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COUNTRY STRATEGIES: KENYA
Draft Letter to Harris Mule



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Women in Development - Country Strategies - Kenya - Draft Letter to Harris Mule

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Draft letter to Harris Mule as requested from Jim Adams

Subject: Improving Women's Productivity

As we discussed, the World Bank decided after the U.N. Conference on Women to accelerate our efforts to integrate women into our lending program. We are approaching this on a country basis, and the first country program we considered is Kenya's. We have completed a promising mission headed by Barbara Herz, an economist who is the Bank's Adviser on Women in Development. We developed concrete ideas that should improve the effectiveness of our lending in Kenya and serve as models elsewhere. We appreciate the cooperation and genuine interest on the part of every Ministry with which this mission worked: Agriculture and Land Development, Cooperatives, Education, Health, Culture and Social Services, and, of course, Treasury.

We are collecting basic data about women particularly in agriculture and developing ideas for the lending program. One consultant from this mission will stay in Kenya for three months to help prepare the second phase of the agricultural extension project and gather the data. Barbara Herz will return in May to help supervise this work, and I will provide continual supervision.

We think we can substantially increase agricultural productivity by bringing the T and V extension system more effectively to women smallholders. In some areas, we find, extension agents naturally ask women as well as men to serve as contact farmers since women do most of the small-holder farming. More important, some extension agents have begun to use women's groups as "contact farmers." This innovation offers considerable promise, as the agent often reaches fifteen or twenty people directly. We and MOALD have agreed to build this approach systematically

into the second phase of the national extension project. We are working with MOALD to meet extension agents and about 80 smallholders (mostly women but some men, for contrast) in four areas of the country (probably Nyeri, Vihiga, Machakos, and Taita) to see what extension messages and approaches work most effectively to improve productivity. In the process, we can gather some basic information on small-holder farming that should help in some of our other operations, for example with cooperatives and forestry.

On the basis of Kenya's experience with women's groups as contact farmers, the Bank is planning similar approaches in several more African countries. Our experience here is, of course, limited. Thus the effort in the second phase of the extension project will be crucial not only in Kenya but also for our broader efforts to improve T and V.

More generally, to raise productivity, women smallholders obviously need the usual resources -- information, credit, inputs, and marketing assistance -- but may face greater obstacles. We have found widespread consensus that the thousands of small women's groups, some formal and some informal, could help channel resources and raise productivity. The difficulty is organizing to reach them effectively.

The Ministry of Cooperatives has suggested a promising approach: encouraging the stronger, better organized women's groups to become cooperatives, to gain systematic access to information, inputs, credit, and marketing. We hope that this would increase both producing and marketing capacity, hence agricultural productivity. Given that women produce most of Kenya's food, it ought particularly to help on that front.

We are exploring with the Ministry of Cooperatives a pilot project to expand perhaps 15-20 existing cooperatives whose members are predominantly or entirely women and to help another 15-20 women's groups become cooperatives. These generally would aim at improving food

production. The project would involve training and assistance in management and in the productive activities of the cooperatives; credit; provision of inputs; marketing assistance; and careful assessment to ensure that we can determine what works best under differing circumstances. This could lead to development of a full-fledged project for cooperatives involving women. We are prepared to pursue this either through an SPPF for this purpose or as another facet of the management pilot now being incorporated in the coffee cooperatives project. The Ministry is developing more concrete ideas together with our staff. The Ministry and our staff are also touching base with the Ministry of Culture and Social Services and MOALD, though we agree that this effort belongs in the Cooperatives portfolio. While we await the detailed proposal from the Ministry, we expect that they will propose a relatively modest level of effort, since this is a pilot -- perhaps \$400,000 over 2-3 years; we share the Ministry's enthusiasm.

On the education front, we have taken the occasion to do some fundamental work to help children of both sexes. We are looking at patterns of access and use of different kinds of schools at different levels, constraints particularly but not exclusively for girls, and broad ways of helping, considering the various issues the Ministry has raised. Perhaps we could increase secondary-level facilities for girls so that we no longer have to turn away qualified girls. Possibly we ought to help improve the supply of textbooks and equipment to ensure greater distribution throughout the country -- and coordinate this with more teacher training. Of course we will have to address the problem of affordability as we expand and improve education. Within this framework we will look to see what girls' particular needs are -- in access and in curriculum (for example in practical mathematics, farming skills, family life and health education, and so on).

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Finally, on the health front, we are working with the Ministry of Health on a "safe motherhood" initiative to strengthen maternal care and family planning in reinforcing ways -- and so reduce both maternal mortality and birth rates. The basic approach is to recognize and endorse a young couple's natural wish to have a family, help the woman survive pregnancy, and get the baby off to a good start -- then it may be more natural and appealing to introduce the idea of timing and spacing of pregnancy. We can also encourage teen-agers to postpone pregnancy until it is safer for mother and child. At the project level, there are promising approaches at the community level and through first-level clinical back-up for extending maternal care in conjunction with family planning, particularly by expanding active outreach programs. We are discussing possibilities within the current project.

Moreover, the Bank in conjunction with WHO, other U.N. agencies, Ford, Rockefeller, and some other NGOs and bilateral donors, plans to sponsor a senior conference to lay plans for an international "safe motherhood" initiative. We've made a good start on child health. It is time to do more for women of childbearing age -- they are the other most vulnerable group, and the children will do better if their mothers are alive and well. The Ministry of Health has proposed that we hold this conference in Nairobi in November or January.

We hope that these ideas, spanning several sectors, constitute a practical approach to integrating women that will further Kenya's basic development goals. We propose to bring these ideas together in a paper aimed to improve agricultural productivity, education, and health, and slow population growth. On the last point, it is not only the "safe motherhood" initiative and concomittant expansion of family planning that would help. The effort to increase women's economic productivity and education ought, we believe, to build demand for smaller families, judging from experience

in Kenya and elsewhere. In fact our main consultant -- who is concentrating on helping prepare the second phase of the extension project -- has done considerable work on the links between income and education and family planning. So we will not neglect this issue, though our principal focus will be on improving women's agricultural productivity.

We hope you share our enthusiasm for these ideas -- they are early-stage, of course, and must be developed. But assisting women in any country has too often proved easier said than done. We have a chance to make a difference in Kenya and thereby to provide food for thought elsewhere.

We look forward to your reaction and would welcome the opportunity to discuss any suggestions you have.

cleared with and cc: Mr. K.Y. Amoako, EAIKU

cc: Mr. V. Rajagopalan, PPDPR
Ms. P. Cox, EAPCA
Mr. R. Durstine, EAPD
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