

## PREFACE

### Background Note on the Office of Evaluation and Its Discussion Paper Series

The primary objective of the Agency of International Development's Office of Evaluation is to provide AID management with usable analyses of the intended and unintended impact of aided projects, programs, policies, and procedures. It is our intent that lessons gleaned from AID's past inform present planning.

The Office tailors its approach to suit the nature of a problem, its urgency, and the type of data available. After identifying a problem and ascertaining management interest in it, the Office's staff normally links up with or establishes a network of AID and non-AID experts. The staff also reviews information from the Agency's automated data base systems and assembles documents including project papers, project evaluations, and special studies sponsored by other parts of the Agency. In conjunction with this the Office commissions discussion papers by experts who are familiar with the past efforts of development agencies as well as with the problem. It may also hold workshops and conferences and, if necessary, carry out field studies of past projects and programs. The Office does not sponsor basic research on development but concentrates on analyzing available information.

Findings are issued in discussion papers, workshop and conference reports, circular airgrams, action memoranda, sector and subsector studies, and case studies. They are intended to stimulate discussion and innovation and to encourage experimentation. They do not constitute formal guidance unless they are explicitly cleared and issued as such.

The purpose of the series of discussion papers prepared for the Office is to stimulate thought and dialogue on a problem by exploring past experience from new perspectives. Consequently, we have encouraged authors to be constructively critical, to examine explicit and implicit assumptions that are usually taken as given, to look for unrecognized and often cross-sectoral linkages, to examine host-country institutional factors, to examine the way AID's organization, staffing, and procedures affect our effectiveness, and to identify for further examination alternative approaches and policy options.

Because the discussion papers are exploratory they are not intended to be comprehensive in coverage, conclusive in their argument, or primarily technical in orientation. They are intended to help

formulate additional hypotheses for testing and to assess what additional work needs to be done on the problem. We hope that the discussion papers will help stimulate innovative and more effective programming and project design in our overseas missions. The papers also will be of interest to scholars carrying out research on development.

Most importantly, however, we hope that the papers will elicit responses from our readers--responses that will confirm or refute assertions, refine or add issues to be analyzed, and suggest case studies necessary to resolve issues.

#### About the Author

Barbara L.K. Pillsbury is a medical anthropologist who has conducted original research in Taiwan, the People's Republic of China, and Egypt and has studied widely about the multiple health systems of Asia and the Middle East. She is author of Traditional Health Care in the Near East: Indigenous Health Practices and Practitioners in Egypt, Afghanistan, Jordan, Syria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Yemen which was prepared under contract with AID's Near East Bureau in 1978. Dr. Pillsbury received a PhD in anthropology from Columbia University in 1973 and is presently on leave to the Office's Studies Division from San Diego State University where she is a tenured Associate Professor.

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