RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

PURSUING THE MILLENNIUM GOALS AT THE GRASSROOTS: SELECTING DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS SERVING RURAL WOMEN IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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I. INTRODUCTION

When we speak of the poorest of the poor, we are almost always speaking about women. Poor men in the developing world have even poorer wives and children. [The modern economy has] place[d] the heaviest burden on poor women, who earn less, own less, and control less.[3]

During the September 14-16 2005 World Summit, the United Nations General Assembly reaffirmed its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs provide an internationally agreed-upon framework for aggressive movement toward rendering our planet more livable for all people.[4] They call for responsible action to address problems related to poverty, gender inequity, disease, and environmental degradation. While the MDGs may lack the radical edge some critics of the contemporary global order identify as essential to a response to global injustice, they have been endorsed by the UN's member

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3. JEANNE VICKERS, WOMEN AND THE WORLD ECONOMIC CRISIS 15 (1991).

4. *See* UN Millennium Development Goals, http://www.un.org/millennium goals/ (last visited July 5, 2006).

states, and thus qualify as official commitments that form, at least in broad terms, part of the legal framework of international human rights protections.[5] The MDGs embody rights numerous states are already committed to protecting under international law. The provisions of human rights conventions and other international legal enactments these states have already accepted as binding "reinforce and complement" the MDGs.[6] The United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights has identified several conventions providing the legal foundation on which the obligation to pursue the MDGs rest. These include the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR),[7] the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),[8] the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD),[9]

5. *Cf.* Barry E. Hill et al., *Human Rights and the Environment: A Synopsis and Some Predictions*, 16 GEO. INT'L ENVTL. L. REV. 359, 378 (2004) (noting Gro Brundtland's association of water access per the Goals and a human right to water); Mary Robinson, *Symposium on the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: The First Ten Years of the Office, and the Next: February 17-18, 2003: Remarks*, 35 COLUM. HUM. RTS. L. REV. 505, 506 (2003-2004) (arguing for the integration of human rights and the Goals); Ko-Yung Tung, *Shaping Globalization: The Role of Human Rights—Comment on the Grotius Lecture by Mary Robinson*, 19 AM. U. INT'L L. REV. 27, 40 (2003-2004) (noting the link between the Goals and human rights); The United States government has sought actively to discourage the characterization of development as a right—for instance, in relation to the Goals. *See, e.g.*, Stephen Marks, *The Human Right to Development: Between Rhetoric and Reality*, 17 HARV. HUM. RTS. J. 137, 153-54 (2004).

6. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Human Rights in Development, Human Rights and Development: Human Rights and the Millennium Development Goals, http://www.unhchr.ch/development/mdg.html (last visited Dec. 15, 2005).

7. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. *See* International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights New York 16 December 1966, http://www.ohchr.org/english/countries/ratification/3.htm (last visited Dec. 15, 2005). To the extent that they are obligated under ICESCR, these states are therefore obligated to implement the MDGs supported by ICESCR.

8. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Dec. 18, 197919 I.L.M. 33, 1249 U.N.T.S. 13 [hereinafter CEDAW]. There are ninety-eight signatories and 180 parties to CEDAW. *See* Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, New York, 18 December 1979, http://www.ohchr.org/english/countries/ratification/8.htm (last visited Dec. 15, 2005). To the extent that they are obligated under CEDAW, these states are therefore obligated to implement the MDGs supported by CEDAW.

9. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,., *adopted on* Dec. 21, 1965, S. Exec. Doc. C, 95-2 (1980), 660 U.N.T.S. 212., [hereinafter CERD]. There are eighty-four signatories and 170 parties to the CERD. *See* Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC),[10] and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).[11] Thus, states' pre-existing treaty obligations commit them, in many cases, to implementing the MDGs as a matter of international law.

This Article focuses on grassroots projects serving—and led by—women in sub-Saharan Africa. Such projects can play a critically important role in the achievement of the MDGs, and, consequently, in the protection and enlargement of human rights and the concomitant promotion of economic development. Studying such projects provides a useful window on the interaction of economic development and human rights. It also offers valuable insights into the link between more traditional human rights on the one hand and economic and social rights on the other.

Some critics have maintained that human rights and development are in conflict because development—a society-wide objective—can only be achieved, at least sometimes, when individual rights are curtailed.[12] The protection of those with little social power is often seen as a luxury in which societies threatened by widespread poverty cannot afford to indulge. However, the experience of grassroots development projects in Africa suggests that the extension of human rights protections to

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New York, 7 March 1966, http://www.ohchr.org/english/countries/ratification/2.htm (last visited Dec. 15, 2005). To the extent that they are obligated under the CERD, these states are therefore obligated to implement the MDGs supported by the CERD.

10. Convention on the Rights of the Child, *adopted on* Nov. 20, 1989, 28 I.L.M. 1456, 1577 U.N.T.S. 3 [hereinafter CRC]. There are 140 signatories and 192 parties to the CRC. *See* Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child New York, 20 November 1989, http://www.ohchr.org/english/countries/ratification/11.htm (last visited Dec. 15, 2005). To the extent that they are obligated under the CRC, these states are therefore obligated to implement the MDGs supported by the CRC.

11. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, *entered into force.* 19, 1966, S. Exec. Doc. E, 95-2 (1978), 999 U.N.T.S. 171 [hereinafter ICCPR]. There are sixty-seven signatories and 154 parties to the ICCPR. *See* Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights New York, 16 December 1966, http://www.ohchr.org/english/countries/ratification/4.htm#N11. To the extent that they are obligated under the ICCPR, these states are therefore obligated to implement the MDGs supported by the ICCPR).

12. *See, e.g.*, Joe W. Pitts III, *Observer's Note: The First U.N. Social Forum: History and Analysis*, 31 DENV. J. INT'L L. & POL'Y 297, 310 (2002) ("Some social equity policies . . . can violate human rights . . ."); Erik B. Bluemel, Comment, *The Implications of Formulating a Human Right to Water*, 31 ECOLOGY L.Q. 957, 988 (2004) (noting the human rights challenge associated with implementing the MDGs with respect to water access).

women, including the protection of their property rights and the provision of opportunities for them to control their own work lives, can be a vital means of ensuring that social and economic benefits can accrue to entire communities.

It is widely argued that economic and social interests—like more traditional interests in free speech, bodily integrity, and so forth—are human rights.[13] But critics of this approach have alleged that we cannot announce economic and social rights without some enforcement mechanism,[14] and that no enforcement mechanism for such rights can be conceived apart from purely procedural guarantees of fairness.[15] The experience of grassroots projects serving women in sub-Saharan Africa does not settle this dispute. But it makes clear that giving priority, at any rate, to women's interests in law and policy can provide an indirect but very powerful way of achieving social and economic justice. Making grassroots projects serving women a policy priority does not precisely constitute the enforcement of a right to social and

13. This conviction is obviously embodied in the ICESCR. For other perspectives, see generally, *e.g.*, Mark S. Kende, *The South African Constitutional Court's Embrace of Socio-Economic Rights: A Comparative Perspective*, 6 CHAP. L. REV. 137 (2003); Linda M. Keller, *The American Rejection of Economic Rights as Human Rights & the Declaration of Independence: Does the Pursuit of Happiness Require Basic Economic Rights?*, 19 N.Y.L. SCH. J. HUM. RTS. 557 (2003); Danwood Mzikenge Chirwa, *Toward Revitalizing Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights in Africa: Social and Economic Rights Action Centre and the Center for Economic and Social Rights v. Nigeria*, 10 HUM. RTS. BR. 14 (2002); Albie Sachs, *Social and Economic Rights: Can They Be Made Justiciable?*, 53 SMU L. REV. 1381 (2000); Human Rights Symposium: Panel Discussion, *How Does the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Guarantee Social and Economic Rights for African Men and Women?*, 26 SYRACUSE J. INT'L L. & COM. 215 (1999); Shadrack B. O. Gutto, *Beyond Justiciability: Challenges of Implementing/Enforcing Socio-Economic Rights in South Africa*, 4 BUFF. HUM. RTS. L. REV. 79 (1998); Barbara Stark, *Urban Despair and Nietzsche's "Eternal Return:" From the Municipal n1 Rhetoric of Economic Justice to the International Law of Economic Rights*, 28 VAND. J. TRANSNAT'L L. 185 (1995); Barbara Stark, *Economic Rights in the United States and International Human Rights Law: Toward an "Entirely New Strategy,* 44 HASTINGS L.J. 79 (1992); Michael G. Collins, *"Economic Rights," Implied Constitutional Actions, and the Scope of Section 1983*, 77 GEO. L.J. 1493 (1989).

14. This does not mean, of course, that enforcement mechanisms have not been proposed; *see, e.g.*, Ubong E. Effeh, *Sub-Saharan Africa: A Case Study on How Not to Realize Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and a Proposal for Change*, 3 NW. U. J. INT'L HUM. RTS. 2, 79 (2005) (suggesting a mechanism designed to address violations of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights in Africa).

15. *See* Michael J. Dennis & David P. Stewart, *Justiciability of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights: Should There be an International Complaints Mechanism to Adjudicate the Rights to Food, Water, Housing, and Health?*, 98 AM. J. INT'L L. 462, 495-98 (2004).

economic well-being, but it is a very effective means by which a community committed to such a right could seek to realize it in practice.

This Article suggests that grassroots projects serving women form a vital part of the social, economic, and political infrastructure needed to ensure the success of development efforts. Such projects build on local knowledge, empower those directly affected by development projects, and ensure the on-the-ground monitoring required for project responsiveness and effectiveness. Empowering women as they do, these projects constitute a straightforward application of human rights principles to the development process. They highlight the positive interaction between development and human rights. In particular, they clearly have the potential to contribute to the achievement of the human rights implicit in several of the MDGs.

This Article seeks to identify specific means of effectively realizing human rights through grassroots development projects. It aims to do so by means of a detailed comparison of projects initiated by Heifer Project International (HPI) in sub-Saharan Africa, a cereal mill in The Gambia, and a brick-making project in South Africa. Data from each project are analyzed using case study[16] and meta-analytic methods.[17]

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16. While case study research is used to evaluate particular grassroots projects, the cases studied are not necessarily representative of similar cases. The purpose of case study research is to describe a particular case study and not necessarily to generalize. However, this need not lessen the value of case study research. *See* Beverly Hancock, Trent Focus for Research and Development in Primary Healthcare: An Introduction to Qualitative Research (1998), http://www.trentfocus.org.uk/Resources/Qualitative%20Research.pdf (last visited Jan. 18, 2006) (on file with authors). The case study is limited in time and location; its conclusions cannot necessarily be generalized beyond comparable projects in sub-Saharan Africa. Nonetheless, they remain important for planners initiating and assessing projects designed to serve this region. Evaluation of grassroots projects is appropriately local in focus.

The data for the HPI and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) studies were collected by the organizations that financed the projects. Obviously, these organizations have an interest in claiming success for their projects. The best reason to think that bias is not decisive in either case is that each data set includes reports of problems within the project with which it is concerned. For example, in the mills project in The Gambia, sixteen of the eighteen mills did not report successes. The data regarding the brick-making project were not collected by the sponsoring organization.

Information regarding HPI projects is taken from the testimonials only. This means that the information was accurate at best only at the time the testimonials were recorded. Relevant factors including the number of cattle produced, the number of cattle involved, and the uses of the cattle may have changed since the data were collected.

Part II explains the importance of a focus on grassroots projects and of projects to which women are central, and highlights the significance of grassroots projects serving women for the implementation of the MDGs. Part III highlights five key factors that conduce to project success and are, at the same time, essential if human rights are to be protected. With an eye to these factors, Part IV compares the three project clusters. Part V presents an analysis of the data organized around the five factors. Part VI discusses the analysis, details appropriate recommendations, and concludes this Article.

II. SETTING THE STAGE

Projects that operate at the grassroots level, and that directly involve women, and focus on their needs may be particularly effective means of implementing the MDGs, and thus of promoting human rights, in sub-Saharan Africa. Section A emphasizes the significance of grassroots projects, while Section B highlights the importance of focusing on women.

A. *The Importance of Focusing on the Grassroots*

The international community has increasingly acknowledged the importance of focusing more "on development outcomes and

17. Meta-analysis can help to identify conditions under which a given hypothesis is supported or not by combining the results of several studies. *See generally* RUSSELL K. SCHUTT, INVESTIGATING THE SOCIAL WORLD: THE PROCESS AND PRACTICE OF RESEARCH (4th ed. 2004). Meta-analysis is helpful in showing how the results of a single study, even though it might be limited in scope, can be re-evaluated and compared with other studies to draw a new conclusion. The analysis described in the Article constitutes a kind of "qualitative meta-analysis". *See* Janice McCormick et al., *Reinterpretations Across Studies: An Approach to Meta-Analysis,"* 13 QUALITATIVE HEALTH RES. 933 (2003); NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE DIRECTORS (NASADAD), ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG TREATMENT EFFECTIVENESS STUDY: A REVIEW OF INDIVIDUAL STATE OUTCOME STUDIES (2001), http://www.nasadad.org/Departments/Research/SlideshowforAODTreatmentEffectivenessStudy (last visited Jan.16, 2006), or "meta-synthesis," *see* Deborah L. Fingfeld, *Metasynthesis: The State of the Art—So Far*, 13 QUALITATIVE HEALTH RES. 893 (2003); Shmuel Reis et al., Meta-Synthesis of Qualitative Studies: From Theory to Practice: In The Domain of Patient Priorities and Evaluations of General Practice/Family Medicine, www.napcrg.org/2002handouts/j3.ppt (last visited Jan. 16, 2005), in which existing studies are reexamined qualitatively in search of new interpretations or synthesized to effect "cumulation[s] of knowledge." *See* McCormick et al., *supra* note 17.

less on inputs."[18] In practical terms, this means that policy- makers can and should explore creative alternatives to existing development strategies as they seek to realize the MDGs. However, if alternative policies are to be pursued, it is important to test these policies in light of their impact on the people the achievement of the MDGs would most clearly benefit.

While often the work of non-governmental organizations, grassroots development projects serving women in sub-Saharan Africa are naturally of great concern to planners and policy-makers.[19] Whether undertaken directly or only encouraged and promoted by local governments,[20] such projects can play a crucial role in achieving public development agendas around the world. This Article concludes that grassroots projects involving rural women in sub-Saharan Africa are most effective when they save participants time, provide them with realistic opportunities for learning, increase their income levels, empower them, and prove to be sustainable. It seeks to illuminate ways in which success with respect to these interconnected factors can be achieved.

Participants in grassroots development projects (GRDPs) organize themselves to help improve their lives, the lives of their families, and their communities.[21] A commitment to the value of such projects reflects the conviction that key to sustainable democracies, equitable societies and prosperous economies is a people-oriented strategy that stresses participation, organizational development and networking.[22] GRDPs are more effective than top-down projects in promoting the development of rural communities in sub-Saharan Africa.[23]

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18. The World Bank Group, Millennium Development Goals, About the Goals, http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org/ext/MDG/home (follow "About the Goals" hyperlink) (last visited Aug. 8, 2005).

19. Underscoring the degree to which such programs are no longer private in nature is the fact that "[i]n 2000, the U.S. Congress passed legislation establishing microenterprise as an integral component of U.S. foreign assistance, with the specification that half of all grants must go to the very poor." Isobel Coleman, *Defending Microfinance*, 29 FLETCHER F. WORLD AFF. 181, 184 (2005).

20. On the relationship between governments and NGOs in the context of microenterprise, *see, e.g.,* Celia R. Taylor, *Microcredit as Model: A Critique of State/ NGO Relations*, 29 SYRACUSE J. INT'L L. & COM. 303 (2002).

21. *See* Inter-America Foundation, What is Grassroots Development?, http:// www.iaf.gov/faq/faq_en.asp# (last visited June 2, 2006).

22. *See id.*

23. *See* Serigne M. Ndiaye, *Promoting Rural Community Development in Africa: States versus Grassroots Organizations*, 24 J. SOC., POL. & ECON. STUD. 65 (1999).

Projects conducted at the grassroots level are especially effective in promoting the development of rural communities in sub-Saharan Africa.[24] Rural development projects are especially important because 69% of Africa's population lives in rural areas,[25] even though the distribution of development funds disproportionately favors urban dwellers.[26] Because of the greater political clout of urban populations, they may be favored at the expense of rural populations.[27] Development funds have often favored the urban upper and middle classes rather than the small family operator.[28]

Raising rural income will lead to improved rural conditions, and so, in turn, to sustainable development.[29] Though individually small, micro and small enterprises studied in five countries in sub-Saharan Africa provide employment for 17%-27% of the adult population.[30] Local development projects play an important role in the working lives of adults by providing them with employment opportunities. The existence of a dense network of autonomous grassroots development organizations on a substantial scale is essential in order to exert pressure in the interests of the poor and provide them with opportunities to generate income.

GRDPs are valuable for many reasons. Among others is their capacity to foster self-reliance. Large regional projects financed by international donor organizations often are not able to achieve sustainability because of extensive ties to the donor organization. These projects are not necessarily designed to function without subsidies. GRDP participants receive sponsoring resources from the donor community and governments and work towards the goal of self-reliance.[31] In such projects, the partici-

24. *See id.*

25. *See* Pierre Antonios, *Education for the Poor is Crucial in Rural Africa: Ministerial meeting opens in Addis Ababa this week,* FAO NEWSROOM, Sept. 6, 2005, http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2005/107444/FAO 1999.

26. *See* MICHAEL LIPTON, WHY POOR PEOPLE STAY POOR: URBAN BIAS IN WORLD DEVELOPMENT (1977); ROBERT H. BATES, MARKETS AND STATES IN TROPICAL AFRICA: THE POLITICAL BASIS OF AGRICULTURAL POLICIES (1981).

27. *See* LIPTON, *supra* note 26.

28. *See id.*

29. *See* Pade Badru, *The World Bank and Peasant Agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Case Study of Agricultural Development Projects in South East Nigeria,* 16 SCANDINAVIAN J. DEV. ALTERNATIVES AND AREA STUD. 55 (1997).

30. *See* Lisa Daniels & Donald C. Mead, *The Contribution of Small Enterprises to Household and National Income in Kenya,* 47 ECON. DEV. AND CULTURAL CHANGE 45 (1998).

31. *See id.*

pants themselves are the providers and organizers as well as the beneficiaries.[32] Project participants at the grassroots level take the lead in defining their own needs and formulating development strategies.[33]

Development projects are often shaped by officials of the countries served by the projects and by development agencies located in donor countries.[34] These two groups are often unaware of the problems facing rural communities.[35] As former President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania once said, "[I]t is sometimes difficult for local people to respond with enthusiasm to a call for development work which may be to their benefit, but which has been decided upon and planned by an authority hundreds of miles away."[36] Too often, when development projects are designed by international donor organizations who are not locally situated, rural communities are left out of the planning process. The rural population of sub-Saharan Africa must be included in any development agenda.[37] Strengthening and developing grassroots organizations by including rural participants in the planning process is more likely to be seen as a way to improve their lives.[38]

GRDPs can transform the lives of marginal communities.[39] Such projects begin with the basic building block of personal capacity as a means to encourage a more democratic culture and ultimately affect values and attitudes.[40] A bottom-up approach to rural development would allow grassroots organizations formed at the local level to implement rural programs as opposed to top-down approaches which design and implement projects non-locally. Grassroots organizations are more responsive to local needs, use more local resources, and depend more strongly on

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32. *See id.*

33. *See id.*

34. *See generally* Ndiaye, *supra* note 23.

35. *See id.*

36. Nyerere, *Creating National Structures for People-Centered Agrarian Development*, BUREAUCRACY AND THE POOR: CLOSING THE GAP 135-64 (C. D. Korten & F.B. Alfonso eds. 1983) (quoted in Ndiaye, *supra* note 23).

37. Thabo Mbeki, *Address of the President of South Africa,* Address, Mar. 4, 2004; *Thabo Mbeki, at the Opening Ceremony of the 23rd Africa Regional Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization* (Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg, 4 March 2004), http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2004/04030414461004.htm.

38. *Id.*

39. *See* Marion Ritchey-Vance, *Social Capital, Sustainability, and Working Democracy: New Yardsticks for Grassroots Development*, 20 GRASSROOTS DEV. J. 3, 4-5 (1996).

40. *Id.*

local initiatives.[41] Such organizations are formed on the basis of voluntary membership and members' active participation in collective action to achieve shared goals.[42]

B. *The Importance of Focusing on Women*

Improving the education and status of women is a key element promoting sustainable development in sub-Saharan Africa.[43] Rural development involving women is particularly challenging as it seeks to transform the current power hierarchy that places women at the bottom.[44] Nonetheless, involving women in the development process is effective because women play important social and economic roles in the region.[45] Rural development projects will not be sustainable if they ignore or exclude

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41. *See* Ndiaye, *supra* note 23.

42. *See id.*

43. *See* United States Agency for International Development, http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/pubs/brochure_gender_matters.pdf (last visited Nov. 16, 2005).

44. *See* Mamphela Ramphele, *Women and Rural Development: The Debate about Appropriate Strategies*, 7 SAGE 9, 12 (1990).

45. *See, e.g.*, Fredoline O. Anunobi, *The Role of Women in Economic and Political Development in Contemporary Africa*, 54 NEGRO EDUC. REV. 61 (1994). Agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa is becoming progressively more feminized. *See* Josephine Ahikire, *Gender and Poverty in Uganda Today*, ELECTRONIC PUBLICATIONS FROM UGANDA MARTYRS UNIVERSITY, http://bij.hosting.kun.nl/iaup/esap/publications/umu/umusca/Genpov.pdf., at 112 (last visited Nov. 16, 2005). ("African women grow some 80% of Africa's food.") EDDA IVAN-SMITH ET AL., WOMEN IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA (1988). A recent USAID study showed that women in Kenya have an increasingly important role in livestock development. *See* Sylvia Morel-Seytoux & Kathy Thompson, *Review of Gender Issues in the USAID/Kenya Integrated Strategic Plan (ISP) 2001-2005*, www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/pubs/kenya_gi_0900.pdf (last visited May 24, 2006). Women do most of the labor required to take care of farm animals even though men are often considered the owners of the livestock. *Id.* Strategies for increasing dairy production in East Africa must begin with the recognition that many, if not most, small dairies are managed by women. *See* INTERNATIONAL LIVESTOCK RESEARCH INSTITUTE, ILRI 1995: BUILDING A GLOBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE (1996) [hereinafter BUILDING]. Despite this, women face disadvantages in accessing land and financial, research, extension, education, and health services and this lack of access lessens their opportunities for agricultural investment, growth and income. *See* WORLD BANK, CAN AFRICA CLAIM THE 21ST CENTURY? (2000). Women play central roles in cattle reproduction and management. John Curry, *Gender and Livestock in African Production Systems: An Introduction*, 24 HUMAN ECOLOGY 149 (1996). Moreover, "[t]hey are often responsible for caring, sheltering, and nurturing stock, especially pregnant cows and calves, kept close to the campsite." Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, *The Gender Dimension in Rural Cooperatives,* CENTENNIAL MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE ALLIANCE (1995).

women.[46] When development strategies consider the different needs of men and women, they are far more effective and sustainable.[47] And when women are involved in the design of grassroots development projects, they feel the projects' efforts have improved their lives and the welfare of their families and communities.[48] In particular, GRDPs can be designed in ways that allow women to decide what types of businesses to conduct. The cooperative structure can foster increased income levels and design programs around women's specific interests.[49] Further, GRDPs in sub-Saharan Africa are often based on work for which women are traditionally responsible, such as family management and food production.[50] Thus, women are well positioned not only to benefit from the projects but also to share the benefits of these projects with vulnerable members of their societies. In short, grassroots projects must target women as both actors and beneficiaries.

Women's status in sub-Saharan Africa does not reflect the very important role they play in contributing to development.[51] Failing to address gender bias that discounts the contributions of women, development projects can actually make problems related to gender bias worse.[52] For example, development projects are often designed on the assumption that if men are better off, women will benefit as well. Too often, the reality is that women's workloads increased and their opportunities for development declined once development projects were implemented.[53] Historically, agricultural projects in developing countries have been oriented by male project workers to male participants.[54] The critical role women play in food production cannot be ignored.[55] The ramifications of ignoring the role women play include de-

46. *See* FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS, REPORT OF THE CONSULTATION, 1996, http://www.fao.org/WAICENT/FAOINFO/SUSTDEV/ROdirect/ROre0002.htm. (last visited Nov. 17, 1998) [hereinafter FAO].

47. *See id.*

48. Anunobi, *supra* note 45, at 71.

49. *See* FAO, *supra* note 46.

50. Anunobi, *supra* note 45, at 61.

51. *Id.*

52. *Id.*

53. *Id.* at 70.

54. KATRINE SAITO & DAPHNE SPURLING, DEVELOPING AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION FOR WOMEN FARMERS, at xii, 1 (1992).

55. *Id.* at 1-2.

signing projects which do not appropriately address the realities of life in rural sub-Saharan Africa.

III. PROJECT SUCCESS, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND THE MILLENNIUM GOALS

The success of grassroots projects is meaningfully enhanced by respect for human rights and contributes, in turn, to the protection of human rights. The success of a project can be measured by the changes it makes in the lives of individuals, families, and communities using local knowledge and practice.[56] Key factors contributing to the success of such projects, especially ones designed with women in mind, include savings in time, realistic opportunities for learning, increased income levels, the empowerment of women, and project sustainability. Each of these factors simultaneously contributes to project success and embodies human rights protections mandated by the conventions that support the MDGs. Sections A through E examine these factors in greater detail; Section F highlights the capacity of projects designed with these factors in mind to facilitate the pursuit of all eight of the MDGs.

A. *Savings in Time*

The ICESCR identifies guaranteeing workers "[r]est, leisure and reasonable limitation of working hours"[57] as a basic state obligation. It is especially appropriate, then, that the ability of a project to reduce the substantial amount of time many women must spend engaging in economically productive—whether or not remunerated—work.

Women's work is diverse, flexible, and difficult to quantify.[58] For example, a woman may care for her children at the same time she milks cows. The categories useful for analyzing women's work are not always clear.[59] Nonetheless, it is clear that, in sub-Saharan Africa, women spend more hours engaged in ag-

56. *See* Helen Hambly, *Grassroots Indicators for Sustainable Development*, 23 IDRC REP. (1995), *available at* http://archive.idrc.ca/books/reports/V231/susdev.html.

57. ICESCR, *supra* note 7, art. 7(d).

58. *See* Carolyn E. Sachs, *The Participation of Women and Girls in Market and Non-Market Activities on Pennsylvania Farms*, *in* WOMEN AND FARMING: CHANGING ROLES, CHANGING STRUCTURES 123 (Wava G. Haney & Jane B. Knowles, eds., 1988). Many of the activities in which female farmers engage overlap. *See id.*

59. *See id.*

ricultural work then men.[60] Women are the major producers of food crops and perform most domestic and reproductive tasks.[61] They are primarily responsible for livestock care in farm households as well.[62] Women and men in sub-Saharan Africa face different constraints arising from imbalances in their rights and obligations.[63] For example, a woman's workload is often more substantial than her husband's—which allows the man to spend more time in beer halls because his wife is bearing the responsibility for providing food for their family.[64]

In most developing areas, rural women lack time to contribute to, or benefit from, development initiatives.[65] Indeed, African women's workloads seem to have increased because of new approaches to rural development.[66] If women are absent from cooperative meetings, they have little chance of influencing decision-making or becoming elected members of cooperative boards.[67] Women's inability to participate because of their heavy workloads slows down the rural development process. For example, it does little good to send men to a livestock reproduction training class if women are the primary caregivers of heifers. Un-

60. ESTER BOSERUP, WOMEN'S ROLE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 20 (1970). For example, the work performed by women with regard to cattle may be the most labor-intensive part of livestock production in arid areas.

61. *See* H. R. Barrett & A. W. Browne, *Time for Development? The Case of Women's Horticultural Schemes in Rural Gambia*, 105 SCOTTISH GEOGRAPHICAL MAG. 4, 4 (1989).

62. Participation by women in farm activities is effected by factors such as the presence of children, changes in farm operations, movement in and out of the labor force, and age. *See* Sachs, *supra* note 58. The presence of young children demands more of their mother's time and this demand competes with her ability to perform farm related functions. *Id.* All of the women in the Sachs study reported that they had other responsibilities such as cooking, shopping, laundering, cleaning, gardening, and child care for which they were primarily responsible. *Id.*

63. Ahikire, *supra* note 45, at 106. The research contained in IVAN-SMITH ET AL., *supra* note 45, implies that if women were given assistance equal to that provided to men—assistance for large-scale farming in the form of loans, training, new skills and techniques—women would be even more productive farmers than men. However, considering all the other tasks women in Africa are primarily responsible for performing—including childcare, carrying water and fuel, cooking and managing the household—it seems unlikely that women would be able to outperform men even if they were assisted with large-scale farming ventures unless their workloads in other areas were reduced.

64. Ahikire, *supra* note 45, at 112.

65. *See* BOSERUP, *supra* note 60; Barrett & Browne, *supra* note 61, at 4.

66. *See* Hazel R. Barrett & Angela W. Browne, *Women's Time, Labour-Saving Devices and Rural Development in Africa*, 29 COMMUNITY DEV. J. 203 (1994); EDWIN KINSEY & DIONISIA MALLYA, IMPACT OF HPI PROGRAM IN TANZANIA TOWARDS GENDER ISSUES (1997).

67. *See* FAO, *supra* note 46.

fortunately, however, often only men have the time to participate in training seminars. Excluding women from the decision-making process decreases their chance for success.[68]

The ICESCR calls for "the widest possible protection and assistance . . . [for] the family."[69] The CRC identifies "the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development."[70] It embodies states parties' acknowledgment of parents' "primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child,"[71] which they can obviously fulfill only if they have adequate resources. It obligates the parties to "render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities"[72]—which they can do by fostering projects that enhance women's income. And it acknowledges "the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health,"[73] which can be safeguarded in part by increasing family income, particularly women's income. In addition, increasing the incomes of adults in a given family can reduce pressures to violate "the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development."[74]

The introduction of time- and labor- saving devices and techniques into the lives of rural women does not simply help to secure the rights of these women. In fact, it serves to promote the rights of entire families. The time women save when projects are well-organized can be diverted into income-generating activities, better childcare, leisure, and tasks that contribute to the well-being of entire families. The introduction of these devices and techniques can thus facilitate continued rural and national development.[75] GRDPs that provide time and labor saving devices for their female participants will experience higher levels of success because they will benefit from the ability to use the time

68. *Id.*
69. ICESCR, *supra* note 7, art. 10, ¶ 1.
70. CRC, *supra* note 10, art. 27, ¶ 1.
71. *Id.* art. 18, ¶ 1.
72. *Id.* art. 18, ¶ 2.
73. *Id.* art. 24, ¶ 1.
74. *Id.* art. 32, ¶ 1.
75. *See* Marilyn Carr, *Technologies for Rural Women: Impact and Dissemination*, *in* TECHNOLOGY AND RURAL WOMEN 115, 124 (Iftikhar Ahmed ed., 1985).

they save for personal and family activities as well as project management and decision-making. By contrast, if participating women do not experience any savings in time or labor, they will not have the ability to translate their savings into other potentially profitable activities, nor will they be able to participate in project decision-making or management.

B. *Realistic Opportunities for Learning*

CEDAW guarantees women the right "to obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, . . . as well as . . . the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency."[76] The parties to the ICESCR "recognize the right of everyone to education."[77] However, the low status of women in sub-Saharan Africa means that their educational opportunities are often restricted.[78] Lack of access to education can impair women's dignity and personal development, which the ICESCR declares that States Parties are obliged to foster.[79] Further, women's resultant dependence on men hinders their productivity and prosperity.[80] Enhancing women's knowledge gives them more control over their workplaces and their daily lives and aid in efforts to improve their status.[81] In particular, training, education, and information have an important role to play in increasing the effectiveness of their involvement in cooperatives.[82] By contrast, lack of access to training can inhibit the success of a cooperative. At the same time, opportunities for learning must be designed in light of participating women's preparation, skill levels, and resources, in a manner consistent with CEDAW's guarantee of rural women's right "[t]o have access to . . . *appropriate* technology."[83]

Thus, effectively to fulfill the relevant human rights mandates, GRDPs should provide *realistic* opportunities for learning, that is, opportunities that do not require participants to master

76. CEDAW, *supra* note 8, art. 14, ¶ 2(d).

77. ICESCR, *supra* note 7, art. 13, ¶ 1.

78. *See* VALENTINE UDOH JAMES, WOMEN AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA (1995).

79. ICESCR, *supra* note 7, art. 13, ¶ 1.

80. *See* JAMES, *supra* note 78.

81. *See id.;* FAO, *supra* note 46.

82. *See* FAO, *supra* note 46.

83. CEDAW, *supra* note 8, art. 14, ¶ 2(g) (emphasis in original).

unduly difficult techniques or technologies.[84] One way to reduce the learning challenges faced by participants in a GRDP is to design the project in a way that builds on traditional or existing women's work.[85] A successful GRDP will obviously involve the acquisition of new skills by participants. Some will require considerably more training than others and require participants to develop significantly more complex skills. However, the more complex new skills the project requires participants to acquire, the greater the likelihood that the project will face serious challenges.

C. *Increased Income Levels*

Rural women have a right under CEDAW to "enjoy adequate living conditions."[86] More broadly, the ICESCR acknowledges "the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions."[87] It highlights, in particular, "the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger."[88] A grassroots project will successfully embody and foster meaningful human rights protections only if it contributes to the provision of the guarantees implicit in these rights.

Rural women in sub-Saharan Africa are affected by the cycle of poverty found throughout the region.[89] When given opportunities to generate more income, women can begin to lift not

84. An International Livestock Research Institute/Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (ILRI/KARI) study provides an example of an unrealistic opportunity for learning. The study asked whether women, the majority of dairy operators in Kenya, were the direct recipients of extension advice. The study discovered that the technical advice given by extension agents was not directly reaching the women who actually used the technology. Instead it was passed through farmer-owners, who were male, to female dairy operators. This inefficient method of communication reduced women's opportunities to learn, thus reducing their ability to perform effectively. The study found that women farmers will learn and adopt new technologies, even if it means more work for them, if there are clear benefits to them and their families. *See generally* BUILDING, *supra* note 45.

85. Women's work in rural sub-Saharan Africa traditionally includes growing and harvesting crops, tending livestock and vegetable gardens, gathering firewood, hauling water, preparing and cooking food, caring for children, and managing household finances.

86. CEDAW, *supra* note 8, art. 14, ¶ 2(h).

87. ICESCR, *supra* note 7, art. 11, ¶ 1.

88. *Id.* art. 11, ¶ 2.

89. *See* Rachel Errett Figura, *An End to Poverty through Microlending: An Examination of the Need for Credit by Poor, Rural Women and the Success of Microlending Programs*, 8 NEW ENG. INT'L & COMP. L. ANN. 157, 157-62 (2002).

only themselves but also their families out of poverty. The incomes of women in sub-Saharan Africa are of vital importance to their families,[90] and a woman's entire family benefits when her income grows. In general, however, women in sub-Saharan Africa have few opportunities to earn money.[91] Women's dependence on men because of their lack of income-generating opportunities makes them burdens, not assets, to their families.[92] Successful projects must thus enhance women's income-generating capacities.[93]

D. *Empowerment of Women*

CEDAW mandates the eradication of "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."[94] Equal rights, without regard to sex, are guaranteed by the ICESCR[95] and the ICCPR.[96] Fulfillment of these mandates for quality is impossible unless women are able to exercise meaningful control over the circumstances of their lives—including their work lives. Women's "right to the same employment opportunities"[97] as men, guaranteed by CEDAW, would be hollow if it did not include significant opportunities to make decisions about the conditions under which they work. CEDAW commits states-parties to ensuring to rural women the right to "participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels."[98] It also affirms rural

90. *See* Takyiwaa Manuh, *Women in Africa's Development*, Africa Recover Briefing Paper 11, April, 1998, http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/bpaper/maineng.htm.

91. *See id.*

92. *See* JAMES, *supra* note 78.

93. The Thusanang Women's Project, for instance, was started because of the participants' desire for increased income. Ramphele, *supra* note 44, at 10. The women engaged in a variety of activities and income levels rose for all the participants. *Id.* Almost all of the participants in the ILRI/KARI study reported that their household income had increased since joining the National Dairy Development Project. *See generally* BUILDING, *supra* note 45.

94. CEDAW, *supra* note 8, art. 1.

95. *See* ICESCR, *supra* note 7, art. 2, ¶ 2, art. 3, ¶ 7(a)(i).

96. *See* ICCPR, *supra* note 11, art. 2, ¶ 1, art. 3, art. 26.

97. CEDAW, *supra* note 8, art. 11, ¶ 1(b).

98. *Id.* art. 14, ¶ 2(a).

women's right "[t]o participate in all community activities."[99] Similarly, the ICCPR guarantees a right to all, without discrimination, "[t]o take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives."[100] Participation in the management of a cooperative helps to provide women with the skills they need to engage in public life and the confidence that they can do so effectively; grassroots project design therefore contributes indirectly to the protection of this right. CEDAW explicitly acknowledges women's human rights to "organize self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self employment."[101] Such groups can play a vital role in fostering women's empowerment.

The ICESCR enshrines for each person "the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts."[102] Respect for this right entails respect for the right of women to select the work in which they will engage. CEDAW obligates states parties to "take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of [the present] Convention to women in rural areas."[103] The relevant conventions ground a general right for women to participate meaningfully in the world of work, to choose what kind of work they will do, and how they will perform it. In this sense, too, these conventions call for the empowerment of women.

Development in general occurs whenever people are empowered.[104] Sub-Saharan African women, in particular, often lack substantial power over their lives, which are often controlled by men.[105] A grassroots projects is likely to be more successful to the extent that it enhances women's control over their lives by enhancing their economic power and the scope within the project

99. *Id.* art. 14, ¶ 2(f).

100. ICCPR, *supra* note 11, art. 25(a).

101. CEDAW, *supra* note 8, art. 14, ¶ 2(e).

102. ICESCR, *supra* note 7, art. 6, ¶ 1.

103. CEDAW, *supra* note 8, art. 14, ¶ 1.

104. *Cf.* Ahikire, *supra* note 45.

105. *See* Coleman, *supra* note 19, at 186 ("In many markets, including Bangladesh's relatively mature microfinance environment, a majority of female loan recipients do not fully control their loans (husbands, fathers, or brothers make investment decisions). Nor do they get direct market access, which is an important route to empowerment. Yet, in all instances, women are left with the responsibility of paying the loans, which are sometimes appropriated by husbands and frittered away on alcohol and drugs.").

where they can make decisions. Ensuring that women can influence social, political, and economic outcomes that affect them most is key to improving their status.[106]

Empowering women provides them with freedom to control their lives both inside and outside their homes.[107] Empowerment can foster a sense of ownership, and thus enhance productivity: if the participants in a project have decided themselves to start the project, they are more likely to work for the greater good of the group.[108] In the workplace, it can also allow cooperatives to take advantage of the participants' developed expertise.[109] The best way to ensure project sustainability beyond donor subsidies is to address problems locally, at their roots[110]—something it is easier to do if participants are empowered. Local development projects will then be able to respond effectively to ongoing changes.[111] Grassroots projects can facilitate the achievement of the goals of sustainable and equitable development because participants are in a position to monitor local indicators and use these indicators to make decisions for the future.[112]

Empowerment as an approach to poverty alleviation for rural women in sub-Saharan Africa is not yet widely recognized as development strategy.[113] But empowering women *can* contribute indirectly to the alleviation of poverty. Women must be more involved in the planning and implementation of development projects if these projects are to help reduce poverty.[114] If the women a GRDP is designed to benefit do not participate directly in the project, the chance of success is decreased.[115]

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106. Anunobi, *supra* note 45, at 61.

107. Ahikire, *supra* note 45, at 108.

108. *See* Ramphele, *supra* note 44, at 10, 11.

109. *See generally* Ndiaye, *supra* note 23.

110. *See* Brian J. Atwood, *Promoting Development in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 2 21ST CENTURY POL'Y R. 9 (1994-95).

111. *See id.*

112. Hambly, *supra* note 56.

113. *See* Ahikire, *supra* note 45, at 115.

114. *Id.* at 117. The state of dairy production in sub-Saharan Africa provides a good example of a setting in which greater empowerment for women would be beneficial. Women are actively involved in dairy production. Apparently, however, the larger a dairy, the less control the women have over livestock products—especially milk. *Id.* If small-scale livestock projects, at least, are targeted at women, there will be a positive impact on their households, since they are more likely to spend their income on household needs such as food, medicine, textbooks, and school uniforms for their children. "Milk sales could, in many instances, provide a regular year-round cash income for women and dairying a suitable income-generating activity for female-headed households." Curry, *supra* note 45, at 150.

115. *See* FAO, *supra* note 46.

E. *Project Sustainability*

The self-determination which is the underlying goal of so many human rights protections—a right to the free development of one's own personality and a full right to personal autonomy—can be achieved only in an environment free from long-term dependence. Further, because the resources available to promote the achievement of human rights through development are limited, these rights can be achieved more rapidly and more widely if outside resources are not consistently invested in the same projects. Once projects become self-sustaining, the resources that might otherwise have been used to support them can be committed to other projects. Also, to the extent that international donors, whether public or private, support these projects, the self-determination of peoples, itself guaranteed by the ICESCR,[116] will be fostered more effectively when dependence on these donors is reduced.

Thus, GRDPs designed to benefit rural women should be sustainable—able to continue without the continued support of their initial sponsors.[117] Sustainability is crucial to long-term project survival.[118] Sustainability matters because donor resources are finite; sustainable projects continue after donor funding ends. In addition, independence from donor agencies through project sustainability empowers participants.[119]

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116. *See* ICESCR, *supra* note 7, art. 1.

117. *See* FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS, PEOPLE: PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE: PROJECT SELF-SUSTAINABILITY (1997), http://www.fao.org/sd/ppdirect/ppre0054.htm (last visited May 23, 2006) [hereinafter PARTICIPATION]. "Long-term viability" is an important goal of development strategy. *See* Canadian International Development Agency, Guyana Futures Fund, http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/cida_ind.nsf/PrintNewsReleaseEn/C048CDD1B3608BFF85256CD2000E7AA6 (last visited May 27, 2006). If long-term viability is the goal, project sustainability is essential. Sustainability is universally acknowledged as vital to successful grassroots development efforts. Marie-Helene Collion & Pierre Rondat, Investing in Rural Producer Organizations for Sustainable Agriculture (2001), http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2002/05/30/000094946_02051404030169/Rendered/PDF/multi0page.pdf (last visited May 22, 2006); JAMES, *supra* note 78; Hambly, *supra* note 56; Atwood, *supra* note 110; Ramphele, *supra* note 44, at 10.

118. *See* Takehiko Uemura, Sustainable Rural Development in Western Africa: The Naam Movement and the Six 'S.' Sustainable Development Department, Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, Sustainable Development Department, http://www.fao.org/waicent/ffaoinfo/sustdev/ROdirect/ROan0006.htm (last visited May 23, 2005).

119. *See* Collion & Rondat, *supra* note 117. Developing sustainable projects requires long-term planning, understanding the cultural, economic, and political conditions under which women work, and employing the potential benefits to be derived

F. *Grassroots Development Projects and the Millennium Development Goals*

GRDPs that focus on the rights and needs of women can contribute to the fulfillment of each of the eight MDGs. Such projects make a vital contribution to the achievement of MDG 1, "Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger." They often serve to produce inexpensive food and to ensure its availability in local communities. But even when they do not, they provide families with the resources they need to obtain food and enhance their economic well-being. The UN has mandated the drafting of "guidelines on a human rights approach to poverty reduction strategies"; the focus on women's dignity, equality, and freedom implicit in the approach under review here constitutes just such a strategy.

The wider dispersal of resources makes greater progress toward the achievement of MDG 2, which calls for "universal primary education." And the fact that these projects provide resources to women may make it more likely that entire families will receive needed resources;[120] and if this is the case, there may be less pressure for children to forego education in order to increase family income.

These projects directly address MDG 3, "Promote gender equality and empower women." They foster women's empowerment directly, by giving them resources and control over their lives, and indirectly by increasing their social standing, their credibility with their families, and expertise they can use in a variety

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from enhancing women's activities. *See* JAMES, *supra* note 78. If sustainability is to be achieved, project participants must want a project to be self-reliant. *See* Uemura, *supra* note 118. They must be responsible for the continued success of the project. *See id.* It is crucial that they feel a sense of ownership and a stake in the project's outcome: a satisfactory development project must create a network of women who are independent of the project sponsorship and willing to make the project their own. *See* Foundation for Sustainable Development, http://www.fsdinternational.org (last visited May 25, 2006).

120. When the incomes of rural women in sub-Saharan Africa increase, they tend to use their newfound resources to benefit not only themselves but also their families. Women's concern for their families and their willingness to use their income for the support of their families cannot but enhance their intrafamilial influence. Women's increased status in the eyes of their children will likely have a gradual positive impact on their children's gender relationships and attitudes. This, in turn, has the potential to contribute to changes to the broader cultural dynamics in sub-Saharan Africa. *See* A. S. Carloni, *Women in Development: AID's Experience, 1973-1985.* Synthesis Paper, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), (Vol. 1) 40-44.

of settings, as well as by giving them resources that equip them to exert greater societal influence.

The reduction in child mortality for which MDG 4 calls is again a likely consequence of increased family incomes and of the availability of resources to women committed to caring for their families. It is also likely that profitable grassroots projects can increase the production of food not only for sale but also for consumption, and thus reduce the risk of childhood hunger and malnutrition, likely contributors to the problem of child mortality.

Grassroots projects serving women are likely to improve maternal health, the focus of MDG 5, as well, to the extent that they increase women's access to food and to the resources they need to enhance their lives. And the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, among the foci of MDG 6, is likely to be reduced when women have greater social power, and therefore greater ability to control their bodies.

Environmental sustainability, the focus of MDG 7, is likely to be more readily achieved if the people most directly affected by economic development activities are also in control of those activities. While corporate and governmental bureaucrats may find it easy to tolerate environmental devastation in distant villages, people who must live with this devastation on a day-to-day basis will have considerable reason to seek sustainability.

Grassroots projects serving women in sub-Saharan Africa can form a vital part of a global partnership for development, the objective outlined in MDG 8. Such projects need not exclude the valuable contributions of NGOs and state aid agencies. But they can provide ways of ensuring that development funds and technical assistance are used in ways that meet actual needs and serve those they are designed to benefit most.

G. *Conclusion*

Effectively implementing the rights implicit in the MDGs and the conventions that support them requires an appropriate infrastructure. GRDPs can play a crucial role in constituting this infrastructure. When given the appropriate tools, women can lift themselves and their families out of poverty.[121] Thus, targeting and involving rural women is critical to the overall plan for im-

121. *See* Microfinance Can Help Poor People Move Beyond Day-to Day Survival, Says Secretary-General At Launch of International Year of Microcredit,

proving the lives of rural people in sub-Saharan Africa.[122] GRDPs aimed at rural women in sub-Saharan Africa should aim to help women save time spent on work. They should provide rural women with realistic opportunities for learning. They should increase the income levels of rural women as much as possible. They should empower rural women. And they should be sustainable. Projects that satisfy these criteria can meaningfully respect and promote human rights and foster the achievement of the MDGs. The remainder of this Article will explore what adhering to these guidelines for success and human rights promotion might look like in practice, through a comparative analysis of three clusters of GRDPs.

IV. FOSTERING RIGHTS ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT AT THE ROOTS: THREE APPROACHES

This Article seeks to identify features of grassroots projects likely to be most effective in implementing the MDGs and thus fostering the human rights of rural women in sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, it seeks to elaborate the meanings of the factors identified in Part III by offering a detailed comparison of projects initiated by Heifer Project International (HPI) in sub-Saharan Africa with a cereal mill in The Gambia and a brick-making project in South Africa.

The mill and brick-making projects were selected because they met the relevant criteria: they were NGO-sponsored grassroots projects involving rural women in sub-Saharan Africa that built on women's existing work. The Gambia mill sample included eighteen mills, four funded by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and fourteen funded by United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). The South African brick-making sample included a twelve year sample of approximately fifteen women. The HPI study included twenty project participants. The data on the twelve female participants are included here. The other eight testimonials were taken from men and not included in the study. HPI provided what it indicated were all

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United Nations Press Release DEV 2493, GA/EF/3098, Nov. 18, 2004, http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/dev2493.doc.htm.

122. *See* URBAN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES: PROBLEMS OF POPULATION IN DEVELOPMENT NATIONS (Valentine Udoh James ed., 1991).

available testimonials regarding grassroots projects in rural sub-Saharan Africa.[123]

The analytic method employed here is qualitative. Because the data are not quantized, they do not lend themselves to statistical analysis. However, the information available regarding these projects is sufficiently detailed to make it possible to reach satisfactory conclusions regarding the issues considered here—to determine, in short, how GRDPs can most effectively secure human rights and foster development.

A. *Heifer Project International (HPI)*

This section examines HPI's cattle cooperatives, with a focus on the five factors identified in Part III. Participants in the HPI project did not report any savings in time resulting from their participation in the project. HPI reports offering training to project participants; only four said they had received any training. All participants reported increased income levels. Participants reported being empowered in a variety of ways. HPI's project design ensured sustainability.

1. HPI's Approach to Cattle Cooperatives

HPI oversees more than 300 projects in over forty countries and has provided livestock and training to more than four million families around the world.[124] As part of HPI's "Passing the Gift" approach to structuring cattle cooperatives, each family that receives a heifer signs a contract in which it agrees to pass on the first female calf of each heifer it receives to another needy family, and also agrees to pass on to others the training and skills that it has acquired.[125]

HPI also offers training sessions to benefit those who receive heifers.[126] These sessions may address topics including dairy management, calf rearing, grass planting, animal treatment, and

123. The data used in this Article were drawn from previously published case studies and prepared testimonials. The published case studies have already been subjected to peer review and the testimonials were provided by a credible NGO. No attempt was made directly to assess the accuracy of the published case studies or the testimonials.

124. *See* http://www.heifer.org (last visited Nov. 16, 2005) [hereinafter Heifer].

125. *Id.*

126. *Id.* It is important for those involved with livestock to have access to information on livestock such as animal health care, the sale of surplus milk, and knowledge of livestock diseases. *See* Morel-Seytoux & Thompson, *supra* note 45. Four of the participants reported receiving training in cattle care.

tick and worm control.[127] The training sessions teach appropriate methods for keeping dairy cows, caring for sick cows, obtaining larger quantities of clean milk, and rearing calves.[128] Recipients can visit dairies to expand their perspectives on cattle rearing and are expected to obtain experience so they can train others.[129]

2. Factors Related to Project Effectiveness and Human Rights Promotion

The experience of participants in HPI cattle cooperatives[130] can help to clarify the ways in which projects can most effectively foster human rights and achieve development goals.

None of the participants reported any savings in time associated with the project. Participants reported substantial surplus milk production. They reported that the following income-generating opportunities resulted from their participation in the program:

- 10 were able to produce and sell surplus milk during lactation
- 3 were able to sell extra calves
- 3 had future plans for the income earned
- 2 started other projects using income earned from the heifer

The increased income apparently had positive consequences for the participants. All twelve reported that improved status or standard of living resulted from the project, though none of the participants reported seeing any savings in time. Two participants indicated increased capacities for purchasing food; eight indicated increased capacities for making home or farm improvement; eight indicated improved family health or nutrition; eight said they were better able to educate their children; and six were able to make other purchases as a result of surplus milk. Interestingly, one participant made an effective additional

127. *See* Heifer, *supra* note 124.

128. *Id.*

129. *Id.*

130. The total number of female testimonials analyzed for the HPI case study was twelve. All participants were female. Most project participants were from Uganda (six of twelve). Others were from Tanzania (three) and Kenya (two). The national origin of one was not identified. Four of the participants were farmers and eight were mothers, including three identified as single parents.

use of the heifer by using either the heifer or its manure to increase crop production, thus potentially increasing her income.

Participants reported the following benefits resulting from participation in the program:

- 2 indicated increased ability to purchase food
- 8 indicated increased ability to make home or farm improvements
- 1 used cow or cow manure to increase crop production
- 8 indicated improved family health or nutrition from milk
- 8 were better able to educate their children
- 12 indicated improved status or standard of living
- 6 were able to make other purchases as a result of surplus milk

None of the women reported receiving any help from men.

The participants reported the number of offspring as follows:

- 7 reported that their cows had produced one calf each
- 3 reported that their cows had produced two calves each
- 1 reported that their cows had produced four calves each
- 1 did not report the births of any calves

In each case, one calf was returned to the cooperative. Returning calves to the cooperative ensures project sustainability.

3. Conclusion

The HPI projects appear to have made a meaningful contribution to securing human rights and promoting appropriate development. Although none of the participants reported any savings in time and although only four received any training, all reported an improved status or standard of living from the project. The women were empowered by an increase in their income. Furthermore, all participants reported returning offspring to the cooperative, thereby contributing to project sustainability.

C. *Cereal Mills in The Gambia*

This section examines a set of cereal mills in The Gambia, with a focus on the five factors identified in Part III. While the project was designed to save participants time, a number indicated that participating had saved them little or no time. The sponsoring agencies failed to provide the participants with appropriate training. The expected income benefits from the project

were indirect; none were reported. The mill project was designed to help empower the participants but failed to do so. The project did not prove to be sustainable.

Hazel Barrett and Angela Browne provide a case study of fifteen mills—funded by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the United Nations Organization for Women (UNIFEM)—which were located in rural areas of The Gambia.[131] Other organizations operating rural cereal mills in The Gambia included ActionAid, the Canadian government, and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Barrett and Browne questioned all the groups involved in rural cereal mills and chose to study in depth the fifteen mills sponsored by CRS (four mills) and UNIFEM (eleven mills). Their findings will be re-evaluated and compared with the other studies here.

1. Grain Milling in The Gambia

The most time-consuming daily task for rural women in The Gambia, where the basic food staples are cereals, is the traditional pounding and grinding of grain by pestle and mortar to produce flour.[132] Grain is hand-ground into sorghum flour, with women spending an average of two hours to grind five kilograms.[133] This labor-intensive activity was identified as an area upon which women's GRDPs could make a positive impact. The goal was to release the women from the time and energy-consuming tasks of hand-grinding cereals and use that time for income-generating activities or leisure.[134]

2. The CRS and UNIFEM Projects

Fifteen mills initially funded by CRS and UNIFEM were handed over to a village committee after a four-year period of joint management. It was anticipated that the introduction of relatively unsophisticated technologies to mill cereals would provide time and labor saving devices for women while requiring little training,[135] and thereby free the women to engage in income-generating projects.[136] Each mill was expected to become self-sustaining.

131. *See generally* Barrett & Browne, *supra* note 66.
132. *See id.* at 10.
133. *Id.* at 5, 10.
134. *See* Barrett & Browne, *supra* note 66.
135. *Id.*
136. *Id.*

Each mill was diesel-powered and usually contained a de-huller and a hammer mill. The UNIFEM mills were larger and more expensive than the CRS mills. At the UNIFEM mills, the de-huller and hammer mills were housed in separate rooms and each machine had its own diesel-powered engine. Each CRS mill consisted of a one-room shed and a single diesel engine.

2. Factors Related to Project Effectiveness and Human Rights Promotion

The experience of participants in the CRS and UNIFEM projects can help to clarify the ways in which projects can most effectively foster human rights and achieve development goals.

The mills could save the women who used them approximately two to three hours per day, but calculation of the exact time was found to be complicated.[137] Women's work is diverse, flexible, and difficult to quantify; many of women's work activities overlap.[138] Furthermore, participants reported that the saving of energy was a more important benefit to them than the saving of time.[139] The distance a woman had to travel to reach a mill was not usually a barrier to using it; however, the availability of cereal to take to the mill and the availability of money to use the mill constrained mill usage by the women.[140] However, women who needed to walk more than thirty minutes to reach a mill found the distance too great and did not use the mill.[141]

Literacy levels among the women in the study were low. The women did not possess the skills needed to manage the financial records required for proper operation of the mills.[142] They were unable to take full control of the management of the mills because of their low literacy levels. None of the women in the study had sufficient skills to keep financial records, and the project donors failed to build training components into their projects.[143]

Potential profits from the mills themselves were not seen as providing income directly to the women. The women would pay to use the mills and the income generated was to be used to sup-

137. *Id.*
138. *See* Sachs, *supra* note 58.
139. *See* Barrett & Browne, *supra* note 66.
140. *Id.*
141. *Id.*
142. *Id.*
143. *Id.*

port the project. The opportunity for increased income levels for the women arose indirectly from the potential benefit to the women in savings in time and energy. It was expected that the time and energy the women saved could be re-directed to income-generating activities.

The cereal mills offered a first step to raising productivity for women, something which in turn would allow participants to save time.[144] Time saved could then be used to enable women to participate more fully in the development of income-generating activities and benefit from these activities. They would therefore be more independent, and so more empowered. The organization of each mill was also designed to foster empowerment. The mills were designed to be managed by village committees, each with a woman president and mostly female members.[145]

Each mill was expected to become self-financing and accumulate a "revolving fund" to cover maintenance and part replacement costs.[146] Even though the milled flour was of good quality and the mills were appreciated by the women, the mills were not found to be sustainable because of repair and maintenance costs, which resulted from the participants' inability to operate the mills.[147] CRS reported that of its four rural mills, one made a profit, one broke even, and two suffered operating losses. UNIFEM reported that none of its mills made a profit.[148]

4. Conclusion

The CRS and UNIFEM case study highlights the importance of the right to appropriate technology and to relevant education. It suggests that rural development projects are seldom sustainable by village host communities when they rely on machinery unfamiliar to program participants.[149] A major obstacle to this kind of GRDP is a low level of technical expertise on the part of project participants and an inability on the part of the sponsoring entity to disseminate technical information[150] or provide training. States seeking to fulfill the human rights obligations reflected in the MDGs must do so by encouraging projects employing appro-

144. *Id.*
145. *Id.*
146. *Id.*
147. *Id.*
148. *Id.*
149. *See* KINSEY & MALLYA, *supra* note 66.
150. *See* Ndiaye, *supra* note 23.

priate technology and dependent on skills which the participants already possess or can readily acquire.

D. *The Ithuseng Brick Making Cooperative*

This section examines the Ithuseng brick making cooperative in South Africa with a focus on the five factors identified in Part III. Participants in the brick making project saved time as a result of their participation in the project. The project empowered the participants and offered them the opportunity to learn a variety of skills necessary for the management of the project. The project sometimes increased participants' income levels. The project is developing toward sustainability.

1. The Ithuseng Cooperative

The Ithuseng Brick Making Cooperative was designed to provide income-generating opportunities for women in a region where most able-bodied men have left to seek employment. In the beginning, fifteen women were involved in the project, which was initially funded by the Community Health Center. The Center also provided free milk for the participants' children.[151]

2. Factors Related to Project Effectiveness and Human Rights Promotion

The experience of the Ithuseng Cooperative can help to clarify ways in which projects can most effectively foster human rights and achieve development goals. The brick-making cooperative was located in the village in which the women lived, so they did not have to go far in order to work. (Previously, they had had to travel great distances to reach their place of employment. They would leave their village as early at 4:00 a.m. and return no earlier than 7:00 p.m.) They drew the water and sand needed to make the cement bricks from a local river; they saved time because they did not have to go far to find the resources necessary to produce the bricks. Furthermore, they were able to bring their babies to the cooperative and nurse them throughout the day. Previously, when they had had to commute a great distance to work, they were forced to leave their children with relatives.

The project provided realistic opportunities for learning in at least three ways. (1) The project utilized skills the women had already acquired in the course of previous employment at brick-

151. Ramphele, *supra* note 44, at 9.

yards. It did not require them to master new techniques or technologies. Thus, while they learned new skills as they worked, these skills built on ones they had already acquired. (2) A management committee was elected by and from the women. The members of the committee needed to learn the skills required to manage a bank account. (3) In addition, literacy classes were provided on site for those who could not read in order to allow them to participate more effectively in the project.

The project allowed the participants to generate income but did not require a substantial capital investment. As co-owners, the members shared in the cooperative's profits. Profit levels fluctuated according to demand in the brick market. Despite these fluctuations, profits from the cooperative allowed for the construction of two daycare centers in the village. Most participants indicated that their standard of living improved after participating in the project. Further, the cooperative project empowered the women by giving them more control over their lives. It did so by enabling them to earn an income without jeopardizing the daily needs of their families.

Profitability varied throughout the twelve years covered in the study. The bricks made by the cooperative were used to replace mud-and-stick houses with cement structures. The project became part of a comprehensive rural development plan in the area. The goal was for the cooperative to function without subsidies from the Community Health Center. Progress was slow because of politics within the cooperative.[152]

3. Project Challenges

The problems associated with the cooperative included difficulties within the group. Most of the participating women did not know each other before meeting at the cooperative. Further complications included difficulties associated with meeting production and delivery deadlines. For example, a drought reduced the amount of water available for use at the cooperative; and the breakdown of the tractor, due to poor maintenance, made deliveries complicated.[153]

During the months when profits were low, the Community Health Center had to subsidize the cooperative. Dependence on the Center hindered progress toward the goal of complete con-

152. *See id.* at 10.
153. *Id.*

trol of the cooperative by the participants. Interestingly, when the cooperative was profitable, the participants asserted their ownership of the project; however, when it was less profitable, they claimed they were merely employees of the cooperative and not responsible for its problems.

4. Conclusion

The experience of participants in the Ithuseng cooperative suggests that the success of a project can be related to a savings in time and realistic opportunities for learning. Respect for women's rights to appropriate technology and leisure time appear to have tangible, positive consequences. In this project, the women were provided with both time savings and learning opportunities. They reported an increase in their standard of living which led to a sense of empowerment. While the sustainability of the project depended on politics within the cooperative, the project did become part of a comprehensive rural development plan in the area. Similar plans could reasonably figure in strategies for the promotion of human rights.

V. WEIGHING THE THREE APPROACHES

The experience of each project suggests lessons for those crafting policies designed to foster human rights and promote sustainable development in rural sub-Saharan Africa. Part V examines the projects in light of the interconnected success factors.[154]

A. *Savings in Time*

It often seems that African women's workloads have increased because of new approaches to rural development.[155] The workloads of rural women in sub-Saharan Africa are substantial. In most developing areas, rural women do not have time to con-

154. Each success factor is a crucial component of a successful GRDP: all are connected and a feature of a given project used to illustrate one factor could be used to illustrate another. Success with regard to one can contribute to success with regard to another. Increased income levels, realistic opportunities for learning, and savings in time can all generate increased power for women. The empowerment of women can contribute to project sustainability. And, in turn, a sustainable project has the greatest chance of increasing women's income in the long run.

155. *See generally* Barrett & Browne, *supra* note 66; KINSEY & MALLYA, *supra* note 66.

tribute to or benefit from development initiatives.[156] Reducing their workloads could significantly improve their lives.

Cattle care is women's work in sub-Saharan Africa and taking on the care of a heifer could mean an increase in a woman's workload.[157] Participants in the HPI project did not directly report extra work caused by the addition of responsibility for the project heifers. And indirect timesaving were reported by one participant. One requirement for participation in the HPI project was to dig a well to provide water for the heifer. One woman reported that she saved a substantial amount of time daily because she no longer needs to go to a nearby dam for water.

The women in the mill study reported saving time except when they needed to walk over thirty minutes each way to the mills.[158] Women spend an average of four hours per day grinding grain.[159] Thus, a project designed to reduce this time could have yielded important benefits for the participants, including opportunities to engage in income-generating activities. The use of the mill saved energy and some time. But when the mill was located over thirty minutes away and the women had to spend time waiting for their grain to be milled, there was little or no benefit.

In the brick-making project, the women were able to save time because the cooperative was located in their village.[160] In addition, the resources needed for the project—sand and water—were available locally, a fact which also helped participants save time.[161] The women were also able to nurse their babies while working.[162] The design of the brick-making project permitted the women to make more efficient use of their time for work and the achievement of personal goals.

Of the two projects which *were* designed to provide savings in time, the most useful to the participants was the design of the brick-making project which permitted the women to work more efficiently by providing work in the village where the women lived. The mill project did provide for some savings of time and energy but the women did not report that they were able to

156. *See* BOSERUP, *supra* note 60; Barrett & Browne, *supra* note 66, at 4.

157. Of course, in connection with other benefits cited by the participants, such as an increase in income, this might still be a reasonable trade-off.

158. *See* KINSEY & MALLYA, *supra* note 66.

159. *See id.* (citing O. C. Schmidt, *The Sorghum De-Huller—A Case Study in Innovation*, *in* SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (Marilyn Carr ed., 1988).).

160. Ramphele, *supra* note 44, at 9.

161. *See id.* at 10.

162. *Id.*

translate their savings in time and energy into other activities such as generating extra income. Participants in the cattle cooperative did not report any direct timesaving.

GRDPs should be designed with women's workloads in mind, as were the mill and brick-making projects. They should not increase participants' workloads unless there is a clear link between an increased workload and a goal attractive to the participants. If GRDPs enable rural women to save time in ways like those outlined here, the time the women save can be then diverted into income-generating activities, better child care and a general increase in the well-being of the whole family and thus result in continued rural and national development.[163]

B. *Realistic Opportunities for Learning*

The cattle cooperative and the mill project involve traditional women's work, that is, the tending of livestock[164] and the grinding of grain for preparing and cooking food.[165] Training in conjunction with the administration of these projects would allow the participants to enhance skills they already possess and contribute effectively to project success.

The brick-making project did not involve traditional women's work.[166] But participants were already employed making bricks. The project is an example of an opportunity to learn new skills in an area such as management. Such opportunities not only enable participating women to sustain GRDPs but also equip them with expertise they can use in other contexts.

The HPI project was based on tending livestock, which is traditionally the responsibility of women in sub-Saharan Africa; thus the HPI project is related directly to women's work. HPI reports that it offers various training sessions to those who receive heifers in connection with the project.[167] It is clear that HPI considers training to be an important contributor to project success.[168] Training provides the skills necessary to care for the cattle provided to participants by the project. Better care can improve the productivity of project cattle; this, in turn, can foster

163. *See* Carr, *supra* note 75.

164. *See* Heifer, *supra* note 124.

165. *See* Barrett & Browne, *supra* note 66.

166. *See* Ramphele, *supra* note 44, at 10.

167. *See* Heifer, *supra* note 124.

168. *Id.*

project success by facilitating project sustainability.[169] Four of the women in the HPI case study reported receiving training regarding the care of cattle. It is not clear whether training was provided to all women even though only four chose to participate, or whether only four women were offered training.

The mill project in The Gambia also involved women's traditional work—the milling of grain into flour for the preparation of food.[170] Instead of pounding the grain by hand, the participating women were provided with the opportunity to mill using machinery provided by donors.[171] The goal of the project donors was that the mill would become self-sufficient and run completely by the female participants.[172] Therefore, although literacy levels among the women were low, the mill project required the women to have the ability to manage financial records. However, the project did not provide needed training and none of the participants had the ability to keep financial records. This oversight on the part of the project designers contributed to the failure of the project. The project failed in part because it did not take into account the existing skills of the participants or equip them with the training necessary to manage the project.

Brick making is not traditional women's work in rural sub-Saharan Africa.[173] Very few rural women could reasonably be expected to know how to make bricks. The Ithuseng project was started specifically to provide the participants with income-generating opportunities.[174] One reason brick-making was chosen was because it required the participants to engage in an activity for which they were already trained: they were already working at a brickyard.[175] But the project still required them to learn new skills. For the first time, they would also be expected to manage the financial aspects of the project instead of just working at the brickyard making bricks. Bank account management training and literacy classes were provided in order to allow participants to contribute more effectively to the project.[176] The project equipped the women with new skills they could use outside their

169. *Id.*
170. *See* Barrett & Browne, *supra* note 66.
171. *Id.*
172. *Id.*
173. *See* Ramphele, *supra* note 44, at 10.
174. *Id.* at 9.
175. *Id.*
176. *Id.* at 10.

workplace, as, for instance, when they managed their household finances.

Projects which provide training opportunities for female participants are more likely to succeed than those that do not. Both the cattle cooperative and the brick-making cooperative featured training components.[177] This provided the participants with opportunities to learn new skills, such as financial record-keeping, and to enhance skills they already possessed, such as caring for cattle. The mill project did not provide training opportunities to participants because the project designers did not anticipate that training would be necessary to run the project.[178] The technology and literacy levels required were considered low level enough that the participants would already possess the skills necessary to manage the project. This was not the case. The participants were unable to take control of the management of the mills because measures were not taken to increase their literacy or address problems resulting from their low literacy levels.

Providing realistic opportunities for learning, as the heifer and brick-making projects did, is vital to the success of GRDPs aimed at rural women in sub-Saharan Africa. It allows the participants to contribute more effectively to project success, fosters project sustainability, and equips participants with skills they can use in other aspects of their lives.

C. *Increased Income Levels*

Both the cattle cooperative and the brick-making project were designed specifically to provide participants with income-generating opportunities through the sale of products produced by the project.[179] Women would be able to participate in the project in order to increase their income levels. The mill project did not provide any direct income-generating opportunities for participants.[180] Instead, the project was designed to benefit the women by providing them with time to engage in other activities which could generate income.[181]

HPI participants reported significant opportunities for increased income because of their participation in the project. The

177. *Id.*
178. *See* Barrett & Browne, *supra* note 66.
179. Ramphele, *supra* note 44, at 9, 10 (discussing the brick-making cooperative).
180. *See* Barrett & Browne, *supra* note 66.
181. *See* Barrett & Browne, *supra* note 66.

increase in income resulted from the sale of surplus milk and extra calves and from other projects which led to a higher standard of living for the women and their families. The mill project did not succeed in helping participating women generate extra income in the indirect manner envisioned by the project's sponsors. The brick-making project was initiated as a profit-making enterprise. It allowed the participants to generate income directly from the sale of bricks made by the cooperative. Although profit levels fluctuated, enough profit was realized to pay for the construction of two daycare centers in the village and most participants indicated that their standards of living improved after participating in the project.[182]

Projects which provide *direct* opportunities for increasing participants' income levels are more likely to be lead to a higher standard of living for participants. Both the cattle cooperative and brick-making project featured income-generating opportunities. HPI allowed project participants to sell surplus and extra calves and keep the income. From its inception, the brick-making cooperative was designed to make a profit for the women who both worked for the cooperative and were co-owners. Even though the mill project was designed with some indirect income-generating opportunities in mind, the overall failure of the project on other grounds made it impossible for the women to seek income-generating opportunities as intended.

Increasing income levels, as the heifer and brick-making projects did, is vital to the success of GRDPs aimed at rural women in sub-Saharan Africa. Projects designed to raise the standards of living of these women by increasing their incomes will benefit both the participants and their families.

D. *Empowerment of Women*

Both the cattle cooperative and the brick-making project seek to empower female participants by providing ways for them to assert more control over their lives. The mill project did not succeed in empowering participants. The brick-making project and the mill project sought to turn over management of the project to the participating women thereby empowering them with decision-making capabilities. The HPI project also offered each participant an empowering responsibility for the continued success of the project as a whole.

182. *See* Ramphele, *supra* note 44, at 10.

HPI participants reported many benefits to their families resulting from their participation in the program. These benefits, such as an increased ability to purchase food or increased ability to make improvements on their property, empowered the women to make decisions which would have direct consequences for their lives. They exercised greater independence. Each one could exercise greater responsibility by deciding what to do with calves and surplus milk generated by her heifer. Obligated to return a calf to the cooperative, each participant was partly responsible for the continued success of the project; this role provided the participant with influence on the success of the cooperative, and thus empowered her.

The mill project was designed to empower women by giving them new opportunities to generate income by decreasing the time they spent milling grain for their own and their families' consumption. But the actual operation of the project did not foster the desired results. The idea was to give participating women independence through access to the mill and thereby enable them to increase their standards of living through other projects; the expectation was that the increased income from these other projects would enhance their influence over their lives. The project did not achieve this result. The project was also designed to empower the participants in the project by designing the project to be run by a village committee with a women president and mostly female members. Because the women were not prepared to manage the mills in the desired manner, this empowerment strategy was unsuccessful.

The brick-making cooperative offered participants substantial opportunities for control over the structure of their work lives. The cooperative made up of the participating women, was the co-owner of the project. And a management committee elected by the participants oversaw the cooperative. The brick-making project empowered the women by enabling them to earn an income without jeopardizing the daily needs of their families.

All three projects were designed to empower the participating women in their lives outside the workplace; the mill project failed to achieve this goal, however. The mill project and brick-making project sought to empower participants by including them in day-to-day management. The HPI project offered participants a measure of empowerment by making them responsible for their community's well-being.

E. *Project Sustainability*

Both the cattle cooperative and the brick-making projects were designed to be sustainable. The mill project was intended to be sustainable; it was not, however, because the costs required for the continued smooth operation without the help of the sponsor were too high.

Almost all of the HPI project participants reported offspring from the heifers they received from the cattle cooperative. Under the contract HPI requires participants to sign, each must return a calf to the cooperative or "pass the gift."[183] This allows the project to be self-sustaining: the renewal of the cooperative continually provides more women with the opportunity to receive heifers. In turn, subsequent generations of heifer recipients will also return calves to the cooperative. The result is ongoing sustainability. The participant, rather than HPI, is responsible for renewing the cooperative.

Each mill was expected by the sponsoring organization to become self-financing and to accumulate a "revolving fund" designed to cover maintenance and part replacement costs.[184] But the prohibitive costs of maintaining the mills made it impossible for them to be sustainable. Only one of fifteen mills reported earning a profit.[185]

The goal of the brick-making project was that the cooperative would function without subsidies from the Community Health Center, the project's sponsor. The need for subsidies fluctuated throughout the twelve years covered in the study. Project sustainability takes time to develop[186] and progress toward sustainability at the brick-making project was slow.[187] When the project was profitable, and thus did not need subsidies, the participants felt involved and behaved like owners. In this way, they contributed to the project's sustainability. However, when the need for subsidies arose, the participants did not view themselves as owners and described themselves instead as employees. Preferring to rely on the subsidies provided by the sponsor, they declined to behave in a manner conducive to sustainability.[188]

183. *See* Heifer, *supra* note 124.
184. *See* Barrett & Browne, *supra* note 66.
185. *Id.*
186. *See* PARTICIPATION, *supra* note 117.
187. *See* Ramphele, *supra* note 44, at 10.
188. *See id.*

All three projects were designed with the goal of eventual sustainability in mind. The HPI project put in place measures intended to maintain project self-renewal by requiring participants to return calves to the cooperative. The design of the mill project called for eventual self-financing. The brick-making project's goals included functioning without sponsor subsidies.

HPI relied on participants to make the project sustainable. No long-term subsidies were involved. The mill project was not sustainable. Both the costs and the participants' inability to manage the project's financial accounts and technology ensured that the project was not sustainable. During the period studied, the brick-making project continued to rely intermittently on subsidy support; it showed signs of becoming sustainable, but never achieved complete sustainability which would include operating free from any subsidies from the project designers.

VI. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

States with highly developed bureaucracies and substantial resources can often promote positive human rights most effectively through direct action. But for some, the most useful strategy for securing such rights may be indirect: it may involve encouraging and cooperating with NGOs and local communities. Reliance on the work of non-governmental actors can, of course, amount to nothing more than a refusal to make difficult political choices to protect people without power and resources. But it can also reflect a realistic assessment of circumstances and available strategies. Indeed, the promotion of local action in response to human need is best seen, not merely as a concession to the constraints imposed by resource inadequacies, or as a pragmatic judgment about effectiveness, but rather as an expression of respect for the dignity and the capacity for genuine agency of those development programs are designed to benefit—as an affirmation of their human rights. Opting to support grassroots projects is itself an expression of a state's commitment to human rights.

Securing the human rights implicit in the Millennium Development Goals is a legal obligation for at least those states that have endorsed the relevant conventions. But identifying appropriate strategies for ensuring that people can enjoy these rights is challenging and context-sensitive. This Article has articulated a dual-track approach to the evaluation of grassroots projects. It has focused on five factors, factors which must be present if human rights are to be respected in the course of the develop-

ment process and which the development literature suggests are crucial to project effectiveness. In light of these factors, it has detailed a comparative analysis of three representative projects in order to facilitate the identification of suitable means of embodying the five factors in future projects. Section A provides an overview of conclusions that seem to follow from this analysis. Section B offers recommendations for the design of future projects.

A. *What Do We Know Now?*

Rural cooperatives often fail as community development schemes in rural Africa. Many have failed because they were promoted by donor agencies in developed countries and were designed to be too bureaucratic and political. Many have not been organized on the basis of participant-recognized needs. The members of many have too often felt that they had no stake in the organizations. Perhaps the major weaknesses of cooperatives are their lack of capital and the low degree of participation by those they are intended to serve.

Development projects that target women in particular face additional challenges. These include opposition from men and communities, lack of education, lack of skills, or lack of experience. However, cooperatives help women meet these challenges by working together to achieve their goals. GRDPs aimed at women have the most chance of success if they save participants time, offer realistic opportunities for learning, increase participants' incomes, empower women, and exhibit sustainability. Successful GRDPs benefit not only participating women but also their families and communities.

This Article has examined three such cooperative projects with attention to the interconnected success factors identified earlier, seeking to illuminate the meanings of these factors.

The workloads of rural women in sub-Saharan Africa are substantial, so helping to save time is an important contribution a GRDP can make to their lives. Strategies for doing so might include:

- locating key project facilities close to the participants' residences, thus minimizing their commute times
- drawing on locally available resources
- designing projects which allow mothers to nurse while at work

Projects should build participants' skills but not overwhelm them with new information. Strategies for achieving this goal might include:

- designing projects around traditional or existing women's work
- providing literacy classes for participants
- providing management training for participants

The projects studied in this Article included two that built on traditional women's work and one that built on work in which the participants were already engaged but which was not traditional for women in their culture.[189] The success of a project in each category suggests that projects that build on traditional women's work and those that build on existing non-traditional women's work can both provide opportunities for learning that are realistic.

Rural women in sub-Saharan Africa are the "poorest of the poor." Increasing their income levels is crucial to enhancing their well-being. Strategies for achieving this goal might include:

- designing projects which will produce goods for sale directly or indirectly
- designing projects that reduce the time women spend on subsistence tasks so they will have more time for income-generating activities
- ensuring project sustainability which can foster long-term income security

Women in sub-Saharan Africa often lack power over their own lives. Empowering them contributes not only to their own well-being and dignity but also to that of their families. Strategies for achieving this goal might include:

- involving participants directly in project management
- providing participants with income-generating opportunities which increase their capacity to achieve their personal goals
- transferring project ownership to participants

The success of the HPI project and the Ithuseng project suggests that projects that build on traditional women's work and those that build on existing non-traditional women's work can both provide opportunities for empowerment.

189. Obviously, conflicts with existing cultural norms can complicate development efforts designed to empower women. *Cf.* Elizabeth M. King & Andrew D. Mason, *Gender Equity*, Interview, 9 GEO. PUBLIC POL'Y REV. 17 (2003).

Projects need to be self-sustaining in order to survive in the long term. Strategies for achieving this goal might include:

- employing techniques like HPI's "Passing the Gift" method
- fostering a sense of ownership among participants
- building in a phase-out of any subsidy

B. *What Are the Next Steps for Research and Policy?*

Policy-makers responsible for securing human rights, and so for promoting development, in sub-Saharan Africa can draw a variety of lessons from the analysis reported here. In particular, they should:

- encourage grassroots projects aimed at women
- encourage development projects at the grassroots level, organized and supported locally
- encourage development projects which do not depend on participants' mastery of unnecessarily difficult technologies
- encourage the development of grassroots projects that offer realistic learning opportunities by, for instance, building on women's traditional roles
- conduct or encourage research designed to elucidate the connection between the empowerment of rural women through grassroots projects and long-term changes in women's social status
- use grassroots projects targeting women to help end poverty
- select strategies that result in net labor savings for participants
- involve project participants in project ownership and management
- encourage more extensive reporting on projects so others can learn from the experiences of project organizers and participants
- direct future research towards refining understanding cooperatives which focus more on traditional women's work incorporating the five factors highlighted in this Article
- direct future research on actual project design by examining various project designs from NGOs and creating

projects structured around the interconnected success factors explored in this Article.

The experiences of the projects reviewed here highlight the linkages between development and human rights. Securing human rights and fostering development are not two distinct processes. Rather, even apart from the increasingly acknowledged right to development itself,[190] encouraging development is a means of promoting numerous internationally recognized human rights. And safeguarding human rights lays the groundwork for effective development.

As states and other macro-level actors work together to achieve the Millennium Goals, they may often find it tempting to focus on high-level, general solutions. But the most useful strategies available to them may actually involve a focus on the grassroots. Empowering women through GRDPs is a recognition of their human rights. But it can also prove to be a powerful means of ensuring that, along with their families and communities, they can enjoy and exercise a range of other internationally acknowledged rights. Selecting the most effective GRDPs will prove, at the same time, a crucial contribution to acknowledging and promoting human rights.

190. *See* Marks, *supra* note 7; Isabella D. Bunn, *The Right To Development: Implications for International Economic Law*, 15 AM. U. INT'L L. REV. 1425 (2000); Sara E. Allgood, *United Nations Human Rights "Entitlements": The Right to Development Analyzed within the Application of the Right of Self-Determination*, 31 GA. J. INT'L & COMP. L. 321 (2003).