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THE WOMEN'S GROUP PROGRAMME
IN MIGORI/KURIA

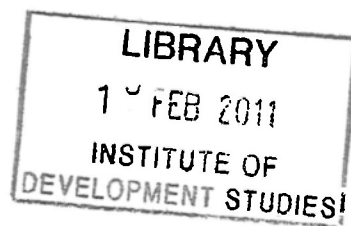
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ABSTRACT

This is the fourth of a series of case studies on the Women's Group Programme in the six Special Rural Development Programme (S.R.D.P.) areas of Kenya, prepared in conjunction with the 1975 I.D.S. Evaluation of the S.R.D.P. The entire report on the Women's Programme, including the initial overview section, is presented in the form of I.D.S. Working Papers Nos. 230 - 236.



THE WOMEN'S GROUP PROGRAMME IN MIGORI/KURIATHE LEADERSBackground Characteristics

Women group leaders in Migori/Kuria S.R.D.P. area can be said to be people who are considered 'acceptable' to their communities and groups as judged by their conduct and social background, mainly age, marital status and position in the community.

In the pages that follow we present a summary of a profile of women leaders obtained in field investigations by an I.D.S. team in December 1974. On a general plane the leaders tend to possess a combination of the following attributes in varying degrees of strength: (1) are married; (2) have children; (3) have a husband who holds a position of authority in the community and/or a salaried job in an urban centre in the vicinity or elsewhere.

Out of a total of 19¹ respondents interviewed, all were married and all except one had children. Their family sizes ranged from 1 - 7. But since they were all quite young, with ages between 21-33 years, the range in family size is expected to expand. Quite a number of the women were younger wives in a polygynous marriage arrangement, while some were the only wives. Polygyny is still a common form of marriage in this area.

Tables 1 and 2 below indicate the leaders' level of education and language ability.

Table 1 - Formal education of leaders

Total	None	Std 2	Std 4	Std 5/6	Std 7/8	Other ²
19	1	1	2	3	7	5

1. Of the 19 respondents 6 answered to title of 'leader', but all the others held responsible positions in the group committee and can be legitimately treated as leaders.

2. In this category four had attended functional literacy classes while one had only attended leadership courses in Macalder and Nairobi.

Table 2 - Language ability of leaders.

Mother tongue (MT) Only	MT/Kiswahili	MT/Kiswahili/English	Total
3	10	6	19

Table 3 - Occupational background of leaders.

Trader	Farmer	Nursery School Teacher	Primary Sch. Teacher	Other ³	Total
4	11	1	1	2	19

All respondents have access to some land for farming. As seen from Table 3 above the majority of them earn their income from agriculture and related activities. Access to land varied from a low of 1 acre to a high of 280 acres. On an average land sizes reported range between 2 acres to 20 acres. Although there was some reticence in reporting land sizes it was clear that respondents have access to land which they cultivate. Among their income-generating farm products are maize, beans, bananas, vegetables, poultry and eggs, kales and milk. This income is supplemented by spouse's income. All respondents reported that their spouses are engaged in some gainful employment: this varied from the prestigious position of an M.P. and Councillor to that of a teacher, clerk, tailor, fisherman and farmer. It is interesting to note that while all of the respondents said they were 'farmers' only four of them reported that their spouses were farmers. One respondent gave no answer. All except one respondent (who had no children) have school age children. They meet the cost of school education as well as other household expenses from income drawn from the farm combined with spouses' earnings.

Respondents were also asked to state their experience with and access to such communication media as the cinema, radio and newspapers. The responses indicated that the radio (usually transistor) is the most common mass medium in the countryside. Of the 19 respondents, 7 listen to the radio

3. In this category one respondent works in a sisal plant and the other as a farm labourer.

everyday; 10 listen to the radio between 1-3 times a week; and 2 listen to the radio occasionally (or once in every week or fortnight). Programmes listened to on the radio are agriculture, poultry keeping, family planning (Kiswahili: Mpango wa Uzazi) and the East African Industries programmes advertising household and cooking items. The majority of respondents listen to these programmes in Kiswahili or their own vernaculars. The second most accessible mass medium is the newspaper: 10 out of the 19 respondents read the newspaper occasionally (as often as they get a copy which varies from twice a week to once in two weeks). One respondent reads the Standard at least three times a week but the most frequently mentioned paper was the Taifa Leo (Kiswahili for Daily Nation). It was noted however, that newspapers could be a more useful medium of communication but the costs are prohibitive and delivery too irregular to allow rural women to rely on newspapers for information. The cinema is the least accessible mass medium: those who reported ever visiting the cinema were only able to do so in Migori, Macalder, Kihancha and Kisumu and even then very rarely (once in 3-6 months or even 1 year). There was a common feeling that although rural women would like to watch the cinema and use it for gaining information on rural development, the distance from the centres where the mobile unit goes and the timing of shows militated against women in two ways: (1) women cannot normally take time off in the early hours of the evening to attend cinema shows because of commitment to household chores; and (2) socially women are not expected to go out at night alone or in groups and consequently they are unable to make any real use of the cinema.

Asked about their recruitment to their present positions of leadership, all the leaders responded that they were elected by group vote. While this may be true for some, there are indications that a husband's influential position may push a woman into a leadership position regardless of the group's estimation of the candidate's suitability as a leader.

TRAINING OF LEADERS AND DROP OUT RATES

Womens' group leaders in Migori/Kuria have attended various types of courses held at short intervals during the period from 1971 to 1975. These series of training sessions involved not only the group leaders but also their trainers and were organised through the Community Development Offices in the field with the assistance of P.B.F.L. mainly in the area of curriculum development, selection of leaders, training of trainers for the groups and follow-up.

A number of courses had already been held in 1971 before P.B.F.L. was asked to help with the programme, namely a two-week divisional seminar for women leaders (21 May to 10 June 1971) which was attended by 51 women, followed by a two-week course for the leaders (starting on 15 September 1971) attended by 23 women. There is no indication whether the 23 women who attended the second course came out of the original 51 or whether they were a completely fresh group.

It was at this time that P.B.F.L. arranged for a Trainers Workshop which was held in Kikuyu from 2 - 8 October 1972 to prepare those who would be training the women's group leaders. At this workshop, arrangements were made to hold a three-day seminar in Migori to allow potential trainers who had been unable to attend the workshop to be familiar with training requirements for women's group leaders. The seminar was subsequently held in Migori from 13-15 November 1972.

According to P.B.F.L., the seminar was organised in a hurry because officers were anxious to go on leave and so little coordination was possible between individual trainers. Furthermore, the tentative programme that had been prepared for women's leaders training was adopted without revision. On the whole it appears that little effort was made to assess the situation in the Migori/Kuria area or the needs of women's groups, and no special curricula were drawn up for this purpose. The agricultural officers for instance were prepared to instruct women in the whole range of crops planned by the Ministry of Agriculture for that area for the year 1973/74, and no attempt was made to identify priority crops from the point of view of the women's groups.

This seminar was followed by a field trip organised for the women's leaders to see groups on the ground, and this again is said to have been poorly coordinated both among the officers and among the groups themselves. The AAO, Home Economist and ACDO visited the groups after a three-week course in February and March 1973.

According to a report by the A.C.D.O.-Migori/Kuria, women's leaders in the area have received two series of training. Series I attended by the first group had four phases, of two weeks, one week, three weeks and one week respectively, with a few months break in between. The second series (Series II, attended by the second group of women had two phases lasting two weeks each (see P.B.F.L. Report No. 15, Appendix 1). The first phase of Series II training occurred from 29 October to 10 November 1973. Courses were held at

Macalder and 21 women attended. A trainer's workshop was held in Migori for 12 trainers from 25-26 October 1973 in preparation for the two week course that followed. Courses continued for women leaders up to the middle of 1974. The second phase of Series II training for the second group was held from 16 March to 30 April 1974 (see S.R.D.P. Phasing Form 1973-74, Department of Social Services). The course content included nutrition, vegetable growing, cattle rearing, child care, family planning, handicrafts, home improvement, literacy classes, group organisation and leadership, and poultry keeping. Not all of the women's leaders in the area were able to attend both series of courses.

Asked how useful the courses were, respondents said that all courses were very useful: however when pressed further to give a more precise statement about the benefits of courses they indicated that lack of equipment and money made it impossible to implement some of the knowledge offered at the courses, especially in poultry keeping and vegetable growing.

Continuity between the phases of training has not been very smooth in Migori/Kuria S.R.D.P. area. Follow-up of groups and trained leaders has not been as frequent as necessary. As has been stated, the follow-up of the first group was conducted by the AAO, ACDO and Home Economist in February and March 1973. A follow-up for the series II, phase 1 course (October-November 1973) was arranged and carried out by the ACDO and the trainers from 26 November 1973 to 28 February 1974, during which 25 women's clubs were visited at least once. Another follow-up was arranged for the period of 15 April to 30 June 1974 to cater for the second group of trained leaders (Phase 2 March - April 1974) during which 25 women's clubs were visited at least once. It is however unclear as to whether or not the second group of women's clubs visited overlapped with the first one. It is also not clear from the ACDO's reports what was the nature of the follow-up and what discoveries were made during the period about the programme on the ground and whether such information had been useful in improving group activities.

Drop-out rates for Migori/Kuria have been quite high. According to P.B.F.L. (see Report No. 15, p. 28), out of 23 group leaders entered for Phase 1 of Series I training (1971/73), 6 or 26% did not attend the second phase of the same series. Of 21 leaders attending Phase 1 of Series II (1973/74), 10 or 47.6% failed to attend Phase 2 of the same series. This rise in drop-out rates for Migori/Kuria is explained at least in part according to P.B.F.L. by (1) the remoteness of the area which resulted in fewer

follow-ups; and (2) the fact that the sheer geographical size of the area covering three Divisions makes it difficult for local trainers to follow-up groups systematically. Additional factors however can be adduced to explain the high drop-out rate of leaders. In the first instance the poor and irregular remuneration of locational CDAs and the lack of any remuneration for women's leaders appear to have combined to reduce the enthusiasm of CDAs and the leaders. As early as the beginning of 1974, locational CDAs for Migori/Kuria were waiting several months for their salaries. While the County Council claimed it had no money to pay CDAs, it was always able to afford salaries for senior officers of the Council, although each was considerably larger than the salaries of two or three CDAs put together. In the past some of the women's group leaders had been paid by the local authority. However subsequently they failed to continue payment and this created an expectation among leaders for remuneration which was not satisfied. Thus the idea of a voluntary leader is still rather difficult for groups and their leaders to accept. Furthermore self-help committees were strained in their resources and found themselves unable to pay women's leaders and nursery teachers. Problems of transportation also add to those resulting from the irregularity of CDA salaries: the terrain in Migori/Kuria is difficult, and roads are often impassable during the rains; this lowers the level of contact which the CDAs can have with the groups - especially during the rains when seasonal streams fill up. The distribution of local staff among the locations combined with the problems of transportation, also appears to have contributed to the low level of communication with some of the groups.

On the whole the Migori/Kuria S.R.D.P. Women's Programme seems to have suffered most from lack of follow-up of groups once they have received training.

THE GROUPS

Women's groups in Migori/Kuria S.R.D.P. area have quite diverse and interesting origins: some are quite old tracing their beginnings to the 1950s and 1960s, while others are new and can be more usefully linked with the S.R.D.P. area from 1971 onwards.

Women's groups can be initiated in several different ways:

(1) by women (usually individuals) who have had training at homecraft centres in sewing and knitting through the C.D. offices or women who having had some training in towns have returned home while their spouses continue to work away from the area; (2) by an interested locational CDA who may work

through any number of social bases such as churches, school committees or other political or social organisations; (3) by a group of men and women who as members of a cooperative society see the need to mobilise women for their local development; or (4) by a nucleus formed from the members of a church.

According to the Ministry of Cooperatives and Social Services 1971 Annual Report there were 20 women's groups in Migori/Kuria with a total enrollment of 416 members. Migori Division had 11 groups with a membership of 222; Kihancha had 3 groups with a membership of 76; and Macalder had 6 groups with a membership of 118. By July 1972 there were 25 women's groups with a membership of 520, according to a Progress Report of the ACDO-Migori/Kuria presented to the senior staff meeting in Migori on 10-11 July 1972. By 1973 it is reported that 34 women's clubs were formed and some had been abandoned (see Annual Report: Migori/Kuria S.R.D.P., Department of Social Services). The 1973 Report however does not state which groups were continuing from 1971 and which were newly formed or abandoned. In the first quarter of 1974 23 groups were reported registered in Migori/Kuria, distributed as follows: Migori Division, 15 groups with a total membership of 243; Kihancha Division, 3 groups with 17 members; and Macalder Division, 5 groups with a membership of 61. The figures show a drastic reduction in groups and membership for Kihancha and Macalder Divisions while Migori Division maintains a steady rise both in number of groups and membership. According to the ACDO, by the end of 1974 there were 34 groups with a total membership of 680. Could 13 new groups have formed in Migori/Kuria between the time of the first quarterly report and the end of 1974? If this is the case then there is some discrepancy between the high drop-out rate in the leader's training courses and the ability of so many new groups to spring up.

The fluctuation in group membership and the actual demise of groups can be explained at least in part in terms of the distance from Migori which is a thriving trading centre and where the divisional headquarters is located. The groups nearest and within Migori Division may derive the benefits of closer follow-up and contact with staff than do groups in Kihancha or Macalder where there seems to be difficulty in forming new groups to replace old ones that are abandoned.

Although in 1974 34 groups are reported with a total membership of 680, these figures are not high in comparison with the three Divisions. It should not be assumed therefore that a numerical rise in groups (from 20 in 1971 to 34 in 1974) is an indication of the success of groups on the ground. A useful indication of the success of groups must

be sought in the follow-up reports rather than in the sheer rise in membership especially, when groups come and go so rapidly.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Women's groups in Migori/Kuria engage in activities such as farming, poultry keeping, pottery, cookery, handicrafts, knitting socks, and making baskets and children's clothes. According to the ACDO, 2 groups are putting up poultry houses; 7 have hybrid maize plots; 18 are involved in kitchen gardening; 1 is building a store; and 1 is building a social hall. The groups have plans to expand their craft production, buy sewing machines, raise money for a dispensary, improve on their farming plots, intensify poultry keeping and improve their cookery and sewing lessons. Each group varies in the emphasis they give to different activities, however nearly all the groups whose leaders were interviewed show an unnecessary concern with knitting and sewing articles which cannot be sold easily and take up too much of the valuable time which groups could spend in other more profitable endeavours.

Groups meet twice a week at a designated meeting place, usually a school room or a church, where they conduct their business. However many of the groups desire a meeting place constructed in their own name which they could utilise for cinema shows and lectures as well as their discussions.

PROBLEMS

The biggest problem facing the groups is financial. Although part of the stress on money problems derived from the perception that the I.D.S. team might deliver or cause others to deliver resources for the group's improvement, there were some quite genuine needs mentioned. The following were noted as major bottlenecks: (1) payment of leaders and nursery teachers; (2) costs of books and purchase of materials for literacy classes; (3) costs of new seeds for kitchen gardening; (4) costs of a meeting room for the groups; and (5) the need for further training of the groups as a whole relating to family welfare and family planning.

PERCEPTION OF THE PROGRAMME

The leaders of groups see the formation of women groups as a valuable step toward helping women to gain confidence in public participation.

The respondents would not list any course as 'not useful' and they praised the Programme for giving women a chance to learn. Indeed a number

of women have benefited from functional literacy classes and welcome any new ideas and means that point to an improvement in their conditions of life. However they stated that cost of equipment such as for poultry keeping sometimes prevents them from implementing what they have learnt.

In spite of the Women's Programme being part of S.R.D.P. respondents showed very limited knowledge of S.R.D.P. as a concept of development or of projects offered for the area. This lack of knowledge may have stemmed from the fact that the other ministries involved in S.R.D.P. did not have as much to do with women as the Ministry of Social Services. This inter-ministerial alienation sometimes creates false divisions between officers in the field and obstructs the possibility of cooperation which is so vital at the field level. Furthermore group leaders themselves appeared not to inform members of their groups about finances and the objectives of the group. Where a leader is not truly chosen by the group some form of alienation also occurs between the leader and her group members. These two types of alienation can generally be reduced or eliminated if members of the group are in frequent contact with all the relevant officials of ministries who are working in the area.

THE OFFICIALS

In the table below we indicate the officials and agencies involved in the Women's Programme in the Migori/Kuria area.

Table 4 - Officials working with women's groups.

<u>Designation</u>	<u>Department/Agency</u>	<u>Types of Contribution</u>
1. CDO	DSS	Training
2. ACDO	DSS	Divisional coordination of training and follow-up
3. CDA	DSS	Locational supervision of groups; assistance in implementation of training; follow-up
4. AAO	MOA	Training and follow-up
5. Home Economist	MOA	Training and follow-up
6. JAA	MOA	Locational extension work
7. Nutritionist	MOH	Training and follow-up
8. Home Visitor	MOH)	Visiting groups on the ground and offering advice on how to use information from courses
9. Health Educator	MOH)	
10. Field Educator	FPAK	Instruction on family planning and follow-up
11. P.B.F.L. Staff	PBFL	Curriculum development, training, follow-up
12. Adult Education Officer	MOE	Instruction in adult literacy and supervision of the programme
13. ACO	MOCOD	Instruction on cooperative societies, follow-up
14. Fisheries Officer	MOTW	Instruction on fish farming