

3. *Ghana Red Cross: Mother's Clubs*

J. Miles Abadoo, Secretary General of the Ghana Red Cross asserts that "there is a general need for an increase in female participation, especially because of the adage if you educate a woman, you educate a nation." The Ghana Red Cross has translated this adage into action by organizing "Mother's Clubs".

The programs supported by the Mother's Clubs span health, income generation, and education. A major priority for most Clubs is health education. The groups meet regularly to discuss topics of primary health care, safe motherhood, and first aid. Many Clubs offer training to traditional birth attendants. Some Clubs have developed compulsory rules for their members that, if broken, result in additional work assignments. One Club's rules are:

No sheep or goats in kitchens; no dirty food containers to be used for children; drinking water must always be filtered and boiled; the house and yard must be kept clean.

In response to high unemployment in Ghana, income-generation projects are undertaken. Projects are now run in cornmill operation, Kaolin processing, bee-keeping, poultry farming, sewing and handicrafts. Some Clubs reinvest their profits into health and social welfare projects. In one village, improved communal latrines were constructed and another co-financed a community clinic. Some Clubs engage in tree-planting and community gardens. Many Clubs have begun day care and kindergarten facilities.

4. *Caribbean Region: Role of Women in Disaster Management*

In 1987, a delegate from the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) Emergency Preparedness Advisor - both assigned to the Antigua-based Pan-Caribbean Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Pro-

ject - prepared a document entitled "The Role of Women in Disaster Management". In response to this document, PAHO/WHO sponsored a meeting to develop guidelines on the role of women in emergency management.

According to the project organizers, in order to maximize women's contribution women must participate not only after a disaster strikes but also in the planning and preparedness stages. In short, women must be viewed as more than just victims of disasters in the Caribbean.

In preparation for the meeting, extensive questionnaires were distributed to Women's Bureaux and Units of Caribbean governments. Information was gathered on women's existing involvement in the disaster plans of each country and feedback was collected on possible mechanisms for coordination and networking. A report summarizing this information was prepared.

In November 1989 a two-day meeting was held in Trinidad and Tobago dedicated to establishing strategies for increasing the contribution of women in emergency preparedness and disaster relief coordination. The meeting's participants, representing a wide range of Caribbean nongovernmental, national, regional, and international organizations - including the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies - produced a series of recommendations designed to be incorporated into National Action Plans. The meeting developed a gender focus for disaster preparedness, response and recovery at three separate levels: family/community, managerial/professional, and political.

In order to give the strategic guidelines maximum political access, the meeting was immediately followed by another: A gathering of Caribbean women political leaders. The women reviewed the guidelines and issued a communique. The leaders agreed that the urgency of the situation demanded that institutional arrangements be established at the national and re-



Examining children in Thailand



Distribution of relief supplies in Niger



Teaching water safety in USA



Sewing in Morocco



Managing in Afghanistan (Mrs. Soraya)

gional levels to permit an integrated approach to disaster management, involving the active participation of women and women's organizations.

5. Nepal Red Cross: Primary Health Care

The Nepal Red Cross Society and the Danish Red Cross are working together on a Primary Health Care Project in western Nepal. This project, begun in 1988, set out to improve community health by upgrading existing health facilities and training local personnel. In short, the project is not classified as a "women's project". Nonetheless, women play major roles, both as participants and beneficiaries.

The project region, according to Chitra Sundaram, Project Consultant for the Danish Red Cross, contains a high percentage of female headed-households. From the early days of British rule, many men have joined the army or sought employment outside of the region. Thus, the women remain. Based on this demographic profile - as well as the important role of women in community health care - the project has tried to involve as many women as possible.

The Nepal project illustrates the Danish Red Cross's commitment to women in development and "making women visible" by involving them in project planning and implementation. A recent working paper produced by the Danish Red Cross stressed the role of women in health and in environmental protection programs, those being areas in which the Society possessed the resources and capacity to participate constructively.

Community participation in the Nepal project has been high. In fact, the process of community consultation may mold the project in new directions. In one Ward, the women have requested adult literacy classes and knitting- and sewing-based income generating projects. Project staff are now working with the community to explore these ideas further. Specifically, feasibility studies will be undertaken to

determine if a viable market exists for the planned products and to insure that the women's enthusiasm is channelled into projects that won't "fall apart". There is also active interest in kitchen gardens, fruit tree planting, and reforestation. While this began as a primary health project in a small region in Nepal, who knows where it will end up...

6. *Malawi: Fuel-Saving Cookers*

The Malawi Red Cross Relief Unit has been busy these days. In the Southern part of the country, 4,000-5,000 Mozambican refugees have been arriving per month, most dressed in little more than a piece of jute sack or plastic bag. An estimated 11,000 metric tons of food relief is distributed to the 750,000 refugees each month. Given these numbers, is there a role for "women in development"?

According to Marcel Fortier, League Head of Delegation in Malawi, the answer is "yes" and "no". Because of the deprivation suffered by this population, Fortier claims that these women refugees have a very basic set of priorities. Some haven't had access to the basics - clothing or bars of soap - for over five years. He explains that the women "have a whole different set of priorities. If you gather a group of refugee women under a tree and start talking about women's issues, they want the soap."

While there may not yet be Red Cross-sponsored income-generating and education projects for these Mozambican refugee women, the Red Cross is nonetheless playing an important role. Over 100,000 "fuel-saving cookers" will eventually be distributed to refugee families. According to Fortier, these portable stoves are much more heat-efficient than the traditional three-stone open fires and will reduce a family's wood consumption by 50-60 percent.

What does this have to do with women? Given that women are responsible for collecting wood, the cooker savers will enable them to spend 50-60

percent less time on this task. The high population density has been rapidly depleting local environmental resources. And this, of course, includes wood. Fortier is hopeful: "If we can reduce the workload of women in the next five years, that would be a major achievement... an enormous savings of kilos and kilos of wood that women would be carrying on their heads."

7. Egyptian Red Crescent: Productive Families Project

The Egyptian Red Crescent Society has an ambitious goal: It plans to build service complexes in each of its 26 branches which will include women's training and income-generating programs, child care facilities, permanent expositions of women's handicrafts, educational classes, library materials, and women's lodging facilities. Family oriented services are also planned, including a fully equipped shelter for afflicted families in need of emergency aid.

The Egyptian Red Crescent's planned Services Complexes represent an expansion of the Society's successful Productive Families Project. While these projects target the family unit as a whole, women are key beneficiaries. Through the project, training is offered in carpet and rug making, weaving, sewing, knitting, handicrafts, and leather-making. Most of those trained are women. Technical guidance and supplies are provided, as well as marketing advice. Evaluations indicate that each "productive family" has benefited from between 50 and 100 percent more monthly income.

The Society has developed an innovative strategy to market the handicrafts produced by project participants. Recently, the handicrafts exhibition was launched in Harrods, one of the largest and most prominent department stores in London. Another major exhibition is planned in Milan.