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Attitudes of women toward world hunger

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ATTITUDES OF WOMEN TOWARD WORLD HUNGER

BY
JUDITH L. KIDD

A Practicum submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF
SOCIAL WORK

*Approved
J. Kidd*

Portland State University
1976

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF TABLES	iii
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE	1
II REVIEW OF LITERATURE	7
III METHOD	15
IV RESULTS	19
V CONCLUSIONS	35
REFERENCES CITED	40
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	42
APPENDICES	
A QUESTIONNAIRE	44
B RESPONDENTS' COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND NUMBER FROM EACH COUNTRY	48
C RESPONDENT OCCUPATIONS AND NUMBER IN EACH OCCUPATION	50
D PERCENT OF AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS BY TOTAL SAMPLE, GROUPS OF AGE, RELIGION, AND COUNTRY	52

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
I	Social Indices of the Status of Women in Developed and Developing Countries	12
II	Number of Respondents According to Age, Religion, and Country	20
III	Agreement and Disagreement with Statements Concerning Basic Human Rights by Percent	22
IV	Agreement and Disagreement with Statements Concerning Roles of Women by Percent.	23
V	Agreement and Disagreement on Women's Roles: Catholic Women and Women from Developed Countries by Percent	26
VI	Agreement and Disagreement with Statements Concerning Roles of Countries by Percent	28
VII	Single Most Important Solution to World Hunger by Total Sample and Respondent Religion by Percent	31

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, 460 million people in the poorest sixty nations of the world are victims of acute hunger. (1, p. 217) If the definition of hunger is widened to include those who consume enough calories, but lack proteins or other essential nutrients, then the number of malnourished people reaches one to two billion. (2, p. 4)

Obviously, some malnutrition arises as a result of lack of education, faulty methods of cooking, as well as social and religious prejudices against some foods; but the main cause of malnutrition is poverty. (3, p. 4) The people who fall in the lowest income groups around the world are small land holders, landless laborers, and the unemployed and underemployed in both rural and urban areas. Within these groups it is the women and children who suffer most. When there is a shortage of food the most economic alternative is for the women to feed the man--the earner in the family--and suffer self-deprivation.

The designation of the year 1975 as International Women's Year was an admission by the governments of the world that in most societies, past and present, tradition has accorded women an inferior role and status. The failure to use women's full potential has impeded the development not only of societies, but of women as individuals.

The primary purpose of this study is to explore the attitudes of women toward the world food crisis, their roles, and the roles of their countries in its possible solutions. The data is based on a questionnaire administered to women from thirty countries who attended the International Women's Year Tribune in Mexico City, June 19 to July 2, 1975.

International Women's Year

On December 18, 1972 the United Nations proclaimed the year 1975 as International Women's Year, and urged that the Year be devoted to intensified action to promote equality between men and women, to ensure the full integration of women in the overall development effort, and to recognize the importance of women's role in the development of world peace. (4, p. 26) The International Women's Year (IWY), by focusing on the problems of women, presented an opportunity to generate awareness that women are not separate or removed from the "real" issues of the day, such as rapid population growth and the world food crisis. The idea of breaking down "separatist" thinking was expressed by Helvi Sipila, Secretary-General of the IWY Conference:

Our failure to see the multidimensional nature of problems, our propensity to deal with them in separate categories, to attack their symptoms but not their roots, all contribute to this tendency which is nowhere more in evidence than in our efforts to deal with women's problems. (5, p. 10)

The major event of the Year was the United Nations Conference of the International Women's Year in Mexico City (June 19-July 2), which brought together government representatives from 133 countries. It was the first world intergovernmental conference on women ever

held. The purpose of the Conference was to approve a global Plan of Action to be later submitted to the United Nations General Assembly.

By the end of the two-week Conference, the body of the original draft Plan was adopted; another 700 amendments to the rest of the Plan were submitted but not considered due to the lack of time and the blatant politicization of the amending process. Basically, the Plan provides guidelines for action by governments in areas including political participation, education and training, employment, health and nutrition, and population. (6, p. 3) The underlying philosophy of the Plan was in making the need to eradicate sexism a primary objective, although the word itself was never mentioned.

The setting for the present study was five miles to the south of the Conference location, at the National Medical Center, where the IWY Tribune was held. The Tribune was an independent parallel activity held concurrently with the official U.N. Conference of IWY. It was organized by a committee appointed by the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Consultative Status with the United Nations.

The purpose of the Tribune was to bring together persons from all geographic areas and varied backgrounds to exchange information and opinions on the position of women in economic and social life, and to give consideration to the work of the U.N. Conference. Any concerned individuals, organization representatives, Conference delegates, and global authorities were invited to participate.

The program for the Tribune consisted of daily workshops, cross-cultural dialogue, platform presentations, films, exhibits, and briefings on the U.N. Conference preceedings. Sessions were interpreted

simultaneously in English, French, and Spanish. Among the topics discussed were: education, health, nutrition, agriculture and rural development, population and family planning, law and the status of women, employment, professions and the arts, political participation, and efforts for peace.

Unlike the Conference, the Tribune had no position on issues discussed and did not adopt formal resolutions.

The general climate of the Tribune was one of excitement. Aside from the regularly scheduled daily events, a number of unplanned demonstrations, "speak-outs", and political confrontations became the focus of attention. One United States delegate referred to the Tribune as "definitely the most exciting of the two conferences".

Nine out of ten of the Tribune participants were women. They represented a diversity of groups such as the United Farm Workers, Amnesty International, European Women in Exile, International Lesbian Caucus, Young Women's Christian Association, World Population Society, and the American Association of University Women. In all, over 5000 persons from 82 countries registered for Tribune sessions.

Nature of the Problem

As stated earlier, separatist thinking has traditionally removed the problems of women from other critical problems of the world, including the food crisis. However, because women are directly affected by food shortages, malnutrition, and hunger, any discussion concerning solutions to food problems must involve the attitudes and opinions of women.

There is growing evidence that development in some countries,

far from contributing to the advance of women, has actually been taking place at their expense. Women who once shared an agrarian system of food production find themselves displaced by modern agriculture techniques which are carried out almost universally by men. Most women are left out of modern agricultural training programs even though, in Africa, they do as much as 70% of all agricultural work. (7, p. 2) As a result, many women join the exodus to the cities, where they may enter the exploited labor force for new industries or turn to prostitution. One inevitability for many of these women is that an adequately nutritious diet will be difficult or impossible to obtain.

The cycle of malnutrition, as illustrated by Alan Berg, is perpetuated by the "need for children" in most poor countries. (8, pp. 33-38) Since male offspring provide the only effective form of social security, families continue to have children in order to ensure that at least one boy will survive. Furthermore, Berg says that the most severe cases of malnutrition are invariably children from large families. The number of children also has a direct bearing on the nutritional well-being of the mother. Nutritional anemia, a major cause of illness and death during pregnancy, becomes more virulent as a mother gives more births.

Clearly, the health of women is an important factor in determining possible solutions to world hunger.

The present study attempts to explore the opinions of women on world food problems and allow them a voice in global activities concerning the alleviation of hunger. Too often women are not included

in decision-making processes on an international level. Perhaps by involving women and their perspective, the more humane aspects of global needs can be emphasized and considered.

The present study is limited, of course, by the women who responded to the questionnaire. Although many of them came from countries severely affected by food shortages, the women themselves were mostly well-educated, well-fed, and financially secure. However, the women were likely to be involved in development programs, government services, and higher education. It is assumed that while the respondents were probably not directly affected by hunger or malnutrition, they seemed generally conscious of global problems and showed an interest in the questionnaire.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The world food situation has been the subject of an overwhelming volume of literature throughout the past decade. The problem has been analysed from a variety of aspects--economic, social, political, technological, and psychological. For the purposes of practicality, the report of the literature review for this study has been restricted to 1) an overall statement of the food problem and proposed solutions, and 2) the perspective of women in food production and food shortages.

World Food Crisis

The dimensions of hunger encompass the majority of people in developing countries. (9, p. 83) Average calorie intake in poor countries containing almost two-thirds of the world's population is below the nutritional minimum required for normal growth and activity. (10, p. 89) Many of these people suffer from chronic protein malnutrition as well as undernutrition. Protein deficiencies are particularly harmful to small children and to pregnant and nursing women. Recently, the consequences of protein deficiencies in small children have been shown to be a decreased number of brain cells and thwarted mental development. (11, pp. 29-33)

The prospect of an approaching world food crisis was envisioned in the early 1960's. (12, pp 3-8) Serious attention was devoted to increasing food production in developing countries through the Green

Revolution. (13, p. 527) The "revolution" depended primarily on high-yielding wheat and rice seeds, together with the use of fertilizer and well-irrigated land.

By 1968-1969 the reemergence of surpluses caused the major grain exporters to reduce their wheat-growing areas dramatically, shifting to feed grains or eliminating grains entirely. This rapid reduction in grain stocks contributed to a further fluctuation of grain prices.

The present world food crisis suddenly emerged in 1972. Due to crop failures and foul weather, the output of food in the world declined for the first time in more than two decades. (14, p. 2) Immediately, U.S. grain exports rose sharply and stocks fell to a level generally considered to be below the minimum to cover normal annual usage.

The oil crisis, the devaluation of the U.S. dollar, rapid worldwide economic growth, and inflation also played a contributing role in these developments.

The Transnational Institute reports that by 1985, the number of people suffering from hunger and severe malnutrition will be over 750 million, if the present pattern of food distribution within countries continues. (14, p. 16) To supply even a small energy addition toward minimum nutrition would require nearly twenty million extra tons of cereals annually. In practice, even larger amounts would be required.

Developments over the past two decades illustrate the multidimensions of the food problem. A large number of the problems are the result of human and governmental factors, rather than environmental

ones. Many experts agree that unequal distribution of food, both within and between nations, is the crux of the food crisis. (3, p. 4, 2, p. 14) Political scientist Richard Barnett says: "While it is true that there is an overall shortfall of food production in the world, the acute hunger problems are really distribution problems". (15, p. 1) Borgstrom characterizes the relationship of the affluent world to the hungry world as "the big grab". (1, p. 217) The average North American requires five times as many agricultural resources as the average Indian, Nigerian, or Colombian. (1, p. 222)

The inequality between the developed countries and the developing countries becomes evident when proteins and other protective nutrients are considered. A number of poor countries export large quantities of high-quality protein-rich food products to preserve and increase overeating in the affluent countries. As a result, the rich countries take a disproportionate share of the protective food and use it in a less economical way than would be necessary in the poor countries. (9, p. 85)

According to Lester Brown, it is unrealistic to consider eliminating hunger without a massive attack on global poverty and raising incomes enough to obtain an adequately nutritious diet. (10, pp 108-109) Hunger is inextricably linked with abject poverty, concentrated in regions where per capita incomes are less than \$400 per year, essentially most of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Furthermore, Brown suggests that a large share of the needed resources could be earned by the poor countries themselves if the affluent ones would permit competitive access to their internal markets.

On the contrary, Mesarovic and Pestel submit that the question

of world food supply is too often considered solely within the confines of economics. (16, p. 118) The need is rather to determine what can be produced with the amount of land available and with existing economic and human resources. They conclude that "the only feasible solution" requires a proper combination of the following measures: 1) a global approach to the problem, 2) investment aid, rather than commodity aid, 3) a balanced economic development for all regions of the world, 4) an effective population policy, and 5) worldwide diversification of industry. (16, p. 127)

Similarly, the Transnational Institute holds that social progress is a pre-condition for the growth of agriculture. (14, p. 162) It advocates agrarian reform, which regroups peasants into cooperatives, coupled with a new marketing system based on cooperatives with strong state participation.

All of the major studies of the world food situation in 1974 lead to generally the same conclusions: 1) There exists sufficient resources of land, labor, water, fertilizer, technology, and capital to increase food production substantially in the next two decades. 2) The major need is to increase food production in those countries that are facing the most severe deficits of food. 3) If food deficits of developing countries continue to rise, the transfer of surpluses from the affluent countries would have to take place on concessional terms. 4) World food stability requires sufficient reserve stocks of food to overcome unexpected disruption. 5) Malnutrition results largely from low incomes and poverty. (13, p. 528)

Women and Food

This study aims to look at the world food crisis from the perspective of women. Although the problems of women constitute only one dimension of the crisis, they illustrate that hunger is a social as well as a technological problem. Hunger is similarly interrelated with other global inadequacies. According to Addeke H. Boerma, director of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization:

It would be futile and unrealistic to attempt to discuss hunger and malnutrition in isolation from other evils of our age...we must look at the economic and social problems of the world in their totality. (17)

In poor countries as a whole, women account for at least one half of the food production. (2, p. 26) Yet women bear a disproportionate share of the world's hunger and poverty. Their literacy rate is far lower than that of men, as well as that of women in developed countries. Further discrepancies among women of the world are shown in Table I.

Women in developing countries are less educated, marry younger, and have more children than women in developed countries. Yet, they play a major role in activities such as subsistence food production, food processing, market trade, and domestic work. (18, p. 6)

The problem of women's participation in development appears when the family production for subsistence is gradually replaced by specialized production of goods and services. Unfortunately, when only men elevate from family production to specialized production, the women continue to work for the family and their contribution to the economy becomes characterized by an inferior status. (19, p. 1)

TABLE I

SOCIAL INDICES OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES*

	MORE DEVELOPED AREAS		LESS DEVELOPED AREAS	
Female adult illiteracy	Europe North America	4.7% 1.9%	Africa Asia Latin America	83.7% 56.7% 27.3%
Percentage of females studying at: Primary level	Europe North America	87.8% 88.2%	Africa Asia Latin America	32.9% 45.2% 66.3%
Secondary level	Europe North America	32.4% 61.5%	Africa Asia Latin America	19.0% 27.9% 25.6%
University level	Europe North America	5.0% 8.0%	Africa Asia Latin America	2.0% 3.8% 4.5%
Percentage of women economically active	Europe North America	29.4% 25.0%	Africa Asia Latin America	26.3% 21.5% 17.1%
Percentage of economically active women employed in agriculture	Europe North America	23.0% 2.5%	Africa Asia Latin America	49.0% 52.0% 12.0%
Percentage of women between the ages of 15 and 19 who are married, divorced or widowed	Europe North America	6.7% 9.9%	Africa Asia Latin America	40.7% 27.9% 15.2%
Average of number of children	Europe North America	Between 2 and 4	Africa Asia Latin America	Between 5 and 7
Life expectancy		74 years		55 years

* United Nations Development Programme, 1974.

In some countries women may begin to take part in specialized production of goods and services at an early stage, but are mainly small-scale producers and traders on their own account. These differences in women's contribution to the main economic activities need to be considered in any discussion concerning the improvement of women's role in developing countries. (18, p. 12)

As long as agriculture is mainly a subsistence activity, where most of the output is consumed by the family, women are consistently found to perform a large share of agricultural work. In many cases, the women must enlist the help of their daughters, resulting in poorer school attendance of girls than of boys.

The women most affected by poverty and hunger are those rural women whose commitment or efficiency with regard to the family and the community is very poor. This group is found at the lowest stratum of rural areas in south east Asia and the Arab countries. (19, p. 8) Poverty, illiteracy, confinement to the house, undernutrition, malnutrition and superstition tend to reinforce and perpetuate a pattern of idleness and low efficiency in all activities, including agriculture.

From an economic and social point of view, no country can afford to neglect the potential contribution of women. A realistic approach is the recognition of women's participation in food production. A U.N. assessment of educational projects explains,

...if one could single out the main factor that has precipitated interest in the education and training of women, it is probably the critical shortage of food supplies. Statistics are beginning to show the significant extent to which women are actually responsible for food production. (20, p 12)

Furthermore, the share of agricultural work done by women is increasing in many countries. (18, p. 14) As urban development creates a widening gap between incomes in urban and rural areas, a large migration of male youth from the villages forces more women into agriculture.

At the 1974 World Food Conference in Rome, six resolutions contained specific references to women. (21, p. 1) The conference officially recognized the important role of women in the production, processing, marketing and consumption of food, in family nutrition and planning, and the need to involve them fully in education and extension.

Finally, the Conference's "Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition" stressed the necessity to ensure that "appropriate education, extension programs and financial facilities are made available to women on equal terms with men". (21, p.2)

The references and bibliography at the conclusion of this report contain a list of resources which provide a general knowledge of the world food situation, its contributing causes and possible solutions. The lists also contain literature concerning the role of women in development and food production, and the status of women in relation to food problems.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

The empirical conclusions of this report are based primarily on data collected by a questionnaire that was administered to women attending the International Women's Year Tribune in Mexico City, June 19-July 2, 1975. Prior to the Tribune a literature review was conducted in order to explore prevailing attitudes and roles of women regarding the world food problems. From this review, some basic concepts concerning human rights, roles of women, and roles of countries were chosen as important elements in determining attitudes of women toward world hunger.

Questionnaire Design

Due to the nature of the Tribune, the questionnaire necessarily had to be clear, simple, and succinct, yet allow for open-ended discussion. Consequently, a multiple-choice type questionnaire was constructed consisting of fourteen propositions, or statements, and an additional fifteenth question for ranking hunger solutions. Each of the fourteen propositions contained a scale of one through ten on which the respondents could indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement with the statement. A ranking of "1" indicated "strongly agree", and a ranking of "10" meant "strongly disagree". Question fifteen was a list of proposed solutions for alleviating world hunger on which respondents were asked to rank the items in order of

importance. An "other" category was provided for additional solutions, as well as a space for "comments". The explanation of purpose as stated on the questionnaire was "to sample the opinions of women with respect to the world food problem and their role in its solutions".

Since the IWY Tribune was an international conference with translations in French, English, and Spanish, the final questionnaire was produced in both the English and Spanish language. A French version was discarded after learning the difficulties involved with translating various African and European dialects. Fortunately, most of the French-speaking women at the Tribune were bilingual in either English or Spanish.

Prior to the Tribune, the questionnaire was pretested by eight interested American women, most of whom were graduate students. A Spanish version was pretested by a former Peace Corps volunteer who served in Colombia. The resulting comments were used to make minor changes in the final form of the questionnaire. (See Appendix A for the complete questionnaire.)

Data Collection

Once the Tribune began with the opening session on June 19, the following seven days of forums, workshops, and exhibits provided the setting for distributing and collecting the questionnaire data. As a matter of choice, only non-American women were requested to answer the questionnaire, with the rationale that Americans are further removed and thus, less aware, of the magnitude of world hunger. Also, my own personal desire to take advantage of a rare opportunity to interview foreign women superseded my desire to interview fellow Americans.

The total attendance at the Tribune was approximately 5000. The largest group came from Mexico, with 2060 persons, followed by the United States, with 1350. Japan was represented by 200 people, Colombia by 200, Chile by 67 and Cuba by 55. Obviously, the location of the conference in Mexico presented an overrepresentation of Mexican and American women.

The population sample was, out of circumstance, a selected sample of "opportunity" which was selected by requesting a woman to complete the questionnaire. Most of the women who were confronted were willing to cooperate. A personal interview was not conducted; the questionnaire was briefly explained and then the woman was left alone to answer it. This method of the "self-administered" questionnaire was chosen over the personal interview due to the bias in the sample data and the errors in recording responses that often result from an interview. (23, p. 25)

The only feasible alternative to this approach would have been to set up a designated area in the convention center and have people choose to respond, if interested. However, this approach probably would have failed to attract anyone but a handful of sympathetic American women. (This, in fact, was the case with other questionnaires being conducted at the Tribune.)

Consequently, the process of approaching women and explaining the questionnaire became a much more tedious and time-consuming task than originally expected. Initially, the goal was to obtain 150-200 responses, but was slowly reduced as each day progressed. In all, sixty-seven completed questionnaires were obtained. Seven of these were disqualified due to lack of information or obvious misunder-

standing of directions, leaving a total of sixty workable responses.

When selecting potential respondents, an effort was made to approach women of all ages, nationalities, and demeanor. As stated earlier, most of the women were eager to participate and carefully answered each question. A few were somewhat suspicious of the questionnaire's purpose or who was going to read it. Others simply did not want to spend the time.

Analysis of Data

Responses to the questionnaire were aggregated and hand tabulated on summary sheets. As this was an exploratory and descriptive study, numerical analysis and percentage tables were utilized. All unusual responses and written remarks were translated into English and compiled for use in the total analysis.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The sixty completed questionnaires revealed a wide range of attitudes and opinions, reflecting the diversity of the population sample. Although the study was undertaken with no specific hypotheses in mind, certain outcomes were anticipated because of various educational, age, and religious differences among the respondents. For example, Catholic women were thought to be more likely to resist the idea of birth control as a primary solution for alleviating hunger. Likewise, Third World women, or women from the "developing" countries, were expected to advocate a more equal distribution of the world's food. Furthermore, older women were anticipated to be less enthusiastic about women taking a political stand on hunger issues. The results proved otherwise on all three suppositions.

Demographic Data

As stated earlier, the respondents were non-American women attending the IWY Tribune. They represented a total of thirty countries and twenty-one occupations. They ranged in age from twenty to over sixty. Table II shows the number of respondents in each group under the categories of age, religion, and country. For purposes of analysis, all represented countries were classified as either "developed", meaning North America, Europe, Japan, and Australia,

and "developing", meaning Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

TABLE II
NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO AGE, RELIGION, COUNTRY

<u>AGE</u>			
21-30	31-40	41-50	51+
16	20	18	6
<u>RELIGION</u>			
Catholic	Protestant	None	Other
20	12	18	10
<u>COUNTRY</u>			
Developed		Developing	
17		43	

The large representation of Catholic women and women from developing countries is largely due to the fact that one third of the respondents were from Mexico and were also Catholic. Other than Mexico, no country had over three respondents. Some of these included Sweden, Bangladesh, Sierra Leone, Egypt, Colombia, and China. (See Appendix B for a complete list of countries of respondents.)

Of the twenty-one occupations listed by the respondents, those of journalist, professor, and teacher appeared most frequently. Other occupations included administrator, social worker, physician, and housewife. Obviously, the majority of the women worked in some kind of professional field and were mostly well-educated. The questionnaire did not seek to obtain education levels due to the vast

differences in schooling throughout the world. (See Appendix C for a complete list of occupations.)

Presentation of Results

As the respondents indicated their amount of agreement and disagreement on a scale of one through ten, the results were tabulated in three degrees of opinion. A ranking of 1,2, or 3, was classified as "clearly agree"; a ranking of 4,5,6, or 7 was classified as "middle range responses"; and a ranking of 8,9, or 10 was "clearly disagree".

For the purpose of analysis and presentation, the questionnaire data was collapsed into four categories. The first three categories aggregate those propositions which concern 1) basic human rights, 2) roles of women, and 3) roles of countries. Question fifteen, the ranking of hunger solutions, was analysed individually in the fourth category.

All data was first examined in the context of the total population sample, and then analysed according to groups of age, religion, and country of origin.

Basic Human Rights

Not surprisingly, the propositions concerning basic human rights solicited the most agreement among the respondents. In fact, on every proposition at least 90% of the women indicated "clearly agree". One proposition received 100% clear agreement--both sexes should have an equal access to education. The only incidence of clear disagreement on basic rights was on the statement that "every country has a right to determine its own path to development". Table III shows the percentage of agreement and disagreement among the respondents on basic human

rights propositions.

TABLE III
 AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS CONCERNING
 BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS BY PERCENT (N = 60)

Statement	Clearly Agree	Middle Response	Clearly Disagree
1. Both sexes have a right to education and training.	100.0	0	0
2. Every human has a right to food.	96.6	3.3	0
3. Every human has an equal right to the world's food.	96.6	3.3	0
4. Women have a right of access to all levels of employment.	93.3	6.6	0
5. Every country has a right to determine its own path to development.*	90.0	5.0	3.3

*No response, one person.

The women clearly agreed that each person has a right to an adequate diet, to education and employment, and to an equal portion of the world's food, and that each country has a right to determine its own development. However, the remaining propositions proved somewhat more controversial as to how the roles of women and countries affect these basic rights.

Roles of Women

The next five propositions concerned the woman's obligation to her family and her country in regards to hunger and food shortages. Again, almost total agreement (90%) was expressed on the statement

that women should pressure their respective governments to not seek political or economic advantage from food shortages. The idea of greedy governments exerting power over smaller countries for economic gain was an emotionally charged subject at the Tribune. Representatives from hunger stricken countries such as Bangladesh and Haiti frequently denounced western world policies of overconsumption and corporate "imperialism".

Table IV shows the amount of agreement and disagreement among the respondents on the role of women in hunger alleviation. (See Appendix D for percentages of agreement according to groups of age, religion, and country.)

TABLE IV

AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS CONCERNING
ROLES OF WOMEN BY PERCENT (N=60)

Statement	Clearly Agree	Middle Response	Clearly Disagree
1. Women should pressure their governments to not seek advantage.*	90.0	6.6	1.6
2. Women have an obligation to utilize birth controls.	66.6	20.0	13.3
3. Women should call attention to the humane aspects of food shortages.	65.0	20.0	15.0
4. A woman's primary obligation is to feed her family.	46.6	20.0	33.3
5. Women's concerns with hunger are different from men's.	30.0	18.3	51.6

* No response, one person.

Overall, two-thirds of the respondents clearly agreed that women have an obligation to utilize birth controls to limit their child-bearing. Less than 15% clearly disagreed. A few women commented that they favored having the right "to choose" birth control, but should not be "obligated" to use it. When the birth control issue was analysed according to groups of age, religion, and country, some interesting differences occurred. Agreement with the statement ranged from only 44.4% of the "non-religious" group of women, who mostly were younger and from affluent countries, to 83.3% of the "over-fifty" age group. Catholic women were also high advocates of birth control (80%).

The issue receiving the widest range of opinion on the questionnaire was the statement that "women have a special role in calling attention to the humane aspects of food shortages. Although about two-thirds of the overall sample clearly agreed with this statement, the variations between groups are significant.

Of the women from the developed countries (i.e. Sweden, Japan, Canada) only 11.7% felt a responsibility to emphasize the humane aspects of food shortages. Almost one half of them strongly disagreed with the statement, and the remaining 41% were in the middle range response category.

On the contrary, a convincing 95% of the Catholic women clearly agreed with the proposition, as well as 86% of those from the developing countries. One explanation for this strong difference of opinion may be that women from the developing world, as several expressed at the Tribune, have undergone more dehumanizing experiences such as military coup takeovers, floods and famines, and general male domination.

Thus, they may feel a need to emphasize and restore humane aspects of living.

A similar proposition concerning the role of women stated that concerns of women with respect to world hunger are significantly different from those of men. On this issue, one-half of the respondents clearly disagreed and another 18.3% were in the middle range. Only 30% expressed clear agreement, indicating that overall, the respondents had mixed responses towards the role of women as opposed to the role of men in regards to hunger. The general lack of consensus is further illustrated by the fact that all of the groups of age, religion, and country had no significant differences of opinion on this statement.

The final proposition concerning the role of women said that a woman's primary obligation is to feed her family. Again, the overall response consisted of varying degrees of agreement. One out of three women clearly disagreed, the biggest majority being the younger "non-religious" women from developed nations. Another 20% were noncommitted to agree or disagree, and the remaining 46.6% strongly favored the notion that a woman should firstly feed her family.

As with the proposition concerning humane aspects of hunger, the Catholic women and the developed world women had some marked disagreements on the woman's role. These differences are shown in Table V.

Of the Catholic women, who were mostly from Mexico, 85% strongly agreed that their primary obligation was to feed their children. Conversely, a mere 12% of the developed world women felt the same obligation and two out of three strongly disagreed.

TABLE V
 AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT ON WOMEN'S ROLES: CATHOLIC
 WOMEN AND WOMEN FROM DEVELOPED COUNTRIES
 BY PERCENT

Statement	Clearly Agree	Middle Response	Clearly Disagree
A woman's primary obligation is to feed her family.	85/12*	5/23	10/65
Women should emphasize the humane aspects of hunger.	95/12	0/47	5/41

*Figures for Catholic women on left side.

The fact that the Catholic women were the highest "agrees" on issues concerning the woman's role is significant. Above all other groups, they felt that a woman is obligated to first take care of her family, to utilize birth controls, and to call attention to the humane aspects of food shortages. These attitudes seem to reflect the Catholic woman's strong sense of womanhood, her close family ties, and her passion for humanity.

Overall, less than 25% of the respondents were in the middle response category on any one proposition involving the roles of women. Most of the women either clearly agreed or clearly disagreed, with the exception of one group--the women of "other" religions. These women, who listed religions such as Moslem, Quaker, and Anglican had a disproportionate 40% in the middle response category on the three statements about the roles of women with respect to world hunger, feeding their families, and emphasizing humane aspects. Another 30%

were in "the middle of the road" on the birth control issue. One explanation for ambivalence among these respondents could be that their religions do not seek to define a woman's role, or else define it in such a way that is unacceptable to a more liberated or educated woman. However, these women could also be experiencing a period of transition in their ideas about roles of women.

Roles of Countries

The third group of statements concerned the roles of countries with respect to world food problems. As with the roles of women, the respondents in general appeared of mixed consensus toward the roles of governments.

Table VI shows the agreement and disagreement on statements concerning national obligations and expectations towards food issues. (See Appendix D for percentages of agreement according to groups of age, religion, and country.)

The statement receiving the largest agreement (88%) was, "Countries with wasteful diets have a greater obligation to reduce their food consumption". Moreover, some of the groups expressed total agreement of 100%, such as those women from developed countries, and those of "none" and "other" religions. Seemingly, the women from the developed world possess an acute awareness that affluency imposes certain responsibility for the world food problems. The largest reservation, 25%, was expressed by the Protestant women and the younger women.

The agreement was not quite as strong with the proposition that "Affluent countries are obligated to help feed the poorer countries".

TABLE VI
 AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS CONCERNING
 ROLES OF COUNTRIES BY PERCENT (N=60)

Statement	Clearly Agree	Middle Response	Clearly Disagree
1. Countries with wasteful diets are obligated to reduce food consumption.	88.3	10.0	1.6
2. Affluent countries are obligated to help feed the poorer countries.	75.0	16.6	8.3
3. Women cannot expect to influence the rich to give up their food surpluses.*	46.6	23.3	26.6
4. Food abundant nations should conditionally supply food to needy countries.**	23.3	11.6	60.0

*No response, two persons.

**No response, three persons.

Although three out of four women expressed clear agreement, some varying attitudes were present. Again, the women from the developed countries, who strongly favored less food consumption, had over 94% agreeing with the statement. On the other hand, only 56% of the "20-30" age group, which was mostly Mexican women, were in strong agreement. The Catholics also had reservations about totally agreeing that the rich countries are obligated to feed the poorer ones.

The greatest lack of consensus concerning the roles of countries was on the statement, "women cannot realistically expect success in an attempt to influence the affluent to give up their food surpluses

in behalf of the hungry". Less than one-half of the overall sample indicated strong agreement. Around one-fourth expressed disagreement, implying that they felt that it was realistic to expect success in influencing the affluent. Another one-fourth of the sixty respondents were in the middle response range.

The differences between the groups on this issue are not significant; however, the women from the developed countries tended to be more optimistic that they could influence their governments to give up food surpluses.

A similar proposition was related to food surpluses which said, "Food abundant nations should place conditions on countries in need before supplying food". A clear 60% of the women disagreed, including women from both developed and developing countries. The Catholics, expressing the strongest doubt, were evenly divided on the issue and had several with no definite opinion.

The overall response from the women on statements concerning roles of nations illustrates the difficulty involved in deciding food policies. Education and awareness of the problem does not automatically accompany a change in attitude.

Solutions to World Food Problem

The last item on the questionnaire was designed to allow the respondents to express their opinion of solutions to world hunger. Given a list of eight proposed solutions, they were instructed to rank them in order of importance. The proposed solutions were:

1. Exploring oceanic sources of food
2. Land reform

3. Birth control
4. More equitable distribution of world's food
5. Labor-intensive farming
6. Regional crop specialization
7. Literacy programs
8. Improvement of farm technology

An opportunity for "other" solutions was also provided.

The results were analysed from two perspectives:

- 1) the solution seen as single most important, and
- 2) the solution seen as one of three most important.

The rationale was that some solutions consistently received a ranking of one, two, or three, and by looking only at the number one ranking, the popularity of a solution was often obscured. The solution of "improved farm technology", for instance, was usually ranked as second most important, but only 8% of the women ranked it as the single most important.

Table VII shows the proposed solutions and their ranking as "single most important" solution by the total sample and by respondent religion.

TABLE VII
SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT SOLUTION TO WORLD HUNGER BY TOTAL
SAMPLE AND RESPONDENT RELIGION IN PERCENT

	Cath.	Prot.	None	Other	Total Sample
N	20	12	18	10	60
Birth Control	35.	16.6	16.6	50.	28.
Equal Distribution	10.	33.3	38.8	10.	23.
Ocean Resources	20.	8.3	5.5	10.	11.6
Land reform	0.	8.3	16.6	20.	10.
Improved farm tech.	10.	25.	0.	0.	8.3
Literacy	10.	0.	11.1	0.	6.6
Inten.-Labor farming	5.	0.	0.	0.	1.6
Reg. crop spec.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.
Other	0.	0.	5.5	0.	3.3
No response	10.	8.3	5.5	10.	6.6

The two most popular solutions were 1) birth control, receiving 28% of the total percentage, and 2) more equitable distribution of the world's food, receiving 23%. The remaining one half of the respondents were divided on the solutions of 1) exploring ocean resources, 2) land reform, 3) improved farm technology, and 4) literacy programs. Overall, the women indicated no clear consensus on any one solution as being the single most important. One significant finding, however, was that slightly over one third of the Catholic women ranked birth control as most important.

Looking at the proposed solutions according to their ranking as

one of the three most important solutions, some differences are evident. Whereas birth control formerly received the top ranking, three other solutions surpass it in popularity as among the three most important: 1) more equal distribution (50%), 2) improved farm technology (48.3%), and 3) land reform (45%).¹

Specifically, the solution of "more equitable distribution" received the highest ranking of over 75% from the older women (over 50 years) and the "non-religious". Almost two-thirds of the 21-30 year old women also favored the solution.

The two middle-aged groups of women both agreed that improved farm technology was among the three most important solutions. The Catholic women were equally divided among birth control, literacy programs, and improved farm technology.

Both the women from developed and developing countries had similar views on solutions. About one out of two in each group favored a more equitable distribution of food, followed by improved farm technology and land reform. Birth control was less popular among the women from the developed nations.

Two of the proposed hunger solutions were clearly seen by the respondents as not very important: 1) labor-intensive farming, and 2) regional crop specialization. The solutions of "literacy programs" and "exploring ocean resources" obtained the widest variation of opinions. Some women ranked them as very important, while others saw them as least important.

¹Percent figures total more than 100% since each respondent was ranking eight items. No one solution could receive more than sixty votes as being first, second, or third in importance. For example, if "birth control" received forty votes as the single most important, only twenty possible votes are left for a ranking of second or third.

About one of three respondents listed additional solutions, which resulted in two separate themes. The most recurring theme was the need for revolution, reform, or changing the political-economic system. Some women stressed the need to give more political power to Third World countries that are allegedly being exploited for their natural resources.

The other main theme centered around the need for education of the public and consciousness-raising on hunger and related issues. This was especially stressed as a need in the affluent countries.

Some other suggested solutions to the world food problems were improved local food preservation, nutrition education, and prevention of waste. One woman quite seriously suggested the solution of cannibalism.

Respondent Comments

An analysis of the questionnaire would not be complete without taking into consideration the written comments submitted by one-third of the women.

In light of the declaration by Third World countries in May of 1974 for a "New Economic Order", it is not surprising that many of the respondents' comments reflected an adherence to a shifting of power among nations. (3, p. 3) A middle-aged Liberian woman described it most openly, "No country has the right to dictate conditions upon another. How would you feel if a third world country would dictate to the U.S.A.? No country is self-sufficient!"

Others stressed the need to "help people to help themselves" and to plan "self-supporting projects and have less talking with regards

to politics".

A Ceylonese woman recommended publicity and raising awareness in developed countries so "that the affluent who indulge in constant wastefulness of all resources of the world will realize the poverty, suffering, and deprivation in the Third World". Similarly a young English woman agreed that western countries know little about food shortages and the needs of poor countries.

Despite the sense of pessimism, some women maintained that cooperation of all nations would be ideal--a spirit of "cooperativismo". A woman from Columbia submitted quite succinctly a solution of . . . "promotion of equality and active participation of all peoples of all parts of the world".

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Unfortunately, a report of this nature cannot truly convey the thoughts and feelings of the world's women--the too often forgotten "la mujere". No questionnaire can capture the colorful personalities of its respondents such as the articulate Chinese lawyer, the tearful Mexican "domestica", or the bitter Nigerian woman who begged "please tell your American government to stop their imperialistic oppression".

For acute hunger is a fact of life for over 460 million of the world's people, and to remove the facts from the feelings seems almost indignant towards those who suffer. Any study of international attitudes, therefore, must include the subjective, as well as the objective, aspects of the issue. This document has attempted to do both.

Limitations

As with any limited study of a large population, the difficulty of selecting a representative sample precipitates a major defect. Under the circumstances of the Tribune, a systematic random sample would have been impossible to obtain. Also, considering the total population of non-American women in the world, no feasible sampling could very adequately represent the entire range of opinions. Any generalizations from the sample of this study to the population at large would be inaccurate.

Another limitation of a cross-cultural study is the variation of

interpretation that results due to language barriers. Since the questionnaire was translated into Spanish, there is a possibility that the meanings of the propositions were slightly altered in the process. Likewise, some of the written comments may have been unintentionally revised in the translation from Spanish into English.

Finally, a limitation resulted from the use of the ten-point attitudinal scale, which did not allow the respondent to indicate indecision or no opinion on a given issue.

Summary of Findings

The most conclusive finding from the questionnaire data was that the women almost unanimously believed that every human has a right to an adequately nutritive diet and an equitable share of the world's food. Also, they strongly agreed that every country has the right to determine its own path to human and social development, and that women have a right of access to all levels of employment in a society. Without exception, the respondents believed that both sexes should have an equal access to educational and training programs.

Differences in opinion began to occur with the issues on women's roles. Although almost everyone agreed that women should pressure their governments to not seek political or economic advantage from the food shortages, only 27% of them felt that it was realistic to expect to influence the affluent countries to be altruistic toward the countries in need of food.

Another issue receiving strong agreement (88%) was the idea that countries with wasteful diets have a greater obligation to reduce their

food consumption. The women from the developed countries were in 100% agreement on this issue, implying that they felt a certain responsibility toward alleviating world hunger.

These same women almost unanimously agreed that affluent countries are obligated to help feed the poorer countries. However, the Catholic women and the younger Mexican women expressed much less agreement about the rich feeding the poor.

On the subject of birth control, two-thirds clearly advocated their use, with the strongest supporters being the Catholic women and the women over age fifty. As a solution for alleviating world hunger, birth control was most frequently cited as the single most important proposed remedy.

Another popular proposition, favored by two out of three respondents, asserted that women have a special role in calling attention to the humane aspects of food shortages. On this issue, the women from the developing nations strongly agreed over the women from the developed nations by a margin of seven to one. Obviously, the "Third World" women feel a greater need to emphasize a humane approach to food problems.

Ambivalence about the roles of women was expressed over the statements that 1) a woman's primary obligation is to feed her family, and 2) the concerns of women with respect to hunger are significantly different from those of men. On the former issue, slightly less than one-half of the women strongly agreed, with the largest objection coming from the younger women of the developed world. Conversely, the Catholics were in 85% agreement that obligations to the family should come

first. On the latter issue, less than one-third of the respondents believed that men and women have separate concerns with respect to hunger. Overall, about 50% felt that the concerns were the same, and there were no significant differences of opinion between groups according to age, religion, or countries.

The least popular proposition, receiving 60% clear disagreement, stated that food-abundant nations should "conditionally" supply food to countries in need.

When the respondents ranked proposed hunger solutions, the result was almost a total lack of consensus on any one solution as being the single most important. The two most frequently cited solutions were 1) birth control and 2) more equitable distribution of the world's food. The remedies of land reform and improvement of farm technology were also considered highly important.

Significantly, both the women from developed and developing countries had similar views on solutions. Although the women disagreed on other issues concerning the roles of women and their countries, they agreed that a more equitable distribution of food, along with improved farm technology and land reform, are all necessary steps toward the alleviation of world hunger.

In conclusion, it is encouraging to see that overall the women were able to agree that structural changes in society, such as redistribution of wealth and power, and land reform are necessary prerequisites to solving food problems. These conditions, coupled with the promotion of personal life-style changes as expressed by the women--utilization

of birth controls, reduced food consumption, and political participation--seem to formulate a feasible approach to eliminating the gruesome affliction of world hunger.

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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE

EXPLANATION OF PURPOSE: To sample opinions of women with respect to the world food problem and their role in its solutions.

INFORMATION: Age: 20-30 _____ 31-40 _____ 41-50 _____ 51-60 _____ 60+ _____
Country _____
Religion _____
Occupation _____

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1. Every human has a right to an adequately nutritional diet.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Strongly Strongly
agree disagree

2. Every human has a right to an equitable share of the world's food.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Strongly Strongly
Agree Disagree

3. Every country has the right to determine its own path to human and social development.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Strongly Strongly
Agree Disagree

4. Affluent countries have a certain obligation to help feed the poorer countries.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Strongly Strongly
Agree Disagree

5. Countries with wasteful diets have a greater obligation to reduce their food consumption.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Strongly Strongly
Agree Disagree

6. It is unrealistic to expect significant success in an attempt to influence the affluent to give up their food surpluses in behalf of the hungry.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Strongly Strongly
Agree Disagree

APPENDIX B

RESPONDENTS' COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND NUMBER
FROM EACH COUNTRY

DEVELOPING

Mexico - 22
Colombia - 2
Argentina - 2
Bangladesh - 2
Turkey - 2
Puerto Rico - 2
Liberia - 1
Trinidad - 1
Ethiopia - 1
Indonesia - 1
Egypt - 1
Oceania - 1
Guatemala - 1
Philippines - 1
New Guinea - 1
Sri Lanka - 1
Sierra Leone - 1

DEVELOPED

Sweden - 3
Canada - 2
England - 2
West Germany - 1
France - 1
Denmark - 1
Belgium - 1
Norway - 1
Japan - 1
South Africa - 1
South Korea - 1
Australia - 1
China - 1

APPENDIX C
RESPONDENT OCCUPATIONS AND NUMBER IN
EACH OCCUPATION

Journalist	9
Teacher	7
Professor	6
Student	5
Administrator	5
Social Worker	3
Housewife	3
Economist	2
Secretary	2
Physician	2
Psychologist	2
Translator	1
Lawyer	1
Anthropologist	1
Military	1
Sociologist	1
Publisher	1
Volunteer	1
Writer	1
Maid	1
Nurse	1
Other	4

APPENDIX D

PERCENT OF AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS BY TOTAL SAMPLE,
GROUPS OF AGE, RELIGION, AND COUNTRY

PERCENT OF AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS BY TOTAL SAMPLE, GROUPS OF AGE, RELIGION, AND COUNTRY

Statement	Total Sample	Age			Religion			Country*			
		20-30	31-40	41-50	51+	Prot.	Cath.	None	Other	Dvg	Dvd
1. Countries with wasteful diets are obligated to reduce food consumption.	88.3	75.	95.	94.4	83.3	75.	80.	100.	100.	83.6	100.
2. Affluent countries are obligated to help feed the poorer countries.	75.	56.2	85.	77.7	83.3	66.6	60.	94.4	80.	67.4	94.1
3. Women have an obligation to utilize birth controls.	66.6	50.	70.	72.2	83.3	75.	80.	44.4	70.	69.6	58.8
4. Women should call attention to the humane aspects of food shortages.	65.	43.7	60.	83.3	83.3	75.	95.	27.7	60.	86.	11.7
5. Women cannot expect to influence the rich to give up their food surpluses.	46.6	37.5	55.	44.4	50.	41.6	60.	27.7	60.	51.1	35.3
6. A woman's primary obligation is to feed her family.	46.6	43.7	40.	55.5	50.	25.	85.	27.7	30.	60.4	11.7
7. Women's concerns with hunger are different from men's.	30.	31.2	30.	22.2	33.3	16.6	35.	33.3	20.	30.2	23.5
8. Food abundant nations should conditionally supply food to needy countries.	23.3	12.5	25.	22.2	50.	8.3	35.	16.6	30.	25.5	17.6

* Developing, Developed