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FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN
TO THE YEAR 2000: NATIONAL EXPERIENCE RELATING TO THE
IMPROVEMENT OF THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN RURAL AREAS

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 40/106 of 13 December 1985, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare, in consultation with the Member States, a comprehensive report on the present status and prospects for improving the situation of rural women, paying special attention to:

- (a) Participation of rural women in socio-economic and political life;
- (b) The exercise by rural women of their rights;
- (c) Role of agricultural co-operatives in the improvement of the situation of women;
- (d) Agrarian reform, particularly in favour of rural women;
- (e) Elimination of illiteracy among rural women and upgrading of their educational level;
- (f) Assistance to rural women in improving their situation.

2. The Secretary-General circulated a questionnaire to all Member States on 19 July 1988. Replies were received from 45 Governments: Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Cameroon, Canada, Chad, China, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, France, German Democratic Republic, Greece, Guinea, Hungary, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Nepal, New Zealand, Madagascar, Morocco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United Republic of Tanzania. These replies were analysed and presented to the International Seminar on Women and Rural Development: Programmes and Projects, which was convened at Vienna from 22 to 26 May 1989, in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 1988/29 of 26 May 1988. The seminar also considered case-studies prepared by national experts. The seminar's recommendations take into account the information presented in the analyses and the case-studies.

3. In order to incorporate the results of the Seminar in the present report, the Secretary-General proposed to the Economic and Social Council that it be submitted directly to the General Assembly (E/1989/70). The Council concurred, in its decision 1989/130. Accordingly, the conclusions and recommendations of the Seminar are contained in the annex to the present report.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

4. In 1985, rural women comprised around 60 per cent of the total world's women and 70 per cent of the women in developing countries. They also accounted for two fifths of the economically active population in agriculture, in which they have a particular role as food producers.

5. Agriculture in developing countries tends to be characterized by a dual structure in which a modern part produces primarily for export and the larger, more traditional part produces for domestic consumption. The lower level of development in the traditional sector has allowed food deficits to persist in many countries, with resulting choices between hunger or using scarce foreign exchange for food imports. Rural poverty is a major cause of rural-urban migration and acts as a brake on the development of indigenous industrial production. It is in this traditional agricultural sector that women are the major component, as a source of labour and, more recently as a result of male migration, as farm managers. Without dealing with the situation of rural women, rural development, and therefore broader national development, is impeded.

6. The experts' conclusions presented in the annex reflect this view. The Secretary-General wishes to underscore several of the points made by the experts.

A. Women and sustainable rural development

7. Rural development has been a concern of Governments and the international community for many years, and considerable experience has been acquired through a wide variety of programmes and projects. It has been recognized that rural development must address social concerns. However, there has also been a tendency to assume that rural development is gender-neutral. In fact, mounting evidence suggests that rural women play a different role in the process than rural men. If these differences are not taken into account in planning rural development, the prospects of success are considerably reduced. This can be seen in land reform, where measures have disproportionately benefited men who have been considered heads of household, often at the expense of their spouses through the loss of traditional rights to land ownership or usufruct. It can also be seen in the introduction of technology to men only. This has not only displaced women in some types of rural employment, but has reduced the contribution that women make to rural production. The lesson learned from this is that if rural development is to be effective and successful, its planning must take full cognizance of women's role, needs and potentials. This implies supporting, in a sustainable way, women's coping strategies in both agricultural and non-agricultural activities.

1. Sustainability

8. It has been easier to begin to implement policies and projects aimed at promoting rural development than to sustain them. While most attain some success when they are launched, improvements frequently do not last. For any economic activity to be effective and satisfactory in the long run, it must be sustainable. This is relevant for rural development in two different respects: for agricultural production as a whole, and for income-generating projects in particular.

9. For agricultural production as a whole, sustainability means that the factors of production (the natural fertility of land, water, wood) must be renewed regularly. This implies land conservation and afforestation measures as a matter

of routine and the identification of farming systems that protect the environment. As farmers and wood gatherers, women must participate in designing and implementing these kinds of programmes.

10. Projects intended to generate income, particularly those designed for women, have come under considerable criticism recently because of their failure to initiate a self-sustaining process of growth. Many activities promoted by the projects have ceased after their external sources of funding have ended, and this has led to widespread feelings of frustration and distrust of external intervention among their intended beneficiaries.

11. In order to ensure the sustainability of income-generating projects, close attention should be given to institutional arrangements for taking over the activities started by these projects in project formulation. Projects must also be funded adequately. This is frequently not the case with projects designed for women, in which a substantial part of the labour is not included in the project budget in the expectation that it will be performed by volunteers. They should also be formulated with the participation of the women beneficiaries and on the basis of gender-specific data collected for that purpose. Pre-feasibility and feasibility studies should be carried out, particularly for investment projects, and attention should be given to selecting appropriate national counterparts.

2. Women's coping strategies

12. In their daily struggle for survival, which the present economic situation has made even more difficult, rural women have been pursuing imaginative and creative strategies. These often place emphasis on voluntary groups, networks and self-help efforts, and rely on a mix of economic activities in agriculture and industry, in the countryside and in the cities, carried out by the different members of the household according to their position in the life cycle. Rural development strategies should support these coping strategies.

13. In doing so, however, care must be taken to promote only those activities which are not obsolete and which development will not automatically eliminate. Women's income-generating projects too often assist women in carrying out their traditional tasks with traditional and non-competitive techniques. It is therefore essential that Governments and international organizations promote coping strategies that can be competitive and self-sufficient in the long run.

14. Although the recognition of women's coping strategies is important, it would be unrealistic to rely too much on the capacity of rural women alone to solve, for themselves and their families, problems that existed before the current difficult economic situation and have been exacerbated by it. Studies of the differential impact of famine and drought on women and men in poor families have indicated that it is the women who are often expected to find a way to make do when family members are unemployed or absent, and many have done so under the most difficult circumstances. But there is a limit to individual resourcefulness, particularly when the individual's own health, information and external support are inadequate.

3. Rural industrialization

15. Over the last four decades, quite contrary to some expectations, employment in agriculture has increased in developing countries. It had been feared that agricultural modernization would imply mechanization and thus reduce the demand for salaried labour, while the peasantry would be unable to withstand the competition of the modern sector and slowly disappear. Instead, mechanization changed the composition of the demand for labour, increasing the number of seasonal and skilled workers. At the same time, labour absorption in small farming increased, more because of population pressure than production requirements. The spillover of surplus agricultural population to industry did take place, but more slowly than expected.

16. This trend is likely to persist. The additional labour force that will be brought into the market by rapid population growth will not find suitable employment in agriculture in the foreseeable future. Part of the solution to the employment problem in the rural areas of developing countries must be based, therefore, on the expansion of off-farm employment in industrial and service activities.

17. At present, opportunities for industrial employment in rural areas are very scant. They should be promoted through the provision of credit and technical assistance to micro-business, the enactment of laws in favour of small entrepreneurs and training for staff and managers of those businesses in technical skills, management and bookkeeping. It is therefore very important to ensure that, as a matter of policy, these opportunities are made available to women.

B. Integrating women in mainstream development policies, programmes and projects

18. In the 1970s and early 1980s, policies and programmes aimed to promote women's economic activities were often designed exclusively for women. One reason for this was that global and sectoral development planning typically ignored women's needs and requirements. Programmes and policies only for women were one means to pursue women's interests and make policy makers aware of women's special role in the economy. It is now opportune to reassess the approach. The experience accumulated over almost two decades in the design and execution of such projects and the findings of important research conducted on the role played by women in the economy have been widely disseminated nationally and internationally. As a result, policy makers have become more sensitive to women's demands and aware of women's potential contribution to production. The projects designed only for women have performed their task of apprising policy makers of women's needs, but have fared less well in improving their economic position. Such activities tend to be marginal in their effect when compared to development planning at the national levels. Consequently, they receive limited political and financial support. In addition, they tend to perpetuate the distinction between male and female resources and roles on which inequality is based. There has for some time been an emerging preference for incorporating women's concerns into mainstream policies and projects.

19. The danger in "mainstreaming" is that, without careful monitoring, it can mean disappearance of women's concerns by assuming that they are not distinct from those of men. Ensuring that this will not occur requires careful use of information about gender differences in rural society and economy in project design, monitoring and evaluation. It also requires institutional mechanisms to provide that information, both from programme and project designers and implementers and from their intended beneficiaries.

20. It is to ensure that "mainstreaming" works that projects designed specifically for women are needed as bridging strategies: for example, when local practice strongly resists the association in public of unrelated males and females; when the prevailing sexual division of labour is such that some tasks are carried out only by women; and when girls and women need special programmes to overcome past discrimination and help them catch up with men. In this and similar circumstances, women-only projects are appropriate.

21. In order to ensure that women's concerns are taken into account in mainstream projects, it is also essential to strengthen women's voluntary associations and formal organizations. Vesting greater power in such organizations increases the likelihood that mainstream projects designed to meet women's needs and make use of women's potential do, in fact, attain these ends.

C. The role of the international community

22. While rural development must be based mainly on co-operation between rural households at the local level and national Governments, there is a role for the international community to assist and support the initiatives taken by national authorities and local organizations by providing financial and technical assistance to requesting Governments. The forms that such international co-operation may take are varied and cover the whole range of sectoral and multi-sectoral actions required for development. Many specific recommendations are made in the report of the experts. Among them, two can be particularly recommended for immediate action by the United Nations itself: (a) training of personnel and other measures to strengthen national machineries, and (b) improving the data available to decision makers to define integrated policies and development projects that take full account of women's concerns.

1. Training and national machineries

23. The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women 1/ assigned to national machineries the crucial functions of assisting national Governments in formulating policies and programmes that promote the advancement of women and of supporting women's voluntary organizations in attaining their political, economic and social aims. National machineries exist in most Member States. Their effectiveness, however, varies considerably. They are usually located in the national capital, where they are more effective than in rural areas, but they are not always placed near the centres of power nor are they usually composed of staff with a full range of specializations. They usually lack the institutional or financial support necessary to perform their duties. As a result,

they may not be able to obtain and mobilize the information needed to reorient national planning and reformulate projects in order to take women's needs into account. National machineries are often unable to provide the guidance needed for policy-making or to give the support demanded for project formulation, monitoring and evaluation in rural areas.

24. To enable them to perform their tasks satisfactorily, their technical capabilities must be strengthened. It is particularly urgent to train them in gender-specific data collection and in handling information systems. The international community should assist national machineries by providing them this training.

25. Training for national decision makers is also essential. Among the causes of the failure of projects designed to generate income for women and of the insensitivity of mainstream policies and projects to women's concerns are underbudgeting and the lack of knowledge of women's roles. Both of these are due, to some extent, to the lack of enthusiasm of many policy makers in development assistance agencies and national Governments for women's policies and projects. Training could help modify these attitudes by demonstrating the different income distribution patterns between spouses in many countries and the ensuing need for women and men to secure independent incomes. It could also show that projects that take women's concerns into account can be just as successful as other projects and, indeed, sometimes more successful, as is the case with rotating credit schemes. The content of this training would have to be defined country by country and according to the different training needs of the policy makers. The international community should provide assistance in training trainers not only on the substance of women's issues but also in teaching techniques, means, methods and materials.

26. One of the teaching materials of greatest importance that the international community could help to prepare is information on projects that have proved successful in promoting rural development and the advancement of rural women.

2. Improving the knowledge and information base

27. There is a widespread feeling among policy makers that the research needed for good planning is already available, and there is some justification for this. Since 1975, considerable work has been carried out on women's share in economic and household activities, and this has contributed to the spreading awareness of women's substantial contribution to the economy. The type of applied research that is necessary to define integrated policies and to design mainstream development projects is, however, still largely absent. Gender-specific data are needed on decision-making patterns within households, the sources and amounts of income related to farm and non-farm employment in cash and kind, and expenditure patterns, in addition to data on the division of labour in the household and in productive activities. This data would allow project designers to identify the activities to be carried out by men and women beneficiaries and assess the potential benefits accruing to each.

28. An important obstacle to the collection and analysis of such data is cost. Accordingly, it is important to develop data collection methods that combine low cost with high reliability. While research on the formulation of policies and design of projects sensitive to women's needs will have to be carried out at the national level, the international community should assist national machineries and focal points in line ministries by suggesting cheap and reliable methodologies for data collection. The research work already done should be synthesized and widely disseminated, through seminars, expert group meetings and technical assistance missions to developing countries. Additional research should be carried out as needed.

III. MAJOR ISSUES AND POLICY OPTIONS FOR RURAL WOMEN

29. Many of the issues involved in the situation of rural women were discussed in the report of the Secretary-General to the Commission on the Status of Women in 1988 (E/CN.6/1988/4). From these and the national replies received to the questionnaire, the international seminar identified a number of issues of concern, which can be classed as those arising from national and international experiences during the 1980s and those likely to emerge in the coming decade.

A. Lessons from the 1980s

1. Recognition of women's economic importance

30. One of the most significant achievements of the research conducted on rural women, largely as a result of the United Nations Decade for Women, has been the recognition of their substantial contribution to the economy. Most of the responses to the questionnaire confirmed this. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has indicated that, in 1985, women constituted 42.3 per cent of the economically active population in Africa, 28.4 per cent in the Far East, 28.1 per cent in the Near East, 11.9 per cent in Latin America, 46.0 per cent in Asian centrally planned countries, and 40.5 per cent in other developing countries - a total of 37.7 per cent for all developing countries.

31. These high rates have been recorded in spite of the well known fact that women's involvement in agriculture is often underestimated, owing to inappropriate definitions of the concepts of work or workers, consequent interviewer bias, women's multiple roles that can influence the replies to the interviewer and seasonality of employment. In all regions, the micro-studies in which rural women were reinterviewed have yielded dramatically higher figures for economically active women than those in various censuses. This leads one to believe that, in Africa, for instance, women are the clear majority of the population economically active in agriculture, constituting 60 per cent to 80 per cent of it in most countries. This is attributable to some extent to the high rate of migration of men to cities, which leaves women as effective heads of households and managers of their farms.

2. Some policy highlights: co-operatives and agrarian reform

32. Co-operatives and agrarian reform are among the most effective means to promote agricultural development. Efforts have been made to secure women's participation. Co-operatives consisting only of women are, however, often short of capital and technology, while mainstream co-operatives seldom place women in management positions. Women are also often excluded from membership in co-operatives because they lack land titles. There are, however, several countries that have promoted the participation of women in rural co-operatives by changing the appropriate legislation.

33. In many countries of Asia, there are co-operative organizations for the mobilization of rural women for socio-economic development. Organizations of rural women, especially of the landless, and women's informal savings and loan associations have proved to be effective in providing for women. In Africa, informal self-help groups have been transformed into more formalized institutions, sometimes under the guidance of the official women's unit, to assume control over economic resources. In some countries, such organizations have also benefited the community at large, by increasing independent incomes to women, by offering credit from pooled resources at low interest, and by decreasing middle-level intervention in marketing and credit. Case-studies in four West African and three East African countries revealed that women's access to loans was limited more by lack of collateral (land title) than by formal restrictions. In Latin America, rural women have been able to form organizations that defend and promote their rights.

34. Most replies received on women and agrarian reform were from developing countries. In general, women have not benefited directly from agrarian reform policies. In fact, in many agrarian reforms, only heads of households can be beneficiaries, and women are seldom considered heads of household when the household comprises an adult male. The concept of head of family or household discriminates against women and undermines married women's rights to a joint share.

3. Women's participation in social and political life

35. Although very few Governments provided gender-specific voting statistics on voting, all replies reported that women enjoyed the same political rights as men and had the right to vote and to be elected. Many also reported measures taken to ensure that rural women were aware of their civil and political rights and obligations.

36. Within the framework of these rights, women's participation in social and political life has varied considerably from country to country, depending on their role in domestic life and reproductive activities and on the norms in each culture that define women's life outside the household. There has been an upward trend in the absolute number of rank-and-file rural women members of all parties and trade unions, but the participation of rural women in major non-governmental organizations not dealing with women's affairs was low. This made it difficult for women and women's organizations to make themselves heard in decision-making processes on rural development. There was also a noticeable absence of rural women

in national and local legislative bodies and in the higher echelons of the civil service. The participation of rural women in political life appears to be more limited than that of men. In some countries women are reported to participate frequently in government at the local and national level in political parties, trade unions and non-governmental organizations.

37. Appropriate national machinery for the effective integration of women in the development process has been either insufficient or lacking. Where the machinery existed, it often lacked the resources, focus, responsibility and authority to be effective.

38. With regard to the elimination of illiteracy among rural women and upgrading of their educational level, most Governments have removed formal barriers to entry into school systems and provided equal access to education for both girls and boys. As well as being a severe handicap to women as individuals, illiteracy seriously limits their contribution to development. The overall decrease in illiteracy is related mainly to a general increase in school enrolment. All countries have recorded an increase between 1970 and 1980 and between 1980 and 1985.

4. The world economic situation and adjustment

39. In countries with high inflation, public deficit and stagnation, there was a need for stabilization and adjustment policies. The effects of stabilization and structural adjustment policies on the economies, particularly of developing countries having a high level of external debt, have been particularly severe. The debate has centred on how to make these policies effective in terms of long-term development and short-term equity, particularly for the poor. The measures required to rectify the serious disequilibria caused by debt have had to contain internal demand and, hence, have slowed down the economy. Inevitably, employment conditions have worsened and wages and salaries have fallen. The quantity and quality of public services has been reduced and cost of living increased, particularly for basic products, which were often previously subsidized. Large segments of the population have been impoverished. In 1985, 42 per cent of the population of developing countries in a sample of 82 countries (excluding India and China) were affected by negative or zero growth rates of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. In Africa, for example, countries in which 84 per cent of the population of the continent are located experienced either no increase or a fall in GDP per capita in that year - a fall of more than 20 per cent in 15 countries. In half the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa, GDP fell by more than 10 per cent.

40. The measures applied were designed to be gender-neutral. However, owing largely to pre-existing inequalities and women's greater responsibility for the survival of their households, they have had greater impact on women than on men. The elimination of subsidies on basic goods has often meant a higher real inflation rate for women, who have to buy those goods, than for men. Retrenchment has again raised the price of services, such as education, health and housing, for which women are mostly responsible. These issues have been discussed in detail in the 1989 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development.

41. It is less clear whether these effects have been different for rural and urban women. Increased agricultural prices normally brought about by adjustment may have benefited women less than expected because higher market prices are likely to have been absorbed by intermediaries. Furthermore, the support lent by many Governments to agricultural production to substitute imports of food and other staples, has benefited the larger farmers more than the smaller ones, and women belong to the latter category. The survival strategies of poor rural households, which typically include temporary migration to the cities for salaried employment, may have lost their viability because of high urban unemployment. Finally, the reduction in public expenditures has affected women, who are responsible for the welfare of their households. These effects, however, have been felt more in the cities, where public expenditures are concentrated, than in the countryside.

B. Emerging issues

42. There appear to be three areas of greatest relevance for rural women in the 1990s: environment, rural employment and empowerment.

1. Environment

43. Rapid population growth, particularly in developing countries, and the increased demand for agricultural and forestry products from developed and developing countries have increased pressure on land. In the absence of policies designed to protect the environment, this has often accelerated deforestation and desertification. In many countries, the amount of land gained by the irrigation of previously unproductive soil is more than offset by that lost to erosion. In developed countries, the use of chemicals in agricultural production has increased the toxicity of drinking-water and polluted the oceans.

44. Women are both victims and actors in this process. Because they are normally assigned land of lower natural fertility for cultivation, and because wood collection for cooking and heating is typically women's responsibility, they suffer from the effects of deforestation and desertification. For this same reason, although the main causes of these two phenomena are the expansion of cultivated land to feed and house the growing population and the over-exploitation of agricultural and forest resources for export, women also contribute to accelerating both processes, and it is their action that can help reverse the trends.

45. The supra-national goals of the conservation of a healthy and productive environment will have to be reached through concerted international action that will satisfy the needs for food and energy of the population, particularly of its poorer sectors, in ways that respect the environment. Women will have to be involved in this process. Their participation is called for in the design of programmes of land conservation and reforestation and in programmes designed to reduce the household demand for fuelwood.

2. Employment and rural industrialization

46. In developed countries, economic growth was accompanied by the massive transfer of population from the countryside to the city and from agriculture to industry. This process is continuing in developing countries. Although the majority of the world's population is still rural, changes in the developing countries will shift the balance to urban areas by the first decade of the next century.

47. It is doubtful whether agriculture in the developing countries will be able to accommodate a rapidly growing population at acceptable levels of living. Already since the 1960s, a variable, but growing part of the income of poor rural households is accounted for by salaried employment in the cities. In the face of population pressure and low demand for industrial labour, agriculture and the rural areas have become reservoirs of population living at subsistence level; from these the growing industries of developing countries have drawn, at an insufficient pace, an underpaid labour force. It is unlikely that this model can persist in the long run. The alternative is to find means to generate non-agricultural, employment-generating economic growth in rural areas, including rural industrialization.

48. The issue for rural women is ensuring that efforts to develop the non-agricultural rural economy do not serve to marginalize them further. For women to take part in new forms of rural development, educational opportunities must be available. It is particularly important to provide vocational training in modern technologies, in recognition of rural women's continuing important economic role.

3. Empowerment

49. Although much has been achieved by women's concerted action and enlightened government intervention, these achievements are vulnerable to changes in the political system and economic crises. Their organizations are the instruments by which women are able to defend and further their progress. They must be strengthened. To this end, women's legal civil and political rights must be consolidated. It is particularly urgent when, as is often the case in Africa, customary law prevails over formal law.

50. The expansion of formal education, particularly at the primary level, will be of considerable importance, as will be adult education designed to eradicate illiteracy and provide other skills. In addition, there is a need for creative approaches to non-formal education and consciousness-raising, to apprise women of their rights, improve their knowledge of the legal system (their legal literacy), and provide them with the organizational, management and leadership skills that will allow them to take their rightful place in decision-making at all levels, both in the political sphere and in economic activity.

Notes

1/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

ANNEX

Main conclusions and recommendations of the International Seminar on Women and Rural Development: Programmes and Projects, Vienna, 22 to 26 May 1989

I. PRIORITIES FOR THE PROBLEMS OF WOMEN IN RURAL ZONES

A. Introduction

1. There is a common denominator in the situation of rural women in the developed and developing countries. The problems are more or less acute depending on the country's level of development and its cultural characteristics. This also determines the order of importance of the problems, which may differ from one country to another.

2. The problems themselves must be analysed, *inter alia*, within an overall context of development, following the example of the world conferences on women. Specifically, the analyses must take into account, in particular, the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies a/ and must, in addition, be based on the following international instruments:

(a) World Population Plan of Action adopted by the United Nations World Population Conference (1974); b/

(b) World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year (1975); c/

(c) Declaration of Principles and Programme of Action adopted by the Tripartite World Conference on Employment, Income Distribution, Social Progress and the International Division of Labour (1976); d/

(d) Resolution No. II, entitled "Priorities for agricultural and rural development", and resolution No. VIII, entitled "Women and food", adopted by the World Food Conference (1974); e/

(e) International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade (General Assembly resolution 35/56, annex);

(f) The report of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (1979); f/

(g) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) (General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex).

B. Identification of the problems

3. The problems identified are the following:

(a) Greater accentuation of the double subordination and discrimination of women in rural zones. Women are in fact cut off from decision-making authority both with respect to programmes for the improvement of rural production and at the political level;

(b) A patriarchal way of life that is more deeply engrained in rural society and, specifically, in farming families;

(c) Limited access to land and credit;

(d) An exodus of young women from the countryside, intensified by a lack of employment possibilities and the virtual non-existence of a social services infrastructure for health, leisure and culture;

(e) The emergence of a pool of women agricultural wage-earners linked to agro-industry involving intensive crop-raising. A consequence of this seasonal work is a precarious employment situation;

(f) Unpaid and unrecognized labour by women;

(g) Depreciation of the occupational status of men and, even more, of women agricultural workers, aggravated by inadequate remuneration for farm production;

(h) The contradiction between, on the one hand, the masculinization of agriculture as a result of mechanization and the introduction of modern and competitive farming, and, on the other, the feminization of manual labour in subsistence agriculture on family farms;

(i) The lack of access for women to market opportunities for the sale of their agricultural and handicraft products;

(j) Limited access on the part of women to educational and training systems;

(k) Poorly designed or inadequate statistical procedures that ignore the work of rural women, thereby rendering it invisible.

C. Solutions and measures recommended

4. Projects and programmes for women should be viewed in a comprehensive and co-ordinated manner and should be part of a forward-looking and total development concept. The fact is that women's current contribution to the agricultural economy is essential to both food security and rural development. The priority solutions and measures involve the economic, political, social, cultural and institutional areas.

5. Rural development models must be reconsidered, taking into account the particular characteristics of these zones and avoiding the error of simply copying them from the models followed in urban development. They must promote the participation and involvement of women in the administration and management of development in the countryside.

6. The major economic problems at this level are:

- (a) Access to land, credit and new technologies, a priority concern;
- (b) The adjustment of price-setting mechanisms to guarantee women and their families a decent standard of living;
- (c) Support for the non-agricultural activities of rural women;
- (d) Facilitating access by women to markets for the sale of their products;
- (e) The generation of employment, with priority given to young persons;
- (f) Improvement of the statistical tools used to measure the participation of women in active economic life and to remove them from the "invisible zone"; carrying out the studies necessary to reveal the economic value of women's labour and publicizing the findings through information campaigns. These findings must be made known to planners, decision-makers, rural communities and women's associations.

7. The main political issues are as follows:

(a) Access to decision-making authority at all levels is essential for rural women. It is a necessary condition if women's concerns are to be reflected in all socio-economic and political areas. By sharing this function, women will be empowered to propose new and suggest alternative solutions to the problems of civil and political society, thereby helping to overcome stereotypes and introduce a fresh perception of these issues;

(b) The associations and organizations of rural women must be supported and encouraged so as to enable their members to acquire the knowledge and skills required for public and professional life, and by so doing to increase their political awareness.

8. As regards social and educational problems, women in rural zones must have available to them, as do the majority of urban women, a minimum level of social infrastructure to permit the improvement of their living and working conditions. The following social and educational measures are indispensable to that end:

- (a) Family planning;
- (b) Sanitation facilities and health services, particularly services specializing in women's diseases, mainly in out-of-the-way communities, designed to improve the quality of life and increase life expectancy;
- (c) Literacy training;
- (d) Socio-educational infrastructure: schools, kindergartens, nurseries and adult education courses;
- (e) Measures to limit the school dropout rate, which is highest among girls;

(f) Utilities: water, electricity, new or renewable energy sources;

(g) Technical appliances designed for the rural household for use in lightening domestic work.

9. Further measures in the social sphere that should be envisaged include:

(a) Extension of social security to rural women;

(b) Introduction of mandatory paid maternity leave of guaranteed duration for women agricultural workers and farmers' wives;

(c) Consideration of the problems of social pathology (e.g. alcoholism, criminality and violence), which aggravate the situation of women, and adoption of appropriate countermeasures;

(d) Inquiry and research into the factors responsible for the deterioration in the living conditions of rural women as a means of eliminating these causes.

10. Socio-professional measures to be contemplated are as follows:

(a) Greater integration of women into rural production through the kind of diversified training that will enable them to find employment anywhere in the production system and to seek work outside the home, expanding their employment prospects beyond the so-called traditional women's occupations or jobs;

(b) Matching vocational training to the development model and projects;

(c) A critical evaluation of all projects with a view to deriving the appropriate lessons;

(d) Implementation of a programme of functional literacy training and agricultural extension activities;

(e) Training of intermediate-level agents to assist women's groups, such as co-operatives, in organizing and enhancing their production activities;

(f) Information for women on employment opportunities and prospects in rural areas, using a full range of communication media (mobile units, video tapes, audio-visual aids, strip cartoons);

(g) An increase in the productivity of women's labour through access to technology, production factors and rural services;

(h) Guaranteed professional status for women on family farms and at enterprises;

(i) Integrated projects, particularly for youth and beginning at the school level, designed to eliminate stereotypes and overcome patriarchal concepts;

(j) The promotion of inter-agency co-operation on the part of the entire United Nations system to carry out programmes on behalf of women.

11. Cultural issues include:

(a) Renewed recognition of the cultural heritage of rural life - which women historically have enriched, regenerated and transmitted - and the creation in this way of favourable conditions for encouraging the population to remain on the land;

(b) The promotion of intercultural studies and the organization of conferences dealing with the concerns of rural women, contributing in this way to the enhancement of their status within the framework of the World Decade of Culture.

D. Final recommendations

12. Recommendations in the economic sphere are as follows:

(a) The contribution of women to agricultural and rural development should be disclosed and re-evaluated by improving statistical methods and tools, carrying out appropriate studies and inquiries, breaking down by sex all agricultural and general census data, establishing socio-economic indicators, preparing technical documents on this subject, and incorporating these sex-specific data in development planning and programming;

(b) Economic and financial studies regarding the production activities of rural women should be carried out for the purpose of providing government authorities, decision-makers, planners and economic officials with the technical and financial information they require for adopting decisions in the area of agricultural and rural development;

(c) The agricultural credit system should be revamped by adapting it to the needs of rural women in particular, through changes in the conditions governing the granting of loans, security and guarantees, and repayment terms;

(d) A campaign should be organized to provide information on the actual participation of rural women in the economic, social and political life of the country;

(e) Appropriate economic and political measures should be taken to remedy the deterioration that has occurred in the situation of rural women as a result of the economic crisis and structural change;

(f) The actions identified in the preceding recommendations should be strengthened and multiplied for women living in scattered communities;

(g) The employment of women in non-agricultural activities should be supported as a means of increasing their productivity, and the necessary measures for ensuring better social security for women working in the home should be promoted.

13. Political measures recommended are:

(a) Women's sense of political awareness and their participation in public life should be increased through the establishment and strengthening of rural women's associations, through civic and political education, and through a campaign to inform the public of the rights and duties of every member of the community and about the social and political organization of the country;

(b) All forms of economic, political, social or technical discrimination, against rural women in particular, should be eliminated by encouraging Governments to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and all the other relevant international instruments;

(c) Women should be more actively brought into the administration of development, which in turn should take account of the specific characteristics and values present in rural areas, the human and cultural aspects of development, and community solidarity.

14. Recommendations in the social and economic sphere are as follows:

(a) The health infrastructure and services should be upgraded so as to reduce the mortality rate among children and mothers;

(b) A programme of family planning should be introduced or strengthened in rural zones with a view to improving the living and health conditions of rural women;

(c) The design and production of appropriate materials for consciousness-raising, communication and training should be encouraged through information campaigns, literacy instruction and education in general, and by using all the mass media approaches (audio-visual aids, video tapes and cassettes, printed matter, theatrical presentations).

15. Socio-professional approaches recommended are as follows:

(a) A programme should be established for the development, under the responsibility of women, of food crops and secondary crops in general by encouraging agronomic research, setting up networks for the marketing, processing and preservation of agricultural products, and introducing agricultural commodity pricing systems with a view to adding to the value of what women produce;

(b) On the basis of lessons drawn from previous experience, and within the framework of a new development model respecting community parity, more comprehensive priority development projects of greater scope and impact should be identified and formulated for rural women;

(c) Women's work in raising industrial and cash crops should be reappraised for the purpose of ensuring them equitable remuneration and providing them with the technical skills they need for more specialized agricultural production tasks;

(d) The living and working conditions of rural women should be improved through the introduction of appropriate technology designed to ease their housework and farming tasks so as to make more free time available for cultural and educational activities and, possibly, for other better-paid and less time- and energy-consuming forms of work;

(e) Vocational training for rural women should be encouraged and provided in such areas as agronomy, agro-industry and industry, with emphasis placed on employment-intensive occupations so that women are not confined either to housework or to jobs traditionally reserved for their sex;

(f) The existing laws should be reviewed, analysed and, where necessary, amended, specifically with regard to access to land and other production factors, in order that rural women may acquire a professional status like that of men, obtain loans, enjoy fully their acquired rights, and have access to the means indispensable for improving their production activities;

(g) The results of agronomic and technological research should be collected and disseminated, in particular to decision-makers, researchers and training institutions, so as to enable them to develop projects and programmes for rural women;

(h) Integrated development programmes for rural zones should be designed and implemented, including cultural and recreational activities, the creation of non-agricultural jobs, and improvements in basic infrastructure and domestic facilities so as to limit the exodus, particularly of the young, from the countryside;

(i) A human resources development plan should be drawn up, specifically envisaging the training of middle-level professionals to encourage and assist technically the women's organizations in their agricultural and craft production activities;

(j) The agricultural and rural development projects should be reviewed and analysed, particularly those involving international assistance, with the objective of incorporating the concerns of rural women into their various components, taking into account their requirements, experiences, skills and potential, and also, so as to avoid overburdening them, the time available to them.

16. Recommendations in the cultural sphere are as follows:

(a) An inter-agency project should be formulated as part of the World Decade of Culture with a view to promoting the cultural life of rural communities, women's associations, youth centres, cultural development activities, artistic training and the preservation of the oral heritage and traditional culture;

(b) Intercultural exchanges should be organized on specific issues of interest to rural women.

17. Institutional approaches recommended are:

(a) National structures and machineries, including women's associations, should be strengthened and made more operationally effective by providing them with substantial financial resources in order, on the one hand, to alert responsible government officials to the importance of involving women in the development effort and, on the other, to perform effective work with rural women;

(b) Support should be given to the creation of technical commissions or working groups on women's issues within key government departments, particularly ministries of agriculture and rural development, finance, planning, and science and technology;

(c) All of these recommendations should be implemented with the co-operation of the entire United Nations system.

II. STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE IN RURAL AREAS

A. Introduction

18. The most basic strategy, then, is to identify those development goals which are more likely to be reached through improving the situation and efficiency of rural women, and to present related arguments, data, and examples to Governments. This will depend on co-operation between Governments, national machineries, rural women's groups, non-governmental organizations and the international community.

19. A distinction should be made between projects and programmes. Programmes are generally composed of projects. Programmes are broad areas with longer-term objectives and goals. However, owing to funding necessity, a programme may sometimes be termed a project.

B. Strategies regarding policy makers

20. Development goals that can be better realized through investment in programmes that reach rural women should be identified and addressed in policy statements, training materials and sessions with policy makers.

21. In addition to equity and human rights, such goals could include:

- (a) Efficient use of resources, both human and financial;
- (b) Alleviation of poverty and improved nutrition;
- (c) Self-sufficiency and decentralization;
- (d) Food security at the household level;
- (e) Balance between population and environmental resources.

22. Information on the potential differential impact of various crisis situations, including debt, environmental and food situations, should be considered by policy makers in planning: it was stressed that policy makers have inadequate information on what they can lose by not taking women into account as agents of development. At the same time, it remains important to feature the gains in terms of realizing national development goals through programmes that serve women. This indicates that active research programmes can be worth while as a basis for informed change.

23. Training sessions on gender awareness would need to be repeated (given rotation in government personnel) until a critical mass of people had been trained. They should include, inter alia, examples of successful work with rural women and possibilities for institutional change that reflect them.

24. Policy makers should also be asked to take more visible responsibility towards improving the situation of women and the links between such an improvement and the realization of national goals. For example, they can facilitate:

(a) A higher priority being placed on budgetary allocations related to rural women's interests;

(b) National meetings that can call together line ministries, women's machineries and central planning units;

(c) The development and presentation of related policy statements in national plans and through the mass media, for the general public;

(d) Reviews and changes in laws that constrain women's full participation as partners in and beneficiaries of development;

(e) Instructions to delegations at international meetings to support issues related to rural women, and in particular to call for further discussion of these in the General Assembly in the light of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. a/ In particular, policy makers should support the improvement of statistics on rural women, so that these can be used for more rational planning;

(f) Invitations to delegations from the United Nations community to visit successful projects, as well as to give technical advice on policy, strategies and projects;

(g) Reconsider adjustment policy in light of the above, taking into account the central role of rural women as food producers and providers.

25. In order for rural women to take advantage of policy, programmes and projects conceptualized in terms of their needs and potential contribution, demands on their time must be reduced either by introducing more efficient methods for their ongoing activities or by introducing new and more profitable activities that may reflect cultural change. Investments in such methodologies and activities are called for, coupled with investments in health and literacy programmes, as a strategy whereby Governments can insure the efficient participation in development by half their population.

C. Strategies regarding national machineries

26. It was recommended that national machineries established for the advancement of women should be strengthened. At present, most of them are located within weak ministries. The location of a national machinery determines its effectiveness. The national machineries do not seem to have close links to policy-making organs, a situation that can be improved through action at the policy level (see above), the international level, and by the national machineries themselves. The role of national machineries should be one of advocacy and monitoring rather than project implementation. The status of national machineries should be raised. Moreover, representatives of ministries should work closely with national machineries in order to strengthen links between them and to facilitate the monitoring and implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. a/ Adequate resources should be allocated for proper functioning of national machineries. In order that national machinery reaches the grass-roots level, cells may be established at the provincial and district levels, linking national machineries in central government with women at the grass-roots level.

27. The need to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was stressed as an important tool for improvement of the status of women.

28. Regarding the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies as the platform for work on improving the status of women, national machineries have to formulate explicit policies and programmes that can translate these strategies into priorities for action that can be undertaken by line ministries. They can communicate to their Governments their desire for the accomplishment and obstacles in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies to be continuously evaluated.

29. National machineries would be advised to use multi-sectoral and sectoral approaches by formulating strategies to provide women with broader opportunities to combine their multiple roles as child-bearers and care-givers, as wives, as economic providers and community members.

D. Empowerment of rural women

30. It was recommended that a strategy of empowerment of rural women be developed. Rural women are not aware of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. They do not know what measures their Governments have agreed to undertake. Legal aid should be provided to rural women to make them aware of legal rights. Utilization of mass media, puppet shows, skits and other means was recommended in order to familiarize women with their Government's commitments, their legal rights and their contribution to development.

31. Women at the grass-roots level should be encouraged to form organizations, though the form of organization may differ to improve their bargaining power. However, it was emphasized that rural women should have the right to form and choose a group. It was also cautioned that young mothers may be excluded from groups owing to their heavy work-load. Support services and crèches should be made

available to enable them to participate. Also, groups formed on the basis of political standing or local status can exclude the women who are most needy. Methodologies for participatory action and training of animators should be developed and implemented on a meaningful scale.

32. It can be helpful to set up support core groups of 10 to 20 women with which women's groups and government officials may maintain a continuous dialogue.

33. It was recommended that women should be made aware of the potential impact of economic and other crises, as well as structural adjustment policies. The need for women's access to land, credit and other resources was also emphasized. Rural women should be able to obtain credit without collateral, based on the successful experience of other projects such as the Grameen Bank. Group responsibility can serve as collateral. Rural women should benefit equally from land reforms and land settlement schemes. The need to remove legal and other procedural constraints to women's access to land and other resources was recognized, but women's machineries cannot accomplish this without the support and action of policy makers. Training courses should be organized for rural women with new and appropriate methods of teaching. The importance of imparting managerial skills to rural women was stressed.

34. It was recommended that young girls should be the focus for structural change, and that their roles and potential contribution should be stressed in dialogues with Governments and national machineries, which should reflect the interests of rural women's groups.

35. It was recognized that the proportion of households headed by women, whether created by widowhood, divorce or male migration, is already high, and is increasing in many countries. The situation of these women calls for specific action, but should not obscure the needs of other rural women who are overburdened.

E. Role of the international community in improving conditions for rural women

36. It was stated that there was a need for the international community actively to follow up and evaluate progress on the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies in connection with their evaluation by the Commission on the Status of Women in 1990 and thereafter. It was also recommended that international agencies work in a flexible way with governmental machineries, non-governmental organizations and groups of women to improve the condition of rural women.

37. It was stressed that the international community need not present the integrated and separate approaches to women in development as mutually exclusive. Projects addressing women's specific issues are needed by way of a bridging strategy. In addition, monitoring of integrated programmes will continue to be necessary in order to ensure that they do in fact effectively serve rural women's interests.

38. The international community should provide technical assistance to Governments on the differential gender impact of crisis and the adjustment policies. In this regard it should develop data and analysis on the differential impact of crisis by gender as a tool for policy makers in their assessment of the importance of rural women's roles and the need for investment by Governments.

39. It was emphasized that technical assistance was needed from the international community in order to develop better national statistics on women. This is extremely important with regard to both the economic and social roles of rural women, and the interdependence of those roles.

40. Finally, it was stressed that the international community and bilateral agencies should have a long-term perspective when developing and evaluating programmes for rural women. It was ascertained that a concern with sustainability was needed in assistance for rural women. Emphasis in programme development and evaluation should therefore be placed on strengthening institutions to produce a multiplier effect. It was also recognized that the empowerment of rural women may be difficult to quantify but is a worthy goal and strategy, which can itself influence and sustain change from the bottom up.

F. The private sector

41. The import and export of goods from women to women should be encouraged both within and between countries.

III. PROJECT FORMULATION, EXECUTION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

A. Introduction

42. Projects for rural women in rural development typically involve assisting women in their role in agricultural production, both subsistence and commercial, and in food processing or providing opportunities for income generation. These can be linked with increased opportunities for education and literacy, health and housing.

43. However, projects addressing these goals may be designed in different ways. We can distinguish three main categories: women's components within larger projects, women-only projects and mainstream projects that include women. Experience indicates that there are strengths and weaknesses in all approaches. For example, many income-generating projects addressed specifically to women have failed to meet their objectives because of inadequate attention to management and marketing strategies. Women's components in mainstream projects have failed to impact on overall project design.

44. The following guidelines, however, refer to all types of projects. These recommendations address two different needs: to advise planners, policy makers and practitioners in the development assistance field on the most appropriate ways to involve women's concerns in project design; and to improve current practices more gradually and incrementally.

45. The main issues faced in the process of designing and executing projects that involve women are set out below.

B. Basic issues

Commitment of donors and governments to gender-sensitive project formulation

46. There is a need for Governments and donors to recognize the importance of integrating gender concerns into all project and programme activities. The commitment to the importance of addressing women's needs expressed in national development plans should be reflected in all policy dialogue. This is important because it is at this stage that projects are formulated and discussions are held concerning budgetary allocations and constraints. The most urgent need for those involved is for both government officials and donor representatives to be trained in gender responsiveness.

47. Since non-governmental organizations are likely to play an important role in the implementation of projects involving rural women, because of their extensive experience at the grass-roots level, Governments should be prepared to recognize their role and provide them with the necessary logistical and human resource support.

Community participation

48. Efforts should be made to ensure the appropriate and full participation of those communities which are the intended beneficiaries of development assistance at all stages of the project cycle: formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This should involve ongoing consultations with the communities at all stages. Although this recommendation is often made by the international organizations, development agencies of donor countries and the recipient countries, it is seldom applied. It is particularly important for women, who, being one of the more marginal sectors of the population, often constitute a group that is not heard when designing rural development projects.

49. The benefits achieved in project design as a result of community participation are well known. They include greater precision in needs assessment, greater popular support for project activities and stronger consolidation of local institutions.

50. The methods for community participation vary, however, and so does the ease with which they are applied, depending on the type and size of the project. Community development projects with a small investment component, and certain large-scale projects, such as nation-wide training schemes, are likely to benefit most from community participation in the identification of needs and of project objectives. However, when it comes to large investment projects or projects of different types, it is necessary to devise new methods for community participation, including forms of mandated representation by the communities.

Sustainability

51. It is important that projects designed to meet women's needs should be designed to achieve sustainability. The following goals can be identified:

- (a) There should be consultation with women themselves;
- (b) There should be adequate resources to achieve effective project implementation and significant impact;
- (c) There should be realistic time frames, usually longer than normal since results may take longer to achieve;
- (d) Consideration should be given to the different constraints faced by women and to providing them with opportunities for access to and control of resources in mainstream projects;
- (e) Line ministries should provide better support;
- (f) There is a need to set up and identify at an early stage the mechanisms and institutional arrangements necessary for the continuation of the project after donor withdrawal;
- (g) The reliance of many projects on rural women as volunteer workers should be reconsidered. Such projects may fail because insufficient attention is given to financial and other incentives for those workers and no consideration is given to the already heavy work-load of many women volunteers;
- (h) Suitable counterparts need to be identified. This may be difficult in rural projects because of the lack of educational opportunities and cultural constraints;
- (i) Projects should address the question of providing an independent income for women, and not a supplementary one;
- (j) All projects should have a realistic training programme.

Integration of women's projects in national development plans

52. Since women in development projects are often perceived as social welfare projects rather than development projects, their design does not take into account the overall national development strategies, nor are they fully integrated within those strategies. This tends to increase operational costs and cause duplication and overlapping of efforts.

Training

53. Training is critical to ensure the inclusion of women's concerns in mainstream development projects. Training should be addressed to staff of donor and international agencies, to governmental and non-governmental organizations involved

in programming and project implementation, and to national women's machineries. The content of the training should include gender sensitization methodologies and incorporate approaches for effectively addressing women's concerns in a variety of development sectors.

54. One of the main reasons why projects fail or why they do not benefit women even when women are the target group is that project designers often ignore the reality of women's multiple roles in rural areas, namely, in food security as well as household responsibility. Applied participatory research, including experimental rapid appraisal research in gender issues is essential to good project design. This may require additional thinking on the long-term development of these methodologies. There should be wide dissemination of the research findings, particularly in relation to monitoring and evaluation, as timely research may help reorient projects that fail to reach their original objectives.

C. Conclusions and recommendations

55. The purpose of the following guidelines is to provide a more systematic approach for addressing the concerns of rural women in development projects. Therefore, what follows is organized according to the main stages in the project cycle: identification, formulation, monitoring and evaluation.

Project identification and formulation

56. A primary area of concern in project identification is community participation in the definition of priorities and needs.

57. However, communities are not always aware of the choices available. Therefore, assistance must be provided to them in articulating and defining these priorities and needs. In this task, familiarity with the culture, language and people's everyday tasks and activities is critical.

58. Also, it is very often the case that projects are identified by development professionals at the international and national levels. In this case, it is essential that:

(a) The project identification teams should comprise women who are technical specialists and include women in development experts. All the members of the teams should be gender-sensitive. For that purpose, development professionals in national Governments, non-governmental organizations and donor agencies must be trained;

(b) Project identification teams should be provided with clearly defined terms of reference regarding women in development and asked to apply them. Project identification teams should contact representative women's groups in the country as a matter of course.

Data collection and methods required

59. It is a prerequisite for the collection of data that the researcher be familiar with the local culture. This research should involve qualitative anthropological methods, which should be applied along with the collection of quantitative data. The former method is preferred, given the high costs and relatively low reliability of large-scale socio-economic surveys. Qualitative information is particularly appropriate for projects involving groups such as rural women where there is likely to be little suitable national statistical data.

60. In order to formulate gender-sensitive rural development projects, it is necessary to possess the following types of data, which permit an understanding of the culture in which the project is designed:

(a) Division of labour in the household - child care, house construction and maintenance, collection of fuel and water, food preparation, health care for family members, maintenance of environment and so on;

(b) Division of labour in productive activities - agricultural tasks, animal husbandry, crop production, forestry, fishing, food processing, trading, homework and so on;

(c) Daily allocations of time over the course of the year, with attention given to seasonal variations - household productive time, space, behaviour patterns and ritual responsibilities;

(d) Intra-household decision-making patterns - financial decisions, work-related decisions, decisions on children's education and so on;

(e) Sources and amounts of income related to farm and non-farm employment in cash or in kind;

(f) Gender-disaggregated expenditure patterns on household and personal consumption and investment;

(g) Control of income and access to resources: land, labour, capital (equipment and credit); access to information about available resources, including technical assistance and training;

(h) Demographic characteristics: fertility, morbidity, mortality, life expectancy (where available and as required);

(i) Other areas, such as skill levels when relevant, training needs and educational attainment.

61. In the collection of data, it may be advisable to employ women consultants from the recipient country. In any case, research should be carried out in full consultation with non-governmental organizations, women's organizations, community-level representatives and leaders, and research institutions.

62. It is important, especially in large-scale projects, that attention be given to strengthening the capacity of national statistical offices to collect gender-disaggregated data linked with policy and planning done by the national machineries. These must have established institutional links with statistical offices and possess the necessary technical capabilities to suggest to them what gender-differentiated data should be collected.

63. National machineries should be trained in the methods for data collection and should be encouraged to establish institutional ties with technical offices of line ministries, in addition to the planning ministry.

Problem description

64. Gender-disaggregated data and analysis and the findings of past experience must be taken into account when identifying project objectives. This will involve setting objectives to attain women's strategic and practical needs, to be measured accordingly.

65. The implementing institution or agency must be carefully identified at this stage, in order for the project to be executed properly. In this regard, preference should be given to agencies experienced in working with rural women.

66. As regards implementing agencies, the choice of governmental versus non-governmental organizations must be guided by considerations for effectiveness and long-term strategy.

67. There must be consistency among the women-in-development objectives of executing agencies in order to avoid difficulties in project execution.

Implementation

68. Ongoing research should be part of both project design and of project implementation.

69. Projects should be executed in a flexible manner, which allows for the project to be reoriented whenever unintended negative effects are recorded, which is particularly likely to occur with women's projects because of the relative ignorance of project designers regarding the question of women in rural areas. In this connection, attention should be given to executing projects in which, while the general objectives are given, the immediate ones and particularly the outputs can be modified in the course of project execution.

70. Beneficiaries should also participate at the stage of project implementation. The manner of participation will vary according to the type and size of the project and will have to be devised specifically for each.

71. Attention should also be given to the selection of project staff. It is important that women be given the opportunity to be employed in the project, but it is essential that project staff be sensitized to women's issues.

72. Attention should be given to ensuring that women occupy key positions in the project and that adequate training is provided to enable them to carry out their work.

73. Since training is one of the most important activities of projects addressed to women, it is essential that targets be established in relation to this training so that achievements can be monitored.

Monitoring and evaluation

74. Although monitoring and evaluation are seen as two separate exercises, it is important that monitoring, in addition to measuring progress, should also be flexible enough to include an ongoing evaluation of whether the project is reaching its objectives and to allow modification where necessary. In order to increase the flexibility necessary for good project implementation for women, monitoring is particularly important. It is essential that monitoring include some aspects of social impact analysis, in fact that it include aspects of the evaluation process in order to permit early reorientation if it appears that it is not attaining its goals.

75. The indicators for monitoring will depend on the type of project. Some indicators, such as those concerned with areas like nutrition, health, work patterns, impact of skills training, employment, improvements in school attendance, percentage of project budgets earmarked for women, loan sizes and collaterals, will be easier to monitor than others. There are, however, other areas that are important in the monitoring of rural women's projects but are more difficult to measure and will involve the development of qualitative participatory evaluation. These include change in status, empowerment, development of dormant abilities, self-esteem, recognition of women's work, change in attitudes, and general satisfaction with what the process is trying to achieve.

76. Evaluations must also look objectively at the involvement of women in future activities of the project, and the reasons for the failure of a project to attain its goals.

77. Dissemination of information collected should be communicated in the most appropriate way.

IV. GENERAL ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

78. Specific projects for women, and particularly those for rural women, must be formulated and implemented within a framework of human solidarity and international interdependence in the economic, cultural and ecological areas, and not as aid provided by the well-endowed countries - who owe their wealth only to accidents of geography and history - and by the international organizations. The role of women, whether it be in the struggle for their survival and the survival of their family or indeed for emancipation in the face of difficult conditions of life, should promote a spirit of generous, dynamic and voluntary solidarity among women.

79. Since there is a need (among project planners and implementors) to recognize successful and innovative projects for possible replication, it is recommended that the Division for the Advancement of Women at the United Nations Office at Vienna, in collaboration with interested agencies, should take the necessary steps to review in depth the case-studies presented at the seminar, to prepare a summary report on successful practices and to identify or develop commendable project models.

Notes

a/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

b/ Report of the United Nations World Population Conference, Bucharest, 19-30 August 1974 (United Nations publications, Sales No. E.75.XIII.3), chap. I.

c/ Report of the World Conference on the International Women's Year, Mexico City, 19 June to 2 July 1975 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.76.IV.1), chap. II, sect. A.

d/ See E/5857.

e/ Report of the World Food Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.75.II.A.3), part one, chap. II.

f/ Report of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, Rome, 12-20 July 1979 (WCARRD/REP); transmitted to the General Assembly by a note by the Secretary-General (A/34/485).
