For more than 15 years, the Agency for International Development and its predecessor agencies have included home economics in technical and economic assistance programs. These home economics advisers, working with technicians from other fields such as education, health, agriculture, and engineering, have been able to assist many nations in their process of development. Schools from the nursery school to the university have been built and equipped. Funds for this purpose have come jointly from the national governments and the United States. More important than money has been the skilled advice of technicians in planning and furnishing these institutions. In addition, curriculum planning and teacher education have supplied great impetus to the formation of more modern programs. Not only has the technician helped with this training in her day-to-day work with the leaders, but thousands of teachers have been sent to the United States or some other suitable country to learn new and better methods. Government agencies have been influenced to put homemaking departments in most of the secondary schools, in the teachers colleges, and in a number of universities.

What has happened in the formal educational program has also taken place in more informal learning situations. An extension service, including home economics, rural development, and community development programs, has been instigated in most of the countries in which AID or its predecessor agencies have had missions. For example, thousands of women are now involved in a community development program in India. The inspiration for this project came when a group of leaders was sent to Japan by our mission to learn methods of working with rural women. Since soon after the war the work in Japan has flourished and continued to gain momentum. Mary Louise Collings was the adviser who helped the Japanese begin the extension program. The country now serves as a training situation for other countries.

Home economists have given help and guidance in establishing and improving institutions which teach home economics. From the beginning of the program in Europe, schools -- both primary and secondary -- were assisted. In the Netherlands the first college of home economics attached to a university in Europe was established, and a home economics research institute was equipped in Denmark. Home economics departments are now functioning on the university level in Brazil, India, Thailand, and Columbia. None of these institutions would ever have been started had it not been for the efforts of the U.S. foreign aid home economics advisers in those countries.

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Under a contract with the Department of Home Economics of the University of Tennessee, assistance was given to six women's colleges to develop their home economics curricula to a level that would enable them to give a master's degree in at least one subject -- child-care, nutrition, etc.

The U.S. home economists helped in the organization of the Home Economics Association of India, a professional organization that has grown in influence. This has also been done in 12 other countries. The U.S. Mission gave strong support to the establishment of about 30 home economics extension training centers by (1) providing special training for the principals of the centers in Japan and Hawaii, (2) providing the services of five home economists to assist in developing and operating the training centers, and (3) providing some training materials and facilities. The centers have trained 4,000 home economists now working at the village level.

Not only have farm girls and women learned many valuable lessons which have resulted in a better home and family life, but they have become aware of the accomplishments possible through cooperation. With the encouragement of their advisers they have advocated and actually helped to build schools, health centers, and community meeting places. They have organized school lunch programs, cottage industries, and village improvement campaigns. The homemaker has been given confidence in herself. She is emerging from "behind the veil" and taking her place as a citizen in her community.

Since 1961, there has been a gradual reduction of the "advisers" on AID mission staffs. This applies not only to home economists but to many specialists who were giving technical help.

In 1955 there were 47 home economists working with the governments of 21 countries. Three years later, after the college contract program came into effect, this number increased to 89 in 31 countries. Today, there are eight home economists employed on AID mission staffs and about the same number attached to contract teams. There may be a few more employed by the colleges and universities whose profession is not given in the documents sent to AID/Washington. In any case a great reduction has taken place in the number of home economists working in the countries of the world today.

The all-important questions are, Why has this happened? What can we do about it?

Before attempting to answer these questions, it is necessary to understand the ideas regarding home economics held by government leaders in many of the less developed countries, the types of problems faced by the women of the countries, and the objectives of the United States in sending home economists to a foreign nation.

It is the host government officials who request our government to give help in specific fields. They can request aid in home economics, refuse it, or advise that it be discontinued. Most of them do not know what home economics is or what it can do. Traditionally, too, in most of the countries, little attention has been given to any kind of education for women. If the men
in leading positions are at all familiar with anything resembling home economics, it is the variety transplanted from Europe. This, in many cases, is impractical in the less-developed countries and the national authorities feel that a technician in such a discipline is unnecessary. Only if one of the officials has visited the United States and has seen what our homemaking education is and what it can do is an adviser voluntarily requested. However, there are some cases where a member of the AID mission staff, well informed on the subject and thoroughly convinced that home economics will be of great value to the people, has been able to persuade the national officials of their own need.

Almost all the problems of rural women in the developing countries are based on a lack of education. The way in which women meet their homemaking responsibilities results from tradition and superstition. Methods are handed down from mother to daughter. A lack of knowledge in regard to sanitation enters into many phases of life. The principles of nutrition are unknown. Home management plays no part in the consideration of daily duties. Women do certain things in certain ways because this is the manner in which they have always been done.

Improving a situation is difficult because of a human characteristic -- the lack of desire to change. There are several reasons for this resistance. Perhaps the most important is that learning to perform a task in a new way is hard. Moreover, with the extremely low incomes of most families in developing countries, experimentation may be expensive. They know that the old way worked; so why risk a new?

The home economist working with the homemaker in these countries must realize that education is a slow process. She must find out what the homemaker herself wants to learn, help her with this, and see that the project comes to a successful conclusion. After she gains the confidence of the homemaker she can lead her into attempting other more needed activities. Whatever is taught must be of practical value to the family and within its cultural pattern and income limitations.

With these problems of the homemaker in mind, let us consider the guidelines which the United States government has set up. After a request for a home economics adviser is received, she is selected and processed. Then she is brought into Washington for orientation. There she is given certain general objectives toward which to work. Among these, are the following:

1. To try to improve the standard of living in the country.
2. To train leaders as quickly as possible to do the work she herself is doing.
3. To understand and respect the national culture.
4. To teach people to do more effectively the things they are doing already.
5. To base programs on the needs and resources of the people.
6. To develop community spirit and action.
7. To help select and orient young women to go for study in the U. S. or some other suitable country.
8. To help interested countries establish or improve needed educational institutions.
9. To make friends for the United States.
Factors Influencing the Home Economics Technical Assistance Program

There are a number of factors influencing the situation of our home economics advisers in the missions. These factors may vary from country to country but some are quite common. Those of us who have worked with the foreign aid program over an extended period feel that in order to make any kind of evaluation of the home economist's work it is necessary to go back to the objectives she was given before she began. To one who has seen the "before and after" of a home economist's tour, it is quite evident that the standard of living has been improved. This is true especially in relation to sanitation, child care, home improvement, and community living.

National leaders have been well-trained both by working with the American specialist from day to day and through study trips to other countries. This success is amply proven by the fact that in a number of countries, though the specialist has left, high standards of work are being carried on by the national staffs. Most specialists have been interested in the culture of the country and have made a great effort to understand it. Giving help to people in their traditional tasks has been done, to a certain extent.

Many of our home economics advisers, however, know little about teaching gardening, poultry keeping, the care of small animals or even such things as soap making or feeding babies without milk or fruit juice. One of the greatest shortcomings has been in the planning of programs on the basis of needs and available resources of the people. Instead of doing this they are likely to plan their programs with United States standards in mind. This is true not only with programs but with teaching equipment.

Women in countries with no tradition of working together are now cooperating on a number of projects. Community clean-up campaigns and village beautification are evident in many countries. Thousands of young women have been selected to come to the United States and other suitable countries in order to learn to do their jobs better at home. The home economist has had a large share in this effective project.

The work of our specialists has generally been highly worthwhile and within the range of economic possibility for the people to carry out. Countless women are now feeding their families better because they have learned to dry fruits and vegetables. Many are now making simple clothing for their families, doing their cooking on mud stoves instead of three stones, and their laundry with the wooden washing machine. Against one over-elaborately equipped laboratory, there are thousands of simple teaching situations which are in keeping with the economic and cultural conditions of the nation. You who will teach, select, and orient the home economics advisers of the future -- you need to know the problems and help the young women who go out to meet them. They will need both understanding and ingenuity in selecting projects and methods of work.
The Challenge to Home Economics Leaders in Colleges of the United States

According to the most valid reports, there will be few if any home economics advisers on our mission staffs of the immediate future. When any are sent to work in the countries they probably will be sent through the college contracts, or through contracts with other government agencies (U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Department of Interior, etc.) If the leaders in our colleges and agencies do not realize their opportunity and responsibility in this matter, women of the less developed world will be blocked in their progress toward better home and family living.

In order to fulfill this obligation -- which is really one of international importance -- it is necessary that you:

1. Help your own staff members develop a deep understanding and conviction that practical home economics, even though the teaching facilities be quite primitive, is just as much home economics and can uphold as high standards as any we teach in the United States.

2. Give the survey committee which goes out to a country a full understanding of the values of home economics to the country and stress the fact that this special type of education is of great importance. It should be considered both in their survey and in their recommendations. Better still, get yourself appointed on such committees. If this is not possible, remember that the members, when the final agreement is reached, will be in consultation with officials of the host government. They may not realize the importance of home economics. A statement listing its values is desirable. This paper, whose virtue will be its brevity and clarity, should be written by a group of home economists working together. One person alone will give her own ideas, but this document should be a pooling of many ideas.

3. Teach the young women under your supervision what I will call the "basics" of home economics. These principles, if valid, should apply to any situation -- not just to conditions in the United States. Along with that, teach them how to see and evaluate needs and how to plan all programs so that these needs can be met or partially met.

4. Realize that men of the United States, no matter how well educated still do not understand nor appreciate our philosophy of home economics. We, the leaders in this field, are entirely responsible for this fact. In the early days of struggle to secure a "place" for home economics, we realized the importance of "educating" the men in our chosen field. Even now, when they do have some appreciation for what we are trying to do, they being as human as the rest of us, feel that the things they are most interested in are the more important.
We must help our staff members, our students, and the men and women with whom we come in contact understand the importance of home and family living. It has made a contribution to our country and it will help homemakers throughout the world take their places in the economic and social structure of their nations. It will assist them in training their children to become stronger and better citizens in a changing world.

Summary

The home economist has made some mistakes but she has met the aims of her government well. Certainly, she leaves the homemakers in the country in which she has worked better able to solve their problems, better able to care for their families.

What can we do to increase the dwindling ranks of home economists overseas? Leaders in home economics in the colleges of the United States will have the opportunity to see that advisers in their field are included in all college contracts signed. They can do this by influencing the members of the survey team which goes out to the countries to discuss needs with the leaders of the host government. They can help the situation greatly by the type of training given their students and by selecting and orienting them with great care before they leave. They also have an opportunity to give men and women a better understanding and appreciation of homemaking education. I am sure they will meet this challenge!