data were generally accepted as valid. Survey data were used if they had been judged reliable by the country analysts in the BuCen International Demographic Data Center (IDDC), Data Evaluation Branch.

The charge has often been made that the Bureau of the Census is overcautious in its approach to survey data, and that it therefore ends up with data that are older than necessary. Because the evaluators did not have access to the actual data file, it was not possible to thoroughly investigate this charge. The BuCen staffers who worked on the compilation said they had no prejudice against survey data and did use them whenever appropriate. The chief of the IDDC noted that the more recent survey data that exist could be retabulated if the time and money were available for analysis.

It is clear that a great deal of work has been done to assemble and check the data. More than 1,300 tables have been compiled (though some remain blank, because of a lack of information). This accomplishment is fairly impressive, given the time allotted.

Some bottlenecks were encountered in keypunching, which slowed the transmission of the file to AID.

The complaint that the most timely data were not incorporated in the data file appears to be a reaction to the short booklet, "Illustrative Statistics." There are a few instances in this booklet where figures were used that had been superseded by more recent survey data--specifically, World Fertility Survey data. BuCen staff explained that this was an oversight, a product of extreme haste in preparing the booklet; they said also that the more recent figures were used on the computerized tape.

The quality of the booklet is compromised by errors such as that described above, although there is general agreement that the publication is a handy and reasonably appealing presentation. The analytical paragraphs accompanying the tables, though short, are useful in pointing out some problems with the available indicators and in highlighting the significance of some statistical patterns.

The three case studies included in the project were not considered to be a great success by the evaluators. They varied in technique and thoroughness, but in general did not display much sophistication in searching out data sources. This kind of task, in the opinion of the evaluators, would probably be better accomplished by a scholar with long acquaintance with the country in question, and it would be far more effective if carried out in the country rather than from Washington.

In sum, the Bureau of the Census seems to have accomplished some significant tasks in a short time. The products of the project have suffered to some extent and in varying degrees from constraints on time, money, and data. The most serious manifestation of the first of these was probably the impossibility of recruiting a stable, high-quality staff with a long-term interest in the subject at hand. The IDDC chief identified the slowness in signing the contract as a contributing factor to this problem; by the time the contract was in hand, most of the people who had been approached about working on it were committed elsewhere.

III. UNRESOLVED ISSUES

The BuCen WID data project's planning documents and the evaluator's interviews brought out varying (and somewhat vague) ideas about this project. An initial concern was that USAID planners in the field and in Washington sometimes reported that programs could not yet be directed toward women in developing countries until better information on women's situation was available. This suggested that building up a data base might alleviate the shortage of information in Washington and in the missions and, ultimately, lead to more concern for women and sounder programs. In addition, it was thought that if the data could be disaggregated, it might be possible to identify relationships between women, development, and a concern for equity and assistance in planning projects. The data might also be useful in evaluating the impact of programs on women.

An assumption was that the availability of data on women in developing countries might remind planners of the importance of incorporating women in their programs, help suggest programs, and speed up the orientation of more development programs toward women. In other words, the project was expected to have a "consciousness-raising" function.

A more specific concern was to build up a solid set of data on characteristics of women in developing countries which could be updated when new information (e.g., 1980 census data) became available. The data might also be useful for researchers in comparing the situations of women in different countries or regions.

Given a single, small project such as the WID BuCen data project, one can scarcely expect to strongly affect the planning process in the field or in Washington. There are numerous inherent difficulties in obtaining up-to-date and comparable secondary information for many countries. Perhaps more modest goals would be more appropriate. One goal might have been to highlight and publicize basic data available to AID missions, generalists in the development community, and program planners who might be interested in comparisons within regions and comparisons between women and men. Another goal could be to create the demand for more detailed and sophisticated information on women in the future, especially if future publications point out current gaps in information.

The 1980 round of censuses will provide more information, as will the country-specific studies now being done in many countries. The data base would provide a solid benchmark of what was available from the 1970s and could serve as a source for future comparisons.

Users

The users of the WID BuCen data base were variously identified in planning documents as AID/Washington, AID mission, or regional staff, program or project planners, evaluators, researchers, and other donors. The needs of these groups are not necessarily identical. No systematic attempt was made to determine what kinds of information would be most useful to these groups of users.

Expanding beyond aid-recipient countries would make the data base more useful for researchers and other donors. Because of the lack of detail, the data would not be very useful for project planning and it is possible that only a few missions would use the information in their annual Country Development Strategy Statements (CDSS), since many missions would be closer to the data for their own countries than the compilers in Washington. Regional comparisons might reemphasize the continued existence of certain problems, such as the relatively low life expectancy of females in South Asia.

In the future, it would be valuable to find out what the data needs of these (or other) groups are. However, this task cannot be done immediately. In the meantime, there might be agreement that the primary audience might be members of the international development community who would like an overview of the basic situation of women in different regions and who would want to be alerted to the weaknesses of the data and be directed toward the kind of data that should be collected in the future. Some missions, especially those with smaller staffs, might find that up-to-date national figures are useful in program planning. If the number of countries could be expanded, secondary researchers might also cite a handbook.

Level of Disaggregation

For project planners in particular, data that have been disaggregated by region, province, or state, by age and sex, by ethnic group, by occupation, by land ownership, by urban-rural, by religion, or by ecological area are often more practical than national-level data. However, in a project such as the BuCen WID data project, which tries to cover a great many countries and to incorporate survey data that cannot be disaggregated on many variables, the extent of disaggregation becomes problematical.

A possible compromise between disaggregating only by age, sex, and urban-rural and by many other possible variables would be to disaggregate further only for larger countries, which almost always break down data by

certain divisions. In Indonesia, Java and Bali often are lumped together and contrasted with the outer islands. Malaysia distinguishes between East and West Malaysia. There would be some arbitrariness about whether to disaggregate in a particular country and how often, but the availability of data would help in making this decision.

It is probably impractical to anticipate the needs of planners for specific disaggregations, and it might be better to solicit and respond to specific requests.

Overlap with Other WID Data Projects

Georgetown University has a subcontract from the Population Reference Bureau (PRB) to compile, analyze, and make readily available population data. Included in its holdings are data on women's labor-force participation, school enrollment, and fertility.

The university has promptly assembled data for a WID project on female labor-force participation and it is developing visual displays of data on an Apple II computer. Some of the data in their holdings are from similar sources, as are some of the BuGen data (e.g., the International Labor Organization), but the extent of computerization is greater at Georgetown.

The Population Reference Bureau has prepared and disseminated a concise data sheet on women in both developed and developing countries. This reference sheet makes information widely available on women's situation and includes data from a much larger number of countries, projected up to 1980. It compares men and women and allows regional comparisons and comparisons between more and less developed countries.

However, it provides no interpretation of the data and does not rank or specifically evaluate the quality of the data, except for the following general disclaimer: "Users of this Data Sheet are cautioned that many of the figures shown are rough estimates based on scanty or defective data. This is particularly true for the less developed countries. In some instances, figures are derived from demographic models and thus may be the same for several countries." The figures are in tabular form. Some of the patterns might have been clearer if graphs had been made.

There is definitely some overlap in the WID BuGen project and the Georgetown/Population Reference Bureau work. The Georgetown/PRB capacity to store and display computerized data exceeds that of BuGen at this time. But many users might not be able to take advantage of the computerized data, at least not at this time. Georgetown is not equipped to help everyone who would like to find out about data on women. Users outside

Washington, and even those in Washington, might not be aware of Georgetown's holdings. Furthermore, at this time, only a data bank is available; the user would have to do his or her own analysis and interpretation. Thus, a product such as a handbook (or set of regional handbooks) is likely to reach a different group of users. If the handbook included an introductory chapter with interpretations, analysis, and discussion of the quality of data, there would be no overlap with Georgetown's operation.

The World Fertility Survey also has collected information on women in developing countries. This effort should not be considered overlapping, but essential to the success of the WID data base, since WFS data should be included, whenever possible, in the data base. BuCen has used WFS information in its country profiles and will, presumably, continue to do so in the future. The exclusion of some WFS data from the illustrative pamphlet prepared for Copenhagen appears to have been an oversight.

Timeliness of Data

Although the staff at BuCen would like to extend the time series of data backward to the extent possible, AID appears to be demanding more up-to-date information. Given the rapidity of change in many developing countries, it would appear that the goal of trying to obtain the most recent data whenever possible is a good one. Survey results may not always be appropriate, especially if the survey did not cover the desired population (for example, one would not normally get information on current school enrollment from a WFS project). But survey results should be used whenever possible and when appropriate. A 1970 census figure on the percent of child-bearing women who were literate might be cited along with a more recent survey figure.

An unresolved question is whether a data base should include projections. The PRB data sheets do use projections and hence can give numbers for the current year for all countries, regardless of when the data were collected. The value of a data base is in the actual data upon which others might base projections. Projections should probably be avoided in the future, if only to provide some alternative to those data sets that rely on projections. This does imply, however, that some countries will have no information for a decade or more.

IV. COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluators recommend that the BuCen WID data project be continued for an initial period of approximately one year, possibly beginning in the spring, summer, or fall of 1981. The recommended goal is twofold: to complete a machine-readable tape holding all the data generated by the project and to produce a handbook, or series of handbooks, presenting the data in a critical and analytical framework.

The complete set of 19 tables for all the developing countries included in the project should be (and perhaps by now already have been) put on a tape in the ESDS system in a form suitable for analysis. The data file should be updated to the maximum extent possible, and the format should permit entry of new data as they become available. Several potential users expressed the hope that the data would be capable of manipulation beyond the tables established by BuCen. The WID office in AID should be responsible for ensuring that the tape is accessible and integrated with other AID holdings.

The handbook is envisioned as a publication (or series of publications, if a single volume is judged to be unwieldy) similar to the Bureau of the Census' 1978 volume, "A Statistical Portrait of Women in the United States." It should contain the most recent data of acceptable quality, as well as a limited set of earlier data--perhaps the most recent census or survey and the one preceding it. Most potential users feel that adding earlier years would not be useful. Given the limited availability of source data, the evaluators feel that expanding the number of variables beyond the 19 already included would not be fruitful.

The following suggestions for the organization of a handbook might be considered:

- Comparisons for men and women should be presented, as in the "Illustrative Statistics" booklet.
- Regional comparisons might be emphasized, even to the point of producing separate handbooks for each of the AID regions.
- The source of each item of information should be specified.
- Survey data should be included whenever possible and integrated with other sources when appropriate.
- If possible, the number of countries included should be expanded beyond the 69 aid recipients to be as comprehensive as possible.

- The handbook should contain both graphic and tabular presentations of the data in as attractive a format as possible.
- The volume should contain definitions of all measures, rates, concepts, etc.
- The data for each country should be circulated to a knowledgeable person to ensure that no data sources have been overlooked.
- In some cases, it may be useful to cite the exact question(s) used in a survey or census.

The evaluators feel strongly that any handbook that is produced should contain an analytical foreword that would draw attention to interesting or anomalous results, discuss the limitations of the data, and point out gaps in information and data needed for the future. Throughout, the quality of the data and the problems inherent in conventional measures should be strongly emphasized.

When possible, illustrative studies or other information could be cited to qualify the data and to highlight conflicting interpretations. For example, a low female labor-force participation rate from a particular country's census data might be contrasted with a time-budget study that suggests women expend a great deal of labor in agriculture. Without this kind of interpretive framework, a handbook of data on women could be worse than useless; it could be positively misleading. With such analysis, it could go a long way toward correcting some of the misconceptions about women's roles and status.

Key to the production of a useful handbook that could be made accessible to a large community is a knowledgeable and interested project director. The evaluators have some doubt that the project could be successfully completed if such a person is not recruited for the duration of the second phase. Therefore, sufficient lead time and flexibility on the starting date should be allowed so that the Bureau of the Census can recruit the appropriate staff. While the final products are being produced, the WID office should carefully plan and budget for the dissemination of the project results.

Much unfinished business remains to be done to make women's contributions, capabilities, and special problems apparent to policymakers. The BuCen WID data project is only a small step, but it is a step in the right direction. The evaluators feel that if the project is continued under the right conditions, as outlined above, greater benefit would be derived from the work that has already been done, and perhaps the way would be paved for fuller use of the data gathered during the 1980 censuses.

Appendix A
LIST OF PERSONS CONSULTED

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<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Samuel Baum	Chief, International Demographic Data Center	BuCen
James Brackett	DS/POP/DEMO	USAID
Sarah Clark	DS/POP	USAID
Richard Collins	Center for Population Research	Georgetown University
Paula Goddard	WID	USAID
Lois Godiksen	ESDS	USAID
Douglas Heisler		Population Reference Bureau
Jane Jaquette	WID	USAID
Kevin Kinsella	IDDC	BuCen
Roma Knee	LAC/DP	USAID
Tim Lorimer	IDDC	BuCen
Marjorie Lueck	IDDC	BuCen
Thomas Merrick	Chief, Center for Population Research	Georgetown University
Maurice Moore	IDDC	BuCen
Ann Orr	IDDC	BuCen
Deborah Pomerantz		DuaLabs
Sara Seims	DS/POP	USAID
Peggy Shaw	AF	USAID
Emmy Simmons	PPC/PDPR/RO	USAID
Joseph Speidel	DS/POP	USAID

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Nina Vreeland	PPC/Evaluation	USAID
H. Bradley Wells		PopLab
Nadia Youssef		ICRW
Meyer Zitter	Assistant Director, International Programs	duCen

Appendix B
DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

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DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Population Reference Bureau

World's Women Data Sheet, 1980.
Family Planning and Marriage Data Sheet, 1970-1980.

Dualabs

Census Data on Women: An Analysis of Data Needs, Availability, and Use,
Prepared for Office of Population, USAID, by Data Use and Access
Laboratories (no date).

Biocentrics

Draft Guidelines for Focusing the Immediate Data Collection Efforts
of the Women in Development Office (no date).

Progress Toward an AID Data Base on Women in Development,
December 31, 1977.

Current Status, Women-in-Development Indicators, October 12, 1979.

Memorandum, Mary Blomquist (Biocentrics) to Arvonne Fraser (AID/WID),
re AID/OTR 147-79-101, February 29, 1980.

Memorandum, Mary Blomquist to Arvonne Fraser and Jane Jaquette
(AID/WID), re AID/OTR 147-79-101, May 23, 1980.

International Center for Research on Women

"The Productivity of Women in Developing Countries: Measurement Issues
and Recommendations," April 1980.

Bureau of the Census

A Statistical Portrait of Women in the United States: 1978, Current
Population Reports, Special Studies, Series P-23, No. 100, February
1980.

Country Demographic Profiles, Republic of Korea (June 1978) and
Thailand (April 1978).

Tables produced from "test" tape on Costa Rica using SAS Statistical Package, May 1980.

Illustrative Statistics on Women in Selected Developing Countries, Prepared for WID/AID, June 1980.

Women in Development--Final Report, Progress Report on the Women in Development Data System Project, June 30, 1980.

IBRD

World Tables, 2nd ed., World Bank, 1980.

World Development Report, 1980.

U.N. Secretariat

"Sex-Based Stereotypes, Sex Biases and National Data Systems," June 11, 1980.

Selected World Demographic Indicators by Countries, 1950-2000, Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, May 28, 1975.

UNDP

Rural Women's Participation in Development, Evaluation Study No. 3, June 1980.

ILO

"La participation des femmes a l'activité économique dans le monde (Analyse Statistique)," March 1980.

OECD

Derek W. Blades, "Non-Monetary (Subsistence) Activities in the National Accounts of Developing Countries," Paris: OECD, Development Center, 1975.

FAO

Monica Fong, "Victims of Old-Fashioned Statistics," Ceres, May-June 1980.

Population Council

Annual Report, 1979.

"Learning About Rural Women," Studies in Family Planning (Special Issue), November-December 1979.

USAID

Published Papers

Ruth B. Dixon, "Jobs for Women in Rural Industry and Services," September 1979.

Ingrid Palmer, "The Nemov Case," Case Studies of the Impact of Large-Scale Development Projects on Women: A Series for Planners, Working Paper No. 7, September 1979.

Ruth B. Dixon, "Assessing the Impact of Development Projects on Women," AID Program Evaluation Discussion Paper No. 8, May 1980.

Internal Documents, Working Papers, and Memoranda

Guidance for the Country Development Strategy Statement (CDSS). Memorandum, September 16, 1978.

CDSS for Costa Rica, FY 82-86, January 1980.

CDSS for Jamaica, FY 82, January 1980.

CDSS for Philippines, FY 82, January 1980.

"Interim Evaluation of 1980 Record of Censuses (932-0622): Contractor-Data Use and Access Laboratories," July 29, 1979; Memorandum, Sara Seims to F. Campbell.

John Kanter, et al., "Evaluation of the Census Bureau's Computation and Analysis of Population Data Project 932-0649," July 1979.

Memorandum, Elsa Chaney to Members of Task Force on Improvement of National Statistics on Women in the LDCs, May 26, 1980; re Background on proposed projects.

PIO/T 3297 523 to provide 1979 funding to amend BuGen RSSA, March 1978.

Memorandum, Lois Godiksen to File, September 6, 1979; re Scope of Work for BuCen RSSA 3-78, Amendment No. 2.

RSSA BuCen 3-78, Amendment No. 2, and Cover Letter, J. W. Auer (AID) to Vincent T. Barabba (BuCen).

Memorandum, Lois Godiksen to File, September 26, 1979; re ESDS-WID-BuCen meeting of 9/20/79 to discuss initial work to be carried out under RSSA BuCen 3-78, Amendment No. 2.

Rae Lesser Blumberg and Lois H. Godiksen, "Toward a Conceptual Framework for Development with Equity: Incorporating New Paradigm's and Priorities" (mimeo), November 1979.

Memorandum, Lois Godiksen, January 25, 1980; re Concluding work to be done under BuCen RSSA 3-78, Amendment No. 2.

Memorandum, Jane Jaquette, May 8, 1980; re Proposal to extend BuCen WID data base project.

Reactions to case-study segment of RSSA BuCen 3-78, Amendment No. 2, from Kathleen A. Staudt, Tim Mahony, Emny Simmons, Sara Seims.

Reactions to proposal for extension of BuCen WID data base project, from Barbara Pillsbury, Peggy Shaw and Jerry Weaver.

Memorandum, Kevin Kinsella (BuCen) to Samuel Baum (Chief, IDDC of BuCen), June 2, 1980; re WID monthly activity report for May 1980.

Memorandum, J. W. Brackett to J. J. Speidel, August 6, 1980; re BuCen report on women.

Other

Georgianne Baker (Arizona State University), "Cross-Cultural/International Research Inventory: Present Status, Needed Action," Paper Presented to 71st Annual Meeting of the American Home Economics Association, Dallas, Texas, June 23, 1980.