The role of women in rural Zaire and Upper Volta:

improving methods of skill acquisition

David A Mitchnik

OXFAM WORKING PAPER 2

FOREWORD

Much has been written and said about the fuller, more equal and less onerous role which rural women, especially in African countries should play in the context of national socio-economic development and about the policies and programmes to be pursued to bring this about.

The starting point of this study is the observations and analysis by the author of concrete situations of two African countries, i.e. to show what the actual pattern of employment and labour utilisation as well as the skill needs and ways of acquiring them are among women in rural communites. It is on the basis of his field studies that the author, who has many years of experience in field work with rural people, puts forward a number of conclusions and suggestions about rural "women-power", its development and utilisation. These views may not find general agreement among all concerned with improving the lot of rural women, but the author makes the point forcefully that adequate knowledge about what the present situation really is and what the tendencies are is essential to working out policies and programmes to bring about changes and improvements which are acceptable to the rural community at large and which are therefore likely to be effective.

The study is a revised version of a working paper issued in the framework of the ILO World Employment Programme and specifically its Research Project on Education and Employment. This project, which is supported by a grant from DANIDA, aims at elucidating the education/training-labour market-employment links with a special view to contributing to the knowledge base of policy making in these areas. While the ILO has commissioned the working paper and encouraged its preparation in many ways, it does not necessarily share the conclusions and suggestions expressed by the author.

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Introduction

During the last fifteen years, it has become clear that economic growth alone, that is an increase in the G.N.P. of a country, is not enough to eliminate poverty, unemployment and inequality. Imbalances of income and equality of opportunity have been all the more acute in the Third World where many countries have concentrated their limited resources on rapid industrialisation - on the assumption that rapid economic growth and industrialisation would eventually benefit the "whole" population.

Numerous studies have shown that this policy has led to a widening gap between the "haves" and "have-nots", and to a relatively small percentage of jobs created in relation to investments made. In many cases the living conditions of the rural poor are worsening especially in the L.D.Cs where resources are scant and population growing at an alarming rate.

The World Employment Conference in 1976 stressed that "strategies and national development plans and policies should include explicitly as a priority objective the promotion of employment and the satisfaction of the basic needs of each country's population." Basic needs can be defined as adequate food and shelter; services that ensure minimum standards of health, sanitation and education; employment and greater equality of income. It is a truism to say that poverty will be eliminated much more rapidly if any given rate of economic growth is accompained by a declining concentration of incomes. Equally it may be said that inequality, especially in incomes, is associated with other inequalities, especially in systems of education and political power which reinforce it.

The satisfaction of basic needs and a greater equality of opportunities and incomes will not be achieved as long as women, who constitute at least 50% of the rural population, do not get a fairer share of the national budget spent on education, teaching occupational skills and creating employment opportunities. The improvement of health, hygiene and sanitation, especially in rural areas, rests on the knowledge and capabilities of women. And since in many parts of Africa women are responsible for growing the major part of subsistence crops, any increase in food production depends on their acquisition of better methods of cultivation.

In recent years an increasing number of activities related to nutrition education, community health, hygiene and home economics have been launched by governments and international and voluntary agencies. Yet only 15 per cent of the rural population in developing countries have access to health services; over 85 per cent do not have access to a safe and sufficient water supply; and the majority of pregnant women, mothers and babies receive neither advice nor welfare services. Moreover little has been done in the field of training in agriculture and non-farm rural skills for women.

¹ Declaration of Principles and Programme of Action Adopted by the Tripartite Worl Conference on Employment, Income Distribution and Social Progress and the International Division of Labour, Geneva, 4-17 June, 1976., World Employment Conference, contained in "Meeting Basic Needs. Strategies for Erasing Mass Poverty and Unemployment", ILO, Geneva 1977. See also "Employment Growth and Basic Needs: A One-World Problem. Report of the Director-General". ILO, Geneva 1976.

² Item 10 of Provisional Agenda and UNICEF report for World Conference of International Women's Year, 1975

An increase in medical, social and welfare services in rural areas is a slow process. It is even slower in the poorest of the LDCs. The participation of women in agricultural development projects or agricultural extension services is even more difficult where there is a high percentage of illiteracy.

Nevertheless much more could be done to facilitate and encourage the participation of women if rural services and training in occupational skills could be made to be more effective and relevant to their basic needs. A number of social and welfare services do involve women but most of these are completely divorced from the pattern of work and organisation of their families, while several agricultural projects directed at men operate as though women had little part to play in growing food.

Whatever the division of tasks, the pattern of work and organisation of a rural family constitutes a strongly knit unit of production and consumption. The exclusion of women from rural programmes has led to wastage of scarce resources, has reinforced the traditional divisions of labour between the sexes and has been the biggest obstacle to increasing productivity.

I have purposely left out the word "equality" in this paper because in the African context the word has little meaning. Egalitarian aims may be legitimate and justified, but they are not the primary concern of the majority of African women in rural areas. Their concern at present is rather to improve their chances of survival by getting a greater share of existing benefits.



The social and economic activities of the rural family in Zaire and Upper Volta

1.1. General: Zaire

In 1971 I carried out a simple survey in rural Zaire to determine daily activities of women in their homes and in the fields. A questionnaire, sent to 113 voluntary agencies, all of which were involved in running programmes for women, was handled both by expatriate and indigenous staff but all the interviewers had lived in the area for a number of years and spoke the local language. 69 of the agencies replied from seven out of the eight provinces in Zaire: Bas Zaire, Bandundu, Haut Zaire, Kiva, Shaba, Kasai Occidental, Kasai Oriental. The survey was directed mainly to married women but included some questions for married men and single girls which threw light on the general welfare and activities of women. Although conditions and social organisation differed from tribe to tribe, differences among the replies were insignificant and a general picture emerged which cut across tribal and regional barriers.

1.1.1. Work in the fields

A woman in Zaire is to a large extent responsible for growing subsistence crops, especially manioc, which forms the basis of their diet. She works a five or six day week and over the year may spend anything between 180 or 321 days in the fields. There are of course seasonal variations in the hours worked. While the crops are growing she will usually spend four to five hours a day hoeing and weeding. During the rainy season, when sowing is urgent, she may have to work seven to eight hours a day.

Her tasks vary. She hoes, weeds, often clears the bush or scrub and turns the soil. Her husband may help with the more strenuous jobs, such as cutting down trees and clearing the bush, but he will not do any of the agricultural work. It is the woman who plants manioc, peanuts, maize, sweet potatoes, vouandzou and plantains. On her way back to the village a Zairois woman will carry on her back or head a load of firewood weighing 30-40 kg. for the evening cooking. Walking to and from her fields which are often some distance from her home may entail a journey of anything between one and ten kilometres.

1.1.2. Fetching water

Carrying water too is women's work. In most areas there is no local water supply and the women and girls have to walk as much as four kilometres from home to fetch what they consider to be clean water. A woman can carry about 10-15 litres on her head and, since a family of seven needs about 40-50 litres daily, this means three or four trips and more for a big family, taking in some areas 45 minutes a time. Always water has to be fetched in the morning and evening and often in the course of the day. Daughters start helping from the age of five or six.

1.1.3. The preparation of food

In most parts of Zaire, manioc, eaten as porridge, is the staple diet and its preparation is very time consuming. Three or four times a week the woman

prepares a stock for use at each meal. First she collects the roots, then soaks them in water for two days to get rid of the hydrocyanic acid which is found in the bitter variety. She then peels off the rind, dries the manioc in the sun and pounds it. This task takes about four or five hours each time.

The manioc flour is boiled into a thick porridge and the leaves are sometimes cooked as spinach. Maize, millet, sorghum and beans are the other main subsistence crops. The grains are pounded into a flour and used in the same way as manioc and the beans are stewed or cooked in palmnut or peanut oil and eaten with pimento sauce when this is available. Rich families may eat cow or goat meat once a fortnight, but the poor families will have meat only once in three months. During the dry season game meat may be eaten once a week, and fish two or three times where there are ponds or lakes. Caterpillars and other insects are eaten seasonally.

Women never eat eggs because they believe that they render them sterile. And poultry is a rare treat, cooked on a festive occasion or to honour guests.

Each meal can take about 1½ hours to prepare, and cooking on an open wood fire takes another hour. In the wet season, when the woman is extremely busy in the fields, she cooks just one meal a day but during the rest of the year she cooks twice a day. Most families do not eat breakfast; those who do, eat left-overs from the previous day.

1.1.4. Education, marriage and pregnancy

In the rural areas formal education for girls lags far behind that of boys, and the provision of professional education is practically nil. Most young girls who do attend school spend only a few years at the primary stage and, without any incentive to practise the skills of reading and writing after they leave, they soon relapse into illiteracy.

Paradoxically, this lack of formal education has ensured that young girls have a long and thorough training in their traditional agricultural and household tasks. From their early years, the girls are taught by their mothers and the older women the duties which they will undertake when they become wives and mothers.

Because the girls lack formal education and are least exposed to new ideas and cultural change they tend to hold on to traditional patterns of living. The boys and young men who receive more formal education and do little to help their mothers in the homes or in the fields are often alienated from village life and agricultural work. This alienation is one reason why young men seek employment in the urban areas. The situation points up the irrelevance and unsuitability of the curricula in rural schools.

Most girls marry between the ages of 16 and 18 and immediately have to bear all the responsibilities of a wife and soon after those of a mother. Almost all girls continue to work in the fields throughout their pregnancy and return to the land shortly after delivery. Children are breastfed on demand for two or three years.

Accurate figures for the infant mortality rate were difficult to obtain, since records are not everywhere kept. But figures that were received show that the infant mortality rate has reached 40% in many areas of Zaire.

1.1.5. Cultivation of cash crops

Where there is a market within walking distance, the woman aims to grow extra subsistence produce for sale so that she may keep half her crops for her household and have about a quarter for sale and the other quarter for replanting. Men do not concern themselves with cultivation of the subsistence crops but where there is an outlet they will grow cash crops such as rice, coffee, tea, tobacco, palm oil and peanuts. Then the woman usually helps her husband to weed, harvest and process the produce, and invariably transports it on her back or head. In the area where cash crops are grown, a woman will walk up to 25 km. to reach a market, carrying produce weighing 30-40 kg. Very often there will be a baby, strapped to her front if she has no room on her back.

1.1.6. Each morning the woman sweeps inside and round her house. Once a week or so she goes over the plaster inside the house and once a month the outside, replastering when it needs it. When a new house is built, she cuts and dries reeds, grass and banana leaves, cuts the wood, collects mud and transports these to the site. The men do the actual building, but sometimes a woman will help by putting mud between the poles to make the walls.

She mends clothes, and if she has one, irons. Most people have only one set of clothes and men and grown children wash their own when they are at the river or other water source, so a woman has to wash only her own and the younger children's clothes. Usually she does this twice a week at a time when she is fetching water.

As well as these regular tasks, a woman may make earthenware cooking pots and jugs, and she may do basket work. Sometimes she will be called on to look after the poor and sick relatives of her village or clan.

A study carried out in the Kivu Province in Zaire confirms the pattern of work revealed by the survey just described. 1

		Unit of Production	Work
Women		1.00	Ploughing, sowing, upkeep of plantation, transport of produce, carrying water, preparation and transport of firewood, markets, beermaking.
Men (in all rural areas all the time)		0.30	Care of banana trees, clearing land where necessary and help with the cultivation of new fields; certain other jobs.
Children aged 5-9	Boys Girls	0.00 0.05	No contribution Helping with the weeding and carrying water.

¹ Analyse de la Malnutrition au Bushi; Oeuvre pour la lutte contre le Bwaki et la protection de l'enfance, 1970

Children aged 10-14 Boys		0.15	Looking after cattle, help with weeding.
	Girls	0.55	Help mother with all agricultural work.
Old people over 55	Men	0.05	Very little work, some jobs in banana groves.
	Women	0.20	Help with light work in the fields.

1.2. General: Upper Volta

A corresponding survey in Upper Volta was carried out by an ILO Rural Employment team in 1975-6. But whereas in Zaire the 1971 survey had been directed almost exclusively to women and covered only household and agricultural activities, the survey in Upper Volta was designed to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the tasks carried out by both men and women. The ILO team hoped that the results of the survey would highlight the basic needs of the rural family and emphasize the importance of the women's contribution to the family's struggle for survival. Planners and administrators would then have a more balanced and detailed view of economic activities in the rural areas as a baseline for programming development work.

An additional survey of traditional artisan activities was carried out at the same time and showed that in the main these crafts were performed by men. See chapter 5.

The general survey questionnaire covered these topics:

Family structure and population

Household tasks

Preparation of meals

Nutrition

Agriculture and animal husbandry during the rainy season

Other farming tasks during the dry season

Non-farming activities during the whole year

Aspects of health and birth rate

Community programmes, social and leisure activities

172 families belonging to the most important tribes were interviewed. Choice of families was determined by adopting these criteria:

The tribe Rainfall

Religion Traditional or modern methods used in agriculture

Environment

It was found that two families with similar characteristics would share the same pattern of work and division of labour among its members even when they lived 50 miles apart.

Many of the results obtained from the survey in Upper Volta were similar to those found in Zaire, but there was one outstanding difference: in Upper Volta men devote as many hours as women to agricultural work, a finding confirmed in a map prepared 40 years ago by Hans Baumann, a German

expert on African subsistence farming. 1

His map shows that, in the whole of the Congo region, in large parts of South East and East Africa and in parts of West Africa, women are responsible for subsistence farming and have no help from men except for clearing the bush. In other areas, including Upper Volta men contribute a large share of the field work.

The 1975-6 ILO survey in Upper Volta revealed that men and women participate equally in all tasks. Men will do most of the heavy work such as clearing the land but they also help in preparing the soil, sowing, weeding and harvesting. There were other differences of custom and practice revealed by the surveys done in Zaire and Upper Volta.

1.2.1. Work in the fields

In Upper Volta there is only one rainy season and agricultural work therefore lasts between 5-6 months. In the dry season some of the men grow vegetables on low-lying ground. In Zaire, there are two rainy seasons and women are occupied for most of the year in agricultural work.

During the rainy season Voltaiques women work an average of 40-50 hours a week in the family fields and in addition most of them have their own small plots averaging between 20-50 ares where they may work for one to two hours a day. Here they grow vegetables and spices both for family meals and to sell at the local market. The women keep the proceeds of their sales and use the money to buy cloth.

Men who are heads of families work an average of 50 hours a week in the fields during the rainy season, while the young single men have no responsibilities in the family fields but have their own small plots to cultivate. They are free to keep the entire proceeds of the sale of their produce.

Mainly it is the women who carry the produce on their heads or backs from their fields to the village, a distance of anything from four to twelve kilometres, and women are also responsible for gathering firewood.

1.2.2. Fetching water

The majority of villages investigated revealed that they had anything between ten and sixty wells and during the rainy season these provided enough water for daily use. But during the dry season a great number of the wells run dry and then the women have to walk long distances to find water - just as the women of Zaire have to do throughout the year. At least in Upper Volta they are spared this time-consuming task during seven to eight months of the year.

1.2.3. The preparation of food

Whereas manioc is the staple diet in most areas of Zaire, in Upper Volta it is millet, though a little manioc is grown and eaten in the south. The preparation of millet is almost as time consuming and it was estimated that women spent an average of 20 hours a week preparing meals. The survey revealed that at least 80 per cent of the women had access to a hammer mill or a manual operated machine in the village or local market place, but that the majority continued to grind by hand, several saying that they preferred it this way.

1 See Chapter 1 of Women's Role in Economic Development, by Est er Boserup, 1970

Families ate better during the dry season when women had more time to prepare meals and less well in the rainy season, when paradoxically they most needed nutritious food. Then the long hours spent by women in the fields gave them little time for cooking and other household duties. The worst period was the one to two months just before harvesting when food stocks were nearly exhausted. The nutritional standards of meals then fell very low. Indeed both the Zairois and Voltaiques people suffered from a lack of protein foods throughout the year.

1.2.4. Education and marriage

As in Zaire, the education of girls in Upper Volta lags far behind that of boys.

The majority of girls marry between the ages of 16 and 18 while boys marry at 20, - with the exception of the Mossi people who constitute 48 per cent of the population of Upper Volta.

A study carried out by ORSTOM¹on Internal and External Migration of the Mossi people shows that men marry on an average at 30. Two out of three Mossi men are still single at the age of 25-29. Between 40-45 per cent of men over 45 years of age are polygamists and have an average of 2-5 wives. The young men are dominated by their elders who have the right to choose their wives from among the unmarried girls. This domination allows them to maintain their socio-political privileges within the tribe but it has also speeded up the migration of young Mossi men to Ghana and especially the Ivory Coast. See chapter 3.

1.2.5. Housekeeping and other tasks

As in Zaire, women are responsible for all household duties and help their husbands to repair their houses. They also engage in cottage industry and petty trade. See chapter 5.

1.3. Observations

It is obvious that in both Zaire and Upper Volta the women's agricultural work is vital to their families' struggle for survival, but in Upper Volta the men share equally in the work with their women folk while in Zaire the women have to cultivate the subsistence crops with little or no help from the men.

Undoubtedly the men of Zaire are underemployed, but the simplistic view that this situation is due to their laziness is not helpful as an explanation of what seems to be a grossly unfair divison of labour. The causes are mainly historical.

Before colonial rule, the men were chiefly occupied in hunting and fishing and in defending their villages against attackers - or in raiding others. Women had the responsibility of growing or gathering food.

The eighty years of colonial administration by Belgians altered the traditional occupations of the men. Warfare among the tribes was stopped and, as wild game was rapidly disappearing, hunting declined. Over a million and a half of the men were induced, and often forced, to work in the mines and on European farms and plantations away from their villages. So the women continued to grow the food.

The colonial administration did little to encourage men to grow subsistence crops except during the last few years before independence, and then they

¹ Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Outre Mer.

even tried to force men to produce a certain quantity of food per household. There was and still is a tremendous resistance to taking on work that is traditional to the women. Growing manioc in particular is considered work proper only to women and the men of Zaire will not take any part in producing this staple crop.

Independence in 1960 brought the departure of white settlers and the rapid destruction and abandonment of European farms and plantations. Hundreds and thousands of salaried men returned to their villages with little incentive and no experience of subsistence agriculture. The men have an aversion to working with hoe and machete and the problem remains acute. The Government has yet to come to grips with the issue.

Nevertheless, small projects undertaken by voluntary agencies have shown that men will undertake agricultural work so long as they are occupied in growing cash crops, and preferably crops not traditionally associated with women's work. Most of all they prefer to work as agricultural labourers or as wage earners in occupations other than farming.

A number of studies were carried out by mobile health teams in the Province of Bas Zaire to determine the incidence of infant mortality, illnesses and diseases. The results showed that abandoned or single mothers with children were on the whole worse off economically and their general state of health was poorer than that of mothers living with their husbands. So, despite the fact that men do far less agricultural work than women in Zaire, they clearly do contribute something to their families' welfare. Abandoned wives complained that they were having a hard time without their husbands.

The majority of women both in Upper Volta and in Zaire attained a measure of economic independence. In Zaire, of course, the women were not at all dependent on their husbands to feed their children, while in Upper Volta, where the men grew some of the basic crops, all the women interviewed engaged in some form of occupation and petty trading in addition to their horticultural work.



Teaching occupational skills for girls and women in rural areas

2.1. General

It is only realistic to start from the assumption that there is little likelihood that formal education will expand rapidly in Upper Volta in the foreseeable future. The population of Upper Volta is approximately 5,870,000 and over 90 per cent live in rural areas. The country spends approximately 26 per cent of its budget on education and so far only 11 per cent of the children go to school.

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	SCHOOLS		STUD	ENTS
	Public	Private	Public	Private
Primary	609	28	107,643	4,404
Rural Education			,	ŕ
Centres	783		26,992	
Secondary	25	33	5,267	3,730
Technical	3		1,212	

The Centre d'Enseignement Superieur (now University) had 345 students in 1971-1972; though it is now estimated that there are approximately 1,000 students including those studying abroad. In 1972-1973 there were 108,000 pupils in primary schools of whom two-thirds were boys. In 1969 - 1970 there were 6,237 pupils in secondary schools of whom 5,323 were boys and 914 were girls. In 1970 there were 2,245 teachers of whom 1,870 were men and 375 were women.

The population of Zaire is approximately 24.2 million and over 80 per cent live in rural areas. About 70 per cent of all children go to school.

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	Schools	Teachers	Pupils
Primary	5,188	73,129	3,219,554
Secondary	1,207	11,824	297,556
Higher (including		•	·
vocational)	22	1,484	15,693

These figures are averaged out over the whole country and do not show the disparities between rural and urban areas: in the towns a far higher percentage of children go to school. Nor do the figures show the number who drop out before finishing primary school and who subsequently lapse into illiteracy.

Whether 11 per cent or 70 per cent of children go to school, Governments are aware that formal education alone is not going to provide the solutions to their National Development policies. On the contrary, formal education has brought in its wake a series of problems which have especially affected rural people. Firstly because education created expectations among young people which could not be fulfilled and secondly because it did not equip them with skills with which they could earn a living. If anything their schooling alienated them from their traditional environment and hastened their exodus from rural areas to the towns.

Even if it were financially possible, to double the number of girls or boys attending schools would merely aggravate an already serious problem of unemployment. This does not imply that education is not important but that the curriculum and methodology of the primary schools in both Zaire and Upper Volta are quite unsuited to meeting the needs of rural people.

For many years Government and various agencies have launched a variety of training and non-formal education schemes in rural areas, partly to compensate for lack of formal education for the rural population, but especially to develop the skills and knowledge appropriate to their social and economic activities.

There are two main areas that need developing.

- a) Education in knowledge and skills useful for improving the general health and nutritional level of the family.
- b) Training in occupational skills useful for improving and promoting farming and non-farming activities in rural areas.

Clearly these concerns overlap and distinguishing between them does not reflect a division of strategies or types of programmes. Indeed a number of agencies are trying to incorporate both areas in integrated educational and training schemes. As yet only a very tiny minority of the population has any chance of being exposed to such development programmes.

2.2. Occupational skills and programmes for promoting health, nutrition and home economics in rural areas

2.2.1. Governmental and independent agencies have launched a series of schemes, some using formal, others more informal methods, intended to teach girls and mothers a variety of subjects related to community health and hygiene, domestic science and home economics. In recent years poultry keeping, horticulture and new methods of growing subsistence crops have been added to the training schemes and some have moved in the direction of community development. It was hoped that these programmes would result in improving the social and economic conditions of women, and through them, of their families.

2.2.2. Approach

There are two main categories: first, the teaching of occupational skills to limited groups of girls and women or the training of girls in more advanced institutions, such as vocational schools. Both come under the heading of "Leadership Training" and may be done through formal or informal methods. The second category is the teaching of skills to the people in their own local community; this type of education always uses non-formal methods.

2.2.2.1. Primary school leavers (and now increasingly girls who have finished two years of secondary schooling) are given 1-3 years training in a centre or a vocational school. When they graduate as "animatrices" or Home Economics or Domestic Science agents or teachers they may be employed as "leaders" attached to a Government Department or as Village Extension agents attached to a specific project or programme.

- 2.2.2.2. For girls who have had 2-3 years primary schooling there are short courses lasting from 3-6 months, usually in a Centre, which teach simple concepts in nutrition, health and hygiene, horticulture, child care and often extend to basic literacy courses. They are designed in the hope that the girls will pass on their knowledge to others when they return to their villages.
- 2.2.2.3. For groups of mothers short sessions or demonstrations are organised in a club or a social centre, usually running one afternoon for several weeks, or occasionally more intensively over a whole week. The women who attend these classes are usually illiterate and methods of teaching are therefore largely practical. New skills in sewing, cooking, weaving, child care, cleanliness and hygiene are demonstrated, again in the hope that the women will become village leaders and eventually organise similar groups in their own villages.
- 2.2.2.4. Medical and para-medical personnel are given a one year course or in-service training in Public Health, sanitation and hygiene. Governmental and non-Governmental medical services in rural areas have become increasingly aware that curative services are insufficient and inadequate to cope with the basic problems of community health, hygiene and nutrition. Therefore, an increasing number of hospitals or medical centres have launched a variety of preventive programmes. See chapter 4.

2.2.2.5. Rural Education Centres in Upper Volta. 1

As early as 1960, the Government of Upper Volta, with the help of the French Technical Assistance Programme, launched an education scheme designed to provide basic training and education for rural youth who had not had the opportunity of acquiring a primary school education. The ordinary school system could not cater for more than a fraction of the rural youth, and only a handful of pupils could enter secondary or higher levels of education.

So it was decided to find an alternative to the existing primary school system which would not only provide a basic elementary education but equip students with practical skills which would be of more use in the rural areas.

There are now approximately 800 Rural Education Centres in Upper Volta with a total of 30,000 students of whom just 3,000 are girls. The minimum age of entry is 12, though the monitrices, who are trained for ten months in Ougadougou, prefer to take students of 15 or 16 years of age so that when they finish their three years at the Centre they will be mature enough to implement what they have learnt and be capable of resisting some of the traditional, conservative pressures from the elders of their own communities.

The girls follow more or less the same programmes as the boys except for the practical work. In addition to general subjects, they study agriculture, which is limited to horticulture, care of household animals and food storage, and they also learn basic concepts of child care, nutrition, home economics, and have practical experience of preparing meals, and sewing.

2.2.3. Appraisal

Some of the problems of setting up and running women's programmes in rural areas are similar to those encountered in rural development programmes directed to men.

¹ See A Rural Alternative to Primary Schools by IEDES and Sven Grabe in Education for Rural Development, edited by Ahmed and Coombs.

- Lack of coordination and cooperation among Ministries and Government Departments. In one country there are four Government Departments reporting to three different Ministries, each with its own programme of activities though in practice their field personnel end up more or less by doing the same thing.
- Piecemeal and fragmented approach to programming and implementation. Many of the activities taught and demonstrated in the courses are divorced from the realities that exist in the rural community or in the family. Furthermore, experience has shown that when a need is identified it can rarely be met by a single input but almost always requires several other coordinated inputs.

2.2.3.1. Training of Animatrices and Village Leaders.

Much has been done in recent years to teach occupational skills that will be useful to girls and mothers in rural areas. But many of the courses are still too theoretical and unrelated to social and economic conditions in the villages. It is, for example, useless to train an animatrice in the use of a sewing machine unless these are available in the villages. In the same way cookery demonstrations on a kerosene stove show methods that may not be applicable to open fire cooking with wood which most women use.

Moreover, many of these training schemes tend to be overloaded with a wide range of subjects and topics which cannot adequately be covered in a nine or ten month period. The training tends to be superficial and so the skills acquired are never reinforced by use. In fact, many of the animatrices end up by giving literacy classes and sewing and knitting lessons in Social Clubs or centres.

In Upper Volta, monitrices teaching at the rural education centres are often assigned to an area or region which is far from their home village or town. It is not surprising therefore that there is a 50 per cent turnover of monitrices every year.

In two rural centres in Upper Volta two week long seminars were held with one hundred animatrices to give them an opportunity to talk about the difficulties they found in their work. The outstanding problems faced by many of the teachers were:

how to acquire or obtain knowledge of the local community

how to get accepted by the community

how to organise a group

how to programme an activity

how to evaluate a programme

how to select and train local teachers

how to draw up a programme with local people

lack of transportation and teaching aids

a feeling of being abandoned and unsupported by the Central or Regional office

2.2.3.2. The short courses from one week to six months may have been useful to the trainees but all the evidence showed that in the majority of cases the women who had been on the courses were not able to make any impact or generate changes once they were back in their own communities. This may be partly because they lacked the status and authority to assume informal leadership, because they feared criticism or ridicule from other women, or simply

because the forces of tradition and conservatism are too strong to be shifted by one person after a relatively superficial course.

2.2.3.3. A detailed analysis of the work of the Rural Education Centres of Upper Volta is given in an ICED and IEDES report published in 1973. Currently a World Bank project is operating in three of the ORDs (Organism Regional de Développement) of Upper Volta with the object of improving the Rural Education curriculum and encouraging greater cooperation and participation between the REC and the local community; and it is putting greater emphasis on a follow-up programme designed to help the graduates put into practice what they learnt in the Centre.

So far there is no evidence that girls benefit much from the type of education they are receiving in the Rural Education Centres and none to indicate any impact or changes in the homes of their villages. In 1975, 18 monitrices carried out a survey to discover what were the attitudes of the girls and their families towards the work of the Education Centres. A lot of very basic difficulties came to light:

- The parents do not believe in the effectiveness of education.
- They need the girls in the home to help out.
- When the girls are 'promised' they are fetched by their husbands.
- The girls themselves are little motivated by such a broad general training.
- The programme is overloaded and the girls are kept away from home far too long. This displeases the parents.
- There is little cooperation between the girl and others working on rural development.

The survey revealed some interesting information on the attitudes of husbands and fathers towards their women-folk. In general the young men wished the girls to be trained so that they would be better at cooking, looking after children etc., while the old were afraid of any innovations. All agreed that general education was of much less use than practical training in the skills of agriculture and of sewing and knitting. According to the women the men think of them in quite limited and stereotyped ways:

- They do not work hard enough.
- They are like leeches.
- They behave badly.
- Without the men they are worthless.
- They can never be equal to men.

Also according to the women, the men wish them to be obedient, respectful, kind and clean and to look after their families well. Some of the men did recognise that their womenfolk always have work to do, that they are constantly engaged in useful activities and that they commonly suffer more than do most men.

The women clearly felt that they were being dominated and exploited by the men and that they were always considered inferior. But the way they viewed themselves revealed a strong self-concept and a fundamental and consistent sense of values.

- A woman is there to do everything.
- She is a person like others.
- She does not wish to do any harm.
- She exists only to work.
- Thanks to women, there are families, compounds and villages.

Their wishes were clear:

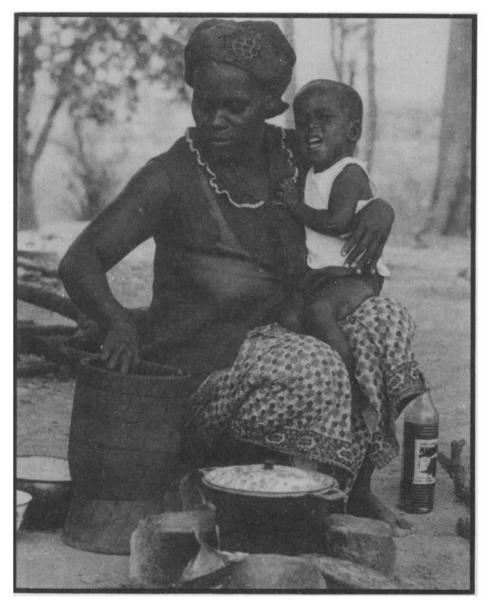
To have children

To be in good health

To have enough food, clothes and money

To have peace.

After discussing all the evidence revealed by their surveys the monitrices recommended that training should be directed first to mothers rather than to daughters. It is only then that women and their families may find it easier to accept changes.



An assessment of some agricultural projects and their effect on the traditional pattern of work of women in rural areas

3.1. General

The main characteristics of subsistence farming may be summarized as follows:

- Cultural practices are poor, yields are very depressed and men are either underemployed because they are unwilling to make a larger contribution to agricultural work, or unable because of climatic conditions.
- Poor and unbalanced agricultural production results in the importation of large amounts of foodstuffs which are high in costs.
- Poor communications, high transport costs, limited marketing facilities and unfavourable prices for agricultural surpluses do not encourage farmers to grow more food.
- In many areas the soils are very poor; rainfall is sparse and irrigation lacking.
- Low nutritional levels and a multitude of diseases are not conducive to hard physical work, and this is accentuated by an enervating climate.
- The pressure on long bush fallows increases because of population growth and internal migration to more fertile or higher rainfall areas. Therefore soil fertility suffers under present farming practices which involve an ever decreasing period of fallow.
- Lack of any adequate agricultural training facilities for farmers or inadequate agricultural extension services.
- Inadequate supplies of selected seed for every species of crops.
- The non-availability of cheap but more effective tools to ease the work load and provide an incentive to better cultural methods.
- Fragmented holdings which compel men and women to walk long distances to their various fields. Fragmentation presents a major hindrance and disincentive to improving cultural practices and increasing impact.
- Pests and diseases, the chemical control of which may be difficult or uneconomical under peasant agriculture.

3.2. Agricultural extension and development projects

For many years Agricultural Extension Services (or Agricultural Advisory Services) concentrated their efforts on increasing production of or introducing cash crops for export. Now, however, Governments are increasingly aware that they must give more attention to stepping up the production of food, especially for feeding the rapidly growing urban population.

Ideally, agricultural extension has been described as a system of out-of-school education for rural people. The extension worker is seen as a teacher whose role is to increase people's knowledge, widen their horizons, and make the very best use of their faculties and skills so developing their capacity for work.

In reality the emphasis of agricultural extension is often exclusively on technologies that will improve cultural practices and increase the production of cash or export crops. The extension agent acts as the link between Government and farmer, or to be more precise, between the planned policies of the

Government and the farmers. His function then is to persuade the farmer to implement these policies, using whatever methods he knows best. When planning comes from the top in this way, the personal wishes of the farmers and their families are seldom, if ever, considered.

With very few exceptions the agricultural extension agents are men and their activities or programmes are directed only to male farmers, a paradoxical situation in a country where the major burden of growing staple foodstuffs is shouldered by women.

In Upper Volta the agricultural extension field workers are as follows:

Agricultural Extension Agents	1042 All men
Technical Agricultural Agents	335 All men
Veterinarian Assistants	227 All men
Animatrices (Home Economics)	102 All women
Animatrices (Div. of Social Affairs)	60 All women
(Course: Five Veer Plan 1072 1076)	

(Source: Five Year Plan 1972-1976)

The dichotomy is clear: agriculture and animal husbandry for men; home economics and nutrition for women. This pattern has been faithfully followed both by governments and by a variety of agencies and has had some disastrous consequences. In many cases the effect of male oriented agricultural extension work has been to increase the burden of the women's work, so giving her even less time to look after her family and perform her household duties. Moreover, the exclusion of the women from participation in innovations in agricultural methods has slowed down food production and in many cases been a major factor in causing the failure of projects.

The problem has been defined in an ECA report:

"Available information suggests that modernisation, including the adoption of agricultural technology, imposes additional farming tasks on the rural women. As children who previously assisted their mothers are sent to school, as labour-intensive cash crops are introduced and as men find employment away from the family farm, women's burdens are increased. Consequently, their opportunity to introduce better family living practices in nutrition, homecrafts and child care is lessened. Additionally, women do not often share the income from cash crops; they seldom have money to purchase labour saving devices or to undertake home improvements. Yet it is in the area of home management that most "vocational" proggrammes for rural women are directed. This should be viewed against the background that women continue to produce more than half the continent's food, most often with primitive tools."

Attempts by agricultural extension services to increase the acreage under cultivation, to improve yields and to introduce cash crops have meant more often than not that women have had to work even longer hours in the fields. In countries like Zaire where women grow 80 per cent of the subsistence crops such as maize, manioc, millet and sorghum the changes or innovations in agriculture have had little or no effect on their work.

3.3. Animal traction

In Upper Volta the Ministry of Agriculture and various agencies have been promoting animal traction, and the effects of these schemes have been noted in a number of reports.

The cost of a pair of oxen and a plough with accessories amounts to approximately 120.000 CFA (1 U.S. dollar = approx 250 CFA).

Most farmers cannot afford or do not want to risk investing such a large sum. The granting of credit to a farmer is on condition that the family cultivates at least 4½-5 hectares and uses the appropriate seed, fertilizers and cultural practices to make the scheme viable; otherwise the farmer will not be able to repay the loan out of his profits.

The results of the use of oxen cultivation for cotton, sorghum, family crops such as gombo and da, groundnuts and rice can be summarized as follows:

Crops and type of work	Work with animal traction (oxen) Days per ha.	Manual Work Man days per ha.
Clearing of land — Clearing undergrowth — Ploughing	0.5 5.5	35 4
 Cotton Crops Preparation of land and mechanical sowing Second sowing - spreading manure or fertilizers - weeding and hoeing - four treatments with 	5.5	5
insecticides - Harvesting (1.222 kg. per ha) uprooting and burning of cotton plant after harvest.	-	53 120
 Sorghum Crop Preparation of land and mechanical sowing Second sowing - ploughing - spreading of fertilizers - 	4.5	2
weeding - hoeing - Harvesting (1862 kg/ha in seed)	11.5	36.5 24.5
Groundnut Crops - Preparation of land - mechanical sowing -		
ploughing — Second sowing - hoeing and	5.5	2
weeding (twice) — Harvesting (1.300 kg/ha in shell)	6	48 195.5
Rice Crops - Preparation of land - ploughing - sowing by hand	5	45.5
 Spreading of fertilizers - weeding and hoeing Harvest (924 kg/ha) 		100 44

	Work with animal traction (oxen) Days per ha.	Manual Work Man days per ha.
Family Crops		
- Preparation of land -		
ploughing - sowing by hand	3.5	28
 Weeding and hoeing 		31.5
- Harvesting		28.5
Total for 4.40 hectares		
- Preparation of land - sowing	25.5	51.5
- Weeding, hoeing, etc.	11.5	208
 Work end of season 	5	31
 Harvesting 	5	359.5
	47	650

Needless to say, much of the weeding, hoeing and harvesting is still done by hand. Whereas, previously a family would cultivate an average of 1.5 hectares, with animal traction it may cultivate at least three times as much. It follows that women's work in the fields has increased very considerably, and it goes without saying that it is men who use the plough. At present approximately 8 per cent of the farmers use animal traction and it is intended that by 1985 the figure will reach 20 per cent.

In a country where there are no agricultural labourers, the natural consequences of such a scheme are to maintain or increase polygamy and large families so that they can help with the agricultural work. Thus to quote from a report by the ECA "One of the strongest appeals of polygamy to men in Africa is precisely its economic aspect, for a man with several wives commands more land and can produce more food for his household and can achieve a high status due to wealth which he can command."

Agricultural schemes have imposed other burdens on women. It is they who have to carry larger quantities of produce from the fields to the village or market, and to process the crop by hand when no manual or power operated machinery exists in the area.

There have been some attempts to lighten the burden of women in a variety of tasks but these have met with limited success. The introduction of carts (where donkeys or draught animals exist) or manual operated machinery for processing crops or the provision of water supplies have more often than not been ignored by women who have seemed indifferent to these innovations. According to the survey carried out in Upper Volta at least 80 per cent of the women have access to either manual or power machinery to mill corn and millet, and yet the majority continue to pound their corn and millet by hand. In a specific project 15 carts were provided to help women transport wood and produce from the fields to the village or market; 14 of these carts have been transformed into doors and windows and only one is being used — by a village chief. Water supplies closer to the village or homes have greatly reduced the number of hours spent fetching water. In many cases, however, it has not made one iota of difference to the cleanliness or level of health of the rural population.

¹ See Chapter 2 in Women's Role in Economic Development, by Ester Boserup, 1970

There are a variety of reasons for the failure of some of these schemes, and it is not possible to go into all the details in this paper. Nevertheless, it is evident that all the schemes lacked a vital element: the participation of the whole community in their planning and implementation and the educational process necessary for committing each community to a development programme. There is no instant solution to these problems but unless women are involved in the total educational process, evidence has shown that they will lose rather than benefit from agricultural change.



Some suggestions for improving skill acquisition for men and women in rural areas

4.1. General

Before drawing up new and more effective rural development strategies, it is essential to make a careful appraisal of the existing use of manpower in each area, otherwise there will be wastage and frustrated efforts.

There are two issues to consider:

- 1. Changing attitudes and beliefs of rural people
- 2. Changing policies of the institutions and agencies responsible for rural development

4.2. Changing attitudes and beliefs

There are a number of constraints working against change and these may be cultural, social, psychological, or most typically a powerful complex of all three.

Technicians and extension workers have a disturbing tendency to assume that the people with whom they are working and whom they want to help are essentially rational, and that their perceptions and modes of thinking are similar to those of the agents who have drawn up the scheme. When a field worker has difficulty in putting a programme across he too often falls into the trap of supposing that the villagers are too conservative or too stupid to see the advantages of change.

In fact, rural people often understand the new message perfectly well. They weigh its benefits and value against alternative and familiar forms of activity and practices - and may decide against change, for reasons that the extension worker, especially when he is an expatriate, does not fully comprehend because he has failed to gain a deep understanding of values inherent in the people's culture.

In peasant societies the world over conservatism appears to be culturally sanctioned. People who have too many novel and original ideas come under suspicion and invite criticism from the rest of the community. And this is understandable. Where the margin between survival and extinction is narrow, tried methods are preferable to taking a risk. What may seem a self-evident advantage to an extension worker could appear a dangerous gamble to a villager.

Programmes directed at improving maternal welfare and child health have been handicapped by a fear of criticism and loss of face on the part of the older women. Where the extended family is strong, the older women feel that it reflects on their ability and judgement when young pregnant women seek the advice of trained midwives or attend ante-natal clinics. To them change may bring about a loss of authority which may affect relationships within the family quite deeply.

Assumptions of male superiority also may come under threat. One attempt to introduce adult literacy classes for men and women soon ran into problems when the women were seen to be doing better than the men. The men stopped attending the classes.

The introduction of new tools and gadgets which involve a radical change in patterns of work or customary body positions has met with resistance. A farmer may find it easier to continue working with short handled tools even though he has to bend almost double to do so. Women, offered the possibility of cooking on a raised open fire where food could be protected from dirt and animals and children safe from the hazards of burns, have not always been receptive. They complained that it was tiring and uncomfortable to have to stand on one's feet while cooking.

Mutual obligations within the framework of family, relatives and friends have discouraged many individuals from taking advantage of technical or monetary help. In cultures where produce and earnings are widely shared, to adopt new techniques or to borrow money cannot be the decision of an individual. A complex system of obligations within an extended family provides a sense of security and protection against food shortages and other crises. Something so long proven and beneficial cannot lightly be set aside in favour of the possibility of increased crops for an individual.

Paradoxically it is often assumed by extension workers that peasant communities represent the ideal of village solidarity and co-operation. So they expect that major enterprises such as the provision of water supplies, the building of roads and organisation of marketing co-operatives will normally be welcomed and easily implemented.

In fact, villagers are frequently suspicious of the motives of fellows outside their family circle. They fear to be outdone by their peers and are therefore often very reluctant to co-operate with others. Progressive farmers may find themselves socially shunned because of jealousy and superstition and even be subjected to witchcraft.

An innovation, which seems of self-evident use to an extension worker, may very well threaten the whole fabric of authority and obligation within a village community. The village chief, the witchdoctor, the traditional midwife, the religious leader and every head of family may feel that his very function and position in the community is being challenged. Unless those who have power and status in the rural areas give their consent and cooperation, any programme, however exactly conceived, may well be a non-starter.

Rural people are often suspicious of government and its representatives. Taxation and other forms of interference that emanate from cities have taught the villager that the less he has to do with government, the better off he will be.

To sum up, in situations where the agent and the recipient have different expectations and experiences of change, diverse perceptions and faulty communications are bound to set up barriers. In the last analysis, any permanent change in an individual's behaviour requires a long process of learning and relearning. There is increasing evidence to show that extension agents do not fully appreciate the difficulties inherent in learning new ideas and operations, and that too many have tried to work in ignorance of the underlying values and beliefs of rural people. Unless a complex of favourable conditions is present, acceptance of any new ways will be very slow.

It is self-evident that schemes directed to girls and women become doubly difficult to undertake. Animatrices and project managers have to contend not only with the normal cultural, social and psychological barriers to change but also with the prevalent attitudes of male administrators, male officials, and not least male heads of families. Women are often their own worst enemies. They resent change and are often more conservative than men because so few are exposed to any kind of education, formal or informal. Girls are taught in the traditional manner by their mothers and the older women the duties which they will undertake when they become wives and mothers.

4.3 Changing policies for rural development

4.3.1. General

Anyone who has had the opportunity of touring in rural areas, visiting projects and talking to government officials, project managers and extension agents is inevitably struck by the isolation of field workers and by the ignorance of what others are doing in the same field - often in a neighbouring area. Worst of all, most central governments seem to be unaware of the work of projects carried out in their own countries by the various independent agencies. To ignore the wealth of information and experience accumulated over many years when formulating new rural development programmes leads to false assumptions and serious miscalculations.

An inventory and appraisal of existing projects in each country would be enormously useful, both to governments and to field workers if written directly and simply in the languages most widely understood. The inventory should indicate where there is duplication or overlapping of various services. Secondly it should show which areas are getting more than their fair share of the limited resources and services. Thirdly, it could single out some of the more successful projects and make it possible for other agencies to adopt some of their methods and techniques when implementing new programmes. Fourthly, it could document ways in which trained personnel are being used and identify projects which would be suitable for in-service training of field workers.

4.3.2. Approach

When we take an overview of the successes and failures of rural development programmes, some essential factors emerge. If a rural community is to accept new ideas and become willing to adopt change

- the people must be consulted at the outset and involve themselves at every stage of the programme
- projects should use informal teaching methods and there should be maximum participation by the people
- teaching and learning should take place in the traditional environment of each community.

Planners and extension agents need first to engage rural people in defining and expressing their own needs and then to co-operate with them in planning and implementing the programme. All the men and women need to understand the reasons for the programme; otherwise they will not assume responsibility for the work. Only too often a community that has been ignored at the planning stage becomes indifferent and apathetic to a project.

4.4. Training

The most crucial factor is the training of suitable extension agents. complexity of the problem defies any easy, ready-made solutions. Over many years and especially since independence, African governments have reviewed their training programmes and policies several times and experimented with a variety of methods and techniques in the attempt to ensure that graduates would be able to deal with the technical and social problems of rural areas. But there is all too often a failure to look at any problem from the receiving end. Most rural communities, especially those living in a subsistence economy, have managed on their own for many years without being affected by government programmes or extension agents. Barring floods, epidemics or droughts, these communities will continue to survive in their own way and change at their own pace. It is obviously vital that extension agents should first become very familiar with the way the rural community organises itself, satisfies its needs and solves its problems, and at the same time be sensitive to underlying values, beliefs and attitudes to change. The cultural, social and psychological constraints mentioned in Section 4.2. have to be constantly born in mind when planning any programme of rural development.

The ideal extension worker would possess all these qualities and qualifications!

- a capacity for hard work and improvisation, adaptability and a willingness to live and travel in simple and often harsh conditions.
- a genuine liking and respect for people and a talent for making good and easy relationships. He has to be able to win the confidence of local leaders, heal their rivalries and get them to work together for the common good.
- a wide range of knowledge and the skills of a teacher. He has to be able to stimulate, educate, inform and convince people who may initially be apathetic and sceptical.
- a high degree of skill in "social technology" or "extension" a mixture of informal adult education, rural sociology, human psychology and cultural anthropology.

All this makes a formidable list of requirements, and one may well ask where such supermen and superwomen can be found, especially as they happen to be in most cases the poorest paid and lowest level of field workers. The main criticisms levelled at many existing training schemes are that they try to cover too many subjects in too short a time and that they bear little relevance to the real social and economic needs met in the rural areas. Training is too often divorced from the planning and programming of rural development projects. If the two could be brought more closely together, the length, type and level of training could be planned more realistically. Even so, no training scheme, however suitable, can cover all the problems or meet all the needs that exist in rural communities and it is essential that initial training should be supplemented by planned in-service training. Indeed in-service training in stages is often much more useful to extension workers once they have gained some field experience in their work. Unfortunately very little serious attention has been paid to progressive training; instead there have been conferences and seminars where there is typically much talk and little resultant action.

4.4.1. The participation of women in agricultural training and development Since women make a large, if not the largest contribution to food production, their full participation in agricultural development and training is vital. Even where as in Upper Volta the men do join in growing staple crops, there is

¹ Training for Community Development (a critical study) by T.R. Batten, OUP. 1962. Extension in Rural Communities, by A.H. Saville, 1965

widespread migration. One estimate revealed that about 60% of the active population between the ages of 14 and 44 were absent at any one time, and the vast majority of the migrants are men.¹

In public health programmes, a certain amount of integration between men and women has been achieved. (See Section 4.5.1.) But in agricultural training and development the issues are far more complex and the factors militating against change very strong. (See Section 4.2.) Colonial administrations never encouraged the training of women in agriculture, and governments need actively to recruit women for Agricultural Vocational Schools and extension work. There is a need to integrate women extension agents into the existing services and to find ways of encouraging women to participate in and benefit from innovations introduced by the various agencies.

The short term solution may well lie in training women in home economics and agricultural extension to work just with women in rural communities, and doubtless this limited approach has a better chance of being accepted and perhaps of succeeding. But, the dangers of creating separate programmes and separate planning in rural development is well known. It is easier to create something "separate" than to "integrate", but the consequences of separatism too often lead to the creation of new sectors and agencies and of unbalanced, uncoordinated development.

Separate projects may be necessary in specific circumstances. But the only long term solution lies within the community itself. Genuine consultation with a community will help it to identify its own needs and priorities and to assess what changes may be feasible. African men are well aware of the contribution their women make in agriculture and once they can be convinced of the advantages in terms of increased food production will see the need for women to learn new skills and better techniques.

4.5. Planning and Programming

4.5.1. The integration of men and women in public health and nutrition programmes

The shortage of medical services and trained medical personnel is chronic in most developing countries. Nevertheless, much can be done to improve the effectiveness and utilisation of scant local and human resources to benefit a wider section of the rural population.

In Upper Volta in 1971, the Health Services consisted of the following:

1,953	Hospital Beds
-	-
308	Dispensaries
78	Maternities
66	Doctors
1 201	Ovalified Stat

1,291 Qualified State Registered Nurses and Medical Auxiliaries

It was estimated that there was one doctor for more than 80,000 inhabitants, but that in urban areas alone, the ratio was 1:7,900 inhabitants.

In Zaire, there were 758 doctors, 1,635 State Registered Nurses and 300 nurse midwives. It was estimated that there was one doctor to 28,000 inhabitants.

In most Western European countries the ratio of doctors to population is approximately 1:800-1,000 inhabitants.

¹ See Internal and External Migration of the Mossi people; report by ORSTOM (Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Outre Mer).

There are no prospects either in the near or more distant future to increase substantially the number of doctors and hospital beds but most countries can increase the number of nurses, medical auxiliaries and dispensaries. Merely increasing the number of structures and trained personnel, however, is not going to make much difference to the standard of health and nutrition in rural areas if medical services continue to operate only a curative service, and do little to solve the basic problems of health and hygiene. Treating patients in hospitals provides only a temporary solution. When patients are released they return to the same poor and unhealthy conditions of their villages. Furthermore, because of the sparseness of hospitals and dispensaries in rural areas, patients have to walk long distances to receive treatment. Evidence has shown that on the whole only people in the immediate vicinity of the medical centre benefit.

It has been estimated that at least 50 per cent of patients admitted to hospitals could be treated as outpatients. Much time, effort and money is spent curing those diseases which could to a large extent be prevented by diverting some of the resources from curative to preventive work in villages.

4.5.2. Public health and nutrition programmes in Zaire

In section 4.3.1. reference is made to the need for making an inventory and appraisal of existing projects or programmes and the way trained personnel are being utilised. A medical advisory team in the three provinces of Bas-Zaire, Bandundu and Kasai Occidental did make such an inventory. The results showed that the majority of the medical personnel in these areas was aware of the inadequacy of tackling the major causes of malnutrition and disease by simply providing a curative service. Several visits and discussions undertaken by the medical advisory team showed that over 20 medical projects were pre-occupied with two main problems:

- lack of knowledge as a basis for planning, programming and implementing public health and nutrition programmes, though both doctors and medical auxiliary nurses had a vague idea of what they wanted to do in villages;
- lack of transport facilities and basic equipment.

The inventory also revealed two medical projects at Vanga and Ngidinga which had succeeded in implementing public health and nutrition programmes and a training scheme for male and female auxiliary nurses for field work.

The medical services at Vanga consist of a 200-bed hospital and eight rural dispensaries. This serves an area of 3,000 square miles and a population of 30,000 people. Each dispensary is staffed by an auxiliary nurse who is given in-service training in rural public health at the hospital.

However, because of the substantial demands of clinical work made on these dispensaries, the amount of public health work they are able to do in villages is limited. Therefore, their work is supplemented by several mobile teams which provide monthly pre-school and anti-natal clinics, sanitation work, TB control and nutrition education. All this requires a considerable amount of health education which the mobile teams give in a lively manner interspersed with songs.

At Ngidinga hospital the programme is basically the same as at Vanga, but the approach is somewhat different. Ngidinga hospital relies more on its rural dispensaries to carry out public health and nutrition programmes and therefore encourages the rural population to build their own dispensaries. The

hospital sends out a fairly intensive mobile service to train the nurses and give general support and supervise their work.

Both hospitals have solved part of their staff shortage problem by recruiting ancillary personnel and training local village leaders. These animatrices have been given a short orientation course in nutrition and community health so that they are able to establish contact with the local people and raise health awareness. The community is encouraged to select men and women from their village who act as local leaders and eventually organise their own groups and activities for improving the general level of health and cleanliness. The mobile health team ensures that local village leaders get material and moral support.

After several meetings between the medical advisory team and the medical staff of Ngidinga and Vanga hospitals, a six-week course was devised for male and female auxiliary nurses and a five-day orientation course for doctors. Most of the doctors and auxiliary nurses had already worked for several years in rural areas. The medical staff of each project was responsible for selecting the candidates.

In order not to disrupt or put too much strain on the services of Ngidinga and Vanga, only four sessions a year were organised, each comprising eight students. Thus 64 medical auxiliaries were trained every year. The medical advisory team then revisited the medical projects to give advice and support to the trainees when they returned to their place of work. A follow-up service of this kind is vital. The scheme was started four years ago and there are in 1976 20 medical projects which have started public health and nutrition programmes in their areas.



Skill acquisition for non-farm occupations in rural areas

5.1. General

With few exceptions, Governments in Africa have given very low priority to programmes aiming at promoting or training men and women for productive non-farm employment in rural areas. Consequently, little has been done to investigate or study this sector of the economy.

It is often assumed that since the purchasing power of the rural population is so low, there is little likelihood that local or village markets can be substantially expanded to absorb a greater volume of goods and services. So, unless there is a possibility of creating new jobs or producing goods for large urban centres or for export, investment in training or employment promotion would be wasteful. Consequently, the argument runs, it is best to concentrate on training programmes directly related to increasing food production to feed the urban population and if possible the growing of industrial and food crops for export.

The adoption of this policy has discriminated against the development of rural areas in favour of urban areas where most vocational and industrial training schemes and jobs are created. It has also neglected a sector of the economy which can substantially be expanded to raise the standard of living of the rural population.

Not all farmers are eager to increase their holdings and agricultural yields, nor is the only obstacle to improved yields the farmer's lack of capital and knowledge of efficient farming. It is that farmers are often short of funds to purchase equipment, tools, fertilisers, etc., and that their knowledge of agriculture is often based only on shifting cultivation; nevertheless these assumptions do not always explain the whole story. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that even when credit is available and marketing facilities are ideal, young people do not always want to remain in rural areas. Many of those who do are not always keen to develop their agricultural holdings but would rather do "something else". In fact, ultimately, the farmer decides, in his own way, for reasons best known to himself, how much time he will spend on farming and on "other activities", irrespective of economic incentives or what "others" many want him to do. The assumption that he is too poor to improve his agricultural holdings is not always true.

A two-year study carried out by ORSTOM in Upper Volta on migration of the Mossi people (Chapter 1. Section 2.4. and chapter 4. Section 4.1.) showed that returnees to rural areas who take up farming spend their savings in the following manner:

	%
Personal and prestige goods'	55
Taxes	15
Social expenses	8
Presents in view of marriage	3
Commerce	7
Agriculture and livestock	5
Food	7

In 1976 I carried out a survey of artisan farmers in the ORD of Koudougou, Upper Volta which is neither the richest nor the poorest of the ORDS. This revealed the average gross earnings of eight types of artisans:

Type of artisan	Gross average earnings per annum in CFA (1 US dollar = approx. 250 CFA)	
	CFA	S
Potters	41 607	166.42
Weavers	21 387	85.54
Leather workers	288 345	1153.38
Basket makers	38 687	154.74
Sculptors (this includes carpentry)	147 527	590.10
Rope makers	27 080	108.32
Dyers	59 350	237.40
Blacksmiths	86 094	344.37

These gross averages include earnings not just from the production of goods, but in some cases from the provision of services to the local population as well. The large difference in earnings is partly due to the purchase of raw materials such as skins (by the leather worker), scrap iron (by the black-smith), wood (by the sculptor/carpenter). Only a small percentage of women engaged in pottery and weaving, although, with the exception of smith work, all traditional artisan activities were in theory open to both sexes. The black-smiths constitute a special caste and access to their trade is reserved to members of that caste only.

5.2. Non-farm occupations in Upper Volta

Rural communities, like any of the communities which live in a subsistence economy and where specialisation is non-existent, try to satisfy their basic needs in their own way using their own resources and technological know-how. Indeed, it can be said that nearly all farmers are artisans in one way or another since they have to undertake a multitude of tasks outside their farming activities to try and satisfy their needs. For the purpose of this paper, I am concerned only with those activities and occupations which generate remunerated employment.

In Upper Volta it is estimated that the turnover from traditional artisan activities in 1976 will be 17.352 million CFA²(\$ 697.000). Whether this figure is right or wrong is difficult to say. Nevertheless, it does indicate the economic importance of non-farm activities and occupations in a country where over 90 per cent live and work in rural areas. These non-farm occupations include the following:

- beer brewing, milling, baking, processing of agricultural produce, butter making (from karite nuts), pastry making, spices, soap making;
- spinning, dyeing, weaving, confectionery;
- pottery, basket making, wood carving, jewellery, leather working, blacksmithing;
- commerce and trade.

¹ There is a total of 11 ORDs (Organism Regional de Developpement) in Upper Volta.

² Five-year Plan of Upper Volta, 1972-1976.

In Upper Volta where only 1.4 per cent of the active population is salaried, there is little likelihood that the structured or salaried sector of the economy will be increased substantially in the near future. Since over 95 per cent of the active population is self-employed, and with the country sorely lacking in raw materials and minerals, there is little doubt that the majority of activities for generating employment will have to be directed towards satisfying local markets and basic needs. However, this does not mean simply creating new jobs, but rather improving the productivity of thousands of artisans and family or small enterprises.

Improving productivity involves the study of organisation, training, method of production, incomes and marketing. These studies are difficult to undertake partly because little information is available and partly because the artisans themselves do not on the whole keep records nor are they always ready to divulge the information required.

The survey of non-farm activities, which was part of the general survey carried out on the social and economic activities of the rural family in Upper Volta, (See chapter 1. section 1.2.) included traditional artisan activities, but it was not a detailed analysis of any specific economic or social aspect of men's or women's activities. Consequently, a survey of 172 families was carried out in the ORD of Koudougou to determine what were the traditional artisan activities especially among the men. Only the results which relate to women will be given here:

5.3. Non-farm activities among women in rural areas

The table below gives the main non-farm activities and approximate gross earnings for women.

Type of activity	Number of families engaged in the activity (this may include more than one woman in the family	Average gross earnings per annum (CFA)	
	1 US dollar = appro	1 US dollar = approx. 250 CFA	
		CFA \$	
Butter making from		•	
karite nuts and sale			
of nuts	111	9,151 36.6	
Cakes and pastries	95	4,774 19.09	
Beer brewing	95	13,044 52.17	

Only the average gross earning are given here; actual incomes varied considerably depending on the number of women in each family who worked. Other activities such as pottery, knitting, sale of wood and basket making were too few to register, accounting for not more than 5-10 families. 120 families engaged in petty trade, and the survey showed that it was not by any means an exclusively female activity.

The survey also registered 72 families engaged in market gardening of whom 51 sold their produce in the local market. In 32 families women participated in market gardening as well.

¹ It is estimated that 16,660 people are employed in the private sector and 15,340 in the public sector.

5.4. The promotion and training of girls and women for non-farm activities in rural areas

If little has been done in Upper Volta to train male artisans or promote non-agricultural employment for men in rural areas, still less has been done for women.

Nevertheless, some efforts have been made by African governments and especially voluntary agencies in Zaire, Cameroon and Upper Volta to give formal and informal training to girls and women in a variety of skills such as sewing, knitting, carpet weaving, basket and mat making, embroidery, jewellery, making toys and games, and household goods such as clay pots and water containers. There is no shortage of ideas for the type of goods that can be produced in rural areas by girls and women using raw materials that can be found locally or brought from other parts of the country.

5.4.1. Type and method of training

Much of the training given to girls in vocational schools has proved to be wasteful, because of the lack of opportunities for salaried employment in both urban and rural areas. Unless employment opportunities exist with government or non-government agencies in rural areas there is little likelihood that girls will find jobs.

The method of training however tends to be rigid and specialised and the skills taught are more suitable for urban employment. Often the equipment and techniques used are far too sophisticated and differ from the skills and techniques needed in rural areas. Voluntary agencies have been more successful in using equipment, skills and techniques which are far more suited to girls' and women's level of education and experience. Their informal approach to teaching a variety of skills in small rural centres or clubs has proved more effective and realistic than the rigid and more specialised type of formal training given in vocational training schools or centres. This applies equally to boys and men.

Whether training is given in a vocational training school or in a rural centre or club, it is important to distinguish between traditional artisan activities or services in rural areas, and the different type of skills or services required for producing goods for urban or export markets.

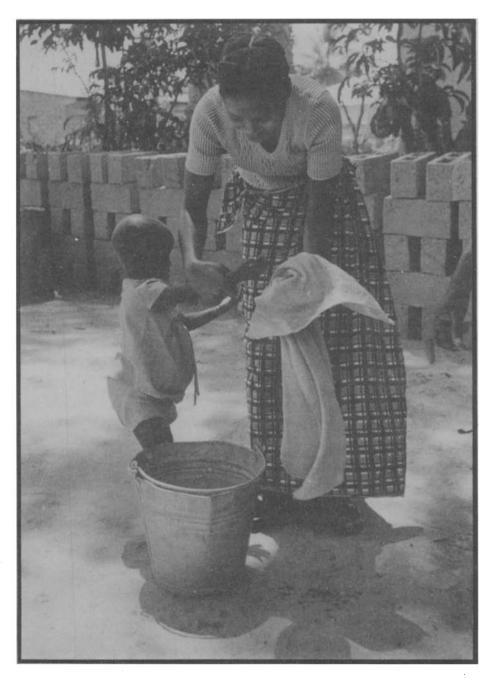
In sections 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 examples are given of traditional artisan work and services carried out by men and women in rural areas. The surveys carried out in Upper Volta show that production, training and marketing are done on a family basis. Thus the training of boys and girls in the form of a long indigenous system of apprenticeship is given by adults within the family unit until they are old enough and able in their own right to set up their own small family workshop or produce goods and services for local or urban markets.

The first step towards teaching skills in rural areas should be to find out what indigenous processes are already there and whether the best solution might not be to strengthen and reprogramme them with more up-to-date content and improved skills, rather than importing new and more expensive models from industrialised countries.

5.4.2. The need for government support

Unless there is a determined effort by Government to grant financial assistance to agencies involved in teaching skills to girls and women existing

efforts will remain small, isolated and ineffective. Furthermore there is a need to promote women's associations or groups so as to encourage and facilitate the production and marketing of goods on a co-operative basis. Credit facilities for the purchase of tools, equipment and raw materials should be made available. Much remains to be done in this field.



Conclusions and suggestions for further studies and research

Conclusions

- 1. The social and economic pattern of work and organisation in a rural family constitutes a strongly knit unit of production and consumption, whatever the structure or division of tasks among its members. It follows that studies related to farm and non-farm activities and social welfare of the rural population should be undertaken within the context of the rural family, and not as isolated components.
- 2. The satisfaction of basic needs and a greater equality of opportunities and income will not be achieved as long as women, who constitute at least 50 per cent of the rural population, do not get a fairer share of the national budget spent on acquiring vocational skills in farm and non-farm activities, education and employment.
- 3. The discrimination against women in education, training and employment has inevitably strengthened their custom-bound traditionalism and has created the biggest obstacle to increasing productivity, income and employment.
- 4. This policy of discrimination has been further strengthened by giving a small percentage of girls and women access only to traditional occupational skills such as home economics and nutrition. In many cases the type of training given is either unsuitable, inadequate or irrelevant to the pattern of work and organisation of the family.
- 5. The improvement of skill acquisition for girls and women will depend mainly on two factors:
- (a) changing attitudes and beliefs among men and women;
- (b) changing training and rural development policies.

Many of the shortcomings of existing development projects or programmes are reflected by the ignorance or unwillingness of planners and administrators to take into consideration the existing pattern of work and organisation of the rural family. Moreover, the lack of participation or involvement of the local community in the planning and implementation of a project or programme has more often than not led to much wastage of effort and resources. Any attempt to alleviate and improve the productivity and general welfare of women as though they were a separate entity or divorced from their families and the rest of the community is almost bound to lead to failure.

- 6. Further research needs to be undertaken on the length, type and level of training to be given to women extension workers and village agents. Three points will have to be considered:
- (a) Since the education of girls lags far behind that of boys, it is most probable that potential candidates will have a maximum of two years post-primary education.
- (b) The type of training given to girls will have to take into consideration their integration and co-operation with existing rural extension services or programmes and their ability to work with the whole community.
- (c) The majority of women will be married and provisions or facilities will have to be made to allow them to be close to their families. Otherwise, there is bound to be a high turnover of staff - a luxury which few developing countries can afford.

7. The training of women for non-farm employment in rural areas has yet to be investigated and developed since existing training schemes, job opportunities and credit facilities are on the whole provided only for men.

Suggestions for further studies and research

- 1. The production and organisation of non-farm activities of women in rural areas. This would include the activities of women's voluntary and traditional associations with a view to promoting co-operatives or pre-co-operative groups.
- 2. Research into the training of women for the promotion of productive non-farm employment in rural areas and the creation of new employment opportunities.
- 3. Type, length and level of training for girls and women at various levels; that is, village local leaders, rural extension and teaching personnel, and supervisory staff, with a view to improving the productivity and income of women in farming activities.
- 4. Research in the field of 'appropriate' technology for alleviating and improving women's social and economic activities in the home and in the fields.

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Photographs of women in Zaire by Sarah Errington

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- Page 33 A trainee health worker teaches a child to wash his hands