1998

Perceptions of female Returned Peace Corps Volunteers regarding the participation and empowerment process for rural African women: a model

Hassan Ali
Iowa State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/rtd

Part of the Agricultural Education Commons, and the Women's Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/rtd/11587

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Iowa State University Capstones, Theses and Dissertations at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Retrospective Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6” x 9” black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600
Perceptions of female Returned Peace Corps Volunteers regarding the participation and empowerment process for rural African women: A model

by

Hassan Ali

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Agricultural Education (Agricultural Extension Education)

Major Professor: Robert A. Martin

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

1998
This is to certify that the Doctoral dissertation of

Hassan Ali

has met the dissertation requirements of Iowa State University

Signature was redacted for privacy.

Major Professor

Signature was redacted for privacy.

For the Major Program

Signature was redacted for privacy.

For the Graduate College
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES v

LIST OF FIGURES vi

ABSTRACT vii

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION 1
- Implications and Need for the Study 1
- Purpose and Objectives 4
- Rationale and Educational Significance 5
- Operational Definitions 6

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE 8
- Theoretical Framework 8
- Participation and Empowerment Methodology 11
  - Problems with empowerment 13
  - Effective empowerment 13
- Present Condition of Village and Rural Women 14
- Current Attempts to Improve the Condition of Village and Rural Women 17
- Participation and Empowerment 19
  - Participation 19
  - Empowerment 22
  - Advantages of participation and empowerment 25
- The Selection of Peace Corps Volunteers 27
- Research Questions 27

CHAPTER 3. METHODS AND PROCEDURES 28
- Purpose and Objectives 28
- Population and Sample 28
- Participation Selection Process 29
- Research Design 35
- Data Collection 37
- Data Analysis 38
- Limitations of the Study 39
- Assumptions 39

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS 40
- Organization of the Findings 41
- A Profile of the Interviewees 42
  - Ms. Gambia 43
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Organization of the findings 42
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. A participatory and empowerment model 210
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to interview female Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) who, within the last five years, had set up, implemented, and managed an agriculturally-based, participatory and empowerment program for rural and village women, during their overseas assignment in Africa. An interview schedule of open-ended questions was used to document descriptive data regarding participation and empowerment.

Participation occurs when facilitators or international development personnel establish self-help programs that permit women to organize, design, implement and manage their own development programs; therefore, members of the target population can have direct involvement in the process of improving their lives. Empowerment is defined as increasing the control of individual(s) over decisions, resources and institutions that may affect them.

The purpose of this study was to determine how to improve the delivery methodologies in international extension programming for women at the village level. By interviewing selected RPCVs in this study, a comprehensive list of strategies, suggestions and helpful hints was compiled to facilitate and improve the implementation of programs that help women become directly involved in the process of solving their own problems. The objectives for this study were twofold: (a) to identify methods to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women; and (b) to identify strategies that may be used to attract rural/village women to participate in these self-help development programs.
Five general conclusions were reached: (a) to achieve a successful participatory and empowerment program, a credibility stage must be completed; (b) the village women must come together as a group and work as a team to complete program activities; (c) the female clients need to expend “sweat equity” to reap program benefits; (d) participation and especially empowerment needs to adhere to village norms (i.e., they must conform to local village protocols); and (e) only “badly needed programs” (as identified by the female clients) should be initiated, and whenever possible these programs should be fun and enjoyable for the participants. Finally, a model for implementation was developed to implement a participatory and empowerment regime that emerged based on the findings of the study.
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Few would argue that in the developing world there is too much pain and suffering, poverty, and starvation, especially among women and children. The battle against this misery requires a change in attitude in the world community. Too often, large amounts of development dollars are poured into impoverished communities, and yet the condition of women and children does not improve. It could be argued that when conditions are bad, women and children become the most vulnerable groups; therefore, they need special attention (Abbott, 1993; Stamps, 1990).

Including women in the development process has become a priority in recent years (Stamps, 1990; Warren, 1994; World Bank, 1994). In fact, many dollars in foreign aid have been earmarked specifically for the purpose of getting village women involved in “the process” of improving their lives. This process may require technology transfer. It may mean building skills through informal or formal educational programs. It may necessitate organizing groups of women for community activities, or it may mean giving women the necessary resources so that they can become self-sufficient (e.g., through income-generating programs) (Stamps, 1990). Many things can be done to assist women. The present trend is encouraging because more attention is being paid to the issue of “women in development,” perhaps more than at any time throughout history (Abbott, 1993; Stamps, 1990).

Implications and Need for the Study

Historically, men have been the target group for development agencies. The “appropriate technology” that was introduced by development agencies was either inappropriate for women or the agencies totally ignored women and never considered them to be a crucial part of the development strategy. “The stark reality is that ‘development’ as commonly construed in the West, has meant underdevelopment for women, and consequently, for children and communities as well” (Potash, 1985, p. 15).
Indeed, helping women has many consequences. Mothers are caring and they tend to give all that they can to their children. Therefore, in the developing world, when a program is designed to help the mother, usually her children will also benefit. This antecedent is why it is unconscionable for extension and development agencies to continue to ignore the plight of women. Simply stated, more programs should be specifically designed for women and their needs (Abbott, 1993; Stamps, 1990). A change is needed!

Rural women do not normally have adequate resources available to them, especially on a long-term basis. Therefore, some have argued that self-help approaches are ideally suited for “women in development” (WID) (Sivard, 1985).

Many projects have gone into a region to provide new technology or international aid, with the intent of improving the standard of living for the people. This method of operating is changing to some extent. Given the limitation of funds and skilled personnel in developing countries, projects are not likely to reach more than a handful of communities. Therefore, a new paradigm is evolving whereby communities that are not recipients of funding are now learning how to come together to help themselves (Stamps, 1990). This new self-help strategy can take many forms, such as the participatory and empowerment approaches.

Participation in the current study is about self-help programs which permit women to get involved in the process of solving their problems. “Every individual tends to feel committed to a decision (or an activity) to the extent that [she] has participated in making it or planning it” (Kindervatter, 1979, p. 67). Empowerment is increasing the control of individuals over decisions, resources, and institutions which affects their lives. The research has consistently attested that, whether it is in a developed or a developing country, the morale and the productivity of the clientele is enhanced when they are involved in making decisions about matters that affect them (Kindervatter, 1979; Ross, 1967).

Philosophically, development programs should be culturally sensitive, financially feasible, and cost-effective. Each of these conditions can be met by adopting participatory
and empowerment self-help activities. With these innovative approaches, indigenous people are directly involved in the process of helping themselves (Kindervatter, 1979). Therefore, their cultural concerns are adhered to, and outside expert and skilled labor costs and overhead are saved because rural people learn to work in a group and tend to be less dependent. Moreover, benefits from program activities tend to be long-lasting when target groups learn to solve their own problems.

Participation and empowerment are cost-effective programs that emphasize community effort and move away from dependence on development dollars. By using the antecedent self-helped techniques, an extension agent or a community development worker can organize villagers into action-oriented teams to get things done at minimal cost.

Why are participatory and empowerment activities so attractive? Village women know what they need and what direction a change must go, to fit their situation. According to Kindervatter (1979, “people are more likely to change when they are involved in defining and implementing [the] particular change effort” (p. 117). Another advantage of participatory activities is that this technique generally depends on skills and materials that are locally available (Scrimshaw, 1982). Moreover, the methods used by women are culturally and socially acceptable to their local community. In addition, participation gives women the opportunity to earn income, make decisions, increase their status, and break down barriers (Stamps, 1990).

When participation is paired with empowerment, the recipients not only get involved in the process of helping themselves but they also have control over local decisions and resources. Some would say that the two complement each other. By doing both, the grassroots program will be stronger because with participation, in time the people develop skills to help themselves, and with empowerment they learn how to make decisions and to manage their self-help program (Brydon & Chant, 1989; Kardem, 1991).
For different reasons, individual women may not want to get involved with new ways of doing things. For example, a caste, tribal, or social class system may preclude groups of women from coming together to help each other. Furthermore, O’Kelly (1979) noted that many village women are too busy with their domestic chores and do not have the time, nor do they see the immediate benefit of changing their lives. O’Kelly stated: “if the women are to be attracted in the first place [to a group activity], it is important that membership carry, or should be seen to carry, some immediate practical advantage” (p. 52). Clearly, a practical approach is needed to facilitate getting rural women more "involved" in the development process.

Purpose and Objectives

This qualitative study was designed to acquire empirical information from Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCV) who had previously implemented participatory and empowerment programs for women in developing countries. The RPCV interviews provided a rich resource of valuable descriptive information on how to organize, develop, and implement a rural-based participatory and empowerment regime. The results of this study could possibly be used to write a manual with general guidelines for Agricultural Extension and development staff who work at the village level. These recommendations could also be used to improve delivery methodologies in Agricultural Extension programming.

The main purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions held by RPCVs on how to organize and implement practical, rural-based self-help participatory and empowerment activities for women in developing countries. A secondary purpose was to use the interview data to develop a framework (i.e., model) for implementing participatory and empowerment activities for rural/village women.

The objectives of this study were twofold: (a) to identify methods to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women; and (b) to
identify strategies that could be used to attract rural/village women to participate in self-help development programs.

**Rationale and Educational Significance**

Participation and empowerment are relatively new concepts in Agricultural Extension Education, especially in programs designed for rural women. By interviewing selected RPCVs in this study, a comprehensive list of strategies, suggestions, and helpful hints could be compiled to facilitate and improve the implementation of programs to get women directly involved in the process of solving their own problems. This research data might become an invaluable resource for development personnel who have a desire to work with rural women. Although writing a manual was not the intent of this research, grassroots strategies emanating from the study could be used at a future date to develop a much needed set of guidelines for the development community.

The research design of this study was qualitative, and an interview format of open-ended questions was used to carry out the research objectives. The structure of the discussions allowed respondents to describe their experiences in organizing and managing a participatory empowerment program, thus providing a new paradigm of fresh ideas based on two years of grassroots work with the Peace Corps.

Because of their unique experiences, RPCVs were chosen to be interviewed for this study. Interviewing RPCVs had four advantages: (a) as returned volunteers, virtually all members of this population resided in the United States, therefore, they were easily accessible; (b) annually, there are approximately 3,000 volunteers returning to the United States following their overseas assignment, thus providing a large pool of interviewees; (c) a mailing list for a large number of RPCVs was available; and (d) most importantly, these volunteers had two years of daily hands-on experience in managing a grassroots program.
Operational Definitions

The following terms were defined for the purpose of this study:

*Bottom-up* - When clients maintain control by dictating what is done in their internationally supported development program.

*Clients* - In the context of this study the people who were offered assistance (i.e., clients) were usually members of the participatory program.

*Consensus decision making* - A process wherein the majority of the members of a group make a final decision.

*Counterpart* - On the local level, an individual, who often will assist the facilitator in setting up and/or maintaining the participatory program.

*Creditability stage* - An initial stage whereby the facilitator establishes rapport, respect, and trust with the clients.

*Empowerment* - Allowing the clients to have control over decisions, resources, and institutions which affect them.

*Extended family* - A unit formed by a traditional nuclear family along with their relatives.

*Facilitator* - An individual, normally, from outside the target community, who serves as a catalyst to get the clients involved in the development process. In this study, the development process included participatory and empowerment procedures.

*Intended beneficiaries* - A target group of clients who participate in the development process.

*International extension* - This form of extension work is conducted by non-native facilitators who assist local people in developing their capacity to have a better life. Local extension personnel primarily offer technical advice to clients. International extensionists, on the other hand, normally attempt to establish capacity-building programs within the community.

*Interview schedule* - A formal list of open-ended questions used to document the perceptions of interviewees regarding specific issues. In this study the key issues were participation and empowerment methodology.
Less educated - A term frequently used in international development to depict clients who are illiterate.

Members - Women who join the participatory group.

Needs assessment - A process whereby the facilitator helps identify the needs of the clients.

Participation - Self-help programs that enable village and rural women to organize, design, implement and manage their development program.

Peace Corps - A United States government organization that initiates overseas volunteer programs to help improve the lives of poor people in developing countries (Coates, 1995).

Program - The formal structure that the facilitator establishes with the clients. It is a public exercise towards a goal (Merriam-Webster, 1991).

Qualitative study - A research methodology that normally evaluates a relatively small number of units, and uses inductive reasoning in the analysis. The researcher plays a major role in interpreting the data.

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCV) - Individuals who have completed at least two years of their overseas assignment for the United States government organization known as the Peace Corps. Normally, these individuals return to the United States to live after they complete their overseas assignment.

Sweat equity - A process whereby clients directly expend energy and make a personal contribution to achieve program benefits.

Template - A plan that is flexible and can be changed to reflect the heartfelt desires of the [female] clients.

Top-down - When the hierarchy in a sponsoring organization maintains control by dictating what is to be done in an international development program.

Women - A term used in this study to refer to "village women" or "rural women".

Women in Development - A general term used to categorize female-based issues in international development.
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The main purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions held by Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) on how to organize and implement practical, rural-based self-help participatory and empowerment activities for women in developing countries. This information might be useful to build a model on how to involve rural and village women in the process of helping themselves through participatory and empowerment approaches. The objectives of the study were to identify methods to enhance participatory and empowerment activities involving rural women, and to identify strategies that could be used to attract rural/village women to participate in self-help development programs.

The literature review covers three primary areas. The first section presents the theoretical framework for this qualitative study, and the second describes the present condition of village women. Finally, the third section reviews propositions on how to make changes.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical base for this study can be found in literature that promotes bottom-up planning and development. The Institute of Cultural Affairs International (ICAI, 1987) noted: "there is a big difference between enterprises run for the poor, and enterprises run by the poor" (p. 36). The ICAI continued by saying that, with participatory development, indigenous people feel a sense of responsibility as they make decisions and manage their development activity: they "grow" in self-confidence, self-reliance, and in their organizing skills. Moreover, their full participation from the beginning usually results in "sustainable [long lasting] development" (p. 36).

Obviously, a group of village people sitting and deciding what to do to improve their living conditions is superior to a village plan prepared by outside agencies. Key elements in most "participatory schemes" allow local people to identify their needs, to make decisions on
their development, to plan their activities, and perhaps most importantly, to agree upon plan(s) which are implemented by the people, themselves. Implementation would require communities to form self-help groups. It would also include training and decision making by the people. As a result, the potential for people to have a better life is enhanced (ICAI, 1987, p. 50).

Hui (1985) stated that the best way for Western societies to help developing nations is to teach them how to help themselves. Successful do-for-self approaches allow poorer nations to become stronger and less dependent on others. They teach impoverished people how to develop their capacities to solve their problems. Successful programs help women acquire self-esteem and learn new ways of improving their condition. To give poor rural women more opportunities than they have had in the past, a different strategy is needed. One approach is to get women actively involved in the process of helping themselves. These approaches can be described as participatory and empowerment activities. The immediate benefit of this type of bottom-up strategy allows target populations to identify their needs and to design programs which fit their culture. Because people at the grassroots level invest their personal time and effort into the program, they have a stake into seeing that the project succeeds. To illustrate this point, Hui quoted a Chinese Proverb: "Go in search of people. Begin with what they know. Build on what they have" (p. 5).

Bottom-up planning has been advocated by many (Alton, 1988; O'Kelly, 1979; Poulton & Harris, 1988; Stamps, 1990; United Nations, 1989). O'Kelly (1979) surmised, "You can take a horse to water but you cannot make it drink. Therefore, if the program is for females, the program will fail unless women are participating" (p. 53). In other words, a female perspective is needed to design effective, female-oriented programs for local conditions.

Rural men and women may have different needs and desires. Nelson (1981, p. 53) supported this theory and indicated it is wrong to assume that an effective development
program for males will automatically translate into an effective program for women. The United Nations' (1989, p. 101) position is similar. The UN purports that the most effective way of helping a significant number of women is by designing projects that are gender-sensitive to their needs. This process involves channeling resources and services specifically for women.

Why should women receive special attention in the development process? There are many reasons why gender-sensitive issues should be included in international projects. Pietila and Vickers (1990) offered a rationale for initiating female programs in international development programs. They noted "the importance of 'special measures' . . . to enhance women's autonomy so that they can come into the mainstream of the development process on an equal footing with men" (p. 56). They went on to say that "achieving a balance between male and female participation in decision-making is the most important way in which to develop a better balance in life and the more humane progress of societies in general" (p. 68). Young (1993) stated specifically that "women should have special programs to address their needs (p. 41). Finally, the United Nations (1989) noted that programs for women tend to be less successful unless resources are earmarked explicitly for female services. Moreover, this report stated that "the most effective way to provide substantial benefits for large numbers of women was by establishing gender-sensitive, female-only projects" (101).

Regarding empowerment, Poulton and Harris (1988) concluded that decision-making should be done by the communities themselves because they know what is best for their situations. However, development agencies should get involved in this process to ensure that "women, children, and the poorest of the poor have a say in program activities" (p. 68).

If rural women are to become directly involved in the development process, then international development staff must play a crucial role. Mascarenhas and Mbilinyi (1981) explained that, if the goal is improving the condition of women, then personnel who work for
international projects must become more enlightened on how to work with rural women, and these organizations must learn how to manage female self-help programs.

**Participation and Empowerment Methodology**

The broad principles of participation and empowerment have been used not only in international development, but in other disciplines as well. In fact, some disciplines have their own definition of participation and empowerment. According to Bryant and White (1982), empowerment is a process which increases the capacity of a group to influence their future. On the other hand, the World Bank maintains that empowerment is acquiring leverage for the poor (Honadle et al., 1985). A definition of empowerment that is used in business, is that of giving official or legal authority to an individual, a department, or a group (Perry, 1987). Finally, Rothwell et al. (1995) offered a formula for determining empowerment: empowerment = direction x support x autonomy, whereby, if any element equals zero, the product of the equation equals zero.

There are also many descriptions of participation. A description used by extensionists defines participation as a process whereby individuals develop their own abilities to solve problems. Skills in problem identification are developed, clients are allowed to determine their goals and their ability to make choices is enhanced. Moreover, by teaching participation, this methodology provides opportunities for people “to develop traits of character, qualities of leadership, and knowledge of issues and concerns that enable them to be productive citizens and to achieve progress in a changing society” (Rothwell et al., 1995, p. 385). When participation is stressed, extension programming can be helpful in training community leaders, establishing community councils as well as facilitate a process whereby community problems and needs are analyzed (Compton & McClusky, 1980; Jones, 1986;).

Prawl et al. (1984) noted that participation could be used in extension programming as a means to enhance cooperation by using grassroots organizations to identify interests and needs as well as to recognize scientific and cultural changes. The use of local leaders and
existing agencies and the development of a community approach to solve problems are additional benefits which are achieved when the participatory approach is included in extension programming.

Although Prawl (1989) referred to Western-based programs in extension, it appears that these initiatives are relevant to the participation and empowerment process in developing countries as well. Elliot (1989) concurred this relevance:

Participation plays an important role in extension. Rural people are encouraged to participate when examining their needs and in program planning, and it is hoped that through this participatory process, people will increase their capacity to identify problems and that leaders will develop within the community. (p. 10)

Anthropologists have noted positive results when participatory methods are used in agriculturally-based programs for rural women in developing countries. Blumberg (1989) took the position that gender is both an essential and a critical variable in the development equation because women are capable of making major contributions to a country. However, Blumberg contends, if women are going to make a major contribution, their productive capacities must be enhanced. Furthermore, when women are ignored in planning, the development effort is undermined. Development planning and outcomes are improved when females are involved in the process.

Liedtke (1986) perceived that judicious use of technology and education could enhance the role of women as equal participants in a society. Carloni (1987) stated that roles and responsibilities are different between men and women. Therefore, programs should be designed specifically for the needs of each gender. Furthermore, women are more likely to realize immediate benefits and achieve long-term socioeconomic goals when they are allowed to participate in projects.

Sollod et al. (1984) advocated documenting the most important problems among the people and to help clients assume more responsibility to improve their condition. Melchoir (1989) stated that to enhance project success, “community participation is essential” (p. 19).
Moreover, the project goals should be: (a) sustainable; (b) utilize all resources effectively; and (c) involve listening to the village people. From the very beginning, the people should be encouraged to participate in all aspects of the project and they should be involved in decision-making.

**Problems with empowerment**

In United States-based Extension, several empowerment problems have been identified (Rothwell et al., 1995). Members of client organizations or the extensionists, themselves, do not understand the direction that their organizations are heading, or they do not understand their organization’s business. They also disagree on which priorities to address. Some think that they are not trusted or they sense little support from the organization, management, or peers. Others do not think their organization provides the necessary training and information to fulfill their obligations and/or responsibilities. Finally, some do not think they have sufficient autonomy to make necessary improvements.

**Effective empowerment**

If people are empowered to act then change is more likely to occur. “In one sense, empowerment means giving people the skills and information that they need to make good decisions and take informed, deliberate actions” (Rothwell et al., 1995, p. 386). On many occasions, when a specific change is desired and the empowerment approach is utilized, the facilitator/extensionist will help clients progress through stages of “everyone has an opinion” to “valid information”, to “possible solutions”. Moreover, to achieve effective empowerment in extension, the organization must: (a) achieve clarity of purpose; (b) establish its change processes collaboratively; (c) help employees and extensionists identify problems and find solutions, and (d) the extension organization must change its internal resources to reflect an empowerment approach (Rothwell et al.).
An effective use of empowerment in business is seen in the Motorola Corporation which has implemented empowerment strategies in many aspects of the organization (Bigelow, 1991). Motorola's Six Sigma process (i.e., six mistakes) emphasizes: (a) knowing the organization's products and services; (b) listening to, and understanding the customer; (c) knowing the suppliers well and developing a relationship with them; (d) understanding the fundamental processes of their business; (e) eliminating waste and making processes mistake-proof; and (f) placing an emphasis on measuring, analyzing, and the control process.

Mercer (1991) perceived that a total quality management (TQM) policy should: "satisfy customer/client requirements, determine customer needs, encourage employee involvement, and "embrace the ethic of continuous improvement" (p. 11). Key mechanisms to achieve these TQM results include training and education, communications, recognition, management behavior, teamwork, and customer satisfaction programs.

In business, and perhaps in other disciplines, when management is willing to foster a sense of teamwork and provide a supportive environment, employees will inevitably experience internal improvements in morale, cooperation, enthusiasm, and in productivity (Mercer, 1991). When comparing empowerment strategies in business, extension, sociology, administration, or with other endeavors, perhaps the salient point is that there is a common theme which runs through them all—improvements are made and people are developed when they are involved in the process.

Present Condition of Village and Rural Women

For many village and rural women, their present condition is not good. Globally, the majority of the poor are women. They are overworked (some toil for 18 hours/day), undertrained, and usually they are malnourished and illiterate (Pietila & Vickers, 1990, Sivard, 1985). In virtually every aspect of life they are caught in a vicious cycle that impedes their progress. For example, in the developing world approximately two-thirds of the female population over the age of 25 have never been to school (Sivard).
When discussing female employment, Murray (1989, P. 21) noted that in developing countries rural women are known to be the poorest of the poor who are asked to work for less money and to put in longer hours of physical strenuous labor, when compared with their male counterparts. Moreover, Kindervatter (1987) remarked that common obstacles which hinder women include lack of employment and educational opportunities, little or no credit or child care, and low self-esteem along with restrictive family and cultural attitudes. According to Davies (1983), many developing countries which have strong male-dominant societies, usually “condition” their women to look upon themselves with less value (p. 6). In addition, self-sacrifice is a requirement for many females. For example, in these traditional settings, if food is in short supply, the women are expected to be the first to starve.

The daily responsibilities with which rural women must struggle was succinctly described by Kindervatter (1987): “Village women must care for their families, work in the fields, and get involved in income-related activities” (p. 8). Pietila and Vickers (1990) added that “rural women who are involved in agriculture often suffer from ‘work overload’ because too many responsibilities are placed on them” (p. 17). In some African countries, women are responsible for as much as 80% of the food production in their region (Sivard, 1985, p. 5).

O’Kelly (1979 noted that many village women are too busy with their domestic duties and do not have the time, “nor do they see the immediate benefit of changing their lives” (p. 52). Wallace and March (1991) added that, in addition to their domestic responsibilities, “women are the primary individuals to transfer cultural and social norms to the children, and they care for the ill, as well as the elderly” (p. 113). The study by Wallace and March also concluded that the main concern of rural women is the care of their children. Thus, community organizing and decision-making could mean less time with their families. Clearly, this is an issue that should be addressed in any participatory and/or empowerment program. One remedy suggested by O’Kelly (1979) was, “If the women are to be attracted in the first place [to a group activity], it is important that membership carry, or should be seen to
carry, some immediate practical advantage” (p. 52). Indeed, immediate benefits may make an individual more motivated to join the group.

Poulton and Harris (1988) concluded that participatory programs should emphasize gender-based economic development, as well as female self-reliance. It would be difficult to argue against Poulton and Harris’ position. One study by Lindsay (1980, p. 40) noted that approximately 60% of the sellers in Africa are women and many of these sellers can benefit by participating in a self-help process.

According to Brydon and Chant (1989) development projects in rural programs were not successful in the early 1970s because: (a) they did not use local knowledge; (b) the projects were designed almost exclusively for the male head of household, even though in some cases the women’s participation in a program was crucial; (c) too often, resources directed towards men did not filter down to benefit their wives or to other family members; (d) these top down schemes tended to last only as long as international aid money was available; and finally; and (e) once aid money evaporated and the rural program had to be transferred and managed by local people, these target groups had not been properly trained to solve their problems; therefore, mismanagement and, in some cases, corruption of project resources occurred.

Participatory and empowerment approaches are designed to alleviate these types of problems. Brydon and Chant (1989) echoed this sentiment by concluding that village women are not a homogeneous group, therefore, “there is no infallible ‘recipe’ for success” (p. 119) when trying to integrate women into the development process. However, some programs such as participatory schemes are more likely to succeed. Simply stated, “bottom-up approaches address ‘real needs’, and they enhance the level of local commitment to the development process” (p. 228).
Current Attempts to Improve the Condition of Village and Rural Women

Although in some development circles the trend has been to emphasize participatory and empowerment approaches, Poulton and Harris (1988) noted that traditional agricultural projects are still geared towards men. In the competition for limited development resources, by far, men have received more attention than women. Nevertheless, Chambers (1974) observed that men usually find excuses not to participate in self-help programs while the women come out and get involved. This is despite the fact that, at that time in the early 1970’s, females were not allowed to have any input in project design or project decision-making. Thus, new approaches are needed to address the need to involve women in programs to improve their own development.

Brydon and Chant (1989) remarked that facilitators of Women in Development (WID) programs should, as much as possible, be female. Male facilitators are not as sympathetic to gender issues and some men have difficulty and feel uneasy when they have to talk with women. Female facilitators, on the other hand, are more sensitive to women’s issues. They are less likely to use gender stereotypes, but they are more likely to empower rural women, and they are much more likely to include rural women in the participatory development process. Moreover, when compared to men, rural women are more likely to trust and to become close to the female facilitator. Finally, UNICEF reported that women project workers are generally more effective when they work with women in the community, rather than when they work with men (Midgley, 1986).

Pietila and Vickers (1990) bluntly stated, “true development occurs when women achieve equity and participation” (p. 36). To include women in the development process, international development administrators must look at women as self-aware individuals who can be counted upon to define their goals and aspirations. Furthermore, female development programs should be “designed, planned, and decided upon” (p. 47) by women themselves.
Finally, Pietila and Vickers concluded that if more women are involved in the decision-making regime, better decisions will be made.

Chambers (1983) warned that administrators often use rhetoric which focuses on participation and community involvement. However, many of these participatory initiatives involve outsiders attempting to change things. “A better, more practical, approach is bottom-up planning and implementation” (p. 211). Similarly, Brydon and Chant (1989) noted, “community participation will often suffer from the fatal flaw of allowing local women to do project implementation and maintenance, but these women are not involved in the design stage of the program” p. 226).

Do participation and empowerment work? It depends on the situation. These self-help approaches are effective in getting women involved in the development process (Alton, 1988; Kindervatter, 1979; Stamps, 1990). The concepts are also good for organizing women so that certain needs are addressed, such as decreasing illiteracy, facilitating technology transfer in programs for extension, or implementing income-generating activities (United Nations, 1989). Furthermore, Kindervatter (1979) argued that bottom-up approaches which emphasize client-centered participatory processes are the most effective ways to address the social needs of women, and advocates using empowerment and self-management strategies to help women overcome their cultural and economic barriers.

The United Nations (1989) assessed the effectiveness of women’s programs, and found that the following changes were needed: (a) increasing women’s participation in programs; (b) incorporating women into development activities; (c) researching factors that affect participation; and (d) better monitoring and evaluation of gender-related activities. They recommended a thorough review of policy issues and options available for rural women.

Planning gender-based programs was discussed by Rao et al. (1991) who looked at policy issues and the implications of organizing rural women into action-oriented groups.
They concluded that at the grassroots level, careful planning is required to get women involved in the development process.

**Participation and Empowerment**

It is clear from the literature that some authors view both participatory and empowerment schemes to be synonymous; therefore, a participatory discussion will also describe elements of empowerment, and vice versa. For example, in a description regarding empowerment, Young (1993) stated, “women must take control of their lives, they must go out collectively and do things for themselves, they must set their own agendas, and they must change things to fulfill their needs” (p. 158). This empowerment description could also have described participation. The salient point is that, in their writings, not all authors make a clear distinction between the terms participation and empowerment. Therefore, some of the statements pertaining to participation also apply to the empowerment process. Arguably, if international agencies allow groups of village women to make decisions for themselves (i.e., empowerment), then many females would intuitively choose participatory, self-help tactics. In this sense, perhaps, participation and empowerment are synonymous.

**Participation**

Establishing village-level groups to initiate the design, preparation, and implementation of a women’s program is critical. The philosophy of rural development should stress: (a) independence; (b) effort(s) at the grassroots level; and (c) a “tighten your belt” (work with what is available) point-of-view. These concepts should be meshed into a coherent development plan to promote the use of self-help and self-reliant tactics. By adopting these approaches, the limited resources of a developing country can be utilized in an optimal way to address the massive needs in their rural society (Poulton & Harris, 1988).

According to Wieringa (1988), village female workers are highly disorganized; therefore, they are easy to exploit, especially by industrialized entities. Moreover, when
economic growth in a country slows down, corruption, unemployment, and pervasive insecurity usually become rampant among the people. Under these conditions the poor and especially, the women are exploited. However, these negative effects can be somewhat mitigated by women coming together for group action.

Is it better to have organizations that are all female? When men join a local women's group, they tend to let the females do all or most of the work. Therefore, the sense of "shared responsibility" is absent when men are involved. Moreover, the men usually try to take all of the profits from group activities thereby accentuating the economic inequity between males and females. Despite this antecedent, international agencies are still resistant to the idea of establishing female-only co-operatives, even though they have proven to be successful in places such as India, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Mali, Ghana, and Lesotho (Pietila & Vickers, 1990).

Poulton and Harris (1988) pointed out that women made better development partners than men. Females were easier to organize and more cooperative, they were quicker to take advantage of any opportunity, and highly motivated to support their families. With female participation, both the society and the women benefit (Davies, 1983).

Wieringa (1988) reported that when women organize themselves into groups and are successful in getting things done, individual members show marked increase in their self-confidence, they learn how to solve internal conflicts among themselves, and they learn how to assuage concerns and to find remedies for problems that may afflict individual group members. Put another way, women learn how to work together to get things done. Wieringa calls this approach the "people’s participation scheme(s)" (p. 49).

It is noteworthy to mention that O’Kelly (1979) concluded that village women do not value something that has been given to them for nothing. On the other hand, their self-esteem is uplifted when they are personally involved in something positive within their community.
The Institute of Cultural Affairs International (1987) noted that if women want to reach their goals they must organize themselves into groups. By organizing, the women get involved in their own development and they feel confident that they can get something done. As one village facilitator said, “If there is no organization, women don’t take any responsibility” (p. 129). Wignaraja (1993, p. 11) concurred and remarked that poverty alleviation for women can only come from actions by women’s groups, and if these groups become better organized, in time this collective activity can improve both the economic and the social condition of not only the women but their children as well.

The United Nations (1989) recommended that women’s grassroots organizations get involved in self-help community development. Grassroots organizing can help women to solve problems such as gaining control of resources and services, accessing government programs, avoiding exploitation, learning how to make decisions, and getting involved in the development process, in ways that in the past, were not available to the female population. Because of these benefits, the United Nations (1989) has endorsed grassroots women-only projects that used participatory tactics in the design, implementation, and the evaluation stages of program development. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (1988) also advocated building women's participation into the preparation, implementation, and evaluation of development projects.

Nelson (1981) perceived that women had been excluded from the development process and that this problem could be rectified by allowing women to: (a) become involved in policy-making; (b) set-up community participation exercises for women; (c) do research on issues pertaining to women; (d) be trained to be part of the development staff; and (e) take part in policy-making for the community.

In discussing ways of getting women more involved, a Canadian Project (ICAI, 1987) remarked that: “once women have been exposed to new ideas, and have access to information
and other resources, they tend to use their imagination and initiative to take the next steps” (p. 145).

The United Nations (1989) has concluded that assisting women in the development process can have a major impact on the development of a society. This process requires that problems are identified and that appropriate programs are designed to enable women to participate in issues that affect them. Nevertheless, according to LaBelle (1976), socio-economic change can occur only if five elements are done for the group: (1) understand the needs of the client; (2) involve clients in their own learning; (3) facilitate the transfer of new behaviors to an environment; (4) establish a link between local initiatives and a broader national system; and (5) build internal and external incentives into a program.

**Empowerment**

Ahmad and Loutfi (1985) were critical of programs that did not include indigenous women as the primary decision-makers. According to these authors, gender sensitive, bottom-up schemes allow resources to be allocated to women in a more equitable manner, thereby increasing the status of women and improving their economic condition. The bottom-up approach that Ahmad and Loutfi recommended permits rural women to design, implement, and participate in a development project. This empowerment process is so important that, as pointed out by Young (1993), “empowerment should be promoted over efficiency” (p. 131). It implies that, if empowerment tactics are used, it is okay if program activities proceed a little slower than expected.

Poulton and Harris (1988) explained that the ideal development model for the 1980’s should be: “Basic Needs + Participatory Development = Community Development” (p. 18). In this model, decisions would be made by the community because it has the best perspective to determine what is best for it. Moreover, these types of bottom-up decision-making schemes allow local input, so that cultural preferences serve as a guide. Historically, development projects have failed in part because they lacked this cultural sensitivity.
Normally, rural women have fewer opportunities to receive an adequate education, and their health is usually impaired because of poor living conditions. As a result, their participation in local decision-making is significantly reduced (Pietila & Vickers, 1990). However, both Kindervatter (1979) and Stamps (1990) stressed that women need empowerment to get the types of programs they need to improve their lives.

The benefits of empowerment can take many forms, such as to: (a) build up self-image and self-confidence; (b) sharpen critical thinking; (c) enhance group cohesion; (d) improve self-reliance; (e) improve decision-making capabilities; and (f) promote change through collective action. With all of these advantages, it is not surprising that the World Bank, feminist groups (such as the Association for Women in Development) and many other international aid agencies have, in recent years, supported and emphasized empowerment programs for women. However, empowerment schemes are still relatively new, and a significant amount of research needs to be done in this area of international development—especially for rural-based programs for females (Young, 1993).

Kardem (1991) reported that women feel more empowered if they are educated. If this is true then uneducated women may feel hesitant to do much decision-making in program activities, at least this may be their initial behavior. Perhaps there are tactics that enhance the empowerment process. For example, Pietila and Vickers (1990) concluded that women will feel more empowered if activities are done to enhance their self-confidence and their assertiveness. No doubt education does build self-confidence and assertiveness; therefore, perhaps Kardem’s basic premise is true—that educated women are attracted to empowerment activities.

Sivard (1985) reported that when it comes to development, rural women want equal power to make decisions. However, many international development agencies are still reluctant to initiate empowerment activities (perhaps because they are concerned about giving up “control” of a project). Similarly, Poulton and Harris (1988) pointed out that generally
speaking, big development agencies do not stress participation and empowerment, whereas small agencies (e.g., nongovernment organizations who perform international development work) allow “participation of the villagers in the development decisions for their communities” (p. 24). Furthermore, Poulton and Harris concluded that self-reliance and decision-making must be part of a development program. Finally, Kardem (1991) summarized this process and stated, “WID tactics are needed to empower poor women so that they can obtain more equality in their lives” (p. 71).

According to Buvinic and Yudelman (1989, p. 3) true development must improve the lives of all the people in the community. The 1973 Percy Amendment to the United States Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 called for the full integration of women into development projects and warned of the consequences if this process is neglected (Carloni, 1987). If females are not involved in the development process, their needs will probably not be met.

In India, the United Nations (1989, p. 83) found that the delivery of extension services for women was done more effectively through women’s groups than through the traditional Training and Visit methodology. Stamps (1990) took a similar position by stating that rural women must come together to form their own self-help groups, and they must organize themselves at the community level.

Historically, extension programs in developing countries tend to be oriented towards male clients and women have been, for the most part, ignored by extension personnel. To avoid these past mistakes, women need empowerment. Men and women have different knowledge and different needs, therefore women should plan female programs. Unless problems and priorities are defined by females, remedies and solutions will continue to be based on the male perspective (Hill, 1981, p. 94). As one women stated, “Nobody has ever come to our village before and asked to meet the women in order to find out [our] opinions on village problems” (Poulton & Harris, 1988, p. 98). This antecedent is why drastic changes are needed in international extension programming for women.
Advantages of participation and empowerment

Initially with participation and empowerment, the women develop an awareness that they can take some action to improve their lives, then groups are formed, and skills are developed. By taking action, the women are less passive and have more confidence in themselves. As their skills develop and they grow more confident, the participants form a common bond and start to work together to improve their community or their lifestyle. With each individual contributing towards a common cause, the following advantages can occur in a participatory program (Kindervatter, 1979; Ross, 1967):

1. An improved economy for the women to work in usually occurs;
2. Women’s status is usually raised;
3. As the women come together to form groups, more leverage in negotiations with nongroup members can result;
4. The discipline of working together is established;
5. Self-determination and local control are initiated;
6. The development process is at the community’s pace;
7. Indigenous plans are used more often;
8. The capacity of a community is increased (e.g. the ability to work together to solve problems are learned);
9. The “will” to change is developed; and
10. Participatory activities will usually facilitate more access to resources and to markets.

Participation and empowerment are not hypothetical theory that “we think” will work. To the extent that activities are well designed and implemented to form realistic objectives, many people (Kindervatter, 1979; Danes et al., 1985; Alton, 1988; United Nations, 1989; Stamps, 1990; Rao et al., 1991) have advocated using participation and empowerment approaches to solve some of the problems facing rural women. Numerous case studies in the WID literature (e.g. Stamps, 1990; Rao et al., 1991) also confirmed the effectiveness of
participatory and/or empowerment activities. "So—against [all] odds, the women inch forward" (Eleanor Roosevelt, 1946, as cited in Sivard, 1985, p. 44).

The importance of successful outcomes of participatory programs is illustrated in the following letter by a village woman (Kindervatter, 1987, p. 25):

Dear Friend,

My name is Maria, and I live in a country called Costa Rica. Not long ago, I came to a meeting like your meeting here today. The women who invited us to attend were members of a community organization. They encouraged us to join a program which would help us to improve our lives. I did join. I attended the program meetings. Let me tell you about the wonderful things that happened because of the program!

Before the program, I didn’t know what to do about my problems. Everyday, I got up and took some vegetables to the market to sell. When I came home, there was always so much to do for my family. I felt tired and worried about many things. I had no idea that I—along with others—could change the situation.

When I was invited to attend the meeting about the program, I was hesitant. I thought it was a waste of time. I was curious though. So, I went. At the first meeting, I heard that the program could help us achieve goals and solve problems. I didn’t understand all this. But I was interested to find out more.

The first few meetings didn’t have many participants—only I and about six other women from my community. When others saw that [this] program was something special, more joined. At first, some husbands didn’t want their wives involved. But, when they saw their wives change, they gave their support.

In the meetings, we played games and heard stories. It was fun. At the same time we learned so much. And we did things together to improve our lives.

I gained so much from the program. I’d like you to know some of the benefits. At the start, we realized that we had a common problem. When we attended the meetings or were away from home, we had no one to look after our children. So, we organized a community child care center. I’m glad to have [a] center we all can use. Next, we realized we shared another problem—too little income. Together, we found a way to learn sewing and dressmaking. Then, we decided that we didn’t want to work away from home, so we thought of setting up a sewing cooperative. We contacted an expert on co-ops who’s helping us now to get started. We’ll need to build a co-op workshop, too. Working together, we also have gotten water and electricity for part of the community, and we’re obtaining ownership rights to our land. Of course, not everything has gone smoothly, but that doesn’t make us discouraged.

The program made us confident of our abilities and of what we can do working together. We learned how to get along. We learned how to analyze problems and how to find solutions ourselves. We found out about community resources and about our rights. I even share some responsibilities now at home with my husband!
Before, I didn’t have any of these things and I didn’t know how to get them. I didn’t know I had the qualities that today I’ve discovered in myself. That’s why I feel so happy now—because I feel I have value as a person.

Your friend,

Maria

The Selection of Peace Corps Volunteers

Since 1961, the Peace Corps has been conducting international development work overseas. In fact, volunteers who serve in the Peace Corps develop an international perspective as a result of their two year assignment. Hapgood (1968) noted: “the Peace Corps experience has been used to teach Americans about poverty in developing countries. The international experience of these volunteers has been used to shed light on, and to provide answers about different cultures” (p. 4). Hapgood (p. 133) also stated that from the very beginning, one of the goals of the Peace Corps was to take a self-help approach whereby volunteers helped indigenous people learn to solve their own problems with available resources. Hoppes (1968) concurred in a Peace Corps mandate that the goal was to: “help others to help themselves” (p. 66). To perform this function volunteers work at the local level, side-by-side with the people, to help them to learn.

Research Questions

Two research questions were formulated to guide the focus of this study:

1. What methods/tactics are used to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women?

2. What strategies are used to attract rural women to participate in a self-help development program?
CHAPTER III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This section documents the research methods and procedures that were used to acquire interview data for this study. Chapter 3 is divided into seven subsections: (1) Purpose and Objectives; (2) Population and Sample; (3) Research Design; (4) Data Collection; (5) Analysis of Data; (6) Limitations of the Study; and (7) Assumptions.

**Purpose and Objectives**

The main purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions held by Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCV) on how to organize and implement practical, rural-based self-help participatory and empowerment activities for women in developing countries. There were two objectives: (a) to identify methods to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women; and (b) to identify strategies that might be used to attract rural/village women to participate in self-help development programs.

**Population and Sample**

There are several reasons why Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCV) represent an ideal group to interview. First, a Peace Corps Volunteer will normally go overseas and spend two years at the grassroots level. Second, as explained by the Peace Corps Training Office, there is a well-established inservice training program that teaches volunteers how to initiate a bottom-up self-help approach. Third, trained volunteers gain practical experience in implementing a participatory/self-help approach at the village level. Finally, the volunteers selected in this study had a solid background in working with rural/village women.

This qualitative study used an interview format with open-ended questions. Dillman (1978, p. 58) stated that respondents are less likely to skip or avoid answering a question if an interview format is used. According to Dillman, an open-ended question format was an effective way of obtaining more information about a topic.
The first task in this study was to secure a mailing list of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. According to the Peace Corps Recruiting Office at Iowa State University, there are over 140,000 former volunteers in the United States. Thus, a strategy was devised to select a specific population from this group. For the purpose of this study, in the summer of 1994, at the request of this researcher, the Peace Corps Recruiting Office conducted a national computer search to identify those RPCVs who matched all of the following criteria:

1. Returned to the United States since 1988;
2. Had a Peace Corps assignment in agriculture;
3. Worked in the Middle East or Africa;
4. Were women; and
5. “Waived their right to privacy” so they could be interviewed.

**Participant Selection Process**

The participant selection process was based on identifying PRCVs who matched all five criteria mentioned above. A rationale for the selection of each criterion is discussed as follows.

**Post-1988 RPCV** - Gender-sensitive programs have been around for some time. In 1974, U.S.A.I.D. established its first Women in Development (WID) department in order to focus more resources on the needs of women (Pietila & Vickers, 1990). Kindervatter (1979) wrote the classic book on gender participation: *Nonformal education as an empowering process*. Nevertheless, it is difficult to determine the origin of when or who developed the original idea of women participating in self-help programs. However, through an examination of the literature it is clear that a large number of WID books were written in the 1980s. Participation and empowerment approaches for women are almost exclusively described in WID literature. Therefore, it can be surmised that the concept of participation and empowerment of rural women became well known and popular during this influx of written material in the 1980s. As a result, the first assumption made in this qualitative study
is that *RPCVs who did their overseas assignment after the mid-1980s utilized more participatory tactics than volunteers who served before 1985.*

With this assumption in mind the researcher decided to interview RPCVs who had returned to the United States within the last five years (i.e., since 1988). Therefore, these volunteers had started their Peace Corps assignment in 1986 or later, and, as a group, it was assumed that they were much more likely to utilize new techniques such as self-help, participatory strategies.

It was beneficial to use the 1988 returnees as a starting point in this selection process for three reasons: (a) perhaps a higher percentage of RPCVs used participatory tactics during their overseas assignment; (b) it would reduce the number of volunteers to contact for an interview to a manageable number; and (c) because the volunteers had been involved in a Peace Corps assignment during the past five years, their perception/memory of what they actually did overseas would have been a little clearer.

*RPCV in agriculture* - Peace Corps volunteers who work overseas are placed into specific job categories, called area assignments. The Peace Corps has 11 area assignments in agriculture: forestry, community forestry extension, crop extension, plant protection, soil science, agricultural education, agricultural economics, small animal husbandry, large animal husbandry, community agricultural extension, and farm mechanics. Through an oversight of the researcher, RPCVs who were in forestry and farm mechanics were not included in the computer search. Thus, volunteers in the other nine area assignments received an invitation by mail to complete an interview with the researcher for this qualitative study (Appendix A).

Interviewing only RPCVs who worked in agriculture was done for three reasons. First, as a graduate student in the Department of Agricultural Education (and Extension), it was important to orient this study in an area of researcher's expertise (i.e., agriculturally related issues). Second, RPCVs who worked in agriculture were more likely to have initiated a grassroots self-help participatory program, as compared to their counterparts who did Peace
Corps activities in urban areas. Finally, many rural women are directly involved in agriculture. There was a likelihood that volunteers who were assigned agricultural positions also worked with many women during their two-year assignments.

*Served in Africa* - Originally this study was designed for those RPCVs who were assigned to the Middle East. However, in recent years agricultural programs for the Peace Corps were either being de-emphasized or eliminated in this region of the world. As a result of this new policy, there were not many recent RPCVs who had performed agricultural tasks in the Middle East (personal communication with Ms. Oldsidle and Ms. Rossate, Peace Corps Middle East Training Officer and Assistant Desk Officer, respectively). In an attempt to move towards an agricultural perspective, this study was later expanded to include RPCVs who had worked in the Middle East or in an African country.

*Female RPCV* - The second assumption used in this study was that, as compared to their male counterparts, the female Peace Corps volunteers worked more diligently and spent more time with rural women; therefore, it was considered prudent to interview and get the perspective of only women RPCVs. The perceptions of male volunteers could be obtained in another study.

*Legal restrictions* - All RPCVs interviewed for this study had previously “waived their right to privacy.” This meant that after their two-year overseas assignment, these individuals had signed a document stating that in the future, they were willing to discuss with interested parties, matters pertaining to the Peace Corps. According to the Returning Peace Corps Office in Washington, DC, Volunteers who did not sign this document were protected by the Federal Privacy Act and the Paper Work Reduction Act from being contacted; therefore, their addresses as well as their phone numbers could not be given to the public.

One of the Peace Corps Recruiting Offices used the above five criteria to conduct a computer search to reduce the number of RPCVs to 155 from over 140,000. As a result of this search, a mailing list of 155 names, addresses, and phone numbers were sent to the
researcher. A form letter (Appendix A) along with a pre-paid post card was sent to each of the 155 RPCVs to invite them to participate in this qualitative study.

Invitation to participate - The form letter which was mailed to each of these RPCVs provided the following information:

1. A brief description of the purpose of this study;
2. An explanation of the criteria used to select those RPCVs who would be ideally suited to participate in this study, and an invitation to these individuals to share their overseas experience through an interview in their home city of residence;
3. A definition of participation and empowerment;
4. Notification that each respondent would get an advanced copy of the questions to be asked during the interview;
5. The approximate time (1½ to 2 hrs.) it would take to complete the interview;
6. A statement as to the confidential nature of the study, and assurance that individual interview data would be destroyed immediately after transcription;
7. For those RPCVs who used the participation and empowerment approach, a form letter asked them to promptly return an enclosed pre-paid postcard back to the researcher to set up a possible interview session. The postcard requested that the volunteers list their name, current address and phone number, dates available for an interview, and the number of months they were actively involved in participation and empowerment activities with groups of rural women.

Prior to the mailing of these form letters and postcards, the research for this qualitative study was approved by the Iowa State University Human Subjects Review Committee (Appendix B).

Setting-up the interviews - A copy of the interview schedule was sent to individuals who returned their postcard. This was done so that each interviewee would have time to review, reflect, and think about his/her answers. By mailing these questions ahead of time
and giving people the opportunity to think about their responses, it was thought that the interview data could be more substantive and more accurate. During data collection, the researcher observed that those individuals who had spent a lot of time studying the interview schedule tended to respond with lengthy answers during their face-to-face interview. Furthermore, they tended to be better prepared to answer the more difficult questions. In contrast, the RPCVs who did little or no reviewing of the questions prior to their interview usually gave short answers, and they had difficulty with some of the questions.

Prior to each interview, the respondents were contacted by phone to set the date and time for their interview. During these initial conversations, the researcher confirmed whether the RPCVs had any experience in participatory and empowerment activities.

*The interview* - Fowler et al. (1990) reported that during an interview, a good interviewer should: (a) read each question as worded; (b) ask probing questions when the answer is inadequate; (c) tape record the answers; and (d) be interpersonally neutral during the course of the interview. Furthermore, Seidman (1991) maintained that for best results: (a) the interviewee should not be someone the researcher knows personally; (b) the researcher should contact the interviewee by telephone to establish a convenient time to meet; (c) the interview should be at a time and date convenient for both the researcher and the interviewee; (d) the place of the interview should be convenient for the interviewee; and (e) the answers should be tape recorded. Seidman (1991, p.19) also remarked:

The place of the interview should be convenient to the participant, private [and] familiar. It should be one in which the participant feels comfortable and secure. A public place such as a cafeteria or a coffee shop may seem convenient, but the [background] noise would undermine the effectiveness of the interview. (p. 19)

These steps were followed during the data collection process. Each interview session was comprised of 1 to 1½ hours of open-ended questions (Appendix C) to document perceptions of how to implement and manage a participatory/empowerment regime. Each interview was recorded on audio-cassette tape and later transcribed into a manuscript for
further analysis. The validity of this study was strengthened with the audio-cassette tapes and the transcribed manuscript which verified that relevant data were collected.

The interview data were analyzed and a systematic set of procedures were formulated from the RPCV interviews and from the literature review on this research topic. Then the results were used to design a participatory and empowerment framework or model.

As indicated previously, five criteria were used to identify a specific group of RPCVs. This selection process reduced the number of RPCVs from over 140,000 to 155. In September, 1994, the form letter was mailed to each of these 155 individuals. This group of 155 RPCVs represented the population from which the sample was drawn. Of the letters mailed, 26 (17%) were returned to the researcher by the United States Post Office as "undeliverable."

There were 46 (30%) completed postcards returned. The individuals returning their postcards represented the available population for this study. For various reasons, the majority of the people sending in their postcards could not be included in this study. Fifteen RPCVs were selected and interviewed. The target group of 15 who were ultimately interviewed for this study represented 33% of the available population.

To get an indication of why some RPCVs did not send in their postcards, 11% of those individuals who did not respond to the first mailing were randomly contacted (via follow-up postcard, Appendix A) and were once again asked to participate in this study. Of the 11 individuals contacted during this second mailing, eight (8) did not respond. One individual said that she had no experience in participation and empowerment. Another said that she moved several times and never received the original form letter. The third RPCV said that she moved several times and received the form letter weeks after it had been sent. Unfortunately, the latter two individuals contacted the researcher after the data collection process had been completed so they were not included in the study.
As indicated previously, most of the individuals sending in their postcards could not take part of this study. From the 46 postcards received, five distinct groups of RPCVs emerged:

1. Eleven (11) did not participate because of their particular circumstance (e.g. they did not fit the five criteria used in selecting the target group or they were going to be out of the country during the data collection process);

2. Five (5) RPCVs were eliminated from the study because they were not accessible by Greyhound Bus, which was the researcher's only means of transportation to the various cities. This weakness in the study could have been resolved if the researcher had more resources to conduct the study;

3. Six (6) postcards were received after the data collection process had been completed;

4. Seven (7) RPCVs sent in their postcard and agreed to do an interview, but after the researcher went to their city/town of residence, all seven indicated that they “did not have the time to do the interview,” therefore, they asked to be scratched from the list of interviewees;

5. Ultimately, 15 RPCVs were interviewed at their place of residence during the months of October and November, 1994.

Research Design

The researcher developed the initial interview schedule after a long conversation with Adelaida Maldonado during her brief visit to Iowa State University. Ms. Maldonado is an university administrator who has had several years of experience in implementing participatory activities for rural and village women in her home country of Venezuela. To improve the original interview schedule, pilot interviews were also done with two graduate students (one from Iowa State University while the other was from the University of Wisconsin). The two subjects in these pilots were RPCVs who did not quite fit all five
categories used in selecting the target group. As a result of these pilot interviews, appropriate changes were made in the interview schedule.

A qualitative study - According to Whitt (1991), a precise and generally agreed upon definition of qualitative research is presently, and perhaps for all time, elusive. In qualitative research, the essential concern for the researcher is to analyze the data inductively and derive some meaning. The researcher is concerned with process and outcomes. Technically, this study was a semi-structured qualitative study (personal communication with Dr. Michael Bell, a qualitative research methodology instructor in the Iowa State University Sociology Department). In a true qualitative research, 100% of the reference population is interviewed.

Nevertheless, the current study followed a qualitative research design based on the interview format of open-ended questions used during data collection. The use of open-ended questions enables the interviewees to answer from their own frame of reference. In qualitative research, this type of questioning is preferred to prearranged or structured questions which tend to influence the interviewees' perceptions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

After the two pilot sessions, an improved interview schedule was utilized (Appendix C) to determine the perceptions of the target population. Whenever appropriate, probing questions were also asked during the interview. Probing questions are additional inquiries which may or may not be on the interview schedule and are asked intuitively by interviewers to get a better, more substantive response from the interviewee.

Validity strengthened - Validity is the measure of facts or concepts which are real or which actually happened. The level of validity is increased if an investigator has some knowledge about the target population (personal communication with Dr. Michael Bell). Knowledge of the investigation is also important because, during the analysis of the data, the perspective of the researcher is combined with the interviewee's point of view to determine meaning (Bogden & Biklen, 1992). In this qualitative study validity was strengthened in three ways.
First, the researcher had many conversations with RPCVs about the nature of a two-year assignment. These informal discussions provided additional information about life in the Peace Corps, knowledge that was helpful in writing the interview schedule. Another way to enhance validity was to use an open-ended interview schedule that allowed each respondent to fully express her views on participatory and empowerment approaches for rural women. These interview data were recorded on a cassette tape and later transcribed into a manuscript form to assure accuracy in documenting each response. The response data along with the available literature were used to describe the methodology for participatory and empowerment activities. Finally, the two pilot interviews were conducted to evaluate the appropriateness of the interview questions.

**Data Collection**

In September, 1994, a form letter was sent to 155 RPCVs, to invite individuals who had experience in the participatory and empowerment approach to do an interview for this study. Forty-six (46) RPCVs responded to these form letters and contacted the researcher (via postcard) to give their name, current address and telephone number, as well as their estimation of how many months they did participatory activities with rural or village women.

Each of the 15 RPCVs who were in the target group, was contacted by phone to confirm that they had appropriate experience in participatory activities and to set a date and time to complete the interview. As returned volunteers living in the United States, each member of the target group was accessible. In October and November 1994, the researcher traveled via a Greyhound Ameripass ticketing arrangement to visit with the 15 interviewees in their home cities.

Before each interview, the respondents were informed about the following concerns of the researcher:

1. All responses would confidential and that the names of interviewees would remain anonymous throughout the entire study. In addition, to ensure confidentiality and
maintain anonymity throughout this research, each respondent is referred to by the country where she did her Peace Corps service (e.g., someone who worked in Kenya would be labeled Ms. Kenya);

2. The interviewee could take a break at any time during the meeting;

3. This study was interested in ascertaining the opinion of the RPCVs regarding the participatory and empowerment process;

4. The RPCVs responses must pertain to Peace Corps work done with village/rural women;

5. The definitions of participation, empowerment, and of “a facilitator” were explained; and

6. Respondents were assured that during the interview, they could decline to answer any question and that the cassette tape recorder could be turned-off at any time upon request.

The researcher read from the interview schedule and allowed all 15 respondents to fully answer each question (Appendix C). The average time to complete each interview was approximately 65 to 70 minutes.

Data Analysis

The main purpose of this study was to document the field experience(s) and the perceptions of RPCVs. There were over 120 response variables in this study. The response variables were based on: (a) the questions asked during the interviews (e.g., For how many months did you work with rural women?); and (b) the information received during the interview (e.g., the RPCVs descriptions of participatory and empowerment strategies). When there was a clear trend in the interview data, simple mode scores were used to categorize the data.
Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations in this study because of financial constraints. This research would have been strengthened if direct interviews were done with village women to get their views on participation and empowerment activities. Second, if supplementary interviews were conducted with experienced field staff members who had done this type of work for nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and other international agencies, a broader perspective of empirical data could have been included in the results. Finally, the researcher interviewed only those RPCVs who lived in communities which had a Greyhound bus service.

Assumptions

As stated previously, two assumptions were made in this study. First, RPCVs who did their overseas assignment after the mid-1980’s utilized more participatory tactics than volunteers who served before 1985. The second assumption was that, compared to their male Peace Corps counterparts, the female volunteers spent more time working with rural women.
CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to interview and document the perceptions of selected Returned Peace Corps Volunteers who had previously implemented participatory and empowerment activities for rural/village women in developing countries, and to use this interview data to develop a framework (i.e., a model) that describes how to initiate and manage these types of self-help bottom-up programs.

The objectives for this study were twofold: (a) to identify methods on how to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women; and (b) to identify strategies that should be used to attract rural/village women to participate in these self-help development programs.

Throughout this section, the term “facilitator” refers to Peace Corps volunteers who initiated participatory and empowerment programs during their overseas service. When discussing rural or village females, this population was simply referred to as “women”. The “sweat equity” concept used in this study means that each women derived program benefits only through their diligent effort and hard work.

Credibility means worthy of esteem, to be trusted or to be favorably considered as a source, and to have influence by developing the confidence of others (Merriam-Webster, 1973). This concept accurately describes the initial period that facilitators must go through to set up a participatory and empowerment regime. All 15 interviewees discussed this initial period of establishing credibility with the people before starting the self-help program. Not all of interviewees mentioned the word credibility, but all described the same concept. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, the initial period is referred to as the credibility stage, wherein the facilitator establishes rapport, respect, and trust with the women. Based on these interview data, a facilitator establishes credibility with the village women by listening to them, spending time getting to know them, asking them many questions, learning the local
language, and working side-by-side with them. The credibility stage promotes a close working relationship with the target population.

**Organization of the Findings**

Based on the questions from the interview schedule, this chapter provides a brief synopsis of what each interviewee said regarding the issues raised in response to research questions 1 and 2. Seventy-two items addressed the first research question: *What methods/tactics are used to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women?* Seven items addressed the second research question: *What strategies are used to attract rural women to participate in a self-help development program?*

The term “Items” refers to questions from the interview schedule that were asked of the respondents. Moreover, for each interviewee, the responses regarding research question 1 are categorized into three parts: (a) Initial Steps; (b) Process; and (c) Epilogue.

The sections which discuss “Initial Steps” are broken down into four sub-sections: (a) Rapport and respect; (b) Facilitators; (c) Training; and (d) Participation synergism with empowerment. The sections that discuss the “Process” have seven sub-sections: (a) Local leaders; (b) Getting started; (c) Meetings; (d) Problem identification; (e) Planning; (f) Implementation; and (g) Empowerment. Finally, the “Epilogue” section has six sub-sections: (a) Communication; (b) Evaluation; (c) Spread effect; (e) Children in the program; (f) Should women be paid; and (g) Attitude change.

For each interviewee, responses regarding research question 2 were discussed in the “getting women to participate” section, and this section is categorized into four sub-sections: (a) Why some women did not get involved; (b) Increasing enthusiasm and attendance; (c) Increasing the rate of participation; and (d) Increasing commitment. The method of interviewing is depicted graphically in Table 1.
Table 1. Organization of the findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Schedule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Initial Steps</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Rapport and respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Participation synergism with empowerment (vice versa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Participation synergism with empowerment (vice versa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Participation synergism with empowerment (vice versa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Participation synergism with empowerment (vice versa)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 1: *What methods/tactics are used to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women?*

- **A. Initial Steps**
  - 1. Rapport and respect
  - 2. Facilitators
  - 3. Training
  - 4. Participation synergism with empowerment (vice versa)

- **B. Process**
  - 1. Local leaders
  - 2. Getting started
  - 3. Meetings
  - 4. Problem identification
  - 5. Planning
  - 6. Implementation
  - 7. Empowerment

- **C. Epilogue**
  - 1. Communication
  - 2. Evaluation
  - 3. Spread effect
  - 4. Children in the program
  - 5. Should women be paid
  - 6. Attitude change

Research Question 2: *What strategies are used to attract rural women to participate in a self-help development program?*

**Getting Women to Participate**

- 1. Why some women did not get involved
- 2. Increasing enthusiasm and attendance
- 3. Increasing the rate of participation
- 4. Increasing commitment

**A Profile of the Interviewees**

Of the 15 interviewees who participated in this study, presently, six were graduate students, three were office administrators, two were school teachers, one was a senior citizen and an author of several books, one was a United States government employee, and the last two were administrators for the World Bank and U.S.A.I.D., respectively.

In terms of their overseas assignments, seven interviewees were agricultural extensionists, three were forestry extension agents, three were agricultural/nutritionists, one was a supervisor for a 50 acre college farm, and one volunteer was an agricultural extensionist for animals. There was no objective indicator to determine how successful each volunteer was in working with village women. Each of the interviewees lived and worked in isolated regions, and most of them did agriculturally-based field work whereby only the
facilitator and the female clients/members were present in these locations. Therefore, an objective evaluation of the program activities was not possible.

The volunteers did, however, articulate some of the problems they experienced in setting up and maintaining their programs. In general, the main challenges that they faced were: establishing trust with the women; getting women to join and work in the self-help program without having to pay for their participation; getting program activities to move along in a reasonable amount of time (often times they did not go as quickly as anticipated); and getting some village men to respect the women or the female facilitator (some men were reticent to respect a woman in a leadership role).

**Ms. Gambia**

Based on her Peace Corps experience in implementing a participatory and empowerment regime for village women, this section summarizes what Ms. Gambia recommended or what she did during her two-year assignment. Assigned in 1987 to 1989 as an Agricultural Extension Agent, Ms. Gambia worked with rural women during the entire two years. Prior to her assignment, she received no formal training in the participatory and empowerment methodologies.

*Research Question 1: What methods/tactics are used to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women?*

**A. Initial Steps**

1. *Rapport and respect* - To start a participatory and empowerment program, a facilitator must first establish rapport and earn the respect of the women. Earning this rapport and respect is not easy. In fact, Ms. Gambia stated that, by “being a pretty heavy duty member of the community,” it still took six to eight months (i.e., the credibility stage) before she could fully work with the village women. By going into the village to work side-by-side with the women, to listen to them, and by waiting a long time before giving advice to them, the women eventually came around whereby they were willing to listen to the suggestions of
their facilitator. After completing this credibility stage, the village women considered their facilitator, Ms. Gambia, to be a peer; therefore, they were more likely to accept the recommendation or suggestions of their facilitator.

The sign that this rapport and trust has been established is a subtle change, when facilitators feel that they are no longer a guest but part of the family. Furthermore, the facilitator will be invited to the day-to-day activities of the villagers and will be “expected” to participate in local activities. When the facilitator is consistently invited by the villagers to be part of their group, this is a clear sign that trust and rapport have been established with the people. A reasonably sensitive facilitator will feel this trust.

According to Ms. Gambia, older facilitators such as herself will have an easier time establishing rapport and respect with the people, perhaps because village leaders tend to be older, and they are generally considered to be the respected members of society.

2. Facilitators - The role of facilitators in the participation and empowerment process is to listen, organize, educate, and work with the women, so that they can improve their condition. In Ms. Gambia's program, improved agricultural methods were also promoted.

When discussing whether program ideas should come from facilitators or from the women, Ms. Gambia thought that village women know their situation. They are in a better position to suggest various options for the participatory program. However, if necessary, the facilitator should present her ideas to the group as well.

Ms. Gambia thought that almost any professional is well-suited to set-up a participation and empowerment program, as long as they understand the culture, that they have a willingness to learn about their clients, and finally, as facilitators, they are willing to adjust and conform to the needs of the clients. Ms. Gambia thought that facilitators must be effective teachers. An extensionist could be part of this process because it is his/her job to teach and to educate. From Ms. Gambia's experience, the aforementioned characteristics are more important in running an effective program than merely having a job title as "the
Extensionist”. The salient point is that it is the person, not the job title or the profession, that will determine how successful the facilitator will be in managing the program.

She also thought that it is necessary for the facilitator to be considered “part of the community” to get things done. Someone who comes in from the outside, who only visits a community every couple of weeks or once a month, and tries to dictate “this is how we are going to do things” is probably not going to be successful. The village women saw Ms. Gambia everyday and worked with her. She was a known entity with whom the women felt very comfortable.

Ms. Gambia stated that the gender of the facilitator did not matter; both men and women facilitators could be effective in working with the village women. Regardless of the gender, to be effective, the facilitator must respect the people and be responsive to the needs of the people, they must earn the respect of the people, and they must, as facilitators, avoid interacting with people in an “I know it all, do this my way” kind of attitude. Finally, Ms. Gambia thought that once trust had been established, both male and female facilitators could develop a close working relationship with the village women. Respecting them, understanding them, and being sensitive to their situation are ways to earn the women’s trust.

3. Training - To train Peace Corps Volunteers or other international development personnel on how to do participatory and empowerment programs at the village level, Ms. Gambia suggested that trainees should understand that many rural communities have excellent agrarian practices that the facilitator should not only leave in place “as is” but as an outsider, he or she would do well to learn these effective indigenous techniques. Other issues a trainee should be taught are to have a good working knowledge of the local culture, to know the appropriate way to greet people in that particular society, and to learn how the government works.

4. Participation synergistic with empowerment - If the goal is to have an effective program with self-help initiatives, to continue operating after the facilitator leaves the
community, then participation needs to be combined with empowerment. The facilitator must assist people in developing some kind of direction and help them understand how they can help themselves; these worthy goals are achieved by combining the participation strategy with empowerment. Ms. Gambia did not entirely agree with the statement that empowerment of the people (to make decisions for themselves) is needed before participation. She thought that first the women must be involved in the program, and as they grow and learn with the participatory process. These group members will find their voice and make decisions for themselves.

B. Process

1. Local leaders - As much as possible, the facilitator should try to get the local leaders, both male and female, involved with establishing the program. The facilitator should visit the village chief and other appropriate leaders, to explain what the proposed program is, and they, as leaders in the community, must approve of any proposed undertaking.

2. Getting started - The women wanted to learn new techniques and to have a better life. Therefore they organized their own meetings, met on a regular basis and assigned various tasks to specific female members. The members who tended to be more active in the program were the older married women whose children were grown-up and they did not have the added responsibility of child-rearing. Because of their age and status, these women tended to be stable and more knowledgeable than the other members.

3. Meetings - The meetings should be open for both members and nonmembers to participate in program activities, although Ms. Gambia admitted that from her experience, only members of the group attended these meetings. The meetings were held in a highly visible location in the middle of the village, thus, what happened during these meetings became public knowledge. In general, she thought that men should be allowed to attend meetings and to participate in the activities. If program activities required tasks that are
normally done by females, Ms. Gambia felt that the men would not want to be involved in such female-oriented programs.

She thought that a participatory and empowerment regime would be more effective if the entire membership were educated. However, that was not realistic in this rural community. Nevertheless, regardless of the education level of the members, Ms. Gambia was confident that eventually each participant in her program, as well as their children [who also learned something from the program] would all become leaders in this village. In Ms. Gambia’s program, all members who used the improved agricultural techniques, significantly increased their yields. However, higher status women gained more simply because they had more land to cultivate than the other women. In this sense, participation and empowerment procedures did not achieve equality in benefits for its members. However, proportionally, depending on how much land a women had to work with, all members gained in this self-help program. Hence, if “sweat equity” was expended and if each member worked, then program benefits were achieved.

Finally, Ms. Gambia mentioned that the women were very organized, knew what they wanted to do and how to do it. They knew when things should be done and who should do it, and they were very easy to work with, especially when compared to the village men. Therefore, the women did not need any formal training from a facilitator to get the program started.

4. Problem Identification - According to Ms. Gambia, the way to assess the women’s problems was by observing what was going on in the community and by listening to the women. She described a “typical day” for a woman. In Ms. Gambia’s analysis, 65% of a woman’s day was spent growing and preparing food. A program was needed to reduce this expenditure of time. More importantly [as required in any empowerment regime], the women confirmed, both individually and in group situations, that their biggest need was reducing the time or the work involved in growing, preparing, and cooking their food.
Ms. Gambia agreed with the statement, that to get a highly motivated group of workers, the program must consistently address the perceived problems, or the perceived needs of the women. Furthermore, if a supervisor wanted a program that is contrary to the perceived needs of the women, Ms. Gambia thought that it is better to address the needs of the women. The agenda for the supervisor is, to a large degree, dependent on how successful the women are with their program. Finally, regarding the importance of being honest with the women, Ms. Gambia thought that it was crucial for a facilitator to be realistic about the program goals, and to be truthful, even though the village women may want to hear something different. Being honest with the women is so important, she thought that, ultimately, this issue will help determine whether the program is successful or not.

5. Planning - In planning, Ms. Gambia and the women in the participatory group identified their problems and tried to change things. This was a step-by-step process whereby the facilitator observed the situation, issues or problems were thoroughly discussed in the group, advantages of various options were mentioned, teaching and training were done (as needed) and, finally, program plans were implemented. Their progress was slow but sure.

During implementation, problems occurred that required additional planning. If there was a lack of understanding among the members in the group, more discussions were held. One part of planning involved building on attributes which already existed in the community, such as using effective indigenous knowledge, or recruiting individuals who possessed skills needed for the program. Finally, the facilitator should make separate plans on how to keep the women interested, engaged, and involved throughout the program. By doing this, the implementation of participatory and empowerment procedures can occur.

6. Implementation - To implement a participatory and empowerment program, Ms. Gambia recommended that during the credibility stage, the facilitator should spend time getting to know people, ask many questions, explain things, learn the local language well, and do other preparatory activities. According to Ms. Gambia, the facilitator should mention
or suggest possible program ideas and benefits, and see whether the women are interested. As a means to motivate the women to start a program, potential participants can be taken to neighboring villages that have on-going, self-help programs. Identifying and working with reliable counterparts who can assist the facilitator with communications or to help with other cultural issues can be a big factor in the implementation process. Facilitators should also identify and work with the most influential women in the village [to get them involved in the program].

The facilitator must be very honest with the women because, sometimes, when an "expert" comes from a developed country, some villagers will have unrealistic expectations of the expert (i.e., the facilitator). For example, oftentimes a facilitator may have less knowledge about agriculture or farming than the women, especially if the situation involves growing staple crops which the villagers have been working with for years. In these situations, a facilitator must explain the limitations of what he/she can do, and admit to the women that they know less about a particular crop than the women. The facilitator/expert should be willing to learn from the villagers. Finally, if things does not go as quickly as anticipated in the program, the facilitator must be patient, not get frustrated, and must adjust to the timeframe employed by the women.

7. Empowerment - In this instance, the female members implemented empowerment (i.e., decision-making) within the group. Some women, including the facilitator, discussed program goals and benefits, and, subsequently, the women themselves decided how they would accomplish these goals. They also selected from among themselves individuals who would carry out specific activities or program duties.

Key issues were discussed by the group before decisions were made. It is not appropriate for a facilitator to tell the women what to do. With empowerment, the facilitator works individually, one-on-one, with members of the group, and listens to what the women are saying. Basically, what the women wanted was implemented. However, if the women
wanted something that did not fit the program, these issues were discussed and plans were changed accordingly.

C. Epilogue

1. Communication - There were no radio stations in the area and most of the women were less educated (i.e., some were illiterate). As a result, the most effective method of communicating with the women was by the facilitator’s being there everyday with the women, living their life, asking them lots of questions, understanding them, learning about their ways, and recognizing what was going on in their lives. At times it was appropriate for the facilitator to talk to the men, who had some influence over the women, and they would convey this discussion to their wives. Basically, lots of talking with the people is the recipe for effective communication. These informal discussions ultimately formed the genesis of getting the program started.

Nevertheless, there were communication problems. It took Ms. Gambia at least one year to speak Mandika fluently enough to ask questions and completely understand answers. A counterpart in the village did speak some English, which assuaged the language problem. To get shy or passive women to speak up in meetings or to become more involved with group activities, Ms. Gambia suggested spending time individually with these females, when the group was not meeting. Basically, it was suggested to never put people “on the spot,” thereby pressuring them to be more active or vocal. However, once the facilitator gets to know a shy or passive female personally, then it is probably appropriate to try and get that person to be more involved in the program.

2. Evaluation - To monitor and evaluate the participatory program, Ms. Gambia used a daily journal. To determine program success, the women got involved in critiquing the program by evaluating the quality of the products grown, harvesting the crops for the program, and by weighing the grain yield. Tasting sessions were also initiated. Furthermore, Ms. Gambia noted:
At the end of the [harvest] we did get feedback. We did a field day, and we talked about the things we had done—what they thought went well, what they thought didn’t go well, how they thought we should change it, what they thought we should continue doing, and actually they were very enthusiastic about having more people involved in the program [for] the following year.

These informal evaluations proved that the program was effective in meeting program goals, (i.e., achieving higher yields by using improved agricultural techniques).

3. Spread effect - The participatory program can disseminate to other regions, when group members visit surrounding villages to discuss program activities as well as program benefits. Ms. Gambia suggested that, ideally, these discussions should be targeted towards women who have already formed their own group in the neighboring villages. It was mentioned that promoting a particular program in the other communities may not have an immediate effect, but, in time, the women in these communities will eventually adopt the program ideas.

4. Children in the program - Ms. Gambia thought that children should be involved in program activities because it is important for kids to experience the whole participatory process. As they grow older, they will see the value of adopting improved agricultural methods. Furthermore, Ms. Gambia mentioned another reason why children should be involved: “The mothers are the educators and if one is going to train and educate another generation, [the children] have to be involved and they have to see their mothers treated as being knowledgeable and in a positive role. That doesn’t happen all the time in this kind of culture.”

5. Should women be paid - In Ms. Gambia’s situation, there were no women who wanted to be paid to join the group. Nevertheless, the female members knew that by participating in the program, eventually they would receive improved varieties of rice seed, they would receive instruction in the use of improved agricultural techniques, and they wanted to work as a group to procure a mill for their community. These incentives were enough to mitigate any desire the women may have had for money.
If there was a lack of financial resources, Ms. Gambia suggested that during the season, the women should grow marketable crops, such as tomatoes and other vegetables, to sell and obtain needed capital for program expenses. Furthermore, Ms. Gambia stated that the women should put their labor and their meager financial resources into the program if they thought the program would be beneficial for them in the long run.

6. **Attitude change** - To conduct participatory programs successfully, Ms. Gambia thought that the attitude of the people should change. The facilitator must help the women to understand that, eventually, there are going to be benefits and that they are going to get something out of the program in the long run. Moreover, by being involved and participating in program activities, a subtle change was likely to occur, namely, the women would realize that teamwork and working together can make a positive difference in their lives.

*Research Question 2: What strategies are used to attract rural women to participate in a self-help development program?*

**Getting Women to Participate**

1. **Why some women do not get involved** - The women self-selected themselves to be part of the group. For those who chose not to participate, poor health was the primary reason the women did not join this self-help program. (Unfortunately this community did not have proper health care).

2. **Increasing enthusiasm and attendance** - Ms. Gambia thought that compared to a “top-down” strategy, the women were eager to learn, more involved, very enthusiastic, and worked hard in their self-help participatory regime. Furthermore, the women took it upon themselves to self-select who should be taught a given task.

3. **Increasing the rate of participation** - A self-help program should be designed to address issues that are important to the women. If it does, the women are more likely to participate in the program. For example, according to Ms. Gambia, in the region were she worked, there would be a high level of participation if the program stressed education and other basic support for the women, if it provided some sort of recognition for the women,
and/or if the program provided more food. Moreover, in this region, females who were involved in the program "were looked up to by the rest of the women." To get shy, quiet, or introverted people involved, the facilitator must be willing to work one-on-one with these individuals, away from the other group members. These private discussions should stress program benefits and there should be lots of encouragement—that everyone is important in the group. In addition, as much as possible, the program should be fun for the women. For example, parties, dances, and other forms of celebration can be organized. Finally, Ms. Gambia thought that the facilitator should spend time getting to know the people. As a result more women are likely to participate.

4. Increasing commitment - To get women to be committed to the program, Ms. Gambia recommended talking to potential participants about the program, emphasizing the goals, the possible results, and the likely benefits. She also noted that demonstration plots should be used whenever possible, either locally or in other villages, to provide concrete examples of what women can achieve. If successful demonstrations are shown, then Ms. Gambia thinks the women will be committed to the participatory program.

Ms. Ghana

Based on her Peace Corps experience in implementing a participatory and empowerment regime for village women, the following section summarizes what Ms. Ghana recommended or what she did during her two year assignment. She served in 1987 to 1989 as a faculty member of an advanced teacher training college and she supervised the 50 acre rehabilitation—college farm. Ms. Ghana worked with rural women during the entire two years. Prior to her assignment, she received no formal training in the participatory and empowerment methodologies.

Research Question 1: What methods/tactics are used to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women?

A. Initial Steps
1. Rapport and respect - To start a participatory and empowerment program, facilitators must first establish rapport and respect with the women, by living in the community and by building a relationship with the elders and the chiefs. Moreover, the facilitator should relate to the women as openly and as comfortably as possible.

2. Facilitators - The role of the facilitator in the participation and empowerment process is to keep the group focused on the goals, and to make sure individuals are recognized and shown respect. The facilitator should also make sure there are choices available to the group and encourage the group to be self-disciplined. Finally, the facilitator should be a support person. Ms. Ghana thought that program ideas should come from the women themselves, not from the facilitator. Moreover she said, “People are best at identifying their own needs and finding their own solutions.”

Ms. Ghana thought that the best facilitators for a participatory regime are the village women who live in the target community. With a little training, their unique background would make them effective in the facilitation process. She also thought it was necessary for the facilitator to be considered “part of the community” to get things done. The sign that the community accepted Ms. Ghana was when the villagers warmly greeted her and invited her to special events. Finally, when doing participatory and empowerment activities for village and rural women, she thought that facilitators should only be female because of traditional attitudes and that, in general, female facilitators can relate to the village women better and get closer to the village women.

3. Training - To train Peace Corps volunteers or other international development personnel on how to do participatory and empowerment at the village level, Ms. Ghana recommended that the trainees go through a participatory workshop and then reinforce these lessons by getting practical experience at the village level.

4. Participation synergistic with empowerment - Ms. Ghana thought that, to be an effective program, participation needs to be coupled with empowerment. Finally, she thought
that participation in program activities is needed before empowerment occurs with the women.

B. Process

1. Local leaders - Local village leaders (male and/or female) can play a vital role in starting a participatory and empowerment program, simply by endorsing or giving their approval to have the program in their community. Moreover the facilitator should keep the local leaders informed regarding significant issues in the program, and it may be important to continue giving the leaders credit for their guidance and their support of the program. Finally, Ms. Ghana thought it would be helpful if the leaders attended the meetings.

2. Getting started - The meetings were organized by making sure the women knew when and where to meet. Each female was greeted individually. The starting time for each session should be prompt and punctual. The facilitator should make sure everybody had "air time" to discuss various issues. Interestingly, Ms. Ghana also said, "You [the facilitator] could provide a role model as far as listening, supportive behavior, paraphrasing, summarizing, all these communication skills which you hope they will develop, in working with each other." Finally, the group members should reach an agreement on the time and the place for the next meeting.

To select women for the participation program, Ms. Ghana suggested to first identify leaders who may be interested in starting a program, and then get these leaders to recruit other members. To get men to agree to let their wives or daughters participate in the program, Ms. Ghana thought that it may be prudent to get assistance from local leaders and get them to persuade the men to let their family members participate. In Ms. Ghana's program, in terms of active involvement, the older unmarried or widowed females with children were the most in need, therefore, they were the most active participants.

3. Meetings - At the meetings, it should be understood "who will decide the selection of the project. The deciding of the responsibility, what will be done with the income or the
outcome—that has to be decided in advance.” Because these participatory meetings require voting and consensus, only members should attend the meetings. However, the group may occasionally want to have public sessions for everyone in the village to attend. Ms. Ghana had doubts about allowing the active participation of educated women in these self-help initiatives because they may want to take over the program from the women who are most in need. Both the educated and the less educated groups should have equality and equity among them. One option is to have separate programs for those who are educated and for those who are less educated. If the women lacked management skills to properly run the program, Ms. Ghana recommended teaching them the necessary skills so that they could be successful. Finally, when a meeting is held for women, Ms. Ghana thought that village men should not be invited, especially during the initial planning or decision-making process.

4. Problem identification - To assess the problems of the women, Ms. Ghana thought that it was appropriate to directly observe the situation and to listen to the village chiefs or the elders. Some problems were discussed in group situations. Ms. Ghana agreed with the statement that, to get a highly motivated group of workers, the program must consistently address the perceived problems or the perceived needs of the women. If the supervisor for the facilitator wants a program that is contrary to the perceived needs of the women, Ms. Ghana still thought it was better to address the needs and concerns of the women. Finally, she said it was very important to be honest, truthful, and realistic in setting goals for the program, even though the women may want to hear something different.

5. Planning - The first step in the planning process is the identification of need. Once the priorities are stated, the women know their situation. They should get intimately involved in the planning process. Any planning initiative should stay within the established village system. If the program plan did not go well, Ms. Ghana recommended that the cause for the problem(s) should be identified and, if need be, the facilitator should get assistance from the local leadership to help assuage the situation. If there is a person who is causing a problem,
the facilitator needs to have an open dialogue with that individual by saying, “I feel threatened by your attitude toward me. What am I doing wrong?”

6. Implementation - To implement a participatory program, the facilitator must determine the primary needs of women. Ideally, the program should be designed for those individuals who are the most in need. The facilitator should determine whether there are any existing structures or groups in the community that could assist in establishing the participatory program. If there are existing structure(s) to align with, it should be easier to set up the self-help initiative. In addition, the facilitator should identify the natural leaders in the community and try to recruit them for the program. Their role would be to manage the self-help initiative. If the facilitator must teach the women, it is important to keep in mind that most of the female clients will be less educated, therefore, they might learn best through general conversation and through observation.

The facilitator should try to be friends, or at least to have a good relationship, with each member in the participatory group. Moreover, the facilitator will probably be more successful in establishing a participatory program if he or she has the aid of a local counterpart. At the very least, this individual could serve as an effective translator of the local language. Finally, if things did not go as quickly as anticipated, Ms. Ghana’s suggestion was to exercise patience until things improve.

7. Empowerment - The women selected themselves to be part of the decision-making process (i.e., empowerment). Moreover, Ms. Ghana made sure decisions were agreed to by consensus, which meant:

Everybody is checked whether they speak or not and if you have objections or concerns, let’s face them now so we can get going. I think it is important that no one be left out, even if they ascent because they don’t know any better. Sometimes that happens, they say yes because they don’t know how to say no or don’t know why they should say no. But if you overlook someone going around the circle, it could be fatal. You could lose that person, [because] they perceive that they don’t count.
C. Epilogue

1. Communications - The most effective method of communicating with the women was by using the local translator. To get shy or passive women to speak up in meetings or to become more involved with group activities, Ms. Ghana thought that the facilitator must try to make them feel important and whenever possible encourage them to speak.

2. Evaluation - To monitor and evaluate the participatory program, Ms. Ghana thought that periodic observation of the program activities should be done to ensure that the program was achieving the stated goals. The women should be involved in critiquing and evaluating the program because, in a participatory regime, they should be allowed to set their own standards of performance (e.g., they may decide among themselves that every woman must spend at least 10 hours on program activities). They should make these decisions. They should also judge who is or who is not meeting the standards that were set by the group.

3. Spread effect - To "spread" or disseminate the participation and empowerment process throughout a region, Ms. Ghana suggested having a successful program, which through publicity, eventually would become known to others in the general region. Moreover, she suggested taking female members of the group to the neighboring villages, to discuss program activities.

4. Children in the program - Ms. Ghana thought that a participatory program for women should also make provisions to include their children as well.

5. Should women be paid - Rather than pay women to participate, Ms. Ghana suggested taking a different approach, namely, asking them: "How can I help you raise money [from other sources]?

6. Attitude change - According to Ms. Ghana, to do participatory programs, the village women must have "an attitude change" to accept the presence of an outsider; an outsider who is attempting to change some aspect of their social order. Therefore, Ms. Ghana recommended just taking small steps when interacting with the women.
Research Question 2: What strategies are used to attract rural women to participate in a self-help development program?

Getting Women to Participate

1. Why some women do not get involved - There were four reasons why some women did not participate in the program. First, they had the perception that the program would not benefit them. Second, timewise, the program activities may have conflicted with their other responsibilities. Perhaps the village males would not let their wives participate. Lastly, the lack of child care may have been a factor.

2. Increasing enthusiasm and attendance - Ms. Ghana thought that any program that allowed intended beneficiaries to fully participate would be popular. Moreover, she said “... adults spoke with their feet. If they are not involved they do not come back.”

3. Increasing the rate of participation - To get more women actively involved in this self-help process, Ms. Ghana thought that potential female members must perceive that they will have a stake in the outcome; there must be something in it for them. Moreover, the facilitator must develop interactive bonds with the women. The location, the dates of the meeting, and hours of the meetings, should not conflict with other responsibilities the women have. The meetings should be fun and as much as possible the facilitator should develop friendships with the women. She suggested offering simple inexpensive refreshments for the meetings. Getting support and encouragement from the village establishment may also be an important factor in increasing the rate of participation. Finally, Ms. Ghana said, “encourage those who come to bring others.”

4. Increasing commitment - To get the women to be committed to the program, Ms. Ghana thought that it was important to identify and focus on any personal agenda the women may have, and to design the program accordingly.
Ms. Guinea-A

Based on her Peace Corps experience in implementing a participatory and empowerment regime for village women, the following section summarizes what Ms. Guinea-A recommended or what she did, during her two year assignment. Assigned in 1987 to 1989 as an Agricultural Extension Agent, Ms. Guinea-A worked with rural women during the entire two years. She did not receive any formal training in participatory methodologies.

*Research Question 1: What methods/tactics are used to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women?*

**A. Initial Steps**

1. *Rapport and respect* - To start a participatory and empowerment program, the facilitator must establish rapport and respect with the women. According to Ms. Guinea-A, this is done by being involved in the lives of the women and by living at their level of existence (rather than like a lot of international development staff who come in and live in their own little communities with generators, with lots of money, and bringing in their own food—which does not build much rapport). Rapport is also established by using local techniques which do not require a lot of money to initiate. In her situation, although rapport had been firmly established with the women, trust was never really developed, in part, because of some negative things which occurred before she arrived on the scene. Nevertheless, rapport is much easier to establish with women than trust.

   This latter point was expressed by many interviewees in this study. To overcome this problem of trust, Ms. Guinea-A recommended that facilitators should develop friendships and coalitions with the women and try to live an exemplary life while living in their community.

2. *Facilitators* - The role of facilitators in the participation and empowerment process is simply to initiate things, to suggest something new, or to spark an idea. To get the participation process going, the facilitator must first develop rapport, respect, and trust with the men and women, then the facilitator must work within the village system to get things
done. That is to say, the facilitator should be patient and work with the protocol that exists in
the target community, even if it takes longer to get things done. An example of this can be
found in rural communities. A facilitator often must deal effectively with the men first. When
starting a program with women in these male-dominant communities it takes time to
persuade the men and to get their okay. To work with the men is an effective tactic because,
by adhering to the village protocol, the inhabitants are more likely to respond positively to
both the facilitator and to the program.

Ms. Guinea-A said that program ideas should come from either the facilitator or from
the women. The facilitator can be important in this process because, to change things or to
improve the condition of women, it may be necessary for them to go in a different direction
than what happened in the past. These new approaches or ideas will often come from an
“outsider” (i.e., facilitator). Finally, Ms. Guinea-A thought that female facilitators can serve
as positive role models, to demonstrate that women can make good decisions and that they
can take on leadership roles. Too often in developing countries many people think that
females are incapable of making good, sound decisions. It can be extremely beneficial when
female facilitators come in to dispel this notion. Moreover, when facilitators serve as a
positive role model, the female members in the group have much more confidence that they
can do the participatory and empowerment program well.

Regarding which professional was best suited to set up a participatory and
empowerment regime, Ms. Guinea-A thought that villagers do not care what credentials the
facilitator has. The educational level of the facilitator or even his/her background fail to be
important issues with them. “The key to a successful empowerment program is having
someone who can step back and not take an expert position all the time, [the person who is
needed is] someone who can be comfortable living the same lifestyle of the people.”

Ms. Guinea-A thought that the facilitator does not necessarily have to be considered
“part of the community” to get things done. However, to do participation and empowerment
programs, she thought that it should be a goal of the facilitator to get involved with the community as much as possible. It is also important to develop friendships and live at the same level as the people.

To some extent, “outsiders” will never truly be considered part of the community. Ms. Guinea-A thought that the issue of developing trust with the villagers is much more important than merely being considered “a member of the community.” In terms of priorities, the facilitator should work on developing trust and as much as possible immerse themselves into the community.

To do participatory and empowerment activities for village and rural women, Ms. Guinea-A thought that the facilitator could be either male or female. In some developing countries, males tend to have a lot of authority and influence over the females. A male facilitator can do quite well in these communities. Moreover, there are villages wherein everything has to go through the men first. If the goal is to work within the village system, a male facilitator can play a crucial role in getting things done in these male-dominant societies. A female facilitator, on the other hand, can serve as a positive role model to demonstrate to people that a woman can make significant gains and do well, if given the opportunity. When discussing the issue of whether female facilitators can get closer to the village women, Ms. Guinea-A thought that, yes, there is a kind of “sister-like bonding between women” which could be useful in establishing the program. Males probably cannot achieve this close working relationship with women.

3. Training - To train Peace Corps volunteers or other international development personnel how to do participatory and empowerment activities at the village level, Ms. Guinea-A thought that, before the facilitator comes to the community, an international organization should do a good assessment of the village. In this way, the organization is more likely to select facilitators who possess the right skills to help a community in the areas where they are most in need. Furthermore, the facilitator should do as much background
reading as possible to learn about the target community and/or the region. Finally, she thought that facilitators should go through extensive empowerment and leadership training.

*Participation synergistic with empowerment* - To have an effective program, Ms. Guinea-A thought that participation needs to be coupled with empowerment. In regards to whether empowerment of the people (to make decisions for themselves) is needed before getting to the participation stage, she was somewhat ambivalent. Although she thought that ideally empowerment is needed first, in reality, often the village women will only be offered participation (i.e., no empowerment) yet, reluctantly, they do seem to get things done. However, when empowerment is coupled with participation, the program will probably be more sustainable and achieve a much higher success rate.

**B. Process**

1. *Local leaders* - The local village leaders (male and/or female) can play a crucial role in starting a participatory and empowerment program. The facilitator should make sure that the village leaders are well-informed regarding program goals and the accompanied plans. Moreover, the leaders must be “sold” on the merits of the program. The facilitator should spend a lot of time meeting with them, especially initially, before the program begins. It might be appropriate to invite them to any training session which is done for the women. This way they will get a better understanding of the program and they will be more likely to lend their support and approval for the program activities. After their initial involvement, it is recommended that these leaders should come to the meetings because the women will not speak in their presence and will be hesitant to take on any initiative while the leaders are there.

2. *Getting started* - Ms. Guinea-A’s initial meetings were organized and the program participants were selected with the assistance of a local government official who served as Ms. Guinea-A’s counterpart for that community. To get men to agree to let their wives or daughters participate in the program, Ms. Guinea-A recommended that facilitators emphasize
the benefits which may filter from the program. In this way, the men were more likely to allow women to join the group. In terms of active involvement in Ms. Guinea-A's program, it did not matter whether the female members were married or single, or whether they was young or old.

3. Meetings - According to Ms. Guinea-A, during the group discussions, there should be some meetings which are held for only female members; on other occasions, meetings should held for the entire community to attend. By having meetings for only the female members, the women would feel comfortable and more empowered to articulate their point of view. However, the advantages of having meetings that are open to the entire community are that people will be less skeptical about what is going on in these meetings and the public will be more supportive of the program.

Ms. Guinea-A thought it was more beneficial if some of the rural women in a participatory and empowerment regime are educated. The educated members can help the facilitator with the program and be a positive example for the other women. Regarding whether lower status and higher status women shared equally in doing the work for the program and whether they shared equally in program benefits, Ms. Guinea-A thought that in her program this equity and equality was achieved. Interestingly, she said one reason there was equality was because of "my ignorance as far as trying not to pay much attention to those who might have a higher status or those who might have a lower status. [Therefore] I didn't have a tendency to defer to the ones who had a higher status more than the ones who had a lower status." That is to say, if the facilitator makes no distinction between various classes of people, the program is more likely to achieve equity among its membership.

If the women suffered from a lack of management skills to do program activities, Ms. Guinea-A thought that gradually more and more group members should be taught the management process, which would build their confidence and give them the necessary skills to succeed. Regarding whether village men should be invited to participate in a program
designed for women, Ms. Guinea-A thought that it depends on the attitudes of the villagers. The facilitator must consistently work within the system or the facilitator must work within the existing cultural norms of the society. These norms will determine whether men should be involve in the program. Ideally, women should have their own meetings. At some level village men may have to be involved if the goal is to win the support, trust, and confidence of men. Then again, it all depends on the norms for that society.

4. Problem identification - To assess the problems of women, Ms. Guinea-A thought that the facilitator must interact with the people to get accurate information about their problems. Moreover, by observing the women, by working with them, by learning more about their traditional ways, by learning what has been effective [in the past] and what has not, the facilitator will be in a position to assess the problems and concerns of the clients. In Ms. Guinea's (A) program, the problems plaguing the community were usually discussed with individual women and with local families, rather than in group situations.

Ms. Guinea-A thought that, to get a highly motivated group of workers, the program must consistently address the perceived problems, or the perceived needs of women. When designing participatory programs, she thought that the needs of both the women and the facilitator's supervisor, should be stressed. The needs of the supervisor cannot be ignored because it is important to work within the system. Addressing the needs of village women is necessary to get participation, empowerment, and commitment implemented in the community. Ms. Guinea-A thought that it is extremely important to be honest with the women, to be realistic in the goals, and to be truthful, even though the village women may want to hear something different.

5. Planning - The first step in the planning process is to take time to get to know people and to assess their situation. Next, the facilitator should determine what the women want to do and use their energy and their desire to formulate the program plans. Basically, in
Ms. Guinea-A's program, plans were informally developed to achieve the goals articulated by the village women.

Plans should be like a template filled with general ideas of what must be done. However, this template of ideas must be flexible enough to go in different directions as dictated by the women. It is okay for facilitators to go into the initial meetings with their own plans and ideas, but these plans, ideas, and/or suggestions should be amended to reflect the heartfelt desires of the women. When planning in developing countries, flexibility and adaptability to different situations is very important.

If the program plans do not go well, Ms. Guinea-A thought that the facilitator must work with what is given and to do the best she (or he) can with what is available. It may be unrealistic “to mold what is given into what you want.”

It is important to identify men who are respected in the community and those who are sympathetic to the women’s situation, and try to get their help during the planning and implementation process. Ms. Guinea-A tried to empower the most influential women in the group because these individuals could provide leadership to other women to carry out the plans. The influential women are not necessarily the women who are in formal leadership positions, rather they are individuals who are respected for their knowledge and their ability to relate to other women in the community.

6. Implementation - To implement a participatory program, Ms. Guinea-A recommended to implement only programs that are “appropriate” for the community. Furthermore, no matter what the situation may be at the grassroots level, the facilitator must try to set the program up by working within the existing village system. As Ms. Guinea-A explained, “I was an outsider coming in, and we were dealing with traditions and values that go deep, and we can’t just come in and say we are going to change all that.” For example, she said that, culturally, there may be times the facilitator may have to get the approval of the village men. This may slow down the whole participatory process.
Initial meetings should be called, goals should be established, and then program plans can be formulated. Moreover, dates and times to meet should be discussed. If things do not go as quickly as anticipated, Ms. Guinea-A suggested that the facilitator should be patient and flexible, because at the village level, even the best laid plans will not get done quickly.

7. **Empowerment** - Ms. Guinea-A suggested that the facilitator must spend time to get to know the women and then identify which individuals are most respected and try to get these leaders involved in the decision-making process. Females who spoke French (the national language) were the other candidates considered in the empowerment process. These individuals could communicate directly with the facilitator and they were invaluable members of the process when decisions were being discussed or made.

Initially, the women looked for their facilitator to make the decisions. Eventually, Ms. Guinea-A was successful in getting the female members to make their decisions as a group. Frankly, although the goal was to get the women to decide things in a group process, often, the women deferred their decisions to other women in the group—those whom they respected:

> There were maybe two or three women that they looked up to, that they would look to, to make the decision. A lot of times those would be the women who spoke French and who could communicate with me. [However] I do think we made the shift from them expecting me to make the decisions, to having at least some decisions-making in the group.

To make this “decision-making shift” whereby the women decided things instead of the facilitator, Ms. Guinea-A said:

> What we did was as much as possible, turn the decision back to them. I think that it was important not to always say “I don’t know, what do you think” because then I think you undermine your own credibility if you do that every single time, but when they would come to me and I offered some possibilities and say “what do think, we could do this, this, or this” and let the women choose among those [choices] and then as they get used to making more and more decisions [then ask] questions, well what are the possibilities, and let them come up with [other] possibilities. So it was a gradual process.

To implement or to organize any empowerment program, Ms. Guinea-A suggested that the local government or the sponsoring agency for the facilitator should provide solid,
accurate information (done ahead of time) about the area and about the society with which the facilitator will be working. By having this good, solid background information, it will be much easier for the facilitator to work within the system and to cause fewer problems [because some communities are sensitive to the issue of empowering their women]. By determining what the women are familiar with or by determining their normal way of functioning in the community, these patterns will dictate to the facilitator what must be done to both implement empowerment and at the same time “stay within the system.” If the women know that their opinions, their ideas, and their suggestions are going to be seriously considered, and there is respect, indeed trust between the women and the facilitator, then the female members will feel empowered and they will want to make decisions for themselves.

C. Epilogue

1. Communication - The most effective method of communicating with the women was by getting the assistance of a local female counterpart who was influential and trusted by the other women in the group. Ms. Guinea-A also thought that communicating with the children was very important. By being involved with the kids and playing charades with them, Ms. Guinea-A was able to teach the children important participatory concepts.

Communication problems were mitigated with the help of educated women and children who spoke French and served as translators. “So we needed to find ways to communicate with those women when I didn’t speak their language, a lot of [translation] ended up being done through children. Children are good translators because [unlike adults] they do not have a lot of opinions that they will insert during the translation.” Finally, to get shy or passive women to speak up in meetings or to become more involved with group activities, Ms. Guinea-A said it takes a lot more time and patience to build a relationship with shy people because it is difficult for them to trust an outsider. Trust must be established with a facilitator before these individuals are willing to be more forthcoming with their thoughts. Shy or passive women have to feel "safe" in a group setting to participate. “My goal would
be to gradually give them opportunities to be successful, give them opportunities to be involved, and on a small scale [allow them] to give their ideas so that they would be more comfortable and more confident over time.”

2. **Evaluation** - Ms. Guinea-A did not convey any information or comment on this topic because evaluation was not stressed in her program.

3. **Spread effect** - To “spread” or disseminate the participation and empowerment process throughout a region, Ms. Guinea-A thought that the facilitator must have small successful programs first, and then start “selling these ideas” to other communities. Small successful programs may entail working with a small group of people initially, and gradually bringing in more and more people with each successful endeavor. Once these low risk programs are completed and an increasing number of people join the program, then it is likely that the word will spread. It will be easier for the facilitator to sell the participatory ideas to other communities in the region.

Ms. Guinea-A made another important point which is relevant to the participation process. The facilitator should assist the women in the areas were they need the most help. These areas may or may not be in the same field of the facilitator. For example, Ms. Guinea-A was an Agricultural Extension Agent. After some time, it became obvious that her female clients did not need nor were they interested in much help with agricultural production. They had a huge need for mud stoves because these units could save the women a significant amount of time and effort each day. As a result, the stove idea became popular and was adopted by a large number of women, not only in the village but throughout the region. The success of this popular program allowed this idea to spread on its own merits.

The salient point is, if the women need help in an area that is unfamiliar to the facilitator, then it is appropriate for the facilitator to get the assistance of someone who is more knowledgeable on the topic and who can more directly help the women in the area(s) were they need the most help. Getting this outside help would be particularly relevant when
spreading participatory programs to other communities, because each of these locations may have different needs and may require different strategies.

4. **Children in the program** - To really be successful Ms. Guinea-A thought that children should be included in the participatory process. However, she also thought that the participation of children needed to be an optional tactic. The only way a woman would be able to spend time to participate in a program would be if she left her daughter or son at home to do some of the chores the mother would be doing. A woman needs the option of either coming to the meetings and leaving her children at home to do the work that she would be doing, or to bring her children with her to participate in the program.

5. **Should women be paid** - If there are women who wanted money for their participation, Ms. Guinea-A suggested that facilitators try and explain what “other benefits” might be acquired if they got involved with the participatory program [obviously the women should never be paid to be in the program]. If the women still requested money to be involved, the facilitator should “just offer that maybe they wouldn’t want to be involved this time, but if they could come to some of the meetings and be aware of how the program proceeded then they might decide to be involved in the future.” If there are a lack of financial resources, Ms. Guinea-A thought that maybe there is only a perception problem; that is to say, some people think that development projects require lots of money. In contrast, Ms. Guinea-A thought that in a participatory regime, the women must live within their means to pay the entire cost for the program.

6. **Attitude change** - To do participatory and empowerment programs, Ms. Guinea-A thought that the attitude of the people does have to change. However, because of tradition, culture, and history, changing people’s attitude is extremely difficult. Therefore, it may be prudent for the facilitator to just try to work with the existing attitudes of the people. Having said this, Ms. Guinea-A thought that to do participation and empowerment programs, the facilitator needs to deal with attitudes regarding gender and giving females the opportunity to
decide things for themselves. The facilitator must convince people that successful
development programs can be initiated without having to spend a lot of money.

*Research Question 2: What strategies are used to attract rural women to participate in a self-help development program?*

**Getting Women to Participate**

1. *Why some women do not get involved* - According to Ms. Guinea-A, the main reason why some women did not participate in the program was because of their domestic chores. They simply did not have time to get involved. In some cases, the men told the women they could not participate in the program. Third, because of what happened historically and politically in the target region, fear and distrust may have been another reason why some women did not join the program. When starting a “bottom-up” program, a facilitator will have to consider the previous experiences of the intended beneficiaries. These experiences will influence how the women react to both the facilitator and to the program. If the facilitator does not know the local language, some women may not want to be involved. A major reason why some women did not join the program was because of what had happened in the past. They all wanted money to be involved in these self-help groups. When they were not paid, some of them left the meetings immediately and never came back.

2. *Increasing enthusiasm and attendance* - According to Ms. Guinea-A, in theory there is more enthusiasm and better attendance when the women are involved and participating in program activities.

3. *Increasing the rate of participation* - The ways to get more women to participate is by making sure: (a) the program is needed and useful to the women; (b) it will save the women time or make their lives more efficient; (c) the facilitator establishes trust, rapport, and respect with the people; (d) an emphasis is placed on assuaging the men, so that they allow women to participate; (e) the facilitator needs to stay away from situations that are controversial or that have historically caused problems in the past; (f) get female group members to bring other people to the meetings; (g) the facilitator should learn the local
language, so that there is effective communication with the women; (h) the facilitator should build a solid relationship with the women; and (i) if the program procured money or other resources for the women, then many members will be attracted. According to Ms. Guinea-A, any of these initiatives can help increase the rate of participation.

4. Increasing commitment - To get women to be committed to the program, Ms. Guinea-A suggested, “It really takes getting going, getting involved, seeing some successes, seeing that they [the women] are not going to be taken advantage of and, gradually, over time, they will be more committed, but I don’t think [it can happen immediately overnight].”

Ms. Guinea-B

Based on her Peace Corps experience in implementing a participatory and empowerment regime for village women, the following section summarizes what Ms. Guinea-B recommended or what she did, during her eight-year assignment. Assigned in 1986 to 1993 as an Forestry Extension Agent, Ms. Guinea-B worked with rural women during the entire eight years (part of this time, however, was for the United Nations). She received formal training in participatory methodologies a number of times during her several years of service.

Research Question 1: What methods/tactics are used to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women?

A. Initial Steps

1. Rapport and respect - To start a participatory and empowerment program, facilitators must first establish rapport with the women. This rapport is built up through casual interaction with the people, by respecting their traditions, by respecting leaders in their community, and by learning the local language. In this particular country, Guinea (West Africa), all foreigners are well respected. This respect is a benefit that facilitators are granted automatically.
The sign that rapport and trust have been established is when the people are genuinely interested and respond positively whenever they interact with their facilitator. It is “through confirmation [of] other sources that you will begin to hear back that somebody did something after your visit or somebody did something in preparation for your visit.”

2. Facilitators - In these traditional settings, people normally do the same things that their parents taught them to do. The role of facilitators in the participation and empowerment process is, to serve as a catalyst, to get the people to do things differently than they have done in the past. The facilitator is recognized as someone who is different. Perhaps by being the outsider, he/she can motivate the women to try different things. “I think a facilitator can get that sort of process of questioning, which leads to a consciousness-raising [among the people].” Moreover, the facilitator can help resolve conflict [in the group] and help the women move in the direction they want to go.

Program ideas should come from both the facilitator and from the women. Ideally, the ideas should come from the women. Sometimes a facilitator “must plant the seeds” of ideas with the people. No matter who suggests an idea, it is ultimately up to the women to decide which direction they want to go. Ms. Guinea-B thought that female facilitators can get closer and develop a much stronger relationship with village women. Therefore, she thought that depending on the culture, female facilitators are much more effective than men in implementing participatory and empowerment activities for rural women. Frankly, in societies such as Guinea, women do not see themselves on the same level as men. They will not participate in programs facilitated by males.

3. Training - Because of time constraints, there were several questions in the middle of this interview that Ms. Guinea-B did not have time to answer. Only the questions at the beginning and at the end of the interview were discussed. Consequently, no information was provided with respect to training individuals in participatory procedures.
4. Participation synergistic with empowerment - Ms. Guinea-B thought that to be an effective program participation needs to be combined with empowerment activities.

B. Process

1. Local leaders - No interview information available.

2. Getting started - To get the meetings started, Ms. Guinea-B met the women once a week at a time that was convenient for the women. A fixed time was established to provide structure and to provide a regular rhythm for everybody to meet.

To recruit women to join the self-help group, the existing village hierarchy should be used. For example, “We did a lot of publicity, using some of the leaders in the villages, the towns, the schools, the teachers, the kids and we let people come to us.” Once the group has been established, the women themselves, not the facilitator, should organize the meetings. Ideally, respected female leaders who join the group should play a crucial role in keeping the program going.

To get men to agree to let their wives or daughters participate was a difficult problem for Ms. Guinea-B. This problem was somewhat assuaged by past and present international development workers who had been working in the region, and they were instrumental in getting indigenous people interested in the idea of community participatory involvement. As a result of this effort, some of the village men were convinced that participation and empowerment was a good thing to do. The rationale for the village men was perhaps “our wives can help us generate some income or eat better.” A facilitator can use third party mediation, such as getting the brother of the husband to convince the reluctant spouse to let his wife come back into the group. If that does not work, the facilitator should probably drop the issue. It would not be appropriate to antagonize any male, by forcing them to let their women participate.

In terms of active involvement, younger women seemed to be more energetic and more physically involved than the older women (older women tended to get run down easily
because they were doing strenuous physical labor, with their family chores and from having so many children). Younger women also seemed to have more strength and more time for the program, usually because they were not married. They had no kids to raise or they had fewer family responsibilities.

3. Meetings - During group discussions, Ms. Guinea-B thought that only members of the program should be allowed to attend the meetings. When it came time to divide program benefits, these allocations were done out in the open, for all to see. This ensured that everyone got an equal share. All group members worked in the program. Lower status women seemed to do a little more of the work. Ms. Guinea-B thought that in participatory regimes it is an asset if there are educated women in the program.

If the women's group suffered from a lack of management skills, thereby impeding their progress to maintain a program, Ms. Guinea-B recommended teaching them basic organization. She suggested breaking the whole program down into small parts. By working on each piece a little at a time, in a participatory way, the women would gain sufficient management capabilities.

She thought that if a meeting is being held for women, no men should be invited because, “I have worked in cultures that are segregated and the men and women do different things. If you are targeting women then you have to design things in a totally different way, and it [would] not be attractive for men [to participate in these female-oriented programs].” If the facilitator wants an inclusive program, there should be separate meetings to which men and women are invited.

4. Problem identification - In Guinea, the problems confronting the women were usually brought out in the open for everyone to observe. Generally, any problem would be discussed in gatherings so that the most important issue(s) would easily come to the surface, for all to see.
The initial group sessions discussed past and present problems in the community, as well as possible directions they might take in the future. The women themselves determine the primary problems to address, especially the educated women. A facilitator should only help the women to develop their strategies. A facilitator should not help the women to identify their problems.

Ms. Guinea-B agreed with the statement that to get a highly motivated group of workers the program must consistently address the perceived problems or the perceived needs of women. By designing the program to address the perceived needs of women, the female members are more motivated to work in the program. If the supervisor for the facilitator wants a program that is contrary to the perceived needs of the women, Ms. Guinea-B still thought it was better to address the needs and concerns of the women. Depending on the culture, she said it was very important to be honest, truthful, and realistic in setting goals for the program, even though the women may want to hear something different.

5. Planning - To do the planning there should be big meetings to determine what the women need to do about their situation and to determine what information may be needed for the program. Once this is done then appropriate plans should be laid out. However, Ms. Guinea-B also stated, “I think planning is real difficult for people. I think that a lot of people I worked with are not familiar with the idea that they have a degree of control over their future.” Therefore, planning needs to be done gradually, until people become familiar with the concept of planning their future.

Planning in Western societies begins with formulating objectives. Objectives may or may not be appropriate in poor rural settings simply because villagers are not familiar with systems whereby they are governing their lives based on a set of goals and objectives. Again, this type of planning and structure is in line with a “Western approach.” Having said this, if goals and objectives are used in the participatory planning process, the women should set the objectives. However, Ms. Guinea-B cautioned that women “may initially come up with very
unrealistic objectives or objectives that are not very clearly defined and it is important to have clearly defined goals that are realistic, [so] that you can have success, especially in the beginning efforts.” Nevertheless, after the women define their objective(s), they must also, at the very beginning, get full agreement on these issues.

The local educated women and Ms. Guinea-B worked with other group members during the planning process. They broke things down into smaller units, and made plans accordingly. Throughout the planning process there were many, many discussions about what they would do, in a certain timeframe. Next, they practiced their plans by doing a lot of role playing. Finally, Ms. Guinea-B stated that both in groups and on an individual basis, she would teach women the importance of looking at the larger picture, or to do long term planning. For example, at the beginning of the rainy season she would ask them what did they wanted and what must be done now to reach their goal(s). Getting the women to think long term teaches them to plan and to achieve their agricultural goals. She went on to say, “so we broke it down into time periods, and by task, and went over it and through it, and went over it and through it again and gradually made [the planning process] more complex.” If the program plans do not go well, Ms. Guinea-B suggested talking to the women until the situation is resolved.

6. Implementation - First, it is important to emphasize that implementing a program should not involve giving away anything free to the women. Ms. Guinea-B’s program achieved some visibility when she did a village survey to determine the past and present situation in the village. There was also a publicity campaign to explain what the program was about.

Implementation also involves spending time to reflect and to clarify various positions before the women can decide who should do what in the program. To solve problems and to accomplish goals and objectives, subgroups should be formed for each objective and respective leaders for these subgroups should also be elected. Furthermore, in some
communities there may be a particular protocol to formally establish a group. To gain the respect of the community, the facilitator should follow this protocol.

Basically, each group or sub-group will go through a long implementation sequence of: consciousness raising, problem identification and a myriad of ideas and. Possibilities are discussed and resources are identified. There is a careful consideration of the options, decisions are made and appropriate planning is done. A tentative time-table of work assignments is formulated and the women themselves must implement their plans. If things do not go as quickly as anticipated, the facilitator should just be patient. It is a “given” in developing countries that progress will be slow.

7. Empowerment - Ms. Guinea-B thought that empowerment, as used in this study, is a form of democratic decision-making whereby everybody has a say in terms of what will be done. However, the people may be familiar with a top-down approach wherein someone tells them what to do. To turn this attitude around she said, “You help them talk about what it means, that every one has a vote or a piece of the action or a say in the matter, and you call for that kind of [empowerment] when decisions are about to be made.”

The facilitator should never select women to be part of the decision-making. Rather this part of the process should be done by the women themselves. However, she thought that a facilitator should get involved in selecting women for leadership roles in the group. Frankly, women who are the most involved or the most active in the program, should assume leadership roles for the group and these individuals are not necessarily the traditional leaders in the community.

C. Epilogue

1. Communication - Ms. Guinea-B did not experience any communications problems. To get shy or passive women to speak up in meetings or to become more involved with group activities, she suggested getting the women into smaller groups, working with them in a less
intrusive environment, and if necessary, the facilitator should be prepared to work with these individuals, one-on-one.

2. Evaluation - Ms. Guinea-B regularly evaluated the program, and used the evaluation process as a learning tool, to teach the women specific tactics to improve the program (i.e., “We did monitoring regularly and we did a kind of official mid-year evaluation. What we did was role play and we invited the whole community to it and we concocted [situations which plagued their program] and we acted out what had happened, and then we got people to laugh and talk about it”).

3. Spread effect - No interview information available.

4. Children in the program - There was no childcare in these communities. The children were constantly with their mothers, so it was inevitable that the children would be part of the program. Often-times, the women themselves thought it was important that their kids be involved, because the program taught the children useful things [and the community did not have other forms of education for their children].

5. Should women be paid - Ms. Guinea-B had to confront the serious problem of dealing with women who wanted money for their participation. The problem would not go away. She made arrangements to pay the women for logistical services. If Ms. Guinea-B had to spend the night at someone’s home, that family would be paid a modest amount for lodging or female group members who had to travel for the program were given money to cover their expenses for the trip, etc.. If there is a lack of financial resources, Ms. Guinea-B suggested changing the program plans, and selecting another project that could generate income.

6. Attitude change - Ms. Guinea-B thought that in the country she was in there had to be a dramatic attitude change to implement effective participatory programs.

Research Question 2: What strategies are used to attract rural women to participate in a self-help development program?

Getting Women to Participate
1. *Why some women do not get involved* - Some women were too busy with their chores and with raising their families to actively get involved with the program. Their lack of time was perhaps due to inadequate labor-saving devices in the community.

2. *Increasing enthusiasm and attendance* - When compared to the top down approach, Ms. Guinea-B observed that there was much more enthusiasm, more emotion, and increased attention to the program when the women were involved and participating in program activities.

3. *Increasing the rate of participation* - To get more women to participate, a facilitator should use the correct [participatory] methodology for the program. For example, it is important to have a group that is not too big, because in large gatherings only the most respected leaders from the community will speak while other members usually remain silent. This is not the correct way to implement a participatory regime. Ms. Guinea-B also suggested doing a lot of publicity about the program. The facilitator should get local leaders involved in the recruiting process for the group. Furthermore, if there is a social stratification within the group, then the women need to separate into smaller groups (of their peers); e.g., these subgroups can be based on ethnicity, class, or age. This separation can be important because in some traditional societies, the women will not mix into heterogeneous group. In sum, these homogeneous subgroups may attract women, thereby increasing the rate of participation in the program.

4. *Increasing commitment* - To get the women to be committed to the program, the facilitator must earn the trust of the women. Then the group must address important issues such as identifying concerns important to the women. The program should reflect the historical context for that community. Arrangements should be made so that the women are thoroughly prepared to be successful in the program, and commitment is engendered by granting the women empowerment capabilities.
**Ms. Kenya**

Based on her Peace Corps experience in implementing a participatory and empowerment regime for village women, the following section summarizes what Ms. Kenya recommended or what she did, during her two year assignment. Assigned in 1987-89 as an Agriforester, Ms. Kenya worked with rural women 75% of the time during the two years. Prior to her assignment, she received no formal training in the participatory and empowerment process.

*Research Question 1: What methods/tactics are used to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women?*

**A. Initial Steps**

1. **Rapport and respect** - To properly start a participatory and empowerment regime, Ms. Kenya agreed that facilitators must establish rapport and respect with the village women first. She said in the beginning the village women will not trust you, so everyone has to get to know each other before the facilitator can get to the point of proposing a program. In fact, the first year of her Peace Corps assignment was simply trying to establish rapport with the women, so that development initiatives could be implemented during the second year. This rapport and respect can be established by exchanging thoughts and ideas, and by having a lot of social contact with the village women. The clear sign this rapport had been built-up occurred when Ms. Kenya noticed that the village women were happy to see her, they all laughed together, and they were able to sit and talk about things. A common theme throughout this interview with Ms. Kenya was that programs in international development will take time. A facilitator can not push the women to do things according to any time-frame. The facilitator should not be discouraged if it takes a year to build trust with the women.

2. **Facilitators** - The social norms of the community determine whether a female or whether a male facilitator will be more effective with village women. For example, from Ms. Kenya's experience, a decision made by a woman [facilitator] was not highly valued. In
contrast, the opinions and authority of a man were very well respected. However, despite the fact that men seemed to have a little more power in this community, all things being equal, there are certain advantages when female facilitators are allowed to work with village women. Ms. Kenya noticed that village women will talk more to female facilitators, and that compared to men, a woman facilitator could get closer to village women. Moreover, if given a choice, Ms. Kenya would rather work with only women and try to keep men out of the participatory process, because too often men try to dominate and take over the women's program. Further, Ms. Kenya reported that when the facilitator is female it is more likely that the village women will be granted empowerment capabilities within the program.

It helps if the facilitator is considered to be part of the community. For example, virtually all of the progress in program activities occurred during Ms. Kenya's last six months of service with the Peace Corps because by then the village women felt comfortable with her, they started to trust her, and liked being around her. Also, another advantage of living in a village for two years is it gives a facilitator time to learn about the target population and time to develop ideas on project(s) which might be viable for the region.

Program ideas should not come from the facilitator, but from the women. In the participation process, the role of the facilitator is to listen to the village women and to help identify their needs, garner outside resources that the village women can not do on their own, to help women think of ways to solve their problems, and to help the women synthesize their thoughts into a coherent plan to solve a given problem.

There is not one single profession that would be best suited for participatory activities. This methodology can be effectively implemented by facilitators who are willing to listen and willing to give up their sense of power [over the villagers]. Facilitators should be patient and be able to take to heart what the clients are saying and make a coherent plan from the client's perspective. Ms. Kenya cautioned that someone who has an "I am going to save the world" type of attitude will have problems with their village client population. Ms. Kenya
speculated that because they utilize the aforementioned attributes every day in the classroom, teachers are well suited to implement participatory activities. Moreover, extensionists can do quite well in the participatory process because they meet local people everyday, and they usually know the leaders in the community. However, to be effective in the participatory process, the extensionists, just like other professionals, need the attributes mentioned above.

3. **Training** - To teach the participatory and empowerment methodology to facilitators, a good training program would include an on-site (i.e., village) two week visit with successful facilitators. The training would also include time conversing with government officials so that facilitator's would better understand and feel more comfortable talking with local leadership at the villages. Ms. Kenya mentioned that there were some difficulties because she did not fully understand how things worked with the local hierarchy. It is important to train facilitators on how to effectively deal with local leadership.

4. **Participation synergistic with empowerment** - To be an effective program, empowerment needs to be coupled with participation. The goal is to engender a long term interest in the project. The project should truly address the perceived needs of the women. Women need to feel as if they own the project so that they are willing to take responsibility for project activities. It is absolutely crucial that both the participation and the empowerment approach are implemented together. In fact, Ms. Kenya agreed with the statement that the empowerment (i.e. decision-making) stage is needed before you get people to participate.

**B. Process**

1. **Local leaders** - Local leaders can play a crucial role in a participatory program. They can identify which women might be interested in a given program. They can help establish the project and perhaps most importantly, before a project can be initiated in the community, the local leader must approve it. When discussing how much involvement village leaders should have in program activities, Ms. Kenya made an interesting point:
Yes, sometimes when you are using village leaders, if you get them too involved, then politics come into play, and if the local head politician has his or her own agenda, it can totally subvert any project that you have already established, [or] that you want to do with another group. There is a fine line between keeping village leaders appraised of what you are doing and involving them in it. If you involve them in it too much, they just usually want to take it over. [This is] really a difficult question and you really have to stay on your toes with this. You have to be aware that most village leaders have their own agenda, but you also have to be aware that they do need to be part of the project, and that the women won't do anything without the approval of the village leaders. There is no answer to [this] one. It is really instinct on your part, just keeping your eyes open, and seeing whether the village leader is a trustworthy sort of person, who maybe doesn't have a lot personal politics that they are playing and then seeing how much you can trust them.

2. Getting started - The initial meetings were mainly set up by a local official who had previous experience in working with groups of women in that community. It should be noted that because of the way things move in developing countries it took maybe two or three months from the time of planning the initial meeting, to actually having the meeting with the women.

In regards to the issue of selecting women for the participation program, Ms. Kenya talked with local government officials to identify which women were most active in the community. Basically, local advice should be used to determine which women might give time to make the project successful. When it comes to active involvement in program activities, the issue of age doesn't really seem to matter, but positions of power in a group is normally given to married women. To get the village men to agree to let their wives or their daughters participate in a program, facilitators may have to talk with the men to discuss the benefits of doing a program, such as earning extra income for the family. The facilitator will also need to stress that a successful program will not circumvent or usurp any male authority in the community.

3. Meetings - Ms. Kenya was ambivalent to the idea of having meetings only for members in the group. Although she thought that it was more expedient if members of the group are allowed to attend and to participate in program activities. Nevertheless, if non-members attend the meetings, then they may eventually join the program.
If project activities produce some sort of benefit (such as money) for the members, the women should decide among themselves how to allocate these resources. In fact, the facilitator should stay out of the sensitive issue of allocating resources. Ms. Kenya agreed with the statement that a participatory and empowerment regime can be strengthened if some of the female members have an education. Generally, one of the problems that plague women groups is a lack of management skills. To solve this problem Ms. Kenya recommended that facilitators take an active role in teaching women the skills that are needed to be successful. For example in her situation, Ms. Kenya taught bookkeeping and marketing to members who were involved in income generating activities.

It was Ms. Kenya's position that men should not attend meetings that are set up for women. Men should not be involved in any female gender-based program activity. Her rationale for this position is that men have a tendency to dominate in these settings and that type of control may not be good for the women's program.

4. Problem identification - Basically in group situations Ms. Kenya would let the women assess their own problems. She thought that the village women know best what their problems were. They should be the ones to define which problem(s) should be addressed by the program. If the supervisor for the facilitator wants a program that is contrary to what the women want, then Ms. Kenya thought it was still prudent to address the needs of the women and not the supervisor, because the facilitator can not force village women to participate in something that does not address their needs and does not benefit them. When identifying the most important concerns, it is the job of the facilitator to make sure the women select problems that they can solve and that are realistic for that community. “You absolutely have to be honest. One of your roles as the Volunteer serving as the facilitator is to make sure that their goals stay realistic. So if you foresee problems, it is your job to let them know what those problems are because your perspective as an outsider is completely different from theirs.”
5. Planning - According to Ms. Kenya, the first step in the planning process is to formulate broad objective(s), which is a difficult task with groups of village women. Identifying these objectives will require many meetings and lots of discussion to identify group needs, desires, and goals. The facilitator must synthesize all these goals into one major objective, because in these rural settings women can handle only one objective at a time. Once the goals have been identified it is necessary to devise some sort of action plan. When devising the plan of action it is very important that the women, not the facilitator, do all the work. For example, the facilitator is not the one who is getting information and who is meeting with officials. It is the village women who need to do all the footwork and the planning. They need to do everything so that the facilitator is simply an organizer and a cheerleader. The facilitator must keep the women focused. The facilitator must be someone who will keep the group's confidence up to the point where the women think they can do the project by themselves.

6. Implementation - As Ms. Kenya saw it, to implement a participatory and empowerment regime the facilitator must understand the local hierarchy. There may be villages with a chief and a sub-chief. Under the sub-chief there may be more sub-chiefs. The facilitator will need to know this structure because any initiative in the village will not be successful if it attempts to subvert this established authority. "This structure is very important on the village level, because their whole life [is built around it]." Women in particular are not going to be comfortable overriding any kind of established hierarchy."

So once the facilitator knows what the structure is then she needs to make herself known to these chiefs and sub-chiefs. Upon arrival in the village, the facilitator must tell the various chiefs why she is living in their community, and maybe towards the end of the credibility stage she also needs to explain to them potentially what programs might be introduced into that community.
As mentioned above, the first six months is the credibility stage whereby facilitators make themselves known and trusted by the people. During this credibility stage, the facilitator will start to see how things work, and to identify what the problems and needs are, for that community. During the credibility stage, as the facilitator gets to know people, she should gently ask the women questions, such as, “What do you think your biggest problem is? What would make your life easier or better? What is your greatest need? What is the greatest need of the community?”

After the facilitator builds a little trust and gets answers to these questions, then the facilitator can start forming her own ideas about a program. Next, the facilitator can introduce gently [because you can’t force anything in these villages] some of these ideas to the appropriate hierarchical levels in that village.

To get things started the facilitator should use the existing system in that community. If there is a women’s group in that community, then the facilitator should go directly to the chairwoman of that group to get her help. It is important to get to know the chairwoman, to respect her, and to recognize her place and her power within that group. Afterall, she was elected by the members because they trusted her and they know her—they hardly know the facilitator, so everything that is done in the proposed program should flow through that chairwoman. If there is not a women’s group already established in the community, then the facilitator must get help from the village men, especially from the hierarchical chiefs and the sub-chiefs. In this situation, to get to the women, to get them to respond, the facilitator must first win the trust of the men.

After getting to know the chairwoman, the facilitator can start discussing various ideas and options with her (generally, the chairwoman will also have opinions on which projects to do). Hopefully, the chairwoman can introduce the facilitator to the group, and from there the facilitator solicits a myriad of suggestions from group members. In the participatory and empowerment process, all ideas and options are amended to conform to the
decisions made by the entire group. In this process, even the chairwoman and the facilitator have limited power in determining which program to do. This major decision is left to the group of village women. However, if there is a lot of disagreement between participants, a number of group discussions will be needed. When the facilitator's ideas, the chairwoman's ideas, and the ideas and suggestions from the group are all basically the same or similar (i.e., there is little or no disagreement between program participants, then there is an easy flow to the next stage, which is planning and delegating responsibility to program activities."

One safeguard against project failure is to make sure that the target group does have ownership of the project. Again, it is not the facilitator's project. It is a project that the village women wanted to do. It is a project in which the women are making decisions. It is a project that the women are going to benefit from—all of these factors are good safeguards that the project is not going to fail. If the facilitator has done all this, and the project does fail, Ms. Kenya recommends having a meeting with the group to discuss why the project failed. The women should be made aware of what problems caused the failure. It is important to determine what their role in the failure was and what might be done the next time to avoid those kinds of problems.

Ms. Kenya also mentioned that women may not need much help in setting up a work project(s). If this is the case the main role of the facilitator is to be a cheerleader, and to give the women confidence that they can implement a successful program. Several times during the interview, Ms. Kenya mentioned that the women have virtually no confidence in themselves. The facilitator must be a cheerleader and encourage the women. If the women need a lot of help in starting a program, then it is mandatory for the facilitator to take a more active role in setting things up. The actual work of the facilitator should be as minimal as possible. When program activities do not go as quickly as anticipated, which is often the case in developing countries, Ms. Kenya advised to deal with the reality of the situation and revise program plans accordingly. For each community that a facilitator works in, she will need the
help of a village aid. During the entire stay in a particular community, or when visiting
surrounding villages for short periods of time to set up programs, an indigenous village aid
can be a valuable asset in assisting the facilitator with program activities.

7. *Empowerment* - When it comes to the issue of deciding specifically who should be
part of the decision-making process in a program, Ms. Kenya stated that each community
already has its own hierarchy, such as the chairwoman with her subcommittees. It is probably
not appropriate for the facilitator to determine exactly who should be making decisions or
who should be part of the program. However, if it is a new program and there are not
established leaders, then the facilitator will have to identify and seek help from the natural
leaders in a group. In any group of village women there will normally be one or two females
that are natural leaders who command the respect of the other women. These natural leaders
should either be the decision-makers or at least they should be in charge of selecting
decision-makers among female members.

When discussing the issue of how the empowerment phase was organized and
implemented, Ms. Kenya stated:

So if you have identified this project with this chairperson, one thing that is very
important is, you must make this chairperson the center of all decision making,
[and] you should make no decision without including the group in it, making it a
group decision, instead of a individual decision; making the women feel like they
are taking an active part in every decision, no matter how minuscule, the women
need to be appraised of what is going on step by step in that project, and not
[only] what is going on, but they need to be making decisions step by step, by
step. So I would say good communication is very, very crucial, and good
communication in the proper order, from the chairperson down, not the other way
around.

Decisions are normally made during meetings. Different women will have different
needs and desires. It is possible that disagreements will arise during the empowerment
program (i.e., the decision-making phase). If disagreement does occur, Ms. Kenya offered
wise advice:

Basically, women need to feel like their needs haven't been forgotten when
decisions are being made about what the project is going to be, and the only
way to avoid that is, that the decisions that are made, must be group decisions,
if it is going to be a group project. So I can only say discuss, discuss, discuss. Make everything open, make everything their decision, let them come to a consensus through their own discussions, and then if they have all agreed to the same thing, there can hardly be room for complaints later.

C. Epilogue

1. Communication - The most effective method of communicating with the women was simply sitting down with them, drinking tea, getting to know them, and asking them about their families. Ms. Kenya recommended not only having lots of discussions during group meetings, but also to spend time making small talk with women individually so that [friendships] are developed and so that everyone would get to know each other personally. If the facilitator does not know the local language then obviously it is necessary to get a translator to communicate effectively. For shy or passive women who do not speak up or become involved in group activities, Ms. Kenya thought that these women generally do not trust their facilitator, and these individuals may overcome their shyness in time, once they get to know the facilitator well. However, it is important that facilitators do not force or push women to be active or to speak up.

2. Evaluation - It was pointed out that evaluation can be a little tricky in these settings because things move along at their own pace. It is extremely difficult to monitor progress based on pre-determined time scales. Because of the slow pace in these villages, Ms. Kenya monitored whether the women were enthusiastic and interested in the program and whether the women were doing what was agreed upon during the meetings. If it is determined during these types of informal evaluations that things are not going well, then appropriate adjustments must be made. It was mentioned that when things do not go well, the facilitator should approach the women and find out their views on what went wrong, what should be done to solve the problem(s), and how to prevent the same mistakes in the future. Again, the women's involvement throughout the process is stressed.

3. Spread effect - Ms. Kenya stated that spreading program ideas to other villages in a region can be enhanced by getting rid of international aid workers, who come in to do
everything for everybody. This dependent relationship ruins the incentive of indigenous people to do things for themselves through the self-help process. Assuming there is an environment whereby people are willing to help themselves, a “successful program” can be disseminated to neighboring villages by using group members to promote the virtues of the program. Given the opportunity, the women would love to teach each other and share information. Ms. Kenya recommends starting a small program that has a high probability of being successful and to train program members how to teach each other so that each trained member can accompany the facilitator to the neighboring village(s). With this trained group, prior to their arrival in neighboring communities, the facilitator will normally have to make pre-arrangements so that these neighboring village(s) can prepare for each group visit.

4. Children in the program - Including children in the participatory process or program should definitely be done. The children can help with some of the labor (i.e., the participation phase) and they can also be taught decision-making skills (i.e., the empowerment phase).

5. Should women be paid - Because they have gotten spoiled by outside development agencies, sometimes an awkward situation arose whereby some of the women wanted to be paid for their services. For this difficult situation, Ms. Kenya responded, “So I just kept reiterating the fact that I had no money. I was there strictly to help them do their own project. I just had to keep saying it over and over and over; some of them got it, and some of them didn’t. It was a big source of frustration for me.”

If a program needs some sort of outside funding, the facilitator can write proposals for small grants. Ms. Kenya thought that it would be much better to select program(s) that did not require a lot of money [in this way the women would learn independence by paying for all of their expenses in the program].

6. Attitude change - In a participatory and empowerment regime the social climate in the target community will determine whether attitudes will have to be changed, to initiate a
program. For example, in the village that Ms. Kenya worked, the men in the community normally did not allow the women to do any self-help activities. As the facilitator, she had to spend a lot time and effort in convincing some men to let their wives participate. In some cases she was not able to change the men’s attitude.

Research Question 2: What strategies are used to attract rural women to participate in a self-help development program?

Getting Women to Participate

1. Why some women do not get involved - Some women did not participate because their husbands would not let them. Other females did not have time because they were too busy taking care of their husbands and their kids, taking care of their food needs, as well as planning and growing their food.

2. Increasing enthusiasm and attendance - Despite their busy schedules, for those who took part in the program, Ms. Kenya observed the women to be very enthusiastic with the participatory process. They loved getting together, planning things, and making things happen. Attendance in her program was also strong.

3. Increasing the rate of participation - There are several tactics that can be used to get more women involved. The facilitator can get more assistance from the village chief. In fact, Ms. Kenya noticed that on a day when the chief ordered the women to do some task, the entire female population of the village participated in the effort. Another tactic is to get group members to actively recruit and to disseminate information about program activities to nonmember females. It was mentioned that women will be attracted to a program if they think the outcome will address one of their needs or concerns. If the women designed and set up the program, as advocated in a participatory and empowerment regime, there is a good possibility that a large number of women will be attracted to this type of bottom-up effort.

4. Increasing commitment - Women will be more committed to the program if they are allowing to be the decision-makers. They feel it is “their project”. Specifically, to get more women involved, Ms. Kenya stated:
If women are going to participate, they have to feel like there is going to be some benefit in it for them. Their lives are already stretched to the limit time-wise—they have so many responsibilities. So, hopefully by letting the women identify their own goals or, hopefully, by letting the women decide what the project is going to be in the first place, they will have a vested interest in it and they will want to participate. So, I think that if you set up the decision-making process correctly, get a lot of feed back from the women who are going to work in the project, if you do that they will want to participate because it will be their project and not yours.

Ms. Lesotho-A

Based on her Peace Corps experience in implementing a participatory and empowerment regime for village women, the following section summarizes what Ms. Lesotho-A recommended, or what she did, during her two year assignment. Assigned from 1987 to 1989 as an Agricultural/Nutritional Extension Agent, Ms. Lesotho-A worked with rural women during the entire two years. She did receive a small segment of informal training in participatory methodologies.

Research Question 1: What methods/tactics are used to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women?

A. Initial Steps

1. Rapport and respect - To start a participatory and empowerment program, first the facilitator must establish rapport with and respect for women or they will not respond to any development initiative. Ms. Lesotho-A specifically discussed this issue with the villagers and they said the facilitator would have to be "weird" to try doing a development program before establishing some ties in the community. This rapport is built by making friends, by learning the language, by showing an interest and a respect for the culture, and by demonstrating a sincere desire to be with the people in the village. In addition, it is important to learn everyone's name. If Ms. Lesotho-A learned someone's name, she would write it down, and memorize it. When the facilitator does these things, the villagers know "that you are interested in them and you want to get to know them, and that you are not there for your own purpose, for your ego, or for [just] your job."
The sign that this rapport and trust had been established was when the conversations became friendly when the interaction became casual and less formal, when friends were made, and the facilitator “feels” integrated into the community and becomes less noticeable. Depending on what happened in the past with other facilitators, there may be problems in establishing trust. To overcome these problems Ms. Lesotho-A suggested, to “Be sure that your primary reason for being there is to make friends and have a good time with the people you meet.”

2. Facilitators - The role of facilitators in the participation and empowerment process is to relax, to be patient, to live the daily village life, to become friendly with the people and understand their needs, before attempting to do a program. Once a need has been identified, the facilitator should think of tactics to address these needs. These tactics should be couched with the thought that the women themselves are not only going to be running the program but they have to solve the problems. Although the facilitator may start out with specific ideas or tactics to address a problem, the main ideas must come from the women. Moreover, there may be multiple needs and/or priorities that will surface over a period of time. Ultimately, solutions to these problems may have to come from not only the women but from a variety of sources, such as outside experts.

According to Ms. Lesotho-A, the best professional to establish a participation and empowerment program would be a sociologist or other professional who has good interpersonal skills, can relate to people, is non-threatening, is empathetic, and does not irritate people. Not all professionals have these qualities.

She thought that extensionists can be helpful in the participatory process because they have contacts. They know how to get supplies and they know how to get information. If they are really “involved” at the village level and they are willing to address the women's needs, then extensionists can be quite helpful. To get things done and to accurately identify the needs of the women, Ms. Lesotho-A thought that it was necessary for the facilitator to be
considered “part of the community”. However, she mentioned that if there is an “activist” environment, then maybe a facilitator can visit an area only occasionally and get some things done. This would be an exception to the rule.

To do participation and empowerment activities for village and rural women, the facilitator needs to be a female, because culturally, village women are very much intimidated in the presence of men, even if they are the nicest guys in the world. Also, to some extent you could say that women understand other women's problems more, especially if they have all shared the common experience of having children. Simply stated, female facilitators can get closer to and work closer with village women.

3. Training - To train Peace Corps volunteers or other international development personnel on how to do participation and empowerment at the village level, Ms. Lesotho-A thought that trainees should be taught cross-cultural issues. They should do role-playing [to act out participatory scenarios]. They should read anecdotes of others who have set up these programs. Finally, they should listen to or read the results of studies, like this dissertation.

4. Participation synergistic with empowerment - To be an effective program, Ms. Lesotho-A thought that participation needs to be coupled with empowerment, because “you can't just go and try to lead people around...they have to want to do it, and they have to be fulfilling a need or a desire of their own.” This is done by empowering the women. Ms. Lesotho-A agreed with the statement that empowerment of the people (to make decisions for themselves) is needed before getting to the participation stage. Once the women have infused the program with their own ideas they are more likely to participate in the program.

B. The Process

1. Local leaders - Ms. Lesotho-A thought that local village leaders (male and/or female) should play a role in starting a participatory and empowerment program. At the very least, these leaders must be informed about the program. If the leaders want to be involved in the meetings, they should be allowed to do so. Basically, the facilitator must respect whatever
decision(s) the leaders decide to do. She also thought that it is advantageous if the leaders are not involved in the women's program [no reason given].

2. Getting started - When setting up meetings for the women, Ms. Lesotho-A thought that many of these gatherings could be out in the field. The women could get first-hand practical knowledge regarding what should be done in the program. Individual teaching in the field, one-on-one, is another tactic, and workshops to teach specific things could also be done. All of the gatherings should be fun and interesting for the participants, and if possible, photographs or pictures should be used as teaching aids. Keeping the program fun makes it enjoyable for everyone and promotes camaraderie among the women. Basically, effectiveness is enhanced when a facilitator makes friends with the women and gets them involved in the program. The most effective method of conveying information was by having conversations with the people every day.

Ms. Lesotho-A did not think it was appropriate for a facilitator to select which women could be in the program. The women decided among themselves whether they wanted to participate. In terms of active involvement, she thought that the younger married women were the most active participants simply because they had experienced life and had an idea of what would make their lives more stable. They usually chose to be involved with the program.

3. Meetings - Regarding the meetings, Ms. Lesotho-A suggested that, to help build the esteem of the members and to make them feel important, it would be prudent to invite only program participants to the meetings. However, there could also be specific community meetings or community discussions whereby everyone in the village could attend. She thought that it would be beneficial if some of the rural women were educated in a participatory and empowerment regime because they could start their own separate program or they could help keep the original program going after the facilitator had left the community. To ensure that lower status and higher status women shared equally in program
activities, and that they would share equally in program benefits, Ms. Lesotho-A thought that this equity could be achieved if all of the activities were done out in the open so everyone could see what was going on.

Ideally, when a meeting is held for women, it would be appropriate to invite the men (i.e., do not exclude them). It would be even better if the men did not show up at any meeting. Once men get involved, they have a tendency of trying to run the whole program. Nevertheless, to be culturally sensitive it would not be appropriate to exclude men and say they can not come to any meeting. The facilitator can, however, "make it unpalatable to men, such as it's just women's work, or just women's stuff; then they won't want to come. They won't come near it with a ten foot pole."

4. Problem identification - It is important to assess problems that are bothering women. Ms. Lesotho-A said the women will normally articulate their concerns or problems individually, rather than in a group situation. She also agreed with the statement that to get a highly motivated group of workers, the program must consistently address the perceived problems or the perceived needs of women. If the supervisor or the facilitator wants a program that is contrary to the perceived needs of women, Ms. Lesotho-A still thought that it is better to address the needs and concerns of women. Finally, she said it was very important to be honest, truthful, and realistic in goal setting for the program, even though the women may want to hear something different.

5. Planning - Ms. Lesotho-A suggested that the planning process in a participatory program should mainly come from the women. It can be a disaster if planning is done by the government or by an outside agency. To plan for a participatory program, the facilitator should be in the village to do an assessment of the present situation for the women. This assessment would determine program direction. Then the appropriate plans can be made. By getting people from the community involved, it is more likely that appropriate plans will be made. Demonstration plots are often a popular tactic used in rural communities. If the
program plans do not go well, Ms. Lesotho-A thought that the facilitator should be patient and try not to force anything. As much as possible the focus should be to try to help the people in spite of the difficulties.

6. Implementation - To implement a participatory program, Ms. Lesotho-A thought that, right after the facilitator arrives in the village, out of respect, the protocol is to go to the chief. It is important to make a good first impression and avoid hurting the feelings of someone influential in the community. It is appropriate for the facilitator to talk with the chief as soon as possible after arriving in the community. The credibility stage must be completed with the facilitator getting to know the people, establishing friendships, and avoiding hurting anyone’s feelings. “I would say that it is important to maintain your friendships, and just get a feel for what the needs are of your community.” Next, it is important to recruit people who have a need for the program. They are more likely to do the work to make the program successful. Once the needs have been identified and the goals established, then the women have a direction, indeed, they have a focus to work toward. If things do not go as quickly as anticipated in the program, Ms. Lesotho-A’s recommendation was to relax and be patient. However, if things really slow down, it may be worthwhile to do another development activity until the main program becomes more active.

7. Empowerment - Basically, Ms. Lesotho-A selected women who were interested in the program and who were willing to work to make the program successful. Each program participant had defined responsibilities. It could be said that each female member was a decision-maker in her particular segment of the program. Ms. Lesotho-A strongly recommended organizing international development programs from the bottom-up and to avoid whenever possible the top-down approach, which [she felt] is an approach skewed towards making bad policy.

I don’t think that it is [good] having it organized from the top, down. I think [development] would work better on a more personal level, making your friendships and your contacts, and going from there with people who are initially interested, who [are] going to be the energy of the program...People
who are self-motivated, [the facilitator should] key into with those people [because] people know what they need, they don’t need to be told what they need.

C. The Epilogue

Communication - The most effective method of communicating with the women was through friendly conversation in a person-to-person exchange and avoiding a teaching sort of attitude or a teaching mode. Moreover these discussions should not be one-way conversations. In a conversational way the facilitator should consistently be asking the women what they think (the women seem to like it when they are asked questions). Written forms of communication were used with the more educated members of the society.

Ms. Lesotho-A had a difficult time understanding the language, but she implied that this problem can be solved if the facilitator is willing to work hard enough to overcome the language barrier. To get shy or passive women to speak up in meetings or to become more involved with group activities, she recommended talking with these individuals one-on-one, rather than forcing them to speak up in a group.

2. Evaluation - To monitor and evaluate the participatory program, Ms. Lesotho-A informally kept records of the program activities, such as what was the yield or how many seeds were sold. The women did critique the program by making suggestions, by complaining, or by offering their advice. Ms. Lesotho-A tried to address many of the concerns articulated by the women.

3. Spread effect - To “spread” or disseminate the participation and empowerment process throughout a region the facilitator must keep in mind that “when a good idea takes hold, it spreads itself.” y setting-up a successful program an initiative will spread by word of mouth. There is rivalry among humans or just an interest in doing what everybody else is doing, so if the idea is good, people will be attracted to a successful program.
4. *Children in the program* - Ms. Lesotho-A thought that a participatory program for women should also include their children. In fact, because many adults are so set in their ways, children are much more likely to accept self-help, participatory methods.

5. *Should women be paid* - If there are women who wanted money for their participation, Ms. Lesotho-A thought that the facilitator should just explain she is not hiring, and help them to understand that the purpose of the program is self-help (the facilitator may also want to ask the women, what made them think that they could earn a salary by being in the program). Basically, the facilitator should assuage the women and motivate them to join the program without paying for their participation. If there was a lack of financial resources, Ms. Lesotho-A suggested selling products such as seeds, or if necessary to write a grant proposal.

6. *Attitude changed* - Ms. Lesotho-A thought that to do participatory programs, the attitudes of the people does have to change, especially in terms of accepting a facilitator, as someone who could help them. Moreover, Ms. Lesotho-A wanted the women to look at her as a friend, not as a stranger.

*Research Question 2: What strategies are used to attract rural women to participate in a self-help development program?*

*Getting Women to Participate*

1. *Why some women do not get involved* - The reason why some women did not participate is because they did not want any more work to do, which would have been a consequence of being in Ms. Lesotho-A's program.

2. *Increasing enthusiasm and attendance* - Ms. Lesotho-A thought that, when compared to a top-down approach, there is more enthusiasm and better attendance when the women are involved and participating in the program activities. If facilitators really want involvement from the women then the female members must have a stake in the program. They must participate.
3. Increasing the rate of participation - The way to get women to participate is by making the program relevant to their lives and to be culturally sensitive. If the program is addressing a need, many will want to be involved in the endeavor. By getting the women directly involved (i.e., empowerment) many problems can be avoided. To get more people involved the facilitator should be flexible by recruiting various segments of the populations. Also, there should be a lot of advertising, especially by word of mouth, “Not by your own mouth but by the mouths of the villagers. The local folks do the best. Word of mouth is the best way to advertise any program.”

4. Increasing commitment - To get the women to be committed to the program Ms. Lesotho-A thought that facilitators must develop programs in which the women have a sincere interest.

Ms. Lesotho-B

Based on her Peace Corps experience in implementing a participatory and empowerment regime for village women, the following section summarizes what Ms. Lesotho-B recommended, or what she did, during her two year assignment. Assigned in 1988 to 1990 as an Agricultural Extension Agent, Ms. Lesotho-B worked with rural women during the entire two years. Prior to her assignment, she received training in participatory experiential non-formal adult education; however, she received no training in empowerment methodologies.

Research Question 1: What methods/tactics are used to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women?

A. Initial Steps

1. Rapport and respect - To start a participatory and empowerment program, a facilitator must first establish rapport and respect. The facilitator can establish this rapport and respect by demonstrating a commitment to the women, a willingness to be there for them, and by not trying to force anything on them.
For Ms. Lesotho-B there was an ongoing process throughout the two years to build a working relationship with the women. In fact, it took at least six to eight months (i.e., the credibility stage) before the women and Ms. Lesotho-B were able to engage in anything serious together. During the first six months, the facilitator should socialize and try to help the women with their chores. By observing them during this initial period, an ongoing informal needs assessment can be done. A sign that rapport and trust had been established was when the people regularly sought to be in the company of Ms. Lesotho-B.

Ms. Lesotho-B thought that if international development personnel decide to work in a rural community, and they are there for only six months, they probably could not accomplish a lot in that short time because a lack of trust would be an issue, an impediment to the facilitator/client relationship. A facilitator can establish trust by visiting the people, being honest with the people, and living in the community with the people [so that relationships are formed].

2. Facilitators - The role of facilitators in the participation and empowerment process is to look at a village situation objectively. The facilitator can be a source of new ideas, help give women more choices [in life], and at some point be a voice for the women. A facilitator must gain the women's trust to get the participatory process going.

Facilitators should have a humble attitude. Once the program has been established, the facilitator must maintain the status as an equal participant in the program and avoid the "top-down" approach.

In a group situation, the facilitator should help the women identify their needs, and then together they should work towards solving problems. Although the facilitator has to steer this whole process, program ideas should come from the women themselves. However, there will be occasions when the facilitator should or must voice her opinion.

According to Ms. Lesotho-B, a host country extension agent who is living in the target community and is trained in extension techniques should be the best professional to set
up a participation and empowerment program. However, some agents may be destructive to the process. It depends on the characteristics of the individual. In a perfect world, because they are right there in the community, the extension agent can be a very effective facilitator. Extension agents can effectively implement a participatory regime if they work with the people to earn their trust, if they help the people identify their problems, if they work with the people and look at a wide range of solutions, if they live right there in the community, and if they are consistent.

If a facilitator is considered part of the community, he/she is more likely to get things done. In the short term, the facilitator, the extension agent, or other “expert” can come in for a visit and immediately rally the community because the villagers will view these professionals in a dignified way and hope to get some materialistic benefit from them. In the short run, an outsider can make a small and more likely unsustainable difference. However, when a facilitator is considered part of the community, a longer more sustainable program can be put into place.

When doing participatory and empowerment activities for village and rural women, the facilitator should be a woman. Ms. Lesotho-B thought that compared to a male facilitator, the female facilitators could get closer to the village women and discuss more of the concerns and issues which are important to them.

3. Training - When discussing effective training methods for the participatory and empowerment regime, Ms. Lesotho-B, who was a former Peace Corps training officer, thought that a training program should be located at the village level. It should teach extension activities, informal needs assessment, how to carefully observe situations, and, true people-centered decision-making skills. The facilitator’s opinion is kept out of the participatory [and empowerment] process. Although the judgment and experience of a facilitator can be an invaluable asset in a participatory regime, Ms. Lesotho-B thought that sometimes a facilitator’s background can get in the way of objectivity, especially when the
individual is opinionated or biased to a particular viewpoint. Therefore, the training should stress objectivity and how to stay away from assumptions such as "it works for me so it has to work for others." During training, a facilitator should be exposed to various participatory activities, such as trying to do things that are low input and low cost. Emphasis should be on learning the importance of hard work as well as building on what is already existing and working in the community.

4. Participation synergistic with empowerment - In Ms. Lesotho-B’s opinion, both participation and empowerment are needed. One is a product of the other. In fact, she agreed with the statement that empowerment of the people is needed before you get to the participation stage. Without empowerment, the people will not show up for an activity. They have no reason to go and they will not have a real commitment to the program.

B. Process

1. Local leaders - The role that local village leaders (male and/or female) can play in starting a participatory and an empowerment program can be very positive or very negative, depending on how these leaders use their influence or status. A positive influence is established when the leader is truly respected by his/her community. They come not only to the meetings but also get involved in the group work. When respected leaders work for the group, the villagers are motivated to get involved and to participate in program activities. On the other hand, a local leader who is not well respected may be viewed by group members as untrustworthy, and perhaps as someone who, if given the opportunity, would steal all the funds the group may earn. However, even if a leader is not respected, the facilitator probably cannot exclude them from the process because of protocol in the village system. The facilitator may be forced to include this leader in a limited way, whereby this individual does not hurt the program. At the very least, the local leader has to be informed that a program is being proposed in the village. Furthermore, to have a sustainable program, the facilitator may have to work with both the male and female leaders. Perhaps the wife of the village chief will
also have to be included in program activities. Each of these individuals will have power and influence that can not be ignored on the local level. Again, if these individuals are not respected, the strategic design of the program can limit their authority and reduce the possibility that they can hurt the group.

2. **Getting started** - The initial meetings were set up by the facilitator and the meeting time was based on the available time the women had from their daily chores. It was very important to tell all the important people (e.g., chiefs, extension agents, community leaders) about the proposed meeting and the agenda.

A chairperson, secretary, and treasurer were selected and ultimately they did most of the organizing of program activities. In terms of active involvement it did not matter whether the women were married or single or whether they were young or old. Occasionally, some men would not let their wives or daughters participate in the program. In these situations, Ms. Lesotho-B suggested letting the men know what was in it for them (i.e., discussing potential benefits). It was important to keep the program controversy-free by not hiding anything, and by setting up activities that only village females would be interested in, such as gardening. By doing these measures, the village men would most likely let their women join the program.

3. **The meetings** - For the meetings, the whole community (i.e., nonmembers and members) should be invited to attend the group discussions. There may be times, however, when these discussions should be kept private, with only members present.

To have educated women in the program would be beneficial because it is more likely the program would continue after the facilitator leaves the community (i.e., the educated women would take over and continue the participatory process). If the group suffered from a lack of management skills, it would be appropriate for the facilitator to teach the required basic skills. If there are people in the community who are natural managers or who are well organized, perhaps they can teach these skills to the other members.
According to Ms. Lesotho-B, when a meeting is held for women village men should not be invited. However, Ms. Lesotho-B also thought that, if a participatory program included men as members, perhaps the males would treat the women a little better because their awareness of issues that are important to women would be raised during the meetings. Unfortunately, Ms. Lesotho-B reported that lower status and higher status women did not share equally in program benefits or activities. However, the lower status women did gain increased knowledge, skills and awareness by being in the program.

4. Problems identified - The problems that women had were assessed through informal discussions, especially in group situations. Once a problem becomes clear and agreed upon, the next step is to determine what should be done about it. Ms. Lesotho-B admitted the solutions that they came up with as a group were not always the right things to do. Their problems were complex and not easily solved.

By designing the program to address the perceived needs of the women, the women were more motivated to work in the program. If the supervisor for the facilitator wants a program that is contrary to the perceived needs of the women, Ms. Lesotho-B still thought it best to address the needs and concerns of the women. Depending on the culture, it is usually better to be honest, truthful, and realistic in setting the goals of the program.

5. Planning - According to Ms. Lesotho-B, the first thing that needs to be done in the planning process is to:

... do an informal needs assessment, that is, a process of just listening, observing, writing things down, drawing pictures—a toned down version of a rapid rural appraisal. Toned down, but that doesn’t make it less accurate—maybe more qualitative along with quantitative information, and take time doing that.

After the women establish goals for the group, various ideas should be offered. The females should go through a learning process while planning. For each problem or idea that is suggested, the facilitator should ask the women why? (e.g., Why is XYZ happening?) By
asking these types of questions, it can help people to get to the root of the problem; therefore the appropriate solutions may be clearer for them to see.

Many meetings may be needed, to ask important questions and to formulate plans of action. Moreover, all plans must reflect the existing village system so that the women feel familiar or comfortable with what is to be done. They should not feel that their plan has been Americanized in any way.

If program plans do not go well the facilitator must talk to people, individually and in groups. In fact, the facilitator may have to go back to the starting point. It may be necessary to “hang out” with the women and ask them what is going on and why didn’t anyone show up the other day? Basically, when the women feel they cannot get things done, the facilitator must try to be a catalyst to spur them on.

6. Implementation - The way to implement a participatory program, according to Ms. Lesotho-B, begins with the facilitator “feeling things out” in the community and determining whether the agenda that was given to him/her by the sponsoring international agency is a plausible approach in a particular village setting. Furthermore, during this initial period, the facilitator must do all that he/she can to establish trust with the women.

During the credibility stage after trust has been established, facilitator must determine whether there is interest among the women to start a program. Moreover, if the program entails agricultural production, for example, a facilitator must try to get land to use to start the program. Next, the facilitator and potential female members of the group should go to the chief and explain what the program will try to accomplish. Basically, a proposed program should be discussed with the important people in the community, such as subchiefs and perhaps with local extension agents. No relevant party should be excluded from these discussions.

Meetings should be called to elect a chairperson, secretary, and treasurer. During these meetings duties should be delegated. The idea that various tasks in the program will
have to be delegated comes from the facilitator. The female leadership and the more motivated women should assign specific tasks to the other members. Ms. Lesotho-B said she failed in her goal of allowing women who were less aggressive and less outgoing to be the decision-makers or to be the individuals who delegated assignments to the other members. She discussed this issue with her group.

Several things can be done to initiate a participatory agricultural program. First, a work ethic can be promoted, such as setting up demonstration plots or community gardens whereby group members achieve benefits by putting in an equal share of the “sweat equity”. This will help avoid the situation of some females working less than the other members. In this example, to ensure that everyone works, it was suggested that each member be given a small piece of land in the community garden that they would maintain throughout the growing season. In this way the women would feel a sense of responsibility and ownership towards their individual plots, and reap the benefits of their sweat equity. Another tactic mentioned by Ms. Lesotho-B was to identify a lead/head female farmer who is very good at farming, has good leadership skills, and is well liked in the community and let this individual do garden demonstrations [to teach new techniques] on fixed days and times that are convenient for the members. Group members could also do these demonstrations for the community. Another popular strategy when teaching agricultural activities is for indigenous women to get involved with training and teaching other members in the group.

It was mentioned several times during the interview that a good program can evolve on its own. It can develop its own momentum among the people, as if it had legs. The key factor is that facilitators implement a good participatory program and let the people take control so that the program can grow to fruition in the community. If the program is good and it is popular, the indigenous people will accept it (perhaps in large numbers) and tell their friends about it.
If things do not go as quickly as anticipated in the program, Ms. Lesotho-B recommended going along with the pace dictated by the women. No matter what happens, the facilitator should not get frustrated or defeated by the pace or any other situation. It is very important that the facilitator implements the program within the cultural system or the societal infrastructure for that community. This involves simply doing things according to what people are accustomed to doing. One should not bypass the standard way of doing things. By staying within these standards or “code of conduct”, the program is more likely to be successful.

7. Empowerment - The facilitator should not select who should be the decision-makers for the group. However, from Ms. Lesotho-B’s experience, all group members generally do not get involved in deciding things. Usually there is a core group of women who seem to have a higher status. Therefore, they would make the decisions for the group. In this society, allowing this core group to decide was the accepted way of doing things. Obviously, as a facilitator who is promoting participatory methods, it is appropriate to encourage everyone to get involved in both the work activities as well as in the decision-making for the group. However, from what Ms. Lesotho-B observed, the women members tended to say they were deciding things, but in fact, they were just following the decisions of the core group.

The women themselves along with the facilitator, organized and implemented the empowerment phase for the program. Depending on the activity, the women decided who would be in charge. Ms. Lesotho-B implied that the facilitator should be involved in the decision-making only when there were severe problems that the women can not handle by themselves. A program can be sustainable over a long period of time, with or without the facilitator, if the women are involved in organizing and deciding their activities for themselves. They do tend to go at a very slow pace without the presence of the facilitator.
Bringing "outsiders" or nonmembers into the group usually does not work well. She also noted that males tend to take over the program when they were involved.

C. Epilogue

1. Communications - The most effective method of communicating with the women was informally. This worked well when they were not doing their work and they were just sitting around in a social setting. Second, to build relationships and friendships, it would be prudent for the facilitator to help the women with their daily work. Third, if the results of the program activities are positive, even in a small way, the facilitator can effectively communicate to members of the group that more good things could come. Ms. Lesotho-B mentioned that in this society male facilitators would be prohibited to talk to the women.

Although Ms. Lesotho-B experienced a lot of difficulty in speaking the language, especially in a manner that was culturally sensitive, the village women were very forgiving of her. She was doing her best to adapt to the language and the culture. Because she was trying and she was making an effort, the women did not mind the mistakes she made with the language. Ultimately, trust was established through constant communication and interaction.

To get shy or passive women to speak up in meetings or to become more involved in group activities, Ms. Lesotho-B suggested working with that person individually.

2. Evaluation - For Ms. Lesotho-B, the evaluating and monitoring was informal. That is, if the members came to the program activities, this was a good sign that things were going well. The women critiqued the program with their attendance. If they did not like what was going on they did not come to the activities. The women who perceived they were getting something out of the program usually attended and participated in the program activities.

3. Spread effect - To spread a program to other communities, the facilitator should start small and try to build a successful program in the local community. Then, if the program does well, eventually people will take notice and hear about it in other communities. In Ms. Lesotho-B's opinion, to spread a program in a cookie-cutter or blueprint sort of way to other
communities, sends up "warning signals" [because each community is so different, one size does not fit all]. The salient point is to have a successful program and, as the people hear good things about what is being done, the program will spread on its own as a "movement".

4. Children in the program - A participatory program for women should include their children because it would be easier to care for the children. Moreover, with many activities, the children can play with each other as their mothers work in the program, or the children can be participants in the program and learn new skills.

Should women be paid - Ms. Lesotho-B stated that there were women who wanted to be paid to be participants in the program. In these situations the facilitator must be honest with the women and say that in the future good things will probably happen [after sweat-equity has been expended]. If there is a lack of financial resources, then the facilitator must slow down and think things through on a much smaller scale, as well as try to save and mobilize meager resources.

6. Attitude change - To do participatory and empowerment, the facilitator should work on changing the attitude of the women, to help them realize that they can gain something from this self-help process. Their extra effort in the program can be beneficial for them in the long run.

Research Question 2: What strategies are used to attract rural women to participate in a self-help development program?

Getting Women to Participate

1. Why some women do not get involved - There were several reasons why some women did not get involved. First, some seemed to be of a lower status. They were not really welcomed in the group. Second, some women were just too busy with their day-to-day chores; therefore, they could not devote any time to program activities. On the other hand, there were some who were doing quite well financially. They owned a shop and it was unbecoming for them to join a group.
2. *Increasing enthusiasm and attendance* - When women are involved and participating in program activities, they seem to be more enthusiastic and have better attendance at group activities. The women would be less enthusiastic about a top-down development approach when told what to do by an "outsider".

3. *Increasing the rate of participation* - There are several ways to get more women to participate. First, motivational techniques such as having "fun occasions" can be used. For example, to introduce a new affordable way of eating nutritionally rich foods that utilize locally available products, the facilitator could set up cooking demonstrations whereby the members are allowed to taste and judge the food. "Something fun and participatory where they get to eat something is always a fun thing for people." Second, Ms. Lesotho-B mentioned that sometimes subtle bribery was be done, by identifying what a poor individual needed, such as clothes or food. Rather than give that individual the item outright, a donation would be given in the context of participating in program activities. Third, the facilitator can make a concerted effort to spend time—one-on-one with nonmembers, to recruit them to the program. Fourth, the facilitator needs to really hear what the people want. Design the program to meet the women's needs. As a result, the rate of participation should be higher. By having group activities out in the open everyone can see what is going on. Some women will become interested and eventually join the program.

Regarding the sensitive issue of including lower status people into the program, Ms. Lesotho-B offered the following observation:

Based on what I believe in, trying to include [the lower status individuals] is worth it, and it is the right thing to do, because ultimately they are the people who don't have access, don't have the choice, don't have the voice that the others have, and, ultimately, if you want to get technical about it, who is the poorest of the poor—they are.

Furthermore, Ms. Lesotho-B thought that if the goal is to include the largest number of women, then it is better to exclude the landless (i.e., the people considered to be of lower status). By excluding these individuals, regular group members will not become alienated.
4. Increasing commitment - To get women to be committed and to get them to attend the meetings consistently, the facilitator must ensure that the members are getting something from the program. Other people will take notice of what is going on. An example of how to develop this commitment is through the use of demonstration plots. Women can see what can be obtained by using locally available products or resources. In this way the women see the outcome before they take the risk of using a new technology in their family plot. A positive demonstration allows women to be motivated and committed to a new approach or program. Once the people see a positive outcome, "... they become interested and active and they [observe] their own results, and that seemed to be what instigated commitment, and they got financial or food incentives for their own households."

Ms. Mali

Based on her Peace Corps experience in implementing a participatory and empowerment regime for village women, the following section summarizes what Ms. Mali recommended, or what she did, during her two year assignment. Assigned in 1987-89 as an Agricultural Extension Agent, Ms. Mali worked with rural women during the entire two years. Prior to her assignment, she did not receive any formal training in participatory and empowerment methods.

Research Question 1: What methods/tactics are used to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women?

A. Initial Steps

1. Rapport and respect - To start a participatory and empowerment program during the credibility stage, the facilitator needs to establish rapport and respect with the women. This personable relationship can be strengthened by learning the local language and by living with the people in their village. Ms. Mali knew that rapport and trust had been established when the conversations with the villagers became friendly and when they all joked and laughed together.
2. Facilitators - The primary role of facilitators in the participation and empowerment process is to bring the people together so that they can solve their problems. The facilitator should make sure everybody in the group is allowed to voice her opinion about the program (i.e. they are empowered). The facilitator must also serve as an outside stimulus to get people to think about what their needs are and to get them to think about solving their perceived problems.

Program ideas can come from either the facilitator or from the women. Facilitators may have fresh ideas or they may suggest a different way of doing things. This new approach offered by the facilitator may help the women to develop new ideas or a better way of solving their problems. She did not think it was “essential” for facilitators to be part of the community to get self-help programs going. To live in these communities certainly can help. Ms. Mali said the best professionals to set up a participation and empowerment program are the local extensionists. She thought that when working with women, it did not matter whether the facilitator was male or female. She agreed that a female facilitator who is native to the country can probably establish a close working relationship with the women.

3. Training - To train Peace Corps volunteers or other international development personnel on how to do participatory and empowerment programs at the village level, Ms. Mali recommended teaching facilitators cross-cultural communications, the required technical skills to do the job, and participatory methods.

4. Participation synergistic with empowerment - Ms. Mali thought that, to be an effective program, participation needs to be combined with empowerment. She said that, if the empowerment or the decision-making phase is not working very well, the participation aspect of the program should at least be implemented. Frankly, some women are not interested in making decisions. Participation in program activities is enough for them.

B. Process
1. Local leaders - The local village leaders (male and/or female) can play a vital role in starting a participatory and an empowerment program. If they are supportive of the program, then it is more likely that the program is going to work. The facilitator may have to convince these leaders that the program will be good for their community and that participatory strategies can be important for the villagers to learn.

2. Getting started - Ms. Mali worked in several villages and each location was somewhat different. In general, a given program was established by organizing meetings with the women. In some communities, the counterpart who was the government official assigned to work with Ms. Mali went to the female leaders to arrange meetings for the village women to attend. In the other locations, after she got to know the people well, Ms. Mali went directly to the respective village leaders to get their assistance in getting a program started. The selection process to determine who would be in the program, was open to any woman who wanted to participate. The most active members in the program were married women who were somewhat older. They had families and they had a tremendous need for the income-generating activities advocated in this program.

Ms. Mali thought it was beneficial if at least a few members have a formal education, to complement a participatory and empowerment program. Moreover, in her program, lower status and higher status women shared equally in program activities and in program benefits. In this region status was not a major societal factor. If the women lacked management skills or other aptitudes to implement the program, Ms. Mali recommended that someone should be found who had the capabilities of performing the task(s) that were needed. She commented: “Let the women do all the work. In this way it will be their program.”

3. Meetings - Regarding the issue of having members or nonmembers attend the meetings, Ms. Mali was noncommittal: “It depends on what kind of meeting you are having and what you are wanting to accomplish at that meeting. It depends on what kind of situations require only members and when should non-members be present.”
4. **Problem identification** - In this region, a needs assessment was not necessary because the problems plaguing the community were open and obvious. Having said this, the women's problems were identified in group situations. Ms. Mali agreed with the statement that, to get a highly motivated group of workers, the program must consistently address the perceived problems or the perceived needs of the women. If a supervisor wanted a program that was contrary to the perceived needs of the women, Ms. Mali still thought it was better to address the needs and concerns of the women. Regarding the importance of being honest and truthful with the women, even though they may have wanted to hear something different, Ms. Mali thought it was very important to maintain a honest and truthful relationship with the women and to keep the program goals as realistic as possible.

5. **Planning** - According to Ms. Mali, the first step in the planning process is to do a needs assessment with both the men and women in the target community. This assessment should determine: “What are the problems? What are the needs? Why hasn’t this worked in the past? If we do this, will it work [or how can it work]? Why won’t work? Why?.” The baseline data from this assessment will dictate which plans are needed. Next, the facilitator should address any logistical concerns such as: will the program need outside funding, how to acquire the necessary resources, what to do about transportation problems, where to get supplies, and who would do various tasks. Each of these concerns would be appropriately planned by the group and, if necessary, input would also come from the facilitator. She thought that, once the program is up and running, careful planning is needed to keep the momentum so that the program would be sustainable for the long term.

If the program plans do not go well, the facilitator should keep trying. There should be more meetings with the women to discuss any difficulties in the program and to try to find solutions.

6. **Implementation** - To implement the participatory program Ms. Mali suggested getting to know the female leader(s) in the community. She would have them convene a
meeting with the women, draw up the details about the program, delegate responsibilities, and determine how to split the profits these meetings. Subsequently, a consensus should be reached whereby the women are allowed to make decisions regarding their program.

Ms. Mali said that, in her program, one of the female leaders had a significant amount of influence over the entire group. When it came to delegating activities to certain women, the female leaders in the group determined who would do what. The facilitator should not get involved in this process. The basic decision-making should remain with the women. If things do not go as quickly as anticipated, the facilitator should just wait it out. Maybe there are roadblocks or other obstacles that can be addressed by the group or the facilitator. Most of the time the slow pace of implementing a program is outside the control of the facilitator. It is appropriate to just wait until the situation improves. It cannot be over-emphasized that, if the program is to achieve long term sustainability, the perceived needs of the women must be addressed. Addressing their needs is essential when implementing a participatory and empowerment program.

7. Empowerment - In the empowerment regime in which Ms. Mali worked, the women usually decided things through consensus. Nevertheless, some of the more influential women seemed to have a big impact in the decision-making process. Ms. Mali designed the program so that the women would be empowered to make decisions for themselves.

C. Epilogue

1. Communication - For Ms. Mali, the most effective method of communicating with the women in a formal way during meetings was by talking with the female leader(s). Informally, she just sat down and talked with the women individually. Culturally, men and women did not normally socialize and talk with each other. She thought that facilitators were considered to be somewhat “neutral gender” as an outsider. They are able to talk with both men and women in the village. To get shy or passive women to speak up in meetings or to become more involved with group activities, Ms. Mali tried to develop friendships with them.
encouraged them to participate more. The main communication problem was in learning the language. This was aided by finding a trustworthy individual who could help with translation.

2. Evaluation - Ms. Mali evaluated her program informally by observing the status of the program and by making quarterly reports to the Peace Corps. When things did not go well, the women got involved by complaining to their facilitator.

3. Spread effect - To spread participatory and empowerment processes throughout a region, a facilitator must work closely with and train local counterparts, whether they are government or non-governmental personnel, so that they can disseminate these self-help techniques to others.

4. Children in the program - Ms. Mali felt it was important to include children in the participatory program.

5. Should women be paid - If there were women who wanted money for their participation, Ms. Mali suggested talking to the women, to let them know that the only money they could get was through generating an income from the program activities. When a woman wanted money just to be in the group, Ms. Mali talked with her and explained that this type of payment was not available. If the program had a lack of financial resources, Ms. Mali suggested that the women pool small amounts of their money together to buy whatever was needed. The people in the village provided the labor to implement the program.

6. Attitude change - Ms. Mali thought that, in West Africa, the people have a favorable attitude towards participatory activities, but the empowerment of women is much more difficult for them to accept historically. Considerable work is needed to change the perspective of some people about empowerment activities, especially among the men.

Research Question 2: What strategies are used to attract rural women to participate in a self-help development program?

Getting Women to Participate

1. Why some women do not get involved - Some women did not participate because of personal animosities within the village that were based on female leadership. Additionally, a
1. *Why some women do not get involved* - Some women did not participate because of personal animosities within the village that were based on female leadership. Additionally, a number of women were too busy with their chores, family problems, or did not see any benefits to the program. These problems can be somewhat relieved when facilitators establish trust with the women and when the program is successful. Establishing this close working relationship with the people increases the likelihood that more women will join the group.

2. *Increasing enthusiasm and attendance* - Ms. Mali observed that the women were enthusiastic to be in a participatory program.

3. *Increasing the rate of participation* - First, Ms. Mali recommended starting a program by relying on existing structures or to find women's groups that are already established. If the program addresses a need, if the women perceive it to be beneficial to be a participant, and if women feel they are empowered to make decisions for themselves, the rate of participation should be high. To enhance the number of participants, she thought that program benefits should be vigorously promoted by having more publicity in public locations.

4. *Increasing commitment* - The women will be committed to the program once they perceive the possibility of "a benefit" accruing to them or to their families (not necessarily to the group) as a result of their participation.

**Ms. Mauritania**

Based on her Peace Corps experience in implementing a participatory and empowerment regime for village women, the following section summarizes what Ms. Mauritania recommended, or what she did, during her two year assignment. Assigned in 1987 to 1989 as an Agricultural Extension Agent, Ms. Mauritania worked with rural women during the entire two years. During her assignment she received both formal and informal training, as well as in-service training in participatory and empowerment methodologies for rural-based, indigenous men and women.
Research Question 1: What methods/tactics are used to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women?

A. Initial Steps

1. Rapport and respect - For Ms. Mauritania, the people in her village were very friendly. Even in the beginning of her stay the village women wanted Ms. Mauritania to socialize and be with them. However, it takes a long time for facilitators to develop rapport, respect, and trust with village women. In fact, it took over a year before Ms. Mauritania felt the women trusted her. Some village women take more time than others to trust outsiders. One indicator that rapport, respect and trust had been established was when the women came to Ms. Mauritania regularly to ask questions. They usually inquired about gardening and other technical information. They also discussed personal matters and sought advice. Some women came by frequently while other women got advice indirectly by sending their questions via the women who regularly visited Ms. Mauritania. By seeking this advice, Ms. Mauritania knew the women respected her as an agricultural extension agent. To build trust and rapport the facilitator has to spend quality time with the women.

Although trust may not have been strong initially, the women were eager to start a participatory and empowerment regime soon after Ms. Mauritania arrived in the village. However, progress was delayed initially because the women did not have much experience. To get them started, Ms. Mauritania spent a lot of time teaching the women basic things like how to organize themselves, proper farming and small gardening techniques, how to handle money, marketing, selling crops, etc..

2. Facilitators - Ms. Mauritania stated that the role of the facilitator in the participation and empowerment process is to find a group of people who are willing to work and be committed to the program. Unfortunately for Ms. Mauritania, most of her group members were more interested in socializing than performing the day-to-day tasks needed in the program. Furthermore, a certain level of commitment is required to build an effective
program. The key role for facilitators is to identify women who are willing to work and to dedicate themselves to the program.

To be considered “part of the community” helps in building respect and rapport with the people. If the facilitator is not part of the community, the people will feel “an outsider” is imposing her opinions on them. Ms. Mauritania also thought that professionals who are foreign to a country should not try to initiate participatory and empowerment procedures until proper ground work has been laid in the community. Specifically, she recommended that respected people from the community, who speak the language and who know key people, should speak on behalf of the facilitator about the appropriateness of forming a program. Moreover, these respected individuals should be involved in introducing the facilitator to the local people and they should try to assist the facilitator in getting established in the target community. Ms. Mauritania implied that getting help from these respected individuals is more important than sending a “big” international development professional into a local community “cold” (i.e., without the help of the aforementioned respected countryman). Agricultural extensionists are the type of people who can introduce the facilitator to local people in a region assuming he/she is respected by the people.

Program ideas can come from anybody. The facilitator must be mindful that, ultimately, the women have to buy into a proposal and be committed to it. When initiating participatory and empowerment programs for women Ms. Mauritania thought it depends on the culture as to whether or not the facilitator should be a man or a woman, especially if it is a Muslim society.

3. Training - When discussing effective training methods to teach the participatory and empowerment regime, Ms. Mauritania thought that it was important to establish a mock community and to do skits to practice participatory activities. In these skits some facilitators would be selected to deliver an issue while other facilitators would act as “participants”. They would mimic village people during group meetings and articulate many points of view
as well as engage in adversarial discussions. This would allow facilitators who deliver these issues to realize what they might face regarding the many different opinions. As they get input from everybody the villagers will learn that different opinions will have to be considered in the program to avoid conflict. Second, this group of trainees should practice by going to actual villages and trying out what they learned to see if it works.

4. Participation synergistic with empowerment - To be an effective program participation activities need to be tied into empowerment capabilities. Moreover, to achieve sustainability, Ms. Mauritania agreed that empowerment is needed first, before the people get to the participation stage.

B. Process

1. Local leaders - Local village leaders can play an important role in starting a participatory and an empowerment program. They can be advocates of the program and speak on behalf of the facilitator. In addition, if they attend a few of the meetings, these leaders can demonstrate both their support and interest in the program.

2. Getting started - Ms. Mauritania had to initiate all the meetings to get the program started. After starting the program, the women selected a leader for the group and this chairwoman helped Ms. Mauritania organize and schedule subsequent meetings.

The participants selected themselves to be part of the program. Many women showed up on their own accord and decided to be part of the group activities. However, some men did not want their wives or daughters to join the program. Ms. Mauritania suggested going to the village leader to get his help in persuading the men to let their wives or daughters join the group. Married women, both young and old, seemed to be more actively involved in the program than single females. The married women seemed to be better at handling responsibility. Ms. Mauritania felt that it is appropriate to invite both the nonmembers and female members to program activities.
Although it is beneficial if some program participants are educated, Ms. Mauritania thought that training selected members is more important than having a few educated women in the program. This type of training, whereby a facilitator would teach selected women basic technical information or teach them how to manage a program, would allow the trained women to teach new skills/methods to other members of the community. In fact, because so many women lacked basic skills, Ms. Mauritania strongly recommended setting up workshops that would be held on a regular basis and taught by someone from the target community who was fluent in the language and knew the culture extremely well. Furthermore, either a village woman or, even better, a village woman and a village man should conduct these workshops in this Muslim environment. By training indigenous men and women to do the workshop, the program is more sustainable because the trained individuals can continue to teach local residents after the facilitator has left the community.

3. Meetings - Initially, the women met daily, not only to do program activities but also to acquire the habit of having women meet everyday to do things together. Eventually, the members met only once a week, around watering time for the garden. Depending on the culture, males should participate in meetings held for women. However, in any group effort that is designed for females, if the women are afraid of speaking in front of a man, then a male should not be a leader. By including men into the program, it allows both males and females to learn how to work together, and it allows each of them to improve their technical abilities as they learn new things in the program.

4. Problem identification - Ms. Mauritania assessed problems in group situations. Furthermore, the women themselves determined the purpose of the program, what needed to be done, the type of program and social activities they wanted, where to grow and market their crops, and what would be done with the profits. When the men were absent in these group settings, the women freely discussed their problems and their concerns with the
facilitator. It may be worth noting that defining the purpose of their program seemed to be a very difficult task for the women.

By designing the program to address the perceived needs of the women, the female members were more motivated to work in the program. If the supervisor for the facilitator wants a program that is contrary to the perceived needs of the women, Ms. Mauritania still thought it was best to address the needs and concerns of women. Depending on the culture, it is usually better to be honest, truthful, and realistic in the goals for the program, although Ms. Mauritania admitted she did not always do this in her village situation.

5. Planning - To start the planning process, a subgroup of women were selected to discuss how to make the program sustainable. Program ideas were solicited during the general meetings by going around to each female member and asking her what she thought. Eventually, a vote would be taken on a course of action or a particular program. Once there was a decision on what needed to be done, either people volunteered for specific tasks or they were appointed. They were usually appointed based on a practical reason, such as a having a skill or a particular tool that was needed in the program.

The facilitator may have to be an integral part of the planning process if the women have little or no experience in planning things. To significantly enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of a rural based program, Ms. Mauritania recommended selecting and training women who are strongly committed to the program. They can learn how to start and to manage these group activities. These trained individuals would go back into their community and teach others.

If the program plans do not go well, sometimes a facilitator will just have to accept the disappointments and either abandon the program, make compromises or adjustments in the original plans, or work with a much smaller group of women. However, one thing that should not be done is to hand out money to appease the women.
6. Implementation - To initiate a successful program facilitators must understand the culture. If cultural mistakes are made, the opportunity of implementing a viable program may be lost. Next, the facilitator should talk with and get advice from the head of the village who may be the religious leader or chief. This leader can identify people who might be interested in starting a program. Moreover, the importance of the leader/chief in a local community cannot be underestimated, as Ms. Mauritania explained:

You act on those recommendations from the leader, whatever they may be. Even if you don’t suspect they are the proper ones, you do act on them. After you get to talk to more people and establish some rapport with them, they will start to recommend other ways of acting, but you have to first know the culture, follow the leader, and act on what the leader recommends, before you do anything [to start a program].

Ms. Mauritania obtained the assistance of the chief to set up her initial meetings with the village women. Unfortunately, the attendance at these program activities significantly decreased once the women realized that this was a serious, non-social program that required a commitment from each participant. If program plans do not go as quickly as anticipated, Ms. Mauritania recommended that facilitators slow down to the pace of the environment. By using this slow pace strategy, it should not matter whether program activities are going quickly.

7. Empowerment - The women themselves decided who would be involved in the decision-making (i.e., empowerment) process. In fact, from Ms. Mauritania’s experience, the chief suggested a particular female should be the head of the group and this individual recommended two other women to be board members for the program. These board members and a few of the other women formed a core as the main decision-makers for the group.

Because of Ms. Mauritania’s limited language skills, she was not able to convince the quiet members to speak up and make decisions. Furthermore, culturally the Mauritanian women were not supposed to speak up, especially in the presence of men. It was very difficult to initiate the “empowerment” segment of the program. All group members,
including the facilitator, had ideas for their participatory program and the group voted on each of the proposals. Some of these ideas were not implemented.

C. Epilogue

1. Communication - The most effective method of communicating with the women was sitting down with them to talk and joke, face-to-face, with no men present. The village women spoke freely with female facilitators, although, in Ms. Mauritania’s opinion, if a male facilitator had established rapport with the women and he was in a particular community for a long time, it would be acceptable for female villagers to talk with him.

For Ms. Mauritania, the main communication problems were issues of cultural sensitivity as well as language barriers. These problems were solved by gaining the confidence of one or two people who could learn the way the facilitator spoke, and accurately translate these thoughts to the group. To get shy or passive women to speak up in the program, one tactic was to make it a point of asking these shy individuals for their opinions or viewpoints during group discussions. However, if this strategy did not work, Ms. Mauritania recommended that a facilitator work with these females separately or to pair these shy women up with other members of the group.

2. Evaluation - Ms. Mauritania had a very informal evaluation system. The members provided feedback during the meetings. Because the women were less educated, the evaluation process was limited. Due to the results of the evaluation, Ms. Mauritania had to talk to and encourage the women to work harder and to be more active in program activities.

3. Spread effect - To “spread” or disseminate the participation and empowerment process throughout a region, according to Ms. Mauritania, a fair could be held (like a 4-H fair) in cooperation with other groups of women from the region. By displaying program benefits in neighboring communities, other people in these communities may become interested in starting a participatory program. By having the fair, the people in the region could see “the end-product of an agricultural program, the results of it, and it was again
attached to one of the benefits that they [could] see, [such as] food for their family, and money."

4. **Children in the program** - The program must include the children because much of what women will do revolves around their kids. A participatory program should not take up too much time away from the kids (i.e., the women are more likely to participate in a program that includes her kids).

5. **Should women be paid** - When discussing the issue of women wanting to be paid, the key point that Ms. Mauritania stressed to the village women was that they could get money but only after the profits came in from the program. If there is a lack of resources to do a program, it was suggested to start small and to build the program up with any profits earned. For example, in the first year the facilitator can try to obtain low-cost seed, and group members can make their own simple gardening tools to cultivate a crop. Subsequently, these crops can be sold to make profits that could be used to purchase better tools. This process allows women to grow a bigger or better garden the following year. Thus year after year, with proper management of meager resources, a "snowball effect" will maintain a sustainable program.

6. **Attitude change** - According to Ms. Mauritania, to do a participatory program it is necessary for the people to change their own attitudes. The women must realize that the program can be good for them. They must also understand why the program would be good for them. They also have to be willing to make a contribution to the program. The women must also feel they are part of the whole participatory process. They are the owners of the program. If they are not part of the process, the participatory effort will simply fall apart when the facilitator leaves the community.

*Research Question 2: What strategies are used to attract rural women to participate in a self-help development program?*

*Getting Women to Participate*
1. *Why some women do not get involved* - The women were busy with their domestic chores from early in the morning until after everyone in their family went to sleep. It was very difficult for them to be involved in the program.

2. *Increasing enthusiasm and attendance* - To increase the women’s enthusiasm, each group member must feel they are going to get some benefit from the program. In Mauritania, the two “benefits” that rural women cared the most about were programs to procure more food for their families and to improve health initiatives. Obtaining material things was not important to this population.

3. *Increasing the rate of participation* - Ms. Mauritania said this was a very difficult question to answer. Each situation in each village may be different. Moreover, she implied that getting higher participation rates is a difficult task. It was suggested that the facilitator should go to the village leader first, and later to the women leaders and have them do an outreach program to find women who may be interested in starting a program. “It is better to have them [the village leaders] speak on your behalf than you go in and talk to people individually.”

To get more women involved, another tactic would be to motivate the village men and/or children to do extra household chores so that the women would have time to do participatory activities. To get women involved in self-help activities, Ms. Mauritania suggested:

> Whether you are in Peace Corps or any other aid organization, you need to talk to the leaders of the organization and the leaders of the community or the leaders of women’s group. Talk to them about [the facilitator’s] interests and talk to them about their interests, then see if there is some common ground. It is going to be very difficult. You may be swimming upstream if you try to implement a program upon a village, but if they are [all] interested in doing [the same thing] then it will be sustainable.”

4. *Increasing commitment* - A facilitator can do very little to get women to be committed to the program. It is up to the women themselves to decide whether they want to be committed or not. However, there is a better possibility that the women will feel a
commitment if they are interested in what is going on and/or if they perceive some sort of benefit coming from the program.

Ms. Morocco

Based on her Peace Corps experience in implementing a participatory and empowerment regime for village women, the following section summarizes what Ms. Morocco recommended, or what she did, during her two year assignment. Assigned in 1986-88 as an Agricultural Extension Agent, Ms. Morocco worked with rural women during the entire two years. Prior to her assignment, she did not receive formal training in participatory and empowerment methods.

Research Question 1: What methods/tactics are used to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women?

A. Initial Steps

1. Rapport and respect - To start a participatory and empowerment program, a facilitator must establish credibility, trust, rapport, and respect with the women first. This personable relationship can be engendered by living with the people in their village. Moreover, it can be helpful when the facilitator makes friends with influential women in the community. By establishing this friendship with a leader, the facilitator is more likely to gain the respect of other village women. The facilitator can overcome problems in establishing trust with the women by being culturally sensitive, living in their village, learning the local language, and starting with small programs that have a high degree of success before attempting to do larger, more risky ventures. Ms. Morocco knew that rapport and trust had been established when the women came over everyday to visit and ask her questions.

2. Facilitators - The role of facilitators during the participation and empowerment process is to get women involved in the program so that the self-help initiative is sustainable once the facilitator leaves the community. To get this self-help process going a facilitator must establish credibility by talking to the women about their needs and about their
community. Furthermore, program ideas should come from both the facilitator and the women. Ms. Morocco also thought that it is helpful, but not absolutely necessary, if the facilitator is considered “part of the community” to get things done during this process. In fact, “outsiders” can get some things done that local people would not be permitted to initiate. She thought that, because the Moroccan culture restricts men from socializing with women, a male facilitator would not be allowed to work with village women. Female facilitators can maintain a closer relationship with the women and they can get a better sense of what village women are going through in their lives.

Ms. Morocco also thought that professionals, such as Robert Chambers, are on track regarding the appropriate manner to implement a participatory and empowerment program. Furthermore, “any of the professionals who are involved with non-government organizations and work at the village level, [who are oriented on a] small scale, and who commit their lives to this type of work, are the best ones [to implement participation and empowerment]; [they] know the best about what is going on, and know the best way you should go about doing it.” An extensionist can also be effective in this process if they are willing to establish credibility with the people, are sensitive and sincerely want to help the people, and are willing to begin on a small scale by using indigenous knowledge coupled with appropriate technology.

3. Training - To train facilitators in participation and empowerment at the village level Ms. Morocco recommended reading books such as *Small is beautiful, Farmer first, Putting people first*, etc. Furthermore, a trainee should be taught how to collect information from villagers and how to develop programs that emanate from this information. Trainees should also go through sensitivity training regarding women’s issues. They should be taught the proper steps to include women in the planning process. The trainees should spend a week visiting the type of village in which they may be working to practice implementing what they learned.
4. Participation synergistic with empowerment - To be an effective program, she thought that participation needs to be coupled with empowerment. Both participation and empowerment needs to be implemented simultaneously.

B. Process

1. Local leaders - According to Ms. Morocco, leaders who have earned the people's respect, especially the female leaders, can play a crucial role in starting a participatory program for women. These leaders can also help the facilitator to establish credibility with the village women. However, she thought that males should not be involved in meetings held for women because they will try to dominate the proceedings.

2. Getting started - The self-help meetings were set up so that, after the females came back from the fields, the women met in different parts of the village to discuss issues pertaining to the program. The selection of women to be part of the program focused primarily on women who had small children. Nevertheless, membership was open to all females in the village even if they were not formal members of the group. She also tried to recruit women who had an awareness of what was going on in other parts of Morocco [no reason was given]. Ms. Morocco thought that it is beneficial to have educated women in the program, and in terms of active involvement, it did not matter whether the women were married, single, young or old. There was no discernible difference between any of these groups in terms of their level of participation. However, the older women tended to have more authority and had more time to do program activities.

Lower status and higher status women shared equally in program activities. They also shared equally in program benefits. This equality was achieved because the women, as well as their facilitator, designed the program to be sensitive and fair. For example, the poorest families, who already invested some of their resources into the program, were given some items free, items that were relatively expensive for them to purchase on their own so that they could continue participating in the program.
4. Problem identification - The problems that the women had were usually identified both individually and in a group situation. Moreover, by living in the community, observing and talking with the women, the problems plaguing the community were fairly obvious to the facilitator. Ms. Morocco agreed with the statement that, to get a highly motivated group of workers, the program must consistently address the perceived problems or the perceived needs of the women. If a supervisor wanted a program that was contrary to the perceived needs of the women, Ms. Morocco still thought it was better to address the needs and concerns of the women. However, she contended that, perhaps, a supervisor could think that their needs are also being met when the women’s needs are satisfied. Regarding the importance of being honest and truthful with the women even though they may want to hear something different, Ms. Morocco thought it was very important to maintain honest and truthful relationships with the women and to keep the program goals as realistic as possible.

5. Planning - According to Ms. Morocco, planning in the participatory process begins with establishing credibility with the women. Other activities include conducting a needs assessment, talking with the female leaders, selecting specific women to be part of the program, and deciding how to accomplish various tasks.

If the program plans do not go well, Ms. Morocco suggested being patient with the realization that it is better to move slowly than to try and force any situation on the women. It would be much better for facilitators to take their time and to work through the problems.

6. Implementation - To implement a participatory program, Ms. Morocco suggested after establishing credibility and determining the needs of the women, the facilitator should start a small scale program in a highly visible village location to attract women. If possible, the initial program(s) should have a high probability of being successful. Appropriate technology and locally available resources should be used. As much as possible, Ms. Morocco worked with respected leaders of the community to get things done. Eventually, a female leader not only delegated responsibility to other members but also replaced Ms.
Morocco as the primary individual who promoted the program, and she advocated other women to join the group.

Meetings were held at a time when it was convenient for the members to attend. Ms. Morocco tried to set it up so that female members could work in their homes to do program activities. Their program was fun—the members had tea and socialized. When things do not go well, Ms. Morocco recommended exercising patience.

7. *Empowerment* - The women decided among themselves who would do the decision-making for the group. Some women did not want to make any decisions. Empowerment or making decisions for themselves was not a familiar procedure for the women. In an attempt to be culturally sensitive, Ms. Morocco did not initiate “empowerment” per se into her program. She perceived real problems with that concept in that particular village. In one sense she recognized the need to have the empowerment phase, however, she did not want to transgress the time-honored tradition of letting other people (males and/or females) decide things for the women. It was implied during the interview that the women did decide things among themselves, but it was in a subtle manner, with only a few women involved in the decision-making process. In true empowerment situations, everyone gets involved in the decision-making process. According to Ms. Morocco, this was an impossible concept to teach or do in that particular region.

C. *Epilogue*

1. *Communication* - The most effective method of communicating with the women was by sitting and talking with them. Moreover, it is important to be culturally sensitive. A facilitator may have to cover her hair, wear long skirts and embrace other traditional practices to build a working relationship with the women. There were no radios or bulletin boards available to initiate other forms of communication. Nevertheless, Ms. Morocco had communication problems. Because learning the local language took a lot of time, she relied on a translator. Ms. Morocco stressed that a facilitator should be very careful and avoid
making big assumptions about what is going on in the community or how people feel about things. "Discuss, discuss, and discuss all issues to avoid making grandiose assumptions." To get shy or passive women to speak up in meetings or to become more involved with group activities, she recommended just talking with them individually and to refrain from calling on them during group discussions. Many of these women were taught to be shy, "so why push it?" Unless they were old friends or relatives, male facilitators were not be allowed to talk with the women in Morocco.

2. **Evaluation** - Ms. Morocco did quarterly evaluations for the Peace Corps. She also monitored whether the women were interested in the various program activities. What the women learned was a key indicator of program success. The women themselves readily critiqued the program when they perceived something good or something bad happening.

3. **Spread effect** - To "spread" the participation and empowerment process throughout a region, Ms. Morocco suggested that the facilitator, along with other female leaders in the group, should visit friends and relatives in the surrounding villages to discuss the program.

4. **Children in the program** - Ms. Morocco strongly agreed that a participatory program for women should also include their children. Furthermore, she tried to set up the program to have overt benefits for the children.

5. **Should women be paid** - If a woman wants money for her participation, the facilitator should simply explain that paying her is not possible. If there is a lack of financial resources, Ms. Morocco suggested arranging for a temporary loan and to pay the money back after the program was in progress.

6. **Attitude change** - To do participatory programs, the attitudes of the women do not have to change. The facilitator and people who are in international development should change their attitude. For example, the people who determine policy in international development should think in terms of small scale projects. They should emphasize
appropriate technology. They should embrace indigenous knowledge and, whenever possible, they should utilize self-help participatory and empowerment methods.

Research Question 2: What strategies are used to attract rural women to participate in a self-help development program?

Getting Women to Participate

1. Why some women do not get involved - Some women did not participate because the program was not relevant to their lives and it did not address their perceived needs. Others were too busy with their daily chores. Ms. Morocco admitted that she could have done a better job of reaching out to include more people into the program.

2. Increasing enthusiasm and attendance - Ms. Morocco thought that women were more involved as participants in empowerment programs, as opposed to a top-down strategy of development.

3. Increasing the rate of participation - To get more women to participate the facilitator must promote program successes as well as promote the tangible and collateral benefits of being in the program. The facilitator also needs to discuss, promote, and market the program to a wide range of people who live in the community.

In some cases it may be appropriate to start small with a program that has a high probability of being successful before attempting larger, more difficult endeavors. A facilitator can also try to make it seem prestigious to be in the program, such as saying “we are growing these special crops” or “we are raising these special rabbits” from the big city. Because the women were literally working 17 hours per day [with their chores], a program would have to be sensitive to the time and energy constraints of the women. If possible, when female members have the potential of making money, the facilitator should highlight this point. A money-making possibility would be a strong incentive for women to join the group.

4. Increasing commitment - To get the women to be committed to the program, each member should make some sort of monetary investment. They will have an extra incentive to make the program successful.
Ms. Niger-A

Based on her Peace Corps experience in implementing a participatory and empowerment regime for village women, the following section summarizes what Ms. Niger-A recommended, or what she did, during her three year assignment. Assigned in 1990 to 1993 as an Community Forestry Agent, Ms. Niger-A worked with rural women for 1½ years. She received informal training in participatory methodologies several times during her service.

Research Question 1: What methods/tactics are used to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women?

A. Initial Steps

1. Rapport and respect - To start a participatory and empowerment program, the facilitator must first establish rapport with the women. This type of close relationship is established by spending a lot of time talking with the women. In Niger, a facilitator could learn a lot about the people by working with them when they did their chores. The women would do a lot of talking during this time. A development program can possibly be started, after trust has been established between the facilitator and the women. This took six months for Ms. Niger-A. The sign that there was trust and rapport established was when the village women asked Ms. Niger-A for advice and when they discussed personal matters, related to their families or their marriages. With participation there are problems in establishing trust with the women if the facilitator is an “outsider”. However, this problem can be mitigated by spending a lot of time with the women and by showing an interest and being concerned for them.

2. Facilitators - The role of the facilitator in the participation process is to provide opportunities for the women to do the things that will improve or change their lives. The role of the facilitator in the empowerment process is more difficult, however, because of cultural ties and societal structure. Empowerment may not be something a facilitator can initiate.
To get the process going, a facilitator can get a dialogue going with the women to gain their trust. It is important to find out what the women need and what would help them to have a better life. Then the facilitator should search for ways and methods to implement the improvements the women need. The facilitator should also provide training and offer ideas to the women. However to ensure that the women’s needs are being addressed, program ideas should basically come from the women themselves.

Ms. Niger-A strongly felt that in the Muslim environment she was in, a female professional who lives in the community is best suited to set up a participation and empowerment program for women. Moreover, she said:

If they think that you are an outsider and not at all part of their community, then they are going to often try to keep putting the ball in your lap, they are going to see it as your project and you are not going to get the participatory involvement you need in order for it to be sustainable. Just say it is your project and you are not a part of the community, so when you leave, your project is going to go with you.

An extensionist (especially a native national) can also be a facilitator by winning the women’s trust and by visiting them often to show a genuine concern for them. However, she thought that an extensionist may have to work a little harder to win the women’s trust simply because, as extensionists, oftentimes they will not normally be in the presence of the women, compared to someone who lives in the community. However, doing a program as an extensionist may be advantageous. By not living in the community, it would force the women to grapple with a program on their own, and the women would have to address any problem arising from the program. In this way, the program could be more sustainable. Ms. Niger-A thought that, depending on the ethnic group and the societal structure, a female facilitator probably could get much closer and perhaps do a better job than a male facilitator because females working together are more likely to establish a rapport. It is possible for a male facilitator to develop a rapport with the women and get a program started with them. However, Ms. Niger thought that the presence of a female facilitator would also be needed (i.e., both the male and the female facilitator would be working on the same program).
Additionally, she thought that many village men would not allow their women to participate in a program that had a male facilitator. Problems could easily be avoided by allowing only female facilitators to work with the village women.

3. Training - To train Peace Corps volunteers or other international development personnel on how to do participatory and empowerment programs at the village level, Ms. Niger-A recommended that trainees go through and learn each step of the participation and empowerment process. They would learn about the different steps, the importance of each step, and then conduct a mock staging to practice this process. She thought it would be a big help if the facilitator had a book or a manual, as a reference to explain the participatory and empowerment process to assist them once they traveled to their villages.

_Participation synergistic with empowerment_ - According to Ms. Niger-A, to be an effective program, participation needs to be coupled with empowerment. She agreed with the statement that empowerment of the people to make decisions for themselves is needed before the women get to the participation stage:

> Because if they can't make decisions for themselves, they are not able to decide whether they are going to participate and how they are going to participate; some one else is going to be telling them, and I think that's perpetuating a mind set that is not going to allow them to fully participate in the program. I think in order to get very successful programs in participation, they do have to be empowered.

_B. Process_

1. Local leaders - With participation and empowerment, the local village leaders (male and/or female) can play a crucial role by showing their support and getting the word out to the village women. By doing this, many females will be interested in starting a program. Moreover, the leaders can perhaps be instrumental in getting the village men to do some of the work in the program, such as digging wells for the women. The leaders should also get involved in the meetings. However, Ms. Niger-A thought that, in general, village men should not be in a women's program.
2. **Getting started** - The meetings should be organized for only female participation. The facilitator should talk to many of the women to find when they have free time during the day. To get a good turn out at the meetings, the facilitator should schedule the meetings when the women have a break in their chores. Moreover, the facilitator will need to get the word out initially that there is going to be a meeting. It is also prudent to notify female leaders as well as women who talk a lot so that they can tell other women about any scheduled meeting.

In selecting women for the participation program, Ms. Niger-A allowed the village women to make the selection among themselves. In each self-help group, there will be natural leaders who should be identified and allowed to be in charge of the program. To get men to agree to let their wives or daughters participate in the program, Ms. Niger-A recommended that facilitators should assure the men that the time involved to do program activities is not going to take away from any of the other responsibilities that the women may have.

In terms of active involvement, it did matter whether the women were married or single, or whether they were young or old. Married women seemed to have more status, more power and influence. Therefore, they were generally the leaders of the group. If they were young, they were usually very enthusiastic about the program activities whereas the participation of the older women gave the program “respect”.

3. **Meetings** - During group discussions, only the members and potential or prospective members of the program should attend the meetings. If the whole community (i.e., nonmembers) is invited, Ms. Niger-A thought it would be an “ideal situation” but it would also be impractical because the situation could be unwielding, with little progress being made during the discussions. If there are only members of the program attending the meetings, the women will feel that their membership is a special thing and they will form a special bonding and act like “a community” within the group. As a result, there would be an extra element added to the program and an enhancement of the desire to be a participant.
Regarding lower status and higher status women sharing equally in program activities and program benefits, Ms. Niger-A thought that the leaders and the other members should be taught good management principles. By doing so they would learn that all units are equal. Regardless of the structure, everyone should get an equal share. This sense of equity should be emphasized over and over again until the women agree with this sense of fairness. If the women suffer from a lack of management skills, Ms. Niger-A thought it was appropriate to teach them the basics of management. This training might be formal or informal. Informal training might be done [one-on-one] for specific women who have the potential to be managers of the programs.

She thought it was beneficial if some of the women are educated in a participatory and empowerment regime because they would have the capacity to go back and teach the other women. The educated women could also set up a separate self-help program. Because men tend to dominate the proceedings, they should not be invited to any meetings or to program activities that are designed to help women.

4. Problem identification - The problems plaguing the women were usually identified in a group situation. This was generally done by one female articulating a problem that was also experienced by other group members. Because women would normally have similar lifestyles, the facilitator could assess problems by talking to the women, observing them day after day, and identify patterns that develop in their community.

Ms. Niger-A thought that, to get a highly motivated group of workers, the program must consistently address the perceived problems or the perceived needs of the women: “The program must be appropriate for the village or it will not work, period!” If the supervisor for the facilitator wants a program that is contrary to the perceived needs of the women, Ms. Niger-A still thought it was best to address the needs and concerns of the women. To address the needs of the women, sometimes the facilitator may have to report to the supervisor that they are doing “ABC” whereas, to meet the women’s needs, the program is actually doing
Ms. Niger-A thought that it is very important to be honest with the women, to set realistic goals, and to be truthful, even though the village women may want to hear something different. By doing so, the facilitator will keep the women's trust.

5. Planning - The planning process in a participatory program begins with drafting an outline that is based on input from the village women. After the program has been outlined, then a timeline and a calendar of the course of events is formulated. Moreover, the plan would include a budget and perhaps a proposal for special funding. Based on the plans that are made, the group would decide how much money or resources each member would have to contribute to implement the program. In poor rural communities, planning is often done in an ad hoc manner. For example, when the facilitator does the daily chores with the women, one of the female members might say, "if we started a community garden, I will have my son dig the well."

Ideas for the program are discussed during the meetings. By using brainstorming techniques, most of these ideas will come from the women. However, occasionally the facilitator may present certain options. At the end of any suggestion by the facilitator, however, she should backstop her statement by asking the women whether they have other ideas that are better. According to Ms. Niger-A, facilitators should never give the impression that they are running the program:

You have to include the women at every step. Let them decide. In their own culture, they have planning processes. They may not be what we, in the West perceive the planning process should be. They have their way. They have been planning all their lives for different things and it will work best if it is in the context, the way that they plan, [which] might frustrate some Westerners but their processes make sense to them.

When planning is done at the village level, ideas are constantly thrown back and forth until some sort of plan is developed. Then someone would be appointed to be in charge of the plan. It may be a woman leader or it may be someone who volunteered during a group discussion. A lot of responsibility is placed with female leaders in these self-help programs because they have to figure out who should do each specific task.
If the program plans do not go well, the facilitator should talk to the women leaders and call meetings with the other members to discuss what the problems are. What caused the problem? What do the women perceive to be needed to solve the problem? Based on this input, the facilitator should sit down with the leaders and decide how to modify the program so that it can work better in the future. If the problems are too difficult, it may be appropriate for the women to decide to abandon the program.

6. Implementation - Implementation in a participatory program should be step-by-step. Ms. Niger-A recommended assessing the problems, observing and talking to the women. Then the facilitator should suggest a few program ideas to female leaders and get feedback from them. The original ideas are now modified to reflect the input received from these village leaders. Next a meeting is organized for the women to discuss program ideas. During the participatory process, Ms. Niger-A's primary role was to be an advisor or an observer. Her philosophy was: "Just let the women run the program, let them figure out the answers to their problems, and of course, let them do the work so that it will be their program." They could continue with this self-help effort even without the presence of the facilitator. The facilitator or an appropriate "outsider" may have to teach the women money management and other rudimentary issues which are relevant in running a successful program. This outsider should preferably be a female from the same ethnic group or the same tribe as the intended beneficiaries of the program. Finally, she mentioned, "You need to find and identify the leaders of the program, either appoint them or have them elected. You might want two or you might want five depending on the program. Make sure they are especially well-trained in how they are going to manage the work-load and the collected money or whatever." Moreover, these leaders should be responsible for delegating program of work assignments to the other members.

If things do not go as quickly as anticipated, it is appropriate for the facilitator to determine what caused the delay. It could be that the reason things do not go well, is beyond
the control of the group, in which case the members would just have to work around the problem or to modify their schedule. However, if the problems are avoidable, then the female members should talk about the situation. Sometimes the village leaders may have to get involved to solve problems.

After the program has been going for a while, the facilitator should go through an evaluation process with the women, sitting down with the female leaders and the other members to identify their problems and to discuss possible solutions. Moreover, the women will probably have to be taught the benefits of an evaluation and a mid-course correction.

When should the facilitator advise the women? Should it be when the facilitator observes something that the women need to know, or is it better to offer advice only when the women request it? Ms. Niger-A said normally she advised the female members only when they requested her help. As much as possible, it is appropriate for the women to come up with their own solutions to solve their problems. The program will truly belong to the women, not the facilitator. If the facilitator must provide the women with answers, the facilitator should:

Solve it [with the members] together or I would explain how I came up with the answer and show them how they could come up with that answer. Once in awhile, I tried not to [advise them] when I perceived a need, because I thought it was important for them to get to the point that they realize on their own that they had this need and not get used to someone telling them, "oh look you need to know this, you need to know that."

7. Empowerment - From the very beginning, the facilitator should try having the women take part in the decision-making process. The only way a self-help program can work is by having them decide things for themselves. The facilitator can set up empowerment by identifying the female leader(s) as well as by identifying the enthusiastic female members and letting them take control of the program. To a large degree, the women selected themselves to be part of the empowerment process. Those who wanted to be part of the decision-making participated in that process.
In Ms. Niger-A's program, the decision-making was not formally organized. Although the decision-making regarding the program was left up to the female members, many of their final decisions were made as a result of input from the women's family. That is to say, empowerment was implemented in the traditional way, which included consultation from the family or from other social groups before the women made a final decision regarding an issue pertaining to the program.

C. Epilogue

1. Communication - The most effective method of communicating with the females was simply by being with the women and having good conversations with them. During the middle of these discussions, the facilitator could talk about the program or various ideas and plans. The main communication problem for Ms. Niger-A was in learning the language. This problem was resolved over time by her own struggles to speak the language rather than assistance from a translator. To get shy or passive women to speak up in meetings or to become more involved with group activities, Ms. Niger-A thought that it was important to give these members some individual attention by visiting them before the meetings to express appreciation for their participation in the group, and to encourage them to come to the upcoming meeting. Maybe this extra attention would motivate them to be more involved.

2. Evaluation - Ms. Niger-A monitored and evaluated the participatory program by setting a timescale, making careful observations and recording the results. The evaluation was based on the stated goals and the time line for the program. The women participated in this evaluation process because Ms. Niger-A asked the female members to sit down and have an evaluation meeting.

3. Spread effect - To "spread" or disseminate the participation and empowerment process throughout a region, the facilitator should first establish a successful program and let the word get out about the effectiveness of the program. Once this is done, it will be easier for the facilitator to implement similar programs in neighboring villages.
4. Children in the program - The participatory program for women should also include their children because they are constantly with their mothers and there is no alternative childcare in these communities. Moreover, by involving the children, they will be the next generation to learn these participatory procedures.

5. Should women be paid - There were women who wanted money to be in the program. Ms. Niger-A strongly recommended not to pay them for their participation because that would just restart the whole dependence mode all over again in the target community. If there was a lack of financial resources, she recommended selecting programs that were needed by the community and did not require much money. The facilitator can also do some brainstorming with the women to come up with different ways to acquire the necessary resources. For example, sometimes the women can implement a sub-program that would establish an income-generating small business.

6. Attitude change - To do participatory programs, Ms. Niger-A thought that the attitudes of the female clients should not be changed but perhaps be modified. To change someone's attitude may cause a problem. It would be better if the facilitator tried to understand the female clients and their attitude and then rework the program so that the activities fit the modifications/concerns expressed by the women.

Research Question 2: What strategies are used to attract rural women to participate in a self-help development program?

Getting Women to Participate

1. Why some women do not get involved - Some women did not participate in the program because they had time constraints. Some were not allowed to join because their husbands did not want them to join. Some were skeptical of the program and others felt they did not need the program benefits.

2. Increasing enthusiasm and attendance - Compared to a top-down approach whereby someone is telling them what to do, from what Ms. Niger-A observed, there was more enthusiasm and better attendance when the women were involved and participating in
program activities that used a bottom-up strategy. Moreover, she thought that a participatory regime would enhance the likelihood that the program would be sustainable after the facilitator left the community. As participants, they become stakeholders in the program. As the women recognize that it is their program, they become more enthusiastic about wanting the program to continue. She also cautioned that, “If it is something that someone is just handing them, it is not going to continue.”

3. Increasing the rate of participation - The way to get more women to participate is by having initial programs that are successful. Non-participants need to see first-hand how the program can affect their lives. Furthermore, a program must be sensitive to any time constraints that the women may have. The women must “feel” that the program will benefit them and their families.

4. Increasing commitment - To get the women to be committed to the program, the members must have a stake in the outcomes. The women must also feel that the program really belongs to them: “The best way I found to get their commitment was to have them involved from the beginning, and to mostly let them do it on their own. Just provide the guidance, and not to be the person there telling them what they should do every step of the way, just be their advisor. Then they become committed because it is their project.”

Ms. Niger-B

Based on her Peace Corps experience in implementing a participatory and empowerment regime for village women, the following section summarizes what Ms. Niger-B recommended, or what she did, during her two year assignment. Assigned in 1988 to 1990 as an Agricultural Extension Agent, Ms. Niger-B worked with rural women during the entire two years. Prior to her assignment, she received no formal training in the participatory and empowerment methodologies.

Research Question 1: What methods/tactics are used to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women?
A. Initial Steps

1. Rapport and respect - To start a participatory and empowerment program, a facilitator must first establish rapport and respect with the women. This rapport is built by learning the local language and by visiting the women. The sign that this rapport and trust had been established was when the women invited Ms. Niger-B to their homes and they entrusted their children to her. Once the people know that a facilitator is going to be part of the community and after a trusting relationship has been established, the women are more likely to discuss their problems and their heartfelt desires to improve their lives.

2. Facilitators - The role of facilitators in the participation and empowerment process is to offer ideas and to give support. According to Ms. Niger-B, program ideas can come from either the facilitators or from the people (i.e., women). The facilitator can offer tentative idea(s) or suggest a structure to the program, but the women must also articulate ideas they think will work "because it is their land, their culture, and they know what will work much better than the facilitator."

There was no particular professional that she thought was best suited to set up a participation and empowerment program. In Ms. Niger-B’s opinion, anyone who had the desire could do this participatory work. Extensionists can be part of the participatory process because they are at the grass-roots level and they speak the language. Both are important in this process. The salient point is, if the extensionist has the desire, it would be easy for them to be part of the participatory process.

Ms. Niger-B strongly agreed that it was necessary for the facilitator to be considered "part of the community" to get things done. By blending into the community, the facilitator is much more likely to gain the women’s trust. She also thought that it would be appropriate to have both male and female facilitators working in the same community. In this way, both the village men and the village women could have access to a self-help, participatory program. Nevertheless, she also thought that a female facilitator could get closer to the women because
many village women would be reluctant to ask a male facilitator any questions. In contrast, there is much more give-and-take and more discussion if the women have a female facilitator in their presence.

3. Training - To train Peace Corps volunteers or other international development personnel on how to do participatory and empowerment programs at the village level, Ms. Niger-B's recommendation was for the facilitator to learn the language well and to go out to meet the people. By talking a lot with the people the facilitator will learn important information that they need to know about the community.

4. Participation synergistic with empowerment - For a program to be an effective, Ms. Niger-B thought that participation needs to be coupled with empowerment. Furthermore, she agreed with the statement that empowerment of the people, to make decisions for themselves, is needed before implementing the participation stage.

B. Process

1. Local leaders - According to Ms. Niger-B the key to success in starting a participatory and empowerment regime would be to get the assistance of the chief or other leaders in the community, because many villagers consider this hierarchy and follow it. If possible, these leaders (males or females) should be involved in meetings, because when they speak, everyone listens.

2. Getting started - In her program, Ms. Niger-B organized and started the participatory meeting for the women by getting the assistance of a local female leader. A women's association was already in place in this particular community. Ms. Niger-B used the existing structure. This women's association already had female members and leaders who made the whole process much easier. To identify which women wanted to be involved in the participatory process, Ms. Niger-B held meetings and asked the women to join the new program.
To get men to agree to let their wives or daughters participate in the program, Ms. Niger-B suggested that facilitators must build a rapport with the men and discuss with them the program benefits they could acquire by letting their women participate in the program. One tactic was to give men many examples of how their lives could improve by having their women involved with the program. They seemed to respond to examples. In terms of which females were the most active in the program, the women who seemed to be the most involved were older and married and had someone at home to do their chores.

3. Meetings - Ms. Niger-B thought that these participatory meetings should be held for the whole community because more people are likely to join the program. She also thought that it is beneficial if some of the rural women are educated in a participatory and empowerment regime because they are usually open to new ideas. If the women suffered from a lack of management or other skills, Ms. Niger-B thought that it was appropriate to train a few female members so that they could teach the other women. Ms. Niger-B thought that village men should be invited when a meeting is held for women. She thought that it would be important for the men to see their women doing something successfully and making a positive difference in the community. The men should be allowed to attend the meetings so that they can observe this positive influence.

4. Problem identification - To assess the problems of the women, the facilitator needs to walk around the village and talk to the women either individually or in a group to discuss their concerns. Ms. Niger-B agreed with the statement to get a highly motivated group of workers, the program must consistently address the perceived problems or the perceived needs of the women. If the supervisor for the facilitator wants a program that is contrary to the perceived needs of the women, Ms. Niger-B still thought it was best to address the needs and concerns of the women. She thought that it is better to be honest with the women, to set realistic goals, and to be truthful, even though the village women may want to hear something different.
5. Planning - According to Ms. Niger-B, during the planning process the facilitator must ask the women "when they wanted to start, what they wanted to do, and from that, that is how we made our plans." Charts were made, the necessary steps in the process were identified, material for the program was procured, and among the women, there were a number of discussions to determine which plans were appropriate. It may be interesting to mention that the women often came up with good solutions to solve their problems.

The role of Ms. Niger-B during the planning process was to offer ideas. These ideas were thoroughly discussed in the group before appropriate plans were made. Plans were formulated not only on how to proceed to reach an objective but there were also discussions about delegating responsibilities. The women themselves decided who was going to do what. If program plans did not go well, Ms. Niger-B's suggestion was to keep trying, and if something was not working, then use a different approach.

6. Implementation - To implement a participatory program, Ms. Niger-B suggested meeting with the village chief and any female leadership to get their assistance in starting a program. Meetings should be held to determine which women are interested in starting a program. In terms of implementation, it is a big advantage if the facilitator knows the local language well enough to teach or speak directly to the intended beneficiaries. Maintaining a strong rapport with members of the group is another effective strategy.

During the initial meetings, the women must identify their problems. They must decide on a specific program to solve some of their problems. They should discuss possible difficulties they may confront, and eventually, training or workshops should be conducted during subsequent meetings. Any instructions or training should be very basic and in small steps, so that no one is overwhelmed with the material. The women should do all the work. The facilitator's main role is to merely be an advisor.

The facilitator and the female leader(s) in the group should delegate responsibility to the other members. The facilitator should try establishing as many incentives as possible for
the women. There should be short or long term benefits. In this way, the members may be more motivated to work. If things do not go as quickly as anticipated, Ms. Niger-B’s recommendation was, to just wait it out. “They have a saying, African time is different and you just wait. All you can do is wait until something happens.”

7. **Empowerment** - In Ms. NigerB’s program empowerment was granted to everyone. All members in the group shared equally in the decision-making [although the female leader for the women probably had the most clout].

C. **Epilogue**

1. **Communication** - The most effective method of communicating with the women was by learning the language so that a translator was not needed (i.e., speaking directly to the women). An effective teaching method was demonstration plots. The women could see new techniques and get hands-on experience out in the field.

2. **Evaluation** - To monitor and evaluate a participatory program, Ms. Niger-B took notes, made charts, and got input from the women. When the women expressed a concern, Ms. Niger-B took the necessary steps to resolve the situation.

3. **Spread effect** - To “spread” or disseminate a participation and empowerment program throughout a region, Ms. Niger-B thought that the facilitator and other female members of the group should visit surrounding villages to discuss program activities. It may also be beneficial to teach these self-help techniques to the younger girls or to the teenagers so that at an early age they can teach the participatory methodology to others. Moreover, the kids are less set in their ways compared to adults. They are more likely to accept new methods.

4. **Children in the program** - Ms. Niger-B thought that a participatory program for women should also include their children because the kids would see their mothers doing something positive to improve their situation.
5. *Should women be paid* - There were women who wanted money for their participation. Ms. Niger-B had to explain that paying them was not possible and that, as their facilitator, her main purpose was to help them to help themselves. If there was a lack of financial resources to do the program, Ms. Niger-B suggested trying to go to one of the international organizations for a grant.

6. *Attitude change* - Ms. Niger-B thought that to do participatory programs the attitudes of the people must change to be a little more open-minded to new ideas.

*Research Question 2: What strategies are used to attract rural women to participate in a self-help development program?*

**Getting Women to Participate**

1. *Why some women do not get involved* - The reason why some women did not participate was because the men did not want their wives or daughters to be involved. Perhaps the women were also a little resistant to change or hesitant to try something new. Many women simply did not have time away from their chores to participate in the program.

2. *Increasing enthusiasm and attendance* - Ms. Niger-B agreed with the statement that there is more enthusiasm and better attendance when the women are directly involved and participating in program activities.

3. *Increasing the rate of participation* - The way to get more women to participate is to focus on short-term program benefits. A program may have many long term incentives but village women are primarily attracted to only the immediate benefits. Moreover, the facilitator must work diligently with the men and convince them to let their women participate.

Many women would come to meetings if there were refreshments being served. If the women are exposed to positive examples, such as female members who are successful in the program, then this may be an incentive for non-members to join the group. A big incentive is to earn extra money by being in the program.
4. Increasing commitment - To get the women to be committed to the program, Ms. Niger-B thought it was important to identify women who really wanted to be part of the process and to work with them closely “through thick and thin.” It is also helpful if the major responsibilities for the program are done during the off-season when the women have less work in their lives.

Ms. Sierra Leone

Based on her Peace Corps experience in implementing a participatory and empowerment regime for village women, the following section summarizes what Ms. Sierra Leone recommended, or what she did, during her two year assignment. Assigned in 1986-88 as an Agricultural Extension Agent, Ms. Sierra Leone worked with rural women during the entire two years. Prior to her assignment, she received one or two hours of formal training, pertaining to Women in Development procedures.

Research Question 1: What methods/tactics are used to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women?

A. Initial Steps

1. Rapport and respect - To start a participatory and empowerment program rapport and respect needs to be established with the women. However, this relationship should be established in a community specific way. Each country and each region is so different. The tactics needed to build rapport, respect and trust will have to be adjusted to reflect the unique circumstances for a given location.

Ms. Sierra Leone built rapport, respect, and trust by showing a sincere interest in the people’s problems by participating in their everyday activities by asking them a myriad of questions about how things are done in their community. It was also important to ask the women what they wanted in their lives and to determine what their plans were to achieve their goals [thereby building the dream, that their lives could be better]. All of these tactics take time. A credibility stage is needed to establish the facilitator within the community.
Despite using the aforementioned tactics, Ms. Sierra Leone said, "I don't think they ever distrusted me before they were very forthcoming. I would say it was probably six months to a year before they were [conveying] things without my prodding."

Furthermore, to help build a stronger relationship, facilitators must follow through on their word. If they say they are going to do something, they must do it. If they plan to be somewhere, then they should be there. In this way, the facilitator will be more credible with the women and will win their trust. Moreover, any technical advice given should be appropriate and accurate. The facilitator should admit it if she does not have an answer. To overcome any suspicion the women might have, Ms. Sierra Leone said, "I didn't attempt to organize groups right away, I waited a little bit until my reputation had been established as somebody who was reliable and trustworthy—generally a nice person."

The sign that this rapport and respect had been established was when the women came to Ms. Sierra Leone to discuss personal problems and issues, and when they came to her for technical advice. She also thought that friendship and trust go together. "You need one to get the other."

2. Facilitators - The role of the facilitator in the participation and empowerment process will depend largely on the program, the people, and the community. Having said this, Ms. Sierra Leone thought that facilitators must help the people identify or define their problems. The facilitator should not determine which problems or issues on which the women will work. The final decision must be with the women themselves. Furthermore, she said facilitators should "help them recognize the resources they have at their disposal, help them see how these resources can be applied to the problems they have defined, and then I think the way they actually go about using those resources needs to be their own design...!"

As a means of bringing a fresh perspective into the community, Ms. Sierra Leone thought that a facilitator should make suggestions or offer new ideas on how to solve local problems. However, the women must have the final say on which course of action to take.
Generally speaking, a woman’s background will determine what she is interested in or attracted to. For example, women will participate in programs or activities only if they fit their personal needs, or fit their culture. There is a comfort level for them.

When discussing which professional is best suited to set up a participation and empowerment program, Ms. Sierra Leone thought that anyone could do it. Furthermore, she stated that it is a big mistake in international development to think that a facilitator has to be a big professional in extension or in sociology. The critical ingredient to successful empowerment work is, respect for the people. Anybody can do that. Specifically, an extensionist can implement this process. They must be willing to start at the level where the women are at and to work from there.

Ms. Sierra Leone thought it was not necessary for the facilitator to be considered “part of the community” to get things done. It does make empowerment much easier and it helps to make empowerment a natural process when the facilitator is living right there among the people. Another advantage of living in the community allows the facilitator to learn firsthand about the local culture as well as to develop friendships with the local people. Regarding the issue of living with the people, Ms. Sierra Leone also said, “It sends a message that you are willing to live at the level of the people that you want to work with, and I think that is a strong sign of respect and caring. That goes way back to building trust, and being [there in the community, a facilitator is] able to identify needs and resources accurately.”

Compared to their male counterparts, she thought that in general, female facilitators could get closer to the village women, assuming there is a connection, a rapport, between the client and the female facilitator. However, a male facilitator who has unique skills could probably become knowledgeable, close to, and intimate with the women just the same as a female facilitator can. Gender is not the issue. The personal characteristics of the facilitator and the way they treat their clients is the key. Of course, in some cultures that do not allow males and females to interact, the facilitator must be the same gender as the clients. She
thought that it was good to have female facilitators serve as positive role models for the village women to demonstrate that a woman can be in a position to have knowledge and to control resources.

3. Training - To train Peace Corps volunteers or other international development personnel on how to do participatory and empowerment programs at the village level, Ms. Sierra Leone recommends teaching facilitators how to analyze issues pertaining to gender. Participatory role-playing should be done. Training is also needed to help:

...with that first stage, which is the needs assessment and resources evaluation. I think that if you do a good needs assessment and a good resource evaluation, you are well on your way to a participatory, empowerment type set up, because in that process of getting to know a community well enough to assess its needs, and its resources, I think it is very likely that you are going to make friends, and hopefully have gained the respect of the people who you're working with... Another value of that resource evaluation, it forces you as an outsider to recognize the resources, and I am not just talking about how much money flows through the community [because the economy and the culture is not based on money, rather] we are talking about resources of knowledge, resources of land, resources of cultural connections, family connections, and the process of evaluating [these things] ...will lead to respect for the community to which you are working with, which will in turn lead to effective empowerment.

4. Participation synergistic with empowerment - To be an effective program, participation needs to be coupled with empowerment. In fact, Ms. Sierra Leone agreed with the statement that, empowerment of the people (to make decisions for themselves) is needed before getting to the participation stage. Why? Because it demonstrates that the women's opinion is important. Moreover, the women are allowed to make critical decisions before they are asked to expend energy and to participate. In other words, by empowering the people first and showing a sincere interest in their knowledge and experience, the women will feel that they are part of the process and that they are not being looked upon as just laborers. They will feel opposite if they are asked to participate (work) but to not run the self-help program. Ms. Sierra Leone also thought that empowerment of the people includes showing a genuine concern for their problems. When the facilitator shows this interest, the people will feel that their problems are important and relevant. They will feel that these issues are worth making
an effort to solve. Hence, they will feel motivated to do something about their situation. They can do something to improve their lives.

B. Process

1. Local leaders - Village leaders, if they are trusted and respected in their community, can play a crucial role in starting a participatory and empowerment program. In the beginning, the facilitator should watch the response people have towards their leader(s) and proceed accordingly. Village etiquette requires that facilitators show respect to leaders regardless of how poorly the people think of them as leaders.

If they are not trusted, it is appropriate for facilitators to recognize the status of these leaders in the community. Involvement should be minimal. Do not let these leaders get control of any resources such as money. Local people will walk away from the program if a facilitator gets too close to a leader who is not trusted. However, if the people respond positively to their leaders, the facilitator should allow these leaders to be involved in starting the program and to be involved in “selected” program activities.

Some communities have strong female leadership. If they are respected by the people, the facilitator should talk to them and get their assistance. Whatever formal leadership structure exists in the community, the facilitator should contact the leaders in these organizations to not only show respect and to acknowledge them but also to determine whether it is appropriate to start a program with them. It is important to use existing resources in the community.

2. Getting started - To get the participatory process going, a facilitator needs to complete the credibility stage. This includes talking and socializing with the people (mostly at night when their work is done). During these relaxed times, the facilitator should ask questions to determine the most pressing problems with the women. The facilitator can plant a seed to suggest possible solutions to these perceived problems with an emphasis on using resources which are available locally. Eventually, the facilitator can initiate meetings to
discuss these issues formally with the women. At these meetings, problems should be discussed thoroughly and there should be brainstorming of possible solutions. Another method of starting a participatory group would be to approach the leader of the community to not only get his consent to start a program. Facilitators should also identify female leader(s) who may be interested in forming a self-help group effort. After discussing various ideas with these female leader(s), meetings can be called to discuss problems and solutions with the other women.

Typically, village men will want to get involved in the women’s program. This is not a good idea because the men will just take over the program. Therefore, to have a female-only program, a facilitator may have to do a lot of negotiating with the men. Ultimately, if these negotiations fail and it becomes necessary to involve the men, it may be appropriate to limit their role in the program. In some cultures, men may have five or six wives. Ms. Sierra Leone thought that separate programs could be started with family units, extended families, or other types of sub-groupings. There could be many different groupings to fit the needs of the community. Ms. Sierra Leone recommends that facilitators be realistic and recognize that not every woman should be recruited for the program. In these village settings there will be a “natural pattern” of women wanting to join. The facilitator should be cognizant of these patterns and recruit these individuals accordingly.

The leaders and the women know the situation in their community. The facilitator needs to be sensitive and adhere to what these villagers are saying about how to set up, start, and manage a meeting. For example, a town crier may be recommended to announce the time and place for the women to meet, initially. In Ms. Sierra Leone’s situation, programs had to be implemented in several communities. By working with the local leaders, arrangements were made to set up a meeting with the women in each of these villages. Moreover, in a “play it by ear philosophy” at each meeting, the women would set the time for their next meeting. Outsiders who come in to provide aid have a habit of advising people and not doing much
work. To send the right message, Ms. Sierra Leone thought that facilitators should, as much as possible, do physical labor with the people as they implement the program activities.

The women self-selected themselves to be or not to be in the program. There were no people saying who could or could not be a participant. For Ms. Sierra Leone, having men agree to letting their wives or daughters join the group was not much of a problem. The objective of the program was to provide more food. Both males and females were interested in this objective. The men readily allowed their women to be part of the program. Moreover, a facilitator must be sensitive to members who have other responsibilities. For example, the facilitator should avoid doing program functions during a time that may pose a conflict for the women. In terms of active involvement, the younger women did more physical work but having older females as members gave a certain amount of credibility and stability to the program. Indeed, both young and old should be involved. Perhaps it is more important that every member has a role to play in the program. Some people should have a more active role than others, depending on their individual abilities.

3. Meetings - Ms. Sierra Leone thought it was proper to invite anyone to the meetings, regardless if they were members or nonmembers, however she also expressed a concern that dominant type personalities may attend the meetings making it difficult for passive members to express themselves. Because there is a possibility that negative individuals may show up from time to time, Ms. Sierra Leone suggested inviting everyone, but to “play the situation by ear.” She also thought people would be alienated or suspicious if they are excluded from the group process or if they are not invited. She recommends designing programs to include a range of people, be they male, female, the elderly or kids. This inclusive strategy can easily be done by implementing programs that are oriented for families or extended families. On the other hand, men have a tendency of either taking over the program or exploiting the women when they are included in these self-help groups. If this worst case scenario occurs, then the facilitator should redesign the program. Men have a less negative influence. One strategy
might be doing program activities that include "women's work", thus the males would be less inclined to participate.

If the women lack specific skills needed in the program, Ms. Sierra Leone thought that the facilitator should recruit individuals from the local community who have these needed skills, whether male or female, and have them join the program. When discussing whether lower status and higher status women should share equally in program activities or benefits, she thought that to avoid conflict it is important that the facilitator try not to change the hierarchical system that the people normally use in their community. Therefore, during the meetings, it is appropriate to discuss and to let the members decide how to allocate program benefits. This may mean they will decide to give a little bit more to higher status women. Ms. Sierra Leone predicted problems in letting educated women join the participatory group. From what she has observed, educated people looked down on less educated people, making them feel ignorant or stupid.

4. Problem identification - The problems the women were experiencing were assessed individually and in group situations. In fact, often the village men discussed problems that were plaguing the women. To identify the problems, a facilitator must make friends and show a genuine concern and interest in what is happening in the lives of people. As a result, the villagers will readily discuss their problems.

Female members become more motivated to work and to participate in their program when the program is designed to address the perceived problems or perceived needs of women. If the supervisor for the facilitator wants a program that is contrary to the perceived needs of the women, Ms. Sierra Leone still thought it was best to address the needs and concerns of women. Even though the village women wanted to hear something different, it is better to be honest, truthful, and realistic in the program goals, because the facilitator can lose the women's trust and they will be less inclined to take any risks inherent in the program. For example, a facilitator should never lie or promise things that they cannot deliver.
5. Planning - According to Ms. Sierra Leone, planning requires a needs and a resource assessment. Next, the facilitator should organize logistics such as approaching community leaders to discuss what is needed to get started. The facilitator may also have to delegate responsibilities to individuals in the community, and to make appropriate plans to deal with an issue. Relatively speaking, compared to the facilitator, these individuals know the community well. They are in a better position to make plans.

By using the existing system within the village, facilitators should work on small scale concerns that the people may have. A good time to discuss things is when the people are doing their chores or working in a comfortable venue like on their plot of land. By working side-by-side with the women, a facilitator can discuss potential plans to solve local problems. A facilitator may also want to check a particular plan with close or influential friends within the community to get their advice on how to fine-tune an idea. Indeed, by talking to these friends, a plan should be fine-tuned before it is presented to the rest of the community. Basically, ideas in the planning process should come primarily from the women and if necessary, from the facilitator. However, any ideas from the facilitator should be fine-tuned through the women.

If program plans do not go well, the facilitator should talk to the people to find out what they think is wrong. Maybe the facilitator will have to go back to the needs assessment. The objective of the plan may not have been something the people really needed. If the women do not really need a program, they will not work in it, which can cause program plans to go astray. Perhaps the facilitator tried to force a particular method or an new approach on the people. Another possibility is that the facilitator said something that led the women to identify a need that they really didn’t “feel” was important. For example, the facilitator may talk only about doing agricultural programs. Therefore, the women may feel compelled to make plans for an agricultural program when what they really wanted was a clinic. “What we really need is a clinic, what we really need is malaria medicine but it doesn’t look like she
has that if she has a shovel on her shoulder. Did [the facilitator] accidentally or intentionally lead them to define a need they didn’t have.” In all of these scenarios, the women would not be concerned whether the agricultural program failed or not. Again, if program plans do not go well, it is appropriate for the facilitator to talk to the people and, if need be, go back to the beginning to re-design the plans.

6. Implementation - Facilitators who want to implement a participatory and empowerment program must first complete the credibility stage. This is the period of time when a facilitator gets to know people in the community. This is a time for learning their culture, as they live day-to-day and on special occasions, as well as developing a caring, sincere relationship with them. During the credibility stage, the facilitator should make an assessment of what the people need and identify available resources in the community. The latter is also known as a resource assessment. A resource assessment can determine what people do on a daily basis and where and how they earn their money, get their food and their other resources. The facilitator needs to document the infrastructure and skilled personnel available in the community. The facilitator also needs to make friends with the villagers because they can provide valuable information about the community. By talking with people and through keen observation, a facilitator can determine not only what people need but what may cause their problems. The women and especially the facilitator must prioritize the needs to match the available resources. The facilitator must play a crucial role in getting women to look at their situation realistically.

The implementation of participatory programs begins by having discussions with leaders in the community. A group of interested participants should be assigned “work sessions” or tasks to complete program activities. The facilitator should participate with the women in these work assignments. By doing so, it builds trust, camaraderie, and it becomes an effective means of breaking down cultural barriers. It will be much easier for women to accept a program once the facilitator has developed friendships and demonstrated a true
concern and a sensitivity for the people. Once this is done, a program can be established to address the need of the clients.

Ms. Sierra Leone thought that it was important to respect the indigenous knowledge the people may have. Local people know how to do things in their community. When a facilitator shows respect for this knowledge, the self esteem of the people builds and they tend to have a better working relationship with their facilitator.

If program plans do not go as quickly as anticipated, the facilitator should re-evaluate the situation. Maybe it is appropriate to ask, “How important is it to go at a faster pace?” If it is important, the women should be appraised of the consequences. One strategy is to get help from children. Ms. Sierra Leone mentioned that it is important to find out which international development activities were previously implemented in the community. This historical analysis helps determine whether a particular program should or should not be introduced to the village. Moreover, if the community presently has an ongoing program, similar to the one tendered by the facilitator, then it would be appropriate to include the existing group in the new program design.

7. **Empowerment** - When selecting women to be part of the decision-making (i.e., empowerment), Ms. Sierra Leone thought it was better to let everyone decide. Let them decide what to do. They know what their interests are. In her empowerment schemes, the women informally voted by nodding their head or by making a verbal or nonverbal gesture. In Ms. Sierra Leone’s empowerment program, she was interested in helping women recognize that they are important parts of the community and that they could make a positive contribution. She also helped them recognize the value of their knowledge. She encouraged them to respect themselves. By doing these things, the women had more confidence that they could make good decisions.

    C. **Epilogue**
1. Communication - The most effective method of communicating with the women was by sitting around talking with them, either informally or somewhat formally in a group situation. Because the women were less educated, written communication would not have been appropriate.

There were communication problems. Most women did not speak the official language. Instead, they spoke the local dialect. The dialect took some time for Ms. Sierra Leone to learn. A translator who was well respected in the community provided assistance until Ms. Sierra Leone could learn the local language well enough to communicate.

Ms. Sierra Leone thought that it was possible for a male facilitator to initiate an effective participatory program. If the women knew the man well and they thought he was truly addressing their needs. Strict Islamic communities will not allow men to converse with women. This interaction between males and females is culturally specific. Conversely, in environments that have more interaction between males and females, Ms. Sierra Leone thought that foreign facilitators, regardless of whether they were male or female, generally are granted more liberties to do more things outside the traditional culture.

Ms. Sierra Leone did not think it was possible, nor did she think it was necessary, to get shy or passive women to speak up in meetings. The main thing is to get them to participate in whatever way they feel comfortable. Sometimes it may be necessary to give them simple assignments or to do tasks that are easy for them to do. Maybe it is not important for every female member to be empowered in the way prescribed in Western societies. Perhaps it is better if women are empowered to a level that they feel comfortable.

2. Evaluation - Monitoring and evaluating the participatory program was done on an informal basis. The women themselves did get involved by monitoring outcomes of program activities and by expressing what they liked and what they did not like in the program. Moreover, the women discussed what they thought about the empowerment process and about starting a group.
3. Spread effect - According to Ms. Sierra Leone, to spread or disseminate a participation and empowerment process throughout a region we need to provide a good example to others. Just start a good program and let people watch it develop. Let people be critical. In time they will be interested enough to invite the facilitator to their community to perhaps start a similar program.

4. Children in the program - Ms. Sierra Leone believed a participatory program for females should also include their children. Mothers are the primary providers of child care. By including the children in the program, the facilitator is acknowledging the needs of the women to be with her kids. In this way, her time constraints are being considered/reduced. Moreover, by having children involved, it builds flexibility into the program. This approach makes efficient use of the women’s time. The children can also provide valuable labor and energy to the program.

5. Should women be paid - There were women who wanted to be paid for their participation. They did not ask for direct compensation. To be in the group, they wanted agricultural inputs such as seeds or tools. However, according to Ms. Sierra Leone, the facilitator must explain that there are limitations of what could be offered in the program.

In this self-help process the women must use their own resources to solve their problems. If there was a lack of financial resources, Ms. Sierra Leone thought that the program should be redesigned to adhere to the financial capabilities of the women. The facilitator does not become an important factor in financially supporting the program. Indeed, by designing a program that the women themselves can afford, the women learn how to do things for themselves within their financial capabilities.

6. Attitude change - Regarding whether the attitude of the people had to be changed to do participatory programs, according to Ms. Sierra Leone, a facilitator must first determine what attitude the people have. She thought that her group had a very positive attitude. As
their facilitator, her challenge was to help them find avenues to channel their energy and their resources.

Research Question 2: What strategies are used to attract rural women to participate in a self-help development program?

Getting Women to Participate

1. Why some women do not get involved - Ms. Sierra Leone thought that some of the reasons why women did not participate included the fact that the program did not address their needs, nor did it fit their traditional methods. The males did not want their women to be involved. Some females did not have sufficient knowledge about the program, therefore, they did not join.

2. Increasing enthusiasm and attendance - According to Ms. Sierra Leone, compared to a top-down approach, there was more enthusiasm and better attendance when the women were involved and participating in these self-help activities. However, in terms of program success, she thought it is better if village men and women are involved, particularly if both genders are viable entities in the agricultural activities of the community [this assumes that agriculture was the focus of the participatory program]. She also mentioned that the participatory and empowerment process helps women to become much more involved in the program, therefore, they are more likely to design the program to fit their needs, their interests, and their culture.

3. Increasing the rate of participation - Ms. Sierra Leone thought that the way to get more females involved is by finding out what the women want and implementing program(s) to address these desires. She also thought it was important to talk to the women and develop a strong relationship with them so that they would personally feel very comfortable with her as a person and as their facilitator; therefore, they would feel comfortable discussing their heart felt problems. These discussions can help build an "inclusive" program that may attract many women.
To get more women involved, the facilitator must genuinely address the needs and interests of the women. Program activities must not conflict with the other responsibilities the women may have. For example, if a particular family is cultivating a bigger crop this year, the women in this family unit will have to shoulder most of the agricultural work. Therefore, the facilitator should not ask these individuals to do much in the program until their work subsides. The facilitator must be sensitive to whatever time-constraints the women may have.

Other tactics that could possibly get more people involved include: (a) making sure the women have good accurate knowledge about the program; (b) having children involved in program activities undoubtedly will increase the availability of the women; and lastly; and (c) adhering to the traditional ways of doing things, if the goal is to get more women to participate. In many rural-based traditional societies, the family unit is extremely important. Ms. Sierra Leone strongly recommended building programs to include the whole family or the extended family as a unit. If the goal is to have an effective approach, the program should include a lot of people, and adhere to the standard, traditional way of getting things done in a rural society. Furthermore, the clients would feel more comfortable working together as a family because they know each other so well.

4. Increasing commitment - Regarding getting women to be committed to the program, Ms. Sierra Leone had reservations about getting anybody committed to something unless they really wanted it. The women are more likely to be committed or dedicated however, if the program is meeting their needs. A facilitator must consistently adjust the program goals to reflect the heartfelt desires of the clients.

Ms. Zaire-A

Based on her Peace Corps experience in implementing a participatory and empowerment regime for village women, the following summarizes what Ms. Zaire-A recommended or what she did, during her two year assignment. Assigned in 1987-89 as an Agricultural Extension Agent, Ms. Zaire-A worked with rural women during the entire two
years. Prior to her assignment, she received formal training in Women in Development procedures.

Research Question 1: What methods/tactics are used to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women?

A. Initial Steps

1. Rapport and respect - To start a participatory and empowerment program, rapport and respect needs to be established first, otherwise the facilitator is just telling women what to do without establishing a partnership or a good working relationship between the parties. The way to build this rapport and respect is by participating in the community, working with the people, living, eating and sleeping with them, and learning about the community; the more these things are done, the easier it will be for the people to trust the facilitator. However, despite doing a number of these initiatives, it took four or five months before Ms. Zaire-A felt the women really trusted her.

Ms. Zaire-A knew that rapport and trust had been established when the women started treating her more like family and not as a visitor (e.g., no special bedding or food had to be prepared for her). Another sign that they trusted her was when they let her listen to private conversations on sensitive matters such as politics. Furthermore, to maintain this trust, if things were not going well in a particular program, it was important that the facilitator be honest with the women. For example, there was an indigenous agricultural method that the village women were using that was perhaps a better method than the technique advocated by Ms. Zaire-A. When Ms. Zaire-A admitted that the indigenous method was better, the women respected her candor and they had more respect for her as the facilitator, because she was so honest with them. Ms. Zaire-A would have lost respect of the people if she tried to promote or force her inferior agricultural technique on the women. In this example, by being honest, the women trusted Ms. Zaire-A more.

2. Facilitators - The role of facilitators in the participation and empowerment process is to help move the program forward, to give technical support, to work with the people, to
present good, viable options, and to help guide the people; however the facilitator should not
be the one to direct everybody or to establish everything for the women. To get people
interested in participating, a facilitator needs to emphasize the potential program benefits.
Moreover, the program should belong to the women, therefore, they must be the ones to
determine what has to be done; the facilitator is there merely to help the people along so that
their goal(s) are do-able. Finally, facilitators need to teach the women goal-setting, and help
the women be dedicated in accomplishing these goals.

When discussing whether program ideas should come from, facilitators or from the
women, Ms. Zaire-A stated that the major overall idea can come from the facilitator, but the
actual goal or final ideas has to come from the women themselves. A facilitator may suggest
a few things and let the women think about it, but the bottom line is the participants are the
ones who will benefit from the program. Therefore, they are the ones who must decide what
must be done.

There is not one particular profession that is well-suited to set up a participation and
empowerment program. However, this process does require facilitators who have certain
characteristics, namely, someone who is well rounded and who is willing to work with the
villagers; someone who is well organized and dedicated. Finally, although that person must
have leadership ability, they should not try to tell everyone what to do. If an extensionist is
known in a community and is well liked by the people, this person can also be a good
facilitator.

According to Ms. Zaire-A it is essential for the facilitator to be considered “part of the
community” to get things done in the participatory process. If the individual is good at their
job, she also thought that both a man and a women facilitator, could be effective in helping
women. However, Ms. Zaire-A thought that because she was a women, it was a little easier to
gain the confidence and to establish trust with the women. Being knowledgeable and also
someone who was willing to listen to the women despite this knowledge, also helped in working with the female population.

Generally, when doing participatory and empowerment activities for village and rural women, Ms. Zaire-A thought that the facilitator should be female, however, for effectiveness the actual gender of the facilitator should be dictated by cultural factors. For example, in a male dominated culture, the women will respect a man more than they would a woman, therefore, in these situations a male facilitator would be more influential. It depends on the culture. She thought that female facilitators could get closer to the village women. For example, through intimate discussions, a female facilitator is more likely to determine the real concerns of the women. One tactic in a male-dominated culture would be to have a male facilitator join with a female facilitator. In this way the female facilitator could talk with the village women. This type of co-partner relationship can be quite effective in helping women.

3. Training - To train Peace Corps volunteers or other international development personnel, on how to do participatory and empowerment at the village level, Ms. Zaire-A recommended teaching: cultural awareness and cultural sensitivities; how to humble oneself (do as they do in that village); and how to behave as a guest in a particular rural setting. The training should also teach effective ways to get villagers to trust their facilitator.

4. Participation synergistic with empowerment - Participation needs to be combined with empowerment to have an effective program. If this happens, the women will work [harder] on the goals that they set for themselves. They must feel the program belongs to them. Moreover, Ms. Zaire-A strongly agreed with the statement that empowerment of the people is needed before getting to the participation stage.

B. Process

1. Local leaders - The facilitator should try and get the local leaders, both male and female, to be involved in the meetings as much as possible. If the leaders are respected individuals, they can be helpful in encouraging a large number of women to join the program,
and these leaders can be instrumental in showing how the program can benefit people in the village.

2. Getting started - Ms. Zaire-A contacted the mayor in her community, requesting his assistance in mobilizing a group of women to start a program. Women who were interested in the program simply came to the meetings and participated in the activities. To get men to allow their wives or their daughters to join, Ms. Zaire-A thought that the facilitator must talk to the men about the potential benefits in letting their women participate in the program. In terms of active involvement in program activities, it did not matter whether the women were married or single, however, the middle aged or younger women seemed to be more involved and energetic than the older members.

3. Meetings - During group discussions, only members of the program should attend the meetings, although new membership should always be encouraged. Ms. Zaire-A also mentioned that the focus of the meetings should revolve around the core group of women who are doing the work, and perhaps exclude people who have a bad attitude or who just want to bring the program down. If a female wanted to bring the process down, the facilitator should talk to a woman leader, and have her speak to that woman to try and get to the core of the problem. Then they should determine out her motivation in being negative. If possible, the members should try and work with her to bring her around to a more positive attitude. If she does not change, then she should not be involved in the program, because her presence would make it unpleasant for the other members.

It is beneficial if some of the rural women are educated in a participatory and empowerment regime, because the educated women know the culture and they are usually open minded, ambitious, and they have more vision than the others; therefore, they could act as additional facilitators to the program. Regarding the issue of whether lower status and higher status women shared equally in program activities and benefits, Ms. Zaire-A stated that everything was equal among her members; even the females in leadership positions did
not get an extra advantage. Moreover, Ms. Zaire-A implied that potential problems were avoided because there was equity.

If the women's groups suffered from a lack of management skills, the facilitator should teach the active members [some basic] skills and how to "focus" their thoughts and energies, so that everyone is "on the same page" working together and understanding each other. Finally, when a meeting is held for women, the village men should not be invited because they will try to take over a program and, generally, they tend to say derogatory things about their women. Furthermore, some men will not give a female facilitator any respect, thereby destroying the facilitator's credibility in front of the other members.

4. Problem identification - The women's problems were mainly assessed by talking with them informally, on an individual basis. Ms. Zaire-A agreed that, to get a highly motivated group of workers, the participatory program must consistently address the perceived problems, or the perceived needs of the women. If a supervisor wanted a program that is contrary to the perceived needs of the women, Ms. Zaire-A thought that it is still better to address the needs and concerns of the women. Finally, regarding the importance of being honest with the women, to be truthful and realistic in the goals, even though the women wanted to hear something different, Ms. Zaire-A stated:

If you get to the point where the women wanted to hear something different, then you have failed in your whole goal-setting process with them, and if that happens you need to go back to the beginning and start over with your ideas and refocus the goals, because the goals have to be theirs, and in the same instance they have to be realistic, so that they are attainable, so [that] they get results.

5. Planning - Frankly, Ms. Zaire-A did not place a lot of emphasis on planning in her participatory program. Basically, her group set a goal and scheduled work activities to accomplish the desired outcome. Teaching selected women something about being an extension agent, so that these individuals could teach agriculture to other females in their community was a major goal for Ms. Zaire-A; in this teaching situation. The village women themselves did their own planning. Ms. Zaire-A also thought that it was important to identify
and recruit females who really wanted to be involved in the program, especially to recruit women who were influential in the community, educated, or close friends of the facilitator. Finally, if the program plans did not go well, Ms. Zaire-A thought that the original plans should be changed to reflect the new situation.

6. Implementation - During the credibility stage, time is spent visiting villages and talking with people to get to know them, because the first step in implementing a participatory program is to get the clients to trust the facilitator and to be a friend to them. Once this has been accomplished, then the women are going to look at the facilitator as a guide who may be able to help them. Ms. Zaire-A also thought that facilitators must work on building the women's self esteem and to help them build the “dream” of having a better life, or to dream what it would be like to solve one of their major problems.

In a participatory process, the initial meetings should determine the goals. Articulating program benefits and educating the women, so that they can understand why various steps and activities are required, should also be discussed during the initial stages. Sometimes to get a particular program going, it may be appropriate for the facilitator to work with a small group of energetic women, and once success occurs in the program, other women may eventually join. In these situations Ms. Zaire-A would do program activities in highly visible locations so that others could see the group members having fun and enjoying the program.

Because the client population is less educated, informal analogous teaching methods are necessary. For example, if the facilitator is trying to explain to the women why they should not cut off and cook young succulent cassava leaves, an informal teaching style would explain that these young leaves are needed by the plant to produce its food [via photosynthesis] in the same way that humans need their mouths to eat: “The leaves of the plant are like our mouths, and the sunshine is like food. Now, if we cut out our mouths we
wouldn't be able to eat any food, and so when you take off the leaves, the plant can't eat and
the plant can't grow."

To help establish a program, Ms. Zaire-A strongly recommends implementing what
she called the "relatability factor" into the program, as a means to get the women to accept the
facilitator's ideas more readily. As a result of colonization, the people in this region lacked
self-esteem as well as self-confidence that they could get things done to improve their lives.
Their thinking was, what foreigners do is good but these things will never work for them. To
combat this negative attitude, during the credibility stage the facilitator must sleep with the
people, eat the same food, and just spend time talking with them to demonstrate to the
villagers that all people are the same. Once this change in attitude has been established, the
people will relate and accept what the facilitator is saying more readily. By looking at the
facilitator as an equal, as one of them, it gives the women confidence that suggestions made
by the facilitator can work for them (i.e., these strange ideas are not something foreign that
will work only in the United States). Once the people can really relate to and know the
facilitator, hence the "relatability factor", then the indigenous population is more likely to
accept the facilitators ideas or suggestions. Finally, if things did not go as quickly as
anticipated, the facilitator should just keep trying. However, the purpose of the program
could be narrowed down to less than originally planned.

7. Empowerment - Ms. Zaire-A thought that everyone involved in the program should
be part of the decision-making process. Admittedly, this task was at times difficult to
implement in her program. No formal empowerment strategy was offered during the
interview, except to say that it was important to talk with the women and determine their
viewpoint.

3. Epilogue

1. Communication - The most effective method of communicating with the women,
was working side-by-side with them and talking. It goes back to the relatability factor: as the
facilitator does more and more of the things that the villagers do, the facilitator is seen less as an outsider and is seen more acceptable to the community. There were no communications problems. The local language was so easy to learn that Ms. Zaire-A became fluent in two months.

To get shy or passive women to speak up in meetings or to become more involved with group activities, Ms. Zaire-A suggested during the group meetings to make it a point of edifying or highlighting to the others, anything that the shy individual was doing well (i.e., publicly building them up to help them feel a little more confident).

2. Evaluation - Ms. Zaire-A evaluated the participatory program by measuring the outcomes (e.g., how much was the yield in their agricultural activities). The women did get involved in evaluating and critiquing themselves. As a result, Ms. Zaire-A learned that her program utilized inappropriate technology for that region, therefore, the program failed.

3. Spread effect - To “spread” or disseminate the participation and empowerment process throughout a region, Ms. Zaire-A suggested identifying a key woman, and teaching her to be a facilitator so that she can continue to teach others once the facilitator leaves the community. This goes back to the “work yourself out of a job” theory.

4. Children in the program - Depending on the culture, a participatory program for women should also include their children so that at a young age they will learn these self-helped methods. Moreover, for each group activity, the facilitator should try to make it fun and easy for the children to get involved so that they are motivated and want to participate in the program. Finally, after the children participate, they should be given a little reward for their efforts to reinforce the point that if they work at something they can achieve.

5. Should women be paid - Ms. Zaire-A did not experience a situation were women wanted to be paid for being in the program, therefore, she had no advice on this topic. If there was a lack of financial resources, she recommended designing the program to fit within the budget of the group or to obtain a grant from an international organization.
6. Attitude change - Ms. Zaire-A thought that there had to be an attitude change to do a participatory program:

In any growth situation, there is always going to be an attitude change, because the attitude that they have right now, is the attitude that put them where they are at. So if they want to change, they will need to change their attitudes, and there is a difference in changing your attitude, and changing your belief system and your culture... The attitude [change] would be, I could have a better life, we can have what we want [if we worked for it].

Research Question 2: What strategies are used to attract rural women to participate in a self-help development program?

Getting Women to Participate

1. Why some women do not get involved - Some women did not participate because due to their low self esteem, they lacked the confidence that their lifestyle could improve. Others were not convinced that the program would work. Finally, there were women who could not see how the program would benefit them.

2. Increasing enthusiasm and attendance - Ms. Zaire-A generally agreed that, compared to a top-down strategy, there was more enthusiasm and better attendance when the women are involved and participating in program activities. Moreover, the women were excited for someone to come in and focus on them.

3. Increasing the rate of participation - Ms. Zaire-A thought that to get more women to participate, the facilitator must emphasize short term benefits to the women. The facilitator must explain the purpose of the program, how the program can benefit the clients, and what the expected outcomes might be from the program. In some communities such as where Ms. Zaire-A was located, the facilitator must also help the clients to have confidence in themselves, that they can do something to better their life. Next, the facilitator needs to have a good program that really works for the women. By just talking to the women and constantly encouraging them, these efforts should go a long way to increase the number of women to participate in the program. Finally, Ms. Zaire-A stated that sometimes, in the beginning, the facilitator may have to work with a small number of female members, and as the program
becomes successful eventually others will join the process. If someone does not join the program immediately, the facilitator should always "keep the door open" for them to join the group.

4. Increasing commitment - The women will be more committed if they know it is their program, and if they think that the outcome will really benefit them.

Ms. Zaire-B

Based on her Peace Corps experience in implementing a participatory and empowerment regime for village women, the following summarizes what Ms. Zaire-B recommended, or what she did, during her four year assignment. Assigned in 1985-88 as a Crop Extension Agent, Ms. Zaire-B worked with rural women for two years. Prior to her assignment, she received training in participation, but not for empowerment.

Research Question 1: What methods/tactics are used to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women?

A. Initial Steps

1. Rapport and respect - The facilitator must first establish rapport and respect with the women to start a participatory and empowerment program. This close relationship develops when the facilitator spends a sufficient amount of time getting to know people, to respect their knowledge, and to work with them in the community. By establishing this close, trusting relationship, the village women are more likely to try new approaches which could improve their lives. When a facilitator must work in several communities, usually it takes three or four visits, to establish this rapport. The sign that this rapport and trust has been established is when the facilitator intuitively feels that she is not treated like an outsider, when she is invited to all the activities in the community, and when she is treated as a normal resident living there in the village.

2. Facilitators - The role of the facilitators in the participation and empowerment process is to teach something that the women value, so that their life is better or easier. To get
the process going, the facilitator must complete a community assessment, to determine what is going on in the village, to identify what the problems are, and to determine what the perceived needs are in the community.

A facilitator must communicate on the level of the women. Because the females were less educated and they were not used to any formal training, it was appropriate for Ms. Zaire-B to tell stories or to do skits, which was the normal method used by the women to learn things.

An extensionist can be part of the participatory process by helping key people in the community realize what power they have, and to realize what resources are available, to get things done. According to Ms. Zaire-B a facilitator should be considered “part of the community” to get things done. Finally, she thought that when doing participatory and empowerment activities for village and rural women, the facilitator should be female, not male.

3. Training - To train Peace Corps volunteers or other international development personnel on how to do participatory and empowerment at the village level, Ms. Zaire-B suggested teaching facilitators how to do community assessments, such as during the credibility stage, to “do a very thorough community assessment, draw maps and write down names of people, try to identify who they are and what they do, you spend the day with the women and decide how much time she spends with each different kind of activity, like gathering wood and water.” Furthermore, she thought that training should include living in the rural community for a week, and then going back into training “to process” what was learned in the villages.

4. Participation synergistic with empowerment - Ms. Zaire-B thought that to be an effective program participation needs to be coupled with empowerment. Although participation starts the self-help process, the women need to get something out of the program, therefore, they need empowerment—to have control in their life and to control the program. Indeed, without empowerment in the program, Ms. Zaire-B strongly feels the
women will eventually abandon the process. Furthermore, she thinks that participation is the precursor to empowerment activities.

B. Process

1. Local leaders - Ms. Zaire-B thought it was important to recognize the historical and the cultural traditions within the community. Therefore, the facilitator should give a village leader the respect that they deserve. However it cannot be overemphasized that, to build a successful participatory program for women, the female leaders within the community need to be involved in the program, as much as possible.

2. Getting started - To get the program going, Ms. Zaire-B received assistance from chiefs and from the local leaders. They set-up the initial meetings and they allocated land for the group to use. Basically, the men determined which females would be in the program. Ms. Zaire-B spent a lot of time talking to the men first, to convince them to let their wives or their daughters participate in the program, “by stating we wouldn’t take too much of the women’s time, and also by developing trust with the men.” Ms. Zaire-B also thought that in terms of active involvement, it did not matter whether the women were married or single, or whether she was young or old. All of the females, regardless of status in the village, seemed to be equally involved. Finally, many of the group meetings included informal teaching as well as field plot demonstrations so that the women could learn the necessary techniques to do the program.

3. Meetings - During group discussions she thought that the meetings should not be restricted to just members, but the whole community (i.e., non- members) should be invited to come and participate. If it is traditional or allowed in the culture, she thought that village men should also be allowed to participate in programs that are designed for women. Both should benefit.

According to Ms. Zaire-B, a participatory program could benefit enormously if there are educated members: “the more the better.” Furthermore, if the women suffered from a lack
of skill(s) to do the program, Ms. Zaire-B thought that it was important for the facilitator to teach the female leaders so that they could go back into their community to teach others. Finally, lower status and higher status women shared equally in program activities, and they shared equally in program benefits as well. However, it is up to the women themselves to decide this issue.

4. Problem identification - The problems that the women wanted to address were usually identified in a group situation. Furthermore, Ms. Zaire-B did not agree with the statement that, to get a highly motivated group of workers the program must consistently address the perceived problems or the perceived needs of the women. She thought that when there are conflicting interests between the women and a distant supervisor, in a participatory program, it is important for the facilitator to balance these interests and try to satisfy both parties, by trying to address each of their needs. Finally, she thought it was important to be honest with the women—to be realistic in the goals, and to be truthful, even though the village women may want to hear something different.

5. Planning - Before planning, the facilitator needs to establish credibility with the women. Even if the facilitator only visits the community occasionally, there has to be a trusting relationship with the people first to get things done. As she explained, “visit that community a minimal of three times before you try to do any work and a visit [meaning an all day or an overnight visit], not just an hour or two. [The facilitator] needs to spend time with as many people as possible...to get to know them.” After credibility has been established, the facilitator needs to build on this relationship by letting the women plan their future. Ms. Zaire-B thought it was important for the facilitator to work with the women as much as possible, but also to allow the members to plan their program. Finally, she had no advice on what to do if program plans did not go well. Incidentally, the main problem in her program was that she was trying to get the women to work in a self-help, participatory kind
of way, whereas the international organizations in that region were giving the villagers the same benefits for free, without requiring a sweat equity.

6. Implementation - To implement a participatory program, Ms. Zaire-B suggested that, at least in Zaire, the facilitator should talk with and work with the men to get the women to do anything [simply because the men were in charge]. Moreover, the facilitator must complete the credibility stage before proposing any program. A facilitator must also be willing to change to fit into the local culture. By making the appropriate changes, the facilitator becomes more acceptable to the community.

It is important to work with village chiefs and elders, and get their assistance in setting-up the program(s). Extension agents and local counterparts, can “learn what I was doing so they could continue with it when I left [the community].” The key when implementing any participatory program for women is to identify the respected female leaders in the community and get them to motivate the other group members to do program activities.

If things did not go as quickly as anticipated, the facilitator should be patient. As Ms. Zaire-B found out, it does not do any good to get frustrated or to try and force the women to work harder or more quickly. The facilitator should give up the “push, push, push American approach”; rather, it is much better to just socialize and talk with the women. By spending this quality time with them, the facilitator will eventually understand why the women are not working at a faster pace. Then appropriate adjustments can be made.

7. Empowerment - Ms. Zaire-B thought that during the credibility stage, it was appropriate for the facilitator to spend time observing who the women listened to, and who they respected. Once these key women are identified, then they should be heavily recruited to be part of the program. Moreover, once they join the program, as leaders of the community, they should be allowed to make managerial style decisions for the group, such as when to take a break, or simply to motivate the women to work.
C. Epilogue

1. Communication - The most effective method of communicating with the women was by sitting around and telling stories; this method was the familiar, comfortable way the women used for learning. To simply tell the women what to do was not effective [which explains why the top-down approach may not work with them]. Ms. Zaire-B had difficulty with the local language, but through diligent study and practice, after some time this problem was solved. Finally, she did not know how to get shy or passive women to speak up in meetings or to become more involved with group activities. She thought that it was more important that they did their work in the program, even if they chose not to speak up in the meetings.

2. Evaluation - Ms. Zaire-B based the evaluation on program results (e.g., higher yields meant the group was successful). Moreover, Ms. Zaire-B noticed that the women were very happy to be in this bottom-up program.

3. Spread effect - To “spread” or disseminate the participatory program throughout a region, Ms. Zaire-B recommended that key members in the group take on the responsibility of explaining the program to village women from other communities.

4. Children in the program - Ms. Zaire-B was not sure whether the children should be involved in a participatory program for the women.

5. Should women be paid - Ms. Zaire-B was not confronted with the problem of women who wanted money for their participation in the program, therefore, she did not have any recommendations regarding this issue. If there was a lack of financial resources for the program, she thought it was appropriate to initiate programs that did not require money.

6. Attitude change - Ms. Zaire-B thought that to do participatory programs, the attitude of the villagers does not have to change much.

Research Question 2: What strategies are used to attract rural women to participate in a self-help development program?

Getting Women to Participate
1. Why some women do not get involved - The key reason why some women did not participate was mainly social; some segments of the community simply did not get along. A few also complained that the program required too much work.

2. Increasing enthusiasm and attendance - Compared to the standard, top-down approach, Ms. Zaire-B strongly agreed that the women were more enthusiastic, more involved and maintained good attendance when they were participating and making decisions in their program. Moreover, the number of women wanting to join the group increased steadily.

3. Increasing the rate of participation - To get more women to participate, Ms. Zaire-B recommended getting the word out and making sure a wide range of women heard about the program either from members of the participatory group or from the extension agents. If there are groups of women, who did not get along, she recommended setting up separate programs or work details for each faction. For example, separate fields could be apportioned for each competing faction. Stressing program benefits is another tactic that could be used to get more women involved.

4. Increasing commitment - The women seemed to be committed to the program because the meetings were fun occasions for them. They usually did a lot of singing and socializing during these gatherings. The members also perceived some of their needs could be addressed by being in the program. Furthermore, program benefits were consistently stressed. All of these factors helped to engender commitment in the women.
CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to interview and document the perceptions of selected Returned Peace Corps Volunteers who had previously implemented participatory and empowerment activities for rural/village women in developing countries. The interview data were used to develop a framework (i.e., model) that describes how to initiate and manage similar types of self-help, bottom-up programs. The framework is presented in Chapter 5 in addition to a comprehensive summary, outline, and discussion of the findings from the interview data. The discussion, summary, outline, and framework were used to address the two research questions in this study: (1) What methods/tactics are used to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women? and (2) What strategies are be used to attract rural women to participate in a self-help development program?

For this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with 15 Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) who had previous experience in setting-up and managing a self-help participatory and empowerment regime for village and rural women in developing countries. A bottom-up philosophy, whereby the female clients decided what they needed and how to implement their self-help development program, was the common theme throughout the data.

Introduction

One key component to any participatory program is for the participants (in this research, the women) to come together and to organize themselves to get things done. In this collective effort, the women identify critical issues and problems (i.e., assessment) and they work together to make a change. Different groups of women will decide on different things. Some are interested in improving their income while others seek technical advise, education, child care, credit, or new socio-economic opportunities. Appropriate health and nutrition programs, potable water, improved transportation to nearby towns, or other family and
community problems may also be a concern (Kindervatter, 1987). The focus of the current study was not to identify the type of programs that the women may choose, rather the interview data were collected in an attempt to describe the process of how to initiate self-help participatory efforts.

There are a myriad of directions a village group can elect to go. This is why empowerment programs are needed. Women can decide among themselves which program will help them the most. The major reason why international development agencies and the local governments are reluctant to accept participation and empowerment as the standard way of operating is because, historically, they do not want to give up their control over a development program. The top-down approach, whereby a sponsoring organization maintains program control, is still the preferred method in international development work (Karl, 1995; Rounaq, 1995). In fact, Dr. Rosalie Norem (personal communication), a former Iowa State University Professor and currently an administrator for Women in Development programs with U.S.A.I.D., has estimated that presently approximately 20% of development programs will utilize some form of participatory or empowerment procedure. This 20% includes programs for both men, and women, yet there are clear indicators that participation and empowerment work successfully at the grassroots level (Ahmad et al., 1985; Chambers, 1983; Institute of Cultural Affairs International, 1987; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1988; Stamps, 1990; World Bank, 1994). Control over the program is a key issue. It can be argued that an outside organization that is investing money into a program has the right to maintain control. On the other hand, programs in participation and empowerment generally require a low capital expenditure and huge amounts of international aid are not needed (Dixon, 1985). The participation and empowerment methodology is truly a grassroots level program designed specifically to help those who are willing to help themselves on the village level (Steady, 1993).
Perhaps program success may be more important than program control. An outside agency should be willing to give-up control of the program if this will enhance program success. The point is that a top-down approach does not always work in international development. There are numerous occasions when an outside agency has decided to make an "improvement" and the local people rejected this type of top-down authority (Dixon, 1985; Harcourt, 1994; Tinker, 1990). For example, Stamps (1990) stated that an outside agency built badly needed latrines in a poor rural community but the females would not use them because it was ultimately determined that the women did not want to use the same structures used by men. The women did not like their feet to be showing while using these facilities. After talking with the women the appropriate changes were made and eventually the latrines became an important part of that community. This example points out that a needs assessment may identify the appropriateness of building a latrine. However, an intimate involvement of the people is required to determine how to implement a participatory program. This is why participation and empowerment procedures can be valuable alternatives in the international development approach (Stamps, 1990).

There are other reasons why the women, not an outside agency, should control the development activity. In the current research findings, Ms. Lesotho-A pointed out during her interview that people know what they need and they do not want to be told by an outsider what they personally need, or, for that matter, what is needed in their community. It is up to the people themselves to decide this issue. For example, Ms. Zaire-B stated that women in her village were not attracted to money or material possessions; rather, the only programs they were interested in included better health care and more food for their families. Because each community has different desires, it is crucial to get the women intimately involved in the development process and let them decide what is appropriate for their situation. The finding of this study, that women should be granted empowerment as advocated by all of the interviewees concur with the findings of Bryant and White (1982).
Another reason why the people themselves should control their development program is because participation and empowerment teaches people to do for themselves. They can make a shift from the dependence mode which occurs too often in a top-down approach (Karl, 1995). With participation and empowerment people become independent because they learn to depend on their own initiative to solve their local problems (Stamps, 1990). One of the interview questions (#32b) in this study asked whether by doing participation and empowerment would the women learn to organize themselves so that they can solve new problems which they may encounter in the future after the facilitator has left the community.

Ninety-three per cent (14 out of 15) of the interviewees in this study thought that participation and empowerment would teach women how to organize themselves to solve their common problems. These programs are like a “rope” that links women together to help them put their skills to effective use (Kindervatter, 1987, p. 24). With participation and empowerment the women are involved in defining their problems from their perspective and these perceived problems tend to be a source of motivation for them to do something about their situation (FAO, 1981).

Perhaps the key in introducing an effective participatory and empowerment program is to have an effective facilitator who has the appropriate personal characteristics as well as a good understanding on how to organize these self-help empowerment programs. Moreover, according to Ms. Mali, the salary and the maintenance expenses for the facilitator are the only major expenses required in a participatory and empowerment regime.

In participatory programs, facilitators should, for the most part, be in the background. They are not like teachers. A teacher will typically stand up and lecture about information the students need to memorize. This type of approach may be good for children but not for adults. In contrast, a good facilitator will respect the knowledge and the experiences of adult female members and help the local women “feel comfortable about expressing their ideas and discussing problems from their point of view” (Kindervatter, 1987, p. 13). Moreover, in a
participatory and empowerment regime the agenda usually involves problem-solving and group action. Furthermore, this approach advocates getting everyone to participate and to make decisions (Kindervatter, 1987).

Ms. Niger-A felt strongly that a female professional who lives in the community is best suited to set up a participation and empowerment program for women:

If they think that you are an outsider and not part of their community, then they are going to try to keep putting the ball in your lap, they are going to see it as your project and you are not going to get the participatory involvement you need in order for it to be sustainable. Just say it is your project and you are not a part of the community, so when you leave, your project is going to go with you.

Perhaps this may explain why some international development projects have failed in the past.

In Chapter 4 of this study, Ms. Gambia, Ghana, and Guinea-A mentioned that the participatory process is much easier if the facilitator has a counterpart to assist them with the programs. Kindervatter (1987, p. 56) took a similar point of view when she stated that a facilitator often will need the assistance of a coordinator/counterpart at the village level. The best individuals for this position are usually women from the local community, however, a local extension worker can also fulfill this role. In any case, the coordinator should be well respected by the women and she should be well trained. A coordinator may have several duties including making the meeting place comfortable for the members and leading a particular discussion, asking questions, or introducing new problems for the women to analyze.

The participation and empowerment methodology has roots in Extension programming. Despite the fact that there has been a myriad of weather-related disasters, wasted national resources, a declining farm population, weakened farm economies, less interest in farm related activity among the general population, and numerous set backs in the research and development process, the United States is presently the world leader in agriculture and has consistently produced enough food for her growing population. One
factor during this period of prosperity has been the adaptability of her farmers to research, educate, and change technologies. United States-based Extension services have played an integral part in bringing this research and new technology to the farmer. As a result, with the assistance of the Extension system, the better educated and the more innovative farmers have done well (Schwieder, 1993).

Visionaries who perceived the possibilities of what Extension could do in 1906 hired the first full-time county extension agent for Smith County, Texas. Eventually, other counties around the United States used private resources to hire agricultural extension agents to assist their farm clientele. As a result, in 1914, the Smith-Lever Act was passed by Congress to provide “mutual cooperation of USDA [United States Department of Agriculture] and land-grant colleges in conducting agricultural Extension work” (Vines & Anderson, 1976, p. 7). This legislative process allowed educated Extension personnel to assist and strengthen the farm community.

From the very beginning, one of the primary tactics used by Extensionists to assist farmers has been the use of participatory procedures. For example, in the early 1900’s, one of the early Extension pioneers, Seaman A. Knapp, thought that diversified agriculture and other desirable changes would come only through demonstrations conducted by the farmers themselves on their own farms, under ordinary farm conditions. “What a man hears, he may doubt; what he sees, he may also doubt; but what he does, he cannot doubt” (Vines & Anderson, 1976, p. 5). This point of view is fundamentally similar to what the 15 interviewees stated in the current study, namely, that progress is made and clients develop when they are directly involved in the process of helping themselves.

Many of the participation and empowerment precepts that were mentioned in Chapter 4 of this dissertation reflect the type of roles and functions that occur in present Extension activity. For example, Rasmussen (1989, pp. 4-5) stated that:
The Cooperative Extension System helps people improve their lives through an educational process which uses scientific knowledge [that is] focused on issues and needs....Its educational programs are available to anyone who wishes to participate, but no one is forced to take part. Within this voluntary cooperative framework, Extension, drawing upon research-based knowledge, teaches people to identify problems, to analyze information, to decide among alternative courses of action for dealing with those problems, and to locate the resources to accomplish a preferred course of action. The educational programs it undertakes most often arise as a response to needs identified on the local level. In addition to basic educational programs, Extension staff members and volunteers meet local needs by organizing activities...and encouraging participation...

Rasmussen's statement accurately describes many of the basic points mentioned in the Chapter 4 interview data, therefore, it may be argued that participation and empowerment methodologies have historical and contemporary roots to Extension programming.

**Interpretation of Findings**

As documented in Chapter 4, many strategies and tactics are needed to build a successful participation and empowerment program. There were a number of common themes or strategies that were consistently mentioned in the interview data. This section presents and discusses the major themes that emerged from the data.

The objectives for this research were twofold: (a) to identify methods on how to enhance the effectiveness of participatory and empowerment activities for rural women; and (b) to identify strategies that should be used to attract rural/village women to participate in these self-help development programs. The themes/strategies in this section provide answers for both of these research objectives.

**Theme 1:** Proper training of facilitators can be helpful. In this study, several interviewees provided data supporting this them, however, they had received little or no training in participatory and empowerment procedures. Ms. Guinea-A and Ms. Kenya are two prominent examples of individuals who had no training and yet, because of their exceptional abilities, they were able to describe the nuances of participation and empowerment. Nevertheless, most people would probably benefit from a good training program which
features participation and empowerment, such as what was advocated by Ms Mauritania and Ms. Zaire-B. Trainees would do skits of a mock community to practice doing various participatory and empowerment techniques. Then these trainees would go to actual villages to try out what they learned to see how it all worked. The trainees would stay in these local communities for a week and then go back into training “to process” what was learned in the villages.

**Theme 2:** The facilitator must establish credibility with the women, first, before initiating any program. Several interviewees mentioned that without this credibility, the women will not take the facilitator seriously. According to Ms. Lesotho-B, if a program is started without credibility being established, the village women will merely abandon the program as soon as the facilitator leaves the community. Credibility is established with the village women by listening to them, spending time getting to know them, asking them many questions, learning the local language and working side by side with them. In time, credibility evolves whereby the facilitator develops trust, respect, and rapport, as well as a close working relationship with the target population.

**Theme 3:** Perhaps the primary role of the facilitator is to initiate “a process” that allows the female clientele to do something about their condition, which should enable them to have a better life. The whole self-help process should be controlled by the women themselves. The women are the ones who determine what their needs are. The women should determine which program(s) can address their needs, culture, and financial capabilities. The women should control the empowerment phase of the program. This may mean that they decide to make decisions pertaining to the program by having strict voting procedures, consensus building, or by allowing female leaders to make critical decisions for the group. Often, the women employ empowerment in a manner that is consistent with the normal way that decisions are made in their community.
Finally, as Ms. Guinea-B indicated, from the very beginning of the program, the women themselves must decide how to divide the program benefits. Several interviewees also suggested that the program benefits should be distributed in the open so that all members can observe what is going on.

**Theme 4:** As much as possible, the facilitator should get the assistance of the respected local leaders be they male or female. Typically, in these village settings there are strong cultural traditions and stringent hierarchical authority, which facilitators must respect. Moreover, village women tend to follow the advice of their respected leaders. It would be wise for the facilitator to get the help and the assistance of these hierarchical leaders. With their help, it should be easier to set up a viable self-help program for women.

**Theme 5:** If the female members lack certain skills to get a program started, it is important for the facilitator to teach the necessary skill(s) to the members. Preferably, the facilitator should teach the rudiments to the female leaders so that they can teach other members in the group.

**Theme 6:** When starting a self-help group, village males should be excluded from the meetings because the men tend to dominate the females and take over the entire program originally set-up to benefit women. Although, ideally, the program should be for females only, in some societies males may demand that they be part of the group. In this case the facilitator will have several options. One is to allow the men and women to participate in the same program. Hopefully, the focus of the activities will continue to help women and children who are in need. Another option the facilitator can try is to set up programs for the family or for the extended family, which includes males and females. On the other hand, the facilitator may want to design the program to include female-oriented activities. Village men tend to be reluctant to join these types of groups.

**Theme 7:** The women themselves need to decide who should be in the participatory group. Normally this will mean that all females who are interested in the program will be
allowed to participate. However, in some communities that have personal, religious, tribal, or other concerns, to avoid conflict it may be appropriate to divide a program into homogeneous subgroups. Moreover, if there are female members who are a negative influence on the group, the female leader(s) should get involved and talk to these individual(s). The sensitive matters that arise from the program should be handled by the influential members of the group.

There may be times when individual females will cause a disruptive influence in the group activities. Unfortunately, there may be instances that require more aggressive action to be taken against them. For example, Wieringa (1988) reported that in Sri Lanka there was an educated woman who had a strong personality and she tried to dominate other members in her group. This woman in question had a lot of influence in the community. It was not easy to tell her not to come back to the meetings. However, in the end the facilitator as well as others in the group had to ask this person not attend further meetings.

Theme 8: To achieve benefits, a strong work ethic or a "sweat equity" should be promoted. By definition, participation requires that the intended beneficiaries work to solve their problems. With participation, theoretically, the intended beneficiaries learn new skills to improve their lives. More importantly, they learn how to organize themselves, and to improve their condition. As a result, the women become more independent and less dependent on others. Arguably, this should be one of the goals of international development (Hui, 1985).

Theme 9: The interview data suggested that a participatory program could benefit by having educated females as members. Eighty-seven percent (13 out of 15) of the interviewees in this study thought that a program would benefit if there were educated female members. On the other hand, Ms. Sierra Leone cautioned that in her village educated women looked down upon the less educated members and treated them badly. It is interesting to note that, although there was a consensus that educated females are helpful and beneficial for a participatory program, none of the interviewees suggested that educated women were
essential to program success. Perhaps this indicates another advantage of participation and empowerment. Other than the facilitator, these self-help approaches do not require the presence of skilled or educated personnel during the implementation process. However, it was clear from the interview data that participation and empowerment regimes do need active members, especially members with leadership ability to get involved with managing the program.

**Theme 10:** The problems that plague a community should be discussed by the women in a group setting. A consensus should be reached about the problem(s) to be addressed by the program. Furthermore, virtually all of the interviewees thought that the needs of the women should be of paramount importance, over and above the desires of the facilitator’s supervisor. By stressing the needs of the female clientele, it is more likely that the participatory program will be successful.

**Theme 11:** Ms. Guinea-B provided the strong interview data for planning in a participatory and empowerment regime. She stated that the women are not familiar with the concept of planning in the manner that is done in the West. The women, however, do have their own method of planning. According to Ms. Guinea-B, planning for the women should include dividing activities into smaller units and, from there, individual plans should be made for each of these units.

Furthermore, planning needs to be done slowly and in-depth until the women get more familiar with this process. Because women are not familiar with the concept of planning and setting objectives, Ms. Guinea-B thought that in the beginning of the program, the women should be taught “what are the objectives”. The female members should also agree among themselves what the objective(s) will be for their program. Throughout the planning process there must be many, many discussions about what must be done in a certain time frame. One volunteer stated, “So we broke it down into time periods, and by task, and
went over it, and went through, and went over it, and through it again, and gradually made [the planning process] more complex."

Next, the women should practice their plans by doing a lot of role playing. And finally, Ms. Guinea-B stated that, both in groups and on an individual basis, she would teach women the importance of looking at the larger picture, or to do long-term planning. Getting the women to think long term teaches them the necessity of planning to achieve their goals. In contrast, Hradesky (1995) thought that planning in a Total Quality Management system (i.e., a Western methodology) should include the following steps: (a) problems are defined; (b) goals are selected; (c) measurements are identified; (d) root causes, problems, and solutions are analyzed; (e) an impact capability study should be done; (f) process capabilities are identified; (g) tactics for corrective and preventative action are developed; (h) process control procedures are implemented and reviewed; (i) prevention measures are developed; and (j) the effectiveness of corrective action is determined.

Other planning models that are used in developed countries, but Hradesky’s model (1995) points out that there is a significant difference between planning at the village level, and planning in structured environments such as in Western societies. When compared to Western planning models, perhaps Ms. Guinea-B’s approach may be a more suitable way for the village level to plan international development “bottom-up” activities.

Virtually all the interviewees in this study thought that the women should do their own planning because the women know their situation better than an “outsider”. According to Ms. LesothoB, the females should go through a learning process while planning. For each problem or idea that is suggested, the facilitator should ask the women, “Why?” (e.g., Why is XYZ happening?”) By asking these types of questions, it can help people to get to the root/cause of the problem. As a result, the appropriate solution(s) may be clearer for them to see.
Theme 12: The facilitator should work side-by-side with the village women, especially when work is being done in the program. By doing so, the facilitator develops a close working relationship and trust with the women.

Theme 13: Both communications and teaching the members rudimentary skills should be done in a manner most familiar to the women. For example, sitting down and talking during relaxed sociable occasions during the day seemed to be a popular method of communicating with many village women. Because the village women tended to be less educated, the most effective method of teaching them seemed to be by telling stories, doing skits, using demonstration plots, or by employing other teaching methods which require observation. Ms. Sierra Leone said that any teaching should be done by using analogies. For example, when explaining the photosynthesis process, she stated that the leaves of the plant are like our mouths, and the sunshine is like food. If the mouths are cut off, a human would not be able to eat any food. When village women take the leaves off the crop plant (for cooking) then the plant cannot grow.

Theme 14: The female leaders in the group should delegate work assignments to the other members. These leaders should also get involved in motivating the women to do the work in the program. As Ms. Kenya mentioned, if anybody can get the women to work, it is probably the respected influential members of the group. In some cases the village men are also important in influencing the women. Basically, the facilitator needs to be cognizant of who has the most influence over the women. These individuals need to be involved so that the program goals can be reached. Reaching the program goals should translate into a better life for the women because they decided among themselves which objectives were the most needed by the community.

Theme 15: If things do not go as quickly as anticipated with the program, then as Ms. Zaire-B said, the facilitator should just be patient, because it does not do any good to get frustrated or to try and force the women to work harder or more quickly. The facilitator
should give up the push, push, push American approach. It is much better to just socialize and talk with the women. By spending this quality time with the women, the facilitator will eventually understand why the women are not working at a faster pace. Then appropriate adjustments can be made.

**Theme 16:** In a participatory and empowerment regime, all 15 interviewees thought that the female members should not be paid money to be involved in the program. This approach is a departure from what some international development programs have done in the past. For example, Ms. Guinea-A, Ms. Kenya, and Ms. Lesotho-B said they had difficulty setting up their self-help programs because there were international development programs in their area who were giving the women money. The women were less inclined to participate in any self-help initiative. The theme of this study was that the women should derive their benefits solely from the fruits of their labor via the program. In this way female members would learn that they can overcome their problems if they work together.

**Theme 17:** If there is a lack of financial resources to do the program, it was generally agreed by the interviewees that the program should be either eliminated or scaled-back to reflect the financial capabilities of the group. Several interviewees also mentioned, and Scrimshaw (1982) advocated, using locally available resources to maintain a program.

**Theme 18:** Evaluation can be difficult to do at the village level because the village women (not an outside independent source) must decide what constitutes a successful program. Many interviewees mentioned that their evaluation merely entailed recording yields, counting attendance for the meetings, or documenting how much money was made from program activities. Another reason why it is difficult to evaluate is because, in developing countries, events at the village level tend to move at a slow methodical pace, which makes it difficult to determine whether adequate progress is being made in a limited timeframe.
Based on the interview data in this study, evaluations in participation and empowerment regimes tend to be highly subjective and informal. Perhaps the willingness of women to work together to solve their common problems is one indicator of program success. The data also suggested that the women readily critiqued their program. This is probably a good way to introduce formative evaluation schemes (i.e., the type of evaluation whereby several times during the duration of the program the weak parts of the program are identified and then improved or corrected).

**Theme 19:** A myriad of suggestions were offered regarding spreading participation and empowerment throughout a region. There appeared to be at least one common element mentioned during these interviews. Before other regions will indicate an interest in the program, the self-help initiative must be a successful venture.

**Theme 20:** All of the respondents thought that children should be involved in the participatory program. Children would at an early age, learn the importance of doing participation and empowerment activities as a group to solve their common problems. Furthermore, by having the kids involved, the mothers would not have to worry about child care. In this way, the women will have more time for group activities. Another reason why some respondents thought that children should be involved is because the kids can provide valuable energy and labor to the participatory effort.

**Theme 21:** It is appropriate to be honest, truthful, and realistic in the program goals, even if the women want to hear something different.

**Theme 22:** The facilitator must be flexible and be willing to change, to reflect new realities that may occur in “real life” situations. For example, if the facilitator has a background in agriculture but the village women desperately need assistance with preventative health care or nutrition, then it is appropriate for the facilitator to seek outside help from someone who could provide the needed service(s). Regarding this issue, Ms. Guinea-A stressed that the international organization that sponsors the facilitator, should do a
good assessment of the target community to determine what are the heartfelt needs of the people. In this way, a facilitator with the appropriate background can be sent to an area where he/she is needed most.

**Theme 23:** There were a few themes, to address objective two of this study. First, regarding the issue of why some women did not get involved in participation and empowerment, many different reasons were offered in this study, however, the most prevalent reason mentioned was because the women simply did not have time to participate and they were too busy with their chores. To overcome this problem, two tactics were suggested. Ms. Kenya thought that village leaders must use their influence and fully support the program. In this way, a larger number of women will participate, despite their chores. However, Ms. Guinea-A thought that the family, especially the children, should be do more of the chores on days when the mother is participating in the program.

Second, all of the women thought that compared to a top-down approach, participatory and empowerment bottom-up schemes generate more enthusiasm, attendance is better, and the women seemed to be more involved, simply because the self-help effort was “their program.” Lastly, if it was possible to get the women committed to the program, many interviewees thought that there must be an emphasis on the program benefits. Also, the needs of the members must be addressed, and whenever possible, the program activities should be fun.

**Theme 24:** To increase the rate of participation, the facilitator can: (a) make sure a wide range of women know about the program; (b) program benefits should be stressed over and over again; (c) if the community is heterogeneous with different factions, then subgroups should be started for each faction; (d) only programs which are needed and/or useful for the women should be initiated; (e) the program should save the women time or make their lives more efficient; (f) the facilitator should build a solid relationship with the women, that includes establishing trust, rapport, and respect with them; and (g) if the program can procure
money or other resources for the women, then many people will be attracted. Any of these initiatives can help increase the rate of participation.

A Participation and Empowerment Framework

The information from the interview conducted in this study was used to formulate a framework (i.e., a model) to implement a participatory and empowerment regime for rural and village women in developing countries. This framework describes how to enhance the effectiveness of participation and empowerment, and it identifies strategies which should be used to attract rural/village women to participate in these self-help development programs. The model addresses both research objectives for this study. Various statements from all 15 interviewees were used to develop this framework/model. Although this study attempts to describe a “model” it should be kept in mind, that each country, each region, and each village is different. One methodology will not fit all situations. This is why the term “A Model” (rather than “The Model”) was included in the title of this study.

Prior to starting a program, facilitators should undergo training sessions that teach the fundamentals of self-help, participatory and empowerment procedures. The training would include skits and role playing to dramatize what must be done to get a program started as well as teach how to implement these agriculturally-based initiatives. Next, the trainees should spend a week in rural villages to “practice” setting-up these self-help programs. Then the trainees should go back into the training sessions “to process” what they learned during their village experience. A reference text that describes the fundamentals of participation and empowerment should be identified and given to the trainees.

In general, when working with village women, the facilitator should be female. A female facilitator is more likely to develop a close working relationship with the female clients. It should be pointed out that in some communities, when working with women, it will not matter whether the facilitator is male or female. In these communities, the facilitator’s
character is more important than gender. To do well, the facilitator must be flexible, sensitive, and caring towards female clients.

After facilitators arrive in the target community, they should establish rapport, respect, and trust with women, before attempting to start a participatory and empowerment program. This close relationship with the women is established when the facilitator completes the credibility stage.

During the credibility stage, the facilitator should determine what the women need so that they can have a better life in their community. These “perceived needs” are determined by talking with the women.

As much as possible, respected local leaders should help set-up the program. Leaders who are not respected, should be appraised of what is going on in the program, however their participation in the meetings and in the program activities should normally be kept to a minimum.

There should be a lot of publicity to let people know about the program. In addition, the facilitator should do recruit vigorously to get as many women as possible to join the group. It is crucial to recruit females with leadership ability or to get women who will be active in the program activities; usually all of these individuals will help manage the program. In some cases, educated women from the community can learn how to be facilitators. They can also serve as catalysts to keep the program going on a long term basis after the facilitator has left the community.

The time to have meetings and to do program activities should be convenient for the women so that there are no conflicts with their other responsibilities. Furthermore, group meetings should be for members only. Village and rural women are busy. Some will want to participate in a self-help program but they will not have the time to do so. Therefore, all meetings should adhere to the following general guidelines: (a) meetings should be held at a time convenient for women; (b) whenever possible, schedule each meeting a few days or one
week apart. This allows women more time to do other things and to complete their work on group activities; (c) the meeting place should be at a location which is convenient for the women to attend; (d) at the meetings, women should have the freedom to discuss and initiate any program that they desire; and (e) if possible, there should be several women leaders in charge of the group. In this way no one will be over-burdened with too many responsibilities. These female leaders can not only help in the program activities, but they can also assuage group members from thinking that “outsiders are taking over and running their program” (Kindervatter, 1987, p. 13). Finally, the facilitator must always be honest, truthful, and set realistic goals with the women.

Before the initial meetings, the facilitator should suggest a few program ideas to the female leaders and get feedback from them. Original ideas are subsequently modified to reflect the input received from these village leaders. Next, a meeting should be organized for the women to discuss these program ideas.

If possible, all group members should be female. Furthermore, in a participatory and empowerment regime, the female members should make all of the critical decisions. They should feel like they are owners of the program, therefore they will have a stake in the outcome. During the credibility stage, the facilitator should assess the women’s problem(s) by talking with them and by making keen observations of what situation(s) might be causing problems. These problems should be prioritized and eventually these issues should be discussed during the initial group meetings.

Oftentimes, when women are asked to get involved in self-help activities, at least initially, the participants are hesitant, reserved, and doubtful whether the program can change their condition. This is why Kindervatter (1979; 1986; 1987) has consistently advocated instilling a “sense of hope” during the first few meetings; a sense of hope that things can improve, if there is a sincere collective effort among the women. From the very beginning, if the women can see practical benefits in a self-help participatory regime, then subsequent
meetings will usually attract a larger audience. Moreover, these bottom-up approaches typically have more enthusiasm and more hope among the participants. As one female from Thailand stated, as each meeting became more and more active, she increased in her self-worth, and she became more confident, "I'm [no longer] afraid to speak up in meetings and to give my ideas" (Kindervatter, 1987, p. 9).

To build the confidence of the people, in the beginning, it may be appropriate to initiate small, quick, low-risk programs that are needed by the community.

As stated previously, ideas for the program should be discussed during the meetings. By using brainstorming techniques, most of the ideas will come from the women, however occasionally, the facilitator may present certain options. Each option or suggestion from the facilitator must be fully discussed, and approved by the women. Facilitators should not give the impression that they are running the program. According to Ms. Niger-A:

You have to include the women at every step. Let them decide; they in their own culture, they have their planning processes...They have their way, they have been planning all their lives for different things and it will work best if it is in the context, the way that they plan, [which] might frustrate some Westerners but their processes make sense to them.

As stated, when planning is done at the village level, ideas are constantly thrown back and forth until some sort of plan is developed, then someone is appointed in-charge of the plan, who may be a woman leader or it may be someone who volunteered during a group discussion. Nevertheless, the facilitator needs to identify the leaders of the program, either by appointing them or having them elected. Depending on the program, it may be appropriate to have several leaders. Moreover, the facilitator must make sure that each leader is very well trained in the essential aspects of the program. Finally, these leaders should be responsible for delegating the program work assignments to the other members. Basically, a lot of responsibility must be placed with female leaders in these self-help programs because they have to figure out who should do each specific task.
Because village female members are very busy, Wieringa (1988, p. 46) suggested splitting their work-loads so that certain duties are done by groups of two or three women on a rotating basis. For example, there may be several groups who are responsible for transporting and selling products at local markets; each group would rotate this responsibility so that individual woman would work once every few weeks. In addition, novice group members should be paired with experienced members so that women are in a position to learn from each other. Furthermore, “Women who said they could not calculate or read well were not given the opportunity to opt-out, but they had to undertake other tasks” (Wieringa, 1988, p. 47).

Facilitators need to get to know each individual member well; the facilitator should develop friendship and affection with group members—so much so whereby criticism and joking with each other is acceptable and “[they] understand the relationships and friendships that exist between them” (Wieringa, 1988, p. 47). Finally, Wieringa (p. 48) stated that program activities should be done at a moderate pace. Usually the motivation and the enthusiasm of the women will determine at what rate the activities can be implemented.

While implementing the participatory process, the primary role of the facilitator is to be an advisor or an observer. The facilitator should just let the women run the program, let them figure out the answers to their problems, and of course, let them do the work, so that it will be their program, so that they could continue with the self-help effort even without the presence of the facilitator. The facilitator or an appropriate “outsider” may have to teach the women money management and other rudimentary skills which are relevant in maintaining a successful program. This outsider should preferably be a female from the same ethnic group or the same tribe as the intended beneficiaries of the program.

To keep a program sustainable, from the very beginning, the facilitator should teach the female leaders or the respected educated women, how to be “facilitators” who can
organize the women, so that if there are future problems which plague the community, these issues can be properly addressed in a self-help manner.

If the program plans do not go well, the facilitator should talk to the women leaders and call meetings with the other members to discuss what the problems are, what caused these problems, and what is perceived by the women to be the solutions. Based on this input, the facilitator should sit down with the leaders and decide how to modify the program so that it can work better in the future. If the problems are too difficult, it may be appropriate for the women to decide to abandon the program.

The participatory program should be evaluated and monitored by making careful observations and recording the program results. Therefore, the women should be evaluated based on their stated goals, and not on a rigid timeline. In developing countries it may be impractical to base program success on a pre-determine timeframe. The women should participate in the evaluation process by critiquing the program and by offering their suggestions or solutions to solve the problem(s). As stated by Ms. Niger-A, the facilitator and the female members should sit down periodically to have “an evaluation meeting.”

With many females the most effective method of communicating is by being with the women and having good conversations with them. During these discussions the facilitator could talk about the program or about various ideas and plans. If there are communication problems several interviewees suggested that a facilitator should work extremely hard to learn the language and not rely on a translator. When the facilitator learns the local language, rapport, respect, and the women’s trust is much easier to establish. Both communications and teaching the female members rudimentary skills should be done in a manner with which the women are accustomed. Furthermore, when the village women are less educated, effective methods of teaching them include telling stories, doing skits, using demonstration plots, or by employing teaching methods which require observation.
To get shy or passive women to speak up in meetings or to become more involved with group activities, Ms. Niger-A thought that it was important to give these members some individual attention, by visiting them before the meetings to express appreciation for their participation in the group, and to encourage them to come to the next meeting. Maybe this extra attention will motivate them to be more involved. Ms. Guinea-A thought that to get shy or passive women to speak up in meetings or to become more involved, trust must be strongly established with the facilitator. She also stated, “My goal would be to gradually give them opportunities to be successful, give them opportunities to be involved, and on a small scale [allow them] to give their ideas—so that they would be more comfortable and more confident over time.”

To “spread” or disseminate the participation and empowerment process throughout a region, the facilitator should first establish a successful program and let the word get out about the effectiveness of the program. Once this is done, influential members of the group, who know the program well, should accompany the facilitator to discuss the program with neighboring villages.

Virtually all of the interviewees strongly recommended not to pay the women for participating in the program, because that would just restart the whole dependence mode all over again in the target community. A better incentive is to emphasize the program benefits. If there is a lack of financial resources, programs should be carefully selected which are both needed by the community and do not require much money. The salient point is that, the self-help initiative should be within the financial capabilities of what the women can afford to pay by themselves. Furthermore, whenever possible, the program should use locally available resources (Scimshaw, 1982). The facilitator can also do some brainstorming with the women to come up with different ways to acquire the necessary resources. For example, sometimes the women can implement a sub-program that could establish an income generating small business.
To do participatory programs, Ms. Niger-A thought that the attitudes of the female clients should not be changed but perhaps modified. To change someone's attitude may cause a problem. It would be better if the facilitator tried to first understand the female clients and their attitude(s). The next step would be to rework the program so that the activities fit the modifications/concerns expressed by the women.

A participatory program for women should also include their children because there probably is no alternative child care in these village settings. If the children are with their mother, then the women will probably have more time to devote to program activities. Moreover, by involving the children they too will learn participatory procedures and perhaps teach the process to others.

Regarding empowerment, from the very beginning, the facilitator should make the women part of the decision-making process. From the interview information in this study, the only way a self-help program can work is by having the women decide things for themselves.

The facilitator can assist in empowerment activities by identifying the female leader(s) as well as by identifying the enthusiastic female members and let them take control of the program. To a large degree, the women can select themselves to be part of the empowerment process (i.e., those who want to be part of the decision-making can participate in this process). All of the respondents thought that empowerment needs to be coupled with participation. Ms. Sierra Leone thought that if the women only "participated" and were not allowed to maintain control or to be empowered, then two bad things would happen. First, the women would not learn how to solve their own problems. That is to say, by doing empowerment activities, the women learn how to make critical decisions and they learn how to manage the daily routine of a self-help effort. Second, Ms. Sierra Leone said that if empowerment was not given to the women the program would fall apart as soon as the facilitator leaves the community.
To attract women to a participatory program, the facilitator should publicize the program, stress program benefits, initiate only programs that are needed in the community, save the women time or make their lives more efficient, and build a solid relationship with the women, including establishing trust, rapport, and respect.

Outline of the Model

This brief outline of the model describes the necessary elements in a participatory and empowerment regime.

I. Training
   A. Use skits and role playing
   B. Initiate village-base, on-site training
   C. Conduct follow-up training
   D. Use reference text

II. Facilitators
   A. For efficacy, female facilitators should work with village women
   B. Facilitators should be caring and flexible towards female clients

III. Credibility established during the initial contact with clients
   A. Credibility is needed to build rapport, respect, and trust with clients
   B. Credibility established when facilitators talk and work with clients
   C. A needs assessment is done during this time

IV. Respected local leaders should help set up the program

V. Publicize the program
   A. Facilitators should emphasize recruiting a large number of women
   B. Practical benefits should be emphasized
   C. Recruit female leaders, educated women, and active members

VI. The meetings
   A. Meetings for female members only
B. Meetings and group activities are held at a convenient time and place
C. Female members allowed to openly discuss their concerns
D. Female members allowed to make all the critical decisions
E. Female members dictate which program(s) to implement
F. Female members make plans and delegate responsibility
G. Selected female leaders are elected to manage the program
H. Facilitators are always honest, truthful, and realistic with the women

VII. Program implementation
   A. If possible, start with small, quick, low-risk programs
   B. Only initiate programs which are needed in the community
   C. Whenever possible, the program(s) should be fun
   D. Female members should do all of the work related to the program
   E. Facilitators work within the existing village system, to get things done

VIII. Facilitators role in program sustainability
   A. Facilitator establishes friendships and gets to know each member well
   B. When appropriate, facilitator teaches rudimentary skills to members
   C. Train female leaders to be facilitators for future programs

IX. Evaluation
   A. Evaluation procedures are established, to modify/correct the program
   B. To improve the program, facilitators talk to the women
   C. With this antecedent input, necessary changes are made

X. Good communication established
   A. Communicate well
   B. Communicate in a manner that the people are comfortable with
   C. Group members are active in spreading the program to other villages
XI. Independent behavior promoted

A. Do not pay women for their participation
B. Programs are dependent on locally available resources
C. Stress benefits to attract women
D. Include children in the program

**Schematic of the Model**

Schematically, this framework/model can be shown as:

Training $\rightarrow$ Female Facilitators $\rightarrow$ Creditability $\rightarrow$ Respected Local Leaders $\rightarrow$

Publicity/Recruitment $\rightarrow$ Meetings $\rightarrow$ Program Planning $\rightarrow$ Program Implementation $\rightarrow$

Program Sustainability $\rightarrow$ Evaluation $\rightarrow$ Good Communication $\rightarrow$ Independent Behavior.

Graphically, this model can be depicted as (Figure 2):

Figure 2. A participatory and empowerment model
Summary

It may be concluded that, in general, participatory and empowerment regimes are enhanced when a number of factors are considered. The characteristics of a good, well functioning participatory program would include: on-site training is provided; the facilitator establishes credibility with the female clients; a needs assessment is done; there is preliminary feedback from women regarding program ideas; there is involvement of respected local leaders in setting up the program; and an emphasis is placed on publicity and recruiting village women, especially recruiting female leaders, educated women, and members who may be active in the program. To start the program, meetings should be organized at a time and place convenient for the village women; group members should openly discuss their points-of-view and their concerns; group members should decide how to make decisions pertaining to the program; group members should decide which program(s) to implement; plans should be formulated by the women; if necessary, the facilitator should teach the women rudimentary skills needed to start the program; and the facilitator should always be honest and realistic with the women. The facilitator should establish good communications with the members and make friends with them whenever possible. Natural leaders should be elected to manage the program. Program responsibilities should be delegated to the women. Evaluation and program modification/correction should be initiated. Last, the program should only be supported by using locally available resources from the women.
CHAPTER VI. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to interview and document the perceptions of selected Returned Peace Corps Volunteers who had previously implemented participatory and empowerment activities for rural/village women in developing countries, and to use this interview data to develop a framework (i.e., model) that describes how to initiate and manage these type of self-help, bottom-up programs.

Procedures

The first step in this research was to interview Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) who had set up, implemented, and managed an agriculturally-based, participation and empowerment program for rural and village women, during their overseas assignment in Africa. The RPCVs had completed their assignments within the past five years. All 15 interviewees had at least two years of hands-on experience in working with village women at the grassroots level. An interview schedule, of open-ended questions was used to document descriptive data regarding participation and empowerment activities. The interviews were taped and later transcribed. At the time of the interviews, the respondents lived in various parts of the United States.

Summary

The results of this study indicate that the characteristics of a good, well functioning participatory and empowerment program would include the following: on-site training; the facilitator establishes credibility with the female clients; a needs assessment is conducted; there is preliminary feedback from women regarding program ideas; there is involvement of respected local leaders in setting up the program; an emphasis is placed on publicity and recruiting village women, especially recruiting female leaders, educated women, and members who may be active in the program. Next, to start the program, meetings should be organized at a time and place convenient for the village women; group members should
openly discuss their points-of-view and their concerns; group members should decide how to make decisions pertaining to the program; group members should decide which program(s) to implement; plans should be formulated by the women; if necessary, the facilitator should teach the women rudimentary skills needed to start the program; and the facilitator should always be honest and realistic with the women. The facilitator should establish good communications with the members and make friends with them whenever possible; natural leaders should be elected to manage the program; program responsibilities should be delegated to the women; evaluation and program modification/correction should be initiated; and the program should only be supported by using locally available resources from the women.

Conclusions

From this information a framework/model was developed that presents a specific process to follow in a participatory and empowerment program. Four propositions can be concluded from the interview data. First, Peace Corps Volunteers used participation and empowerment strategies in a variety of situations. Second, there are common traits, characteristics, and features in all participatory and empowerment programs. Third, facilitators play a critical role in participatory and empowerment programs. Finally, not all participatory and empowerment strategies can be applied the same way, in all situations.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the results and conclusions of the study:

1. Agricultural and Extension Educators working in international development as well as domestic programs should be trained how to implement participatory and empowerment programs;
2. The model developed as a result of this study provides a working framework to operate a participatory and empowerment program for women and should be studied further to test its usefulness;

3. Further studies should be conducted to verify the findings of this study;

4. The findings of this study should be shared with administrators and program developers to ensure the use of the major components of the model.

**Educational Implications**

Participation and empowerment are relatively new concepts in international extension education. To date, this researcher has identified few comprehensive treatises that explain the strategies on how to effectively organize village women into a participatory/empowerment self-help program. By interviewing selected RPCVs in this study, a comprehensive list of strategies, suggestions, and helpful hints was compiled to facilitate and improve the implementation of getting women directly involved in the process of solving their own problems. Finally, this study attempted to describe a "model" participation and empowerment program, with the caveat that each region is different. Because every community and every country is different, one strategy cannot fit all situations. Simple, common sense tactics from a grassroots bottom-up perspective were detailed in this study. Eventually, this interview data could be used to write a manual to provide information, or a reference for the international extension community.
Dear Returned Peace Corps Volunteer:

It is indeed a pleasure to be writing you. As a former Volunteer no doubt you performed a very special service, which was enriched with many unique experiences in international development. This is why we would like you to participate in our research study, so that others can benefit from the experience you gained while working for the Peace Corps.

We are attempting to identify individuals who: (a) became a Return Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV) after 1987; (b) who did their two year assignment on the African Continent; (c) who did some form of agricultural work for the Peace Corps; and (d) we need RPCVs who have previously signed the document to wavier their right to privacy, thereby making themselves available to discuss matters pertaining to their experiences in the Peace Corps. Apparently you fit all four of these criteria therefore we would be honored if you could take part in the interviews we are conducting in October, 1994.

The information from these interviews will be used to develop methods on how to empower rural women so that they can learn how to get things done and to become more self-sufficient. As researchers, our goal is to identify EFFECTIVE ways to implement participatory and empowerment programs for rural/village women, and we strongly feel that with your Peace Corps background and experience, you can provide valuable information about this self-helped style of rural development. Therefore if you did participatory and/or empowerment activities during your two year assignment, we would like to come to your city or town, to do an in-depth interview.

What is participation and empowerment? The Peace Corps has called this "the experiential learning technique" whereby the local people learn how to help themselves. However from the viewpoint of this study, participation is a self-help Peace Corps program that permitted rural/village women to get involved in the process of solving their own problems. This type of participation allowed rural/village women to define their problem(s), to organize, to plan, to implement, and to manage their local development program. And in this study, empowerment is increasing the control of rural women over decisions, resources, and/or institutions which can affect their lives. Arguably, rural men and women may have different needs and desires; therefore to give poor rural women more opportunities than they have had in the past, a "bottom-up" strategy is needed to allow women to identify "their needs" and for them to get involved in programs that fit "their situation". Simply stated, a female perspective is needed to design effective, gender oriented programs for local conditions. As a former Volunteer, you probably have a lot to say on this topic therefore, once again, we invite you to do an interview with us.

If you feel that you have considerable experience in the participation and/or the empowerment approach, would you be so kind to fill out and to mail the enclosed post card to us (no postage is needed) so that we can possibly set-up an interview session with you, in your home city of residence. It may take 1 1/2 to 2 hours to complete this interview. As an interviewee we will send to you, in advance, a copy of the questions we intend to ask. All information from these interviews will be held strictly confidential and the names as well as the identities of each RPCV will remain anonymous throughout the study. You may also decline to answer any of the questions. And finally, your interview data will be destroyed immediately after it has been transcribed.

We think these interviews will be rewarding for all who participate. Therefore, we welcome the opportunity to hear your viewpoint on how to empower rural women. To be part of this study, please send the enclosed post card no later than October 10, 1994. We thank you.

Hassan Ali
Graduate Assistant

Robert A. Martin
Professor
Response Postcard:

Dear RPCV, please print the following information:

Your name is:

Your current address is:

Your phone number:

In October (1994) what dates, days or times are convenient for you to do this interview:

During your Peace Corps assignment, the number of months that you did participation and/or empowerment activities with rural women were:

Follow-up Postcard:

Dear RPCV,

Recently we sent a letter to explain our research project regarding empowering rural women. Up to this time, we have not received your post-card. If you are interested in participating in this study, as soon as possible, please return the postcard that was included with our letter.

Warmest Regards,

Hassan Ali
223 Curtiss Hall
Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa 50011
APPENDIX B: HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

Last Name of Principal Investigator: Ali

Checklist for Attachments and Time Schedule:
The following are attached (please check):

12. □ Letter or written statement to subjects indicating clearly:
   a) purpose of the research
   b) the use of any identifier codes (names, #s), how they will be used, and when they will be removed (see Item 17)
   c) an estimate of time needed for participation in the research and the place
   d) if applicable, location of the research activity
   e) how you will ensure confidentiality
   f) in a longitudinal study, note when and how you will contact subjects later
   g) participation is voluntary; nonparticipation will not affect evaluations of the subject.

13. □ Consent form (if applicable)

14. □ Letter of approval for research from cooperating organizations or institutions (if applicable)

15. □ Data-gathering instruments

16. Anticipated dates for contact with subjects:
   First Contact
   Last Contact
   September 24, 1996
   October 31, 1996
   Month / Day / Year
   Month / Day / Year

17. If applicable: anticipated date that identifiers will be removed from completed survey instruments and/or audio or visual tapes will be erased:
   December 31, 1996
   Month / Day / Year

18. Signature of Departmental Executive Officer
   Date: 9-26-96
   Department or Administrative Unit: [Signature]

19. Decision of the University Human Subjects Review Committee:
   X Project Approved
   ___ Project Not Approved
   ___ No Action Required

   Patricia M. Keith
   Name of Committee Chairperson
   Date: 10-3-96
   Signature of Committee Chairperson
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Dear RPCV,

We thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview on empowering rural women. This is the complete list of questions that will be asked. Initially you may think that there are too many questions. However, we have timed these interviews and it should not take more than 1 1/2 to 2 hours to complete the entire questionnaire. There are several things we would like you to know. First, in Part One, we would like to obtain thorough answers; in Part Two below however, short answers should be sufficient; and finally, we only need quick answers in Part Three of this questionnaire. You may decline to answer any question. And of course whenever you like, you may take a break during the interview. So if you have time, we would like you to look at each of these questions and to think about a possible answer—prior to my arrival to your home town. There is no problem if you do not know the answer to some of these questions; basically all we need is YOUR opinion(s). Once again we thank you.

HASSAN ALI'S INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

First, to start each interview session the researcher (Hassan Ali) will do the following: a) explain to each RPCV interviewee, that all comments will be confidential b) as defined in this study, the meaning of participation and empowerment will be explained c) a description of a facilitator (i.e. the RPCV) would be stated d) and finally, to remind the interviewee that all questions during the discussion, will pertain to Peace Corps work that was done with village and rural women.

PART ONE--A THOROUGH DISCUSSION

1.) When did you do your Peace Corps assignment, which country was it in, and what was your area assignment?
   1a.) And how long did you work with women?

2.) During your two year assignment, did you receive any formal or informal training in participatory or empowerment methods?

3.) To start a participatory and empowerment program, do you need to establish rapport and respect with the women first? If so, how is this rapport built up, and how long did it take before the women trusted you?
   3a.) When did you know that this rapport and trust had been established? What were the signs?

4.) To be an effective program, does participation need to include empowerment as well?

5.) What is the role of the facilitators in the participation and empowerment process?
   5a.) Exactly what must a facilitator do, to get this process going?

6.) Do program ideas come from the facilitators or from the people (i.e. women)?

7.) How did you organize your meetings for the women?

8.) From what you have observed, is there more enthusiasm and better attendance when the women are involved and participating in program activities?

9.) How did you select the women for the participation program?

10.) This is a very important question. What are the ways to get more women to participate? And how did you get the women to be committed to the program?
11.) How did you assess the problems of the women? (And were problems usually identified individually or in a group situation?)

12.) How did you implement your participatory program (i.e. step by step, what did you do)?
12a.) Starting from the very first day, can you outline the step by step procedure on how to implement a participatory at the village level. What are the principles in this process?

13.) If the program plans did not go well, what did you do?

14.) Explain the planning process in your participatory program?
14a.) How would you advise someone on how to plan a participatory program? Step by step what are the principles for planning at the village level?

15.) How did you select women to be part of the decision-making (i.e. empowerment), or did everyone decide?

16.) With the empowerment program you were involved in, how was it organized and implemented?

17.) Which professional is best suited to set-up a participation and empowerment program? How can an extensionist be part of this process?

18.) A key question in this study is, what are some of the reasons why some women did not participate, and what could have been done to get more women actively involved in this self-helped process?

19.) Can you think of any other way(s) to attract women into these self-helped programs?

20.) What activities would you recommend to train Peace Corps Volunteers (or other international development personnel) on how to do participatory and empowerment at the village level?

21.) In your opinion, how can you "spread" or disseminate the participation and empowerment process throughout a region?

PART TWO—SHORT ANSWERS

22.) It has been said that empowerment of the people (to make decisions for themselves) is needed before you get to the participation stage. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

23.) What role can local village leaders (male and/or female) play in starting a participatory and an empowerment program? Should these leaders be involved in meetings?
23a.) Did you need approval from female local leaders as well?

24.) Is it necessary for the facilitator to be considered "part of the community" to get things done?

25.) What are the expenses for a participatory or empowerment program? Are these the type of expenses a village/rural community can afford to pay by themselves?

26.) While doing participatory and empowerment activities, did you notice any differences between the educated and uneducated women? Explain.

27.) What was the most effective method of communicating with the women?
27a.) Were there other forms of communication with the women?
28.) If things did not go as quickly as anticipated, what did you do?

29.) How did you monitor and evaluate your participatory program? Did the women themselves get involved in evaluating and critiquing the program?

30.) Was the empowerment phase evaluated, if so please describe what was done.
30a.) To be effective, can there be participation and no empowerment, and vice versa?

31.) What are some of the problems with participation? And what are some of the problems associated with empowerment activities?

32.) From your experience, does a successful participation and empowerment program teach the women to do-for-self? And after you came back to the United States, do you think the women abandoned the participatory and empowerment program after you left their community?
32a.) In your program, the women LEARNED the how to solve their own problems through participation. After you finished your two year assignment and went back to the United States, do you think the women will use this self helped participatory technique to solve other problems that they might encounter in the future?

**PART THREE—QUICK ANSWERS**

33.) It has been said that to get a highly motivated group of workers, the program must consistently address the perceived problems, or the perceived needs of the women? Did you find this to be the case during your Peace Corps assignment?

34.) Do you know of any other helpful hints on how to start and to manage a participation and empowerment program for village/rural women?

35.) With this type of program, whose needs should be stressed the most, the needs of your supervisor, or the needs of the village women?

36.) How important is it to be honest with the women, to be realistic in your goals, and to be truthful, even though the village women wanted to hear something different?

37.) During group discussions, should only members of the program attend, or should the whole community (i.e. non members) be invited to come and participate?

38.) When doing participatory and empowerment activities for village and rural women, should facilitators be men only, or should the facilitators be women? Why? Can they be men or women?
38a.) Do you think that female facilitators can get closer to the village women?

39.) Can a participatory program for women also include their children? Explain.

40.) Is it beneficial, if SOME of the rural women are educated in a participatory and empowerment regime?

41.) Were there women who wanted money for their participation? If so, what did you do about this situation?

42.) How can technology transfer be facilitated with participation and empowerment activities?
43.) On a scale of 1-10 (10 being excellent), how successful was your participation and empowerment program?

44.) With participation are there problems in establishing trust with the women; if so how did you overcome this problem?

45.) Were there any communication problems, if so how was this problem solved?

46.) How did you get shy or passive women to speak up in meetings or to become more involved with group activities?

47.) How did you neutralize richer villagers from garnering too much power in the group?

48.) Did lower status and higher status women share equally in program activities, and did they share equally in program benefits? If so, how was this equity achieved?

49.) It has been stated that women's groups tend to suffer from a lack of management skills. How did you over-come this problem?

50.) What can be done about a lack of financial resources?

51.) When a meeting is held for women, should village men be invited? Should men participate in any of the programs that are designed for women?

52.) How did you get men to agree, to let their wives or daughters participate in your program?

53.) In terms of active involvement, did it matter whether the women were married or single, or whether she was young or old?

54.) And finally, in order to do participatory programs, do you have to change attitudes of the people? Explain.

54a.) Do you think the methods used for participation and empowerment of women, are also the type of methods that would work for men as well?

Note: All respondents were asked probing questions. These probing questions are identified with a number, followed by the letter "a". For example the last probing question on this interview schedule was "54a".


