



Ford Foundation records, Douglas Ensminger Oral History

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Rockefeller Archive Center

15 Dayton Avenue

Sleepy Hollow 10591

archive@rockarch.org

URL: <http://www.rockarch.org>

Table of Contents

Summary Information	3
Biographical / Historical	3
Scope and Contents	6
Arrangement	6
Administrative Information	7
Controlled Access Headings	7
Collection Inventory	8
Topics Related to Non-Project Areas	8
Topics Related to Specific Projects	10
Programs in Pakistan and Nepal	12

Summary Information

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[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical / Historical

Douglas Ensminger served as Representative of the Ford Foundation in India from 1952-1970, and formally retired from the Foundation on December 16, 1970 to accept an appointment as professor of rural sociology at University of Missouri. At the time of his retirement, according to Ensminger, he was asked by the Trustees to record his reminiscences of his work and the Foundation's programs in India. He dictated his reminiscences about his time in India while in Columbia, working with two assistants paid for by the Foundation. He worked on the project between 1971 and 1973, which coincided with the Foundation's own oral history project. Although Ensminger did not formally participate in the oral history project, he did consult with Charles Morrissey and Ron Grele, the oral history project staff, and he did execute an agreement with the Foundation regarding rights to his material.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical / Historical

Segment One: International Activities of the Ford Foundation: An Overview

The Foundation's aspiration to become a national and international philanthropy for the advancement of human welfare was first formally expressed in the seminal 1949 report of the Gaither Study Committee, *Report of the Study for the Ford Foundation on Policy and Program* (RAC Library, call letters 361.7 GAI), which was commissioned by the Board of Trustees to chart the Foundation's future. Foundation Trustees launched Ford's international grantmaking activities in 1950 when they approved the committee's report and its embrace of peace, democracy, and freedom. Since then, the Foundation has tackled these goals using a variety of strategies and responding to changing contexts, from the Cold War to the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall and beyond.

Toward the Foundation's aspirational goal, "the establishment of peace", its international activities have comprised a wide range of conceptual approaches and focus areas. These include international affairs, international studies, international understanding, arms control and disarmament, international law, international economic concerns, and overseas development in nearly every region of the world. Three distinct periods emerge for the international grantmaking defined by external contextual changes and internal changes in Foundation leadership and structures: the expansion era of 1950-1965; the transition and restructuring years of 1966-1988; and the post-1989 shift away from Cold War dichotomies. During each of the distinct historical periods the consistent objectives were: 1) to ensure freedom and democracy in developed countries; 2) to foster education and international understanding in all countries; and 3) to contribute to the social, economic, and political development of less developed countries.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical / Historical

Segment 2. Period Sketch - The Expansion Era 1950-1965

The Ford Foundation's expansion era (1950-1965) began when the Gaither Study Committee Report placed "peace" as the area of top priority for the Foundation and set the Ford Foundation on a global course. Board Chair Henry Ford II writing in the 1951 Annual Report of the Foundation, identified "the danger of war" as the "the prime threat to human welfare today." Under the leadership of the three Ford Foundation presidents in this period-- Paul Hoffman, H. Rowan Gaither and Henry Heald--and several key trustees, notably the two seriatim chairs, John J. McCloy and Julius A. Stratton, the Foundation programs were largely informed by the post-World War II desire to avoid nuclear war and promote greater understanding among the world's peoples, strengthening of the United Nations, and enhancing both private and public American participation in world affairs. The strong board presence of university presidents and former leaders of postwar reconstruction efforts in Europe also helped to inform Ford's

approach to building the field of peace and international security in the United States and encouraged extensive overseas activities.

For example, the first three presidents of the expanded Foundation ranged from government and business leadership experience to academic and nonprofit: Paul Hoffman (at Ford, 1950-1953) ran the Marshall Plan in Europe; H. Rowan Gaither Staffer (1948-1953), President (1953-1956) and Trustee (1956-1958) had MIT and Rand experience; Henry Heald, former president, Illinois Institute of Technology and New York University, President (1956-1966). The trustees also ran the leadership gamut from government and nonprofits to academic: Trustee John J. McCloy (from 1953; chair, 1959-1965) was assistant Secretary of War during World War II and chairman of the Council on Foreign Relations; and Trustee Julius A. Stratton (Trustee from 1955; chair, 1966-1970) was president of MIT.

When Ford became an international foundation in 1950, it had a small staff and operated through separate funds. The expansive period in the 1950s and 1960s resulted in a large number of field offices, which increased Ford's global footprint. Support focused on a mix of US university-based programs for research and training; think-tanks for policy-oriented meetings and policy research; and action projects specifically in less developed countries. The Foundation's focus on peace, freedom, and democracy played out against the Cold War backdrop for scientific and military competition between the United States, the Soviet Union and China.

Under President Hoffman, the Foundation's work was organized by the areas identified in the Gaither Committee Report: Area One, the Establishment of Peace; Area Two, The Strengthening of Democracy; Area Three, The Strengthening of the Economy; Area Four, Education in a Democratic Society; and Area Five, Individual Behavior and Human Relations.

Program differentiation began in the Gaither era. When he began in 1953, he introduced the following programs, with international work under nearly all of them: International Programs, Public Affairs Programs, Program in Economic Development and Administration (mainly U.S. based), Education Program, The TV-Radio Workshop, and Behavioral Sciences Program. In 1954, the Foundation gave prominence to the international work explicitly through changing the program names and separating international affairs and overseas development. The 1954 program names were: The Advancement of Education, Education for Democracy, Increasing Knowledge of Foreign Areas, Economic Development and Administration, the Behavioral Sciences, and Overseas Development. In 1955, Increasing Knowledge of Foreign Areas became Increasing International Understanding. In 1956, the last year of the Gaither presidency, the program roster read: Education in the United States, The Behavioral Sciences, Public Affairs, Hospital Aid (only in the U.S.), Economic Development and Administration, International Understanding, and Overseas Development. Names changed but the program focus often remained the same.

President Heald maintained the areas of international interest of Hoffman and Gaither. The International Affairs program housed the programs based in the United States, Europe and Japan, with a few activities linking American and developing countries institutions. The Overseas Training and Research Program took over the efforts to increase American understanding of international issues. From 1957-1959, an International Legal Studies program, run from New York, helped build law programs in developing countries. Starting in 1959, the Overseas Development program comprised all the regional and country offices. In fiscal year 1964, Heald convinced the trustees to add a new focus on population, with grants both in the United States and overseas.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical / Historical

Segment 2. Period Summary - The Expansion Era 1950-1965

With the ever-increasing budget and trustee willingness to invade capital, presidents Hoffman, Gaither and Heald oversaw vast growth in the Foundation's international activities in the United States, other developed countries and developing countries. Activities crossed disciplines, institutions, and national boundaries, although few crossed intra-foundation boundaries. Under the three presidents, Foundation staff in various domestic and international offices from New York interacted with the regional and country offices headed by representatives. Usually in this period, however, these offices in fact worked more closely with local governments than with New York staff, reinforcing the commitment to locally led social and economic development in less-developed countries.

The shared values of this early period reflected as much the continuing competition between the Communist and capitalist worlds as the concerns about maintaining peace. The Cold War provided the contextual continuity for grantmaking on the core themes of increasing American understanding of the rest of the world, building and strengthening connections not only with European and Asian democracies but also with Eastern European countries, the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Scope and Contents

Oral history.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Arrangement

Arranged in 3 series: 1. Topics related to Non-Project Areas. 2. Topics related to Specific Project Areas. 3. Programs in Pakistan and Nepal.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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archive@rockarch.org

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

Ford Foundation archive was deposited at RAC in 2011. Ford Foundation records, correspondence, reports, program files and officers papers were transferred to, and accessioned by, RAC beginning in 2011. Accessions continue as necessary.

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[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Controlled Access Headings

- India
- Ford Foundation -- History

- Ford Foundation

Collection Inventory

Topics Related to Non-Project Areas

Title/Description	Instances
A.1 Introduction	box 1
A.2 The Ford Foundation's Relations with the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance [Government of India], October 19, 1971	box 1
A.3 The Ford Foundation's Relations with the [Government of India] Planning Commission, October 21, 1971	box 1
A.4 Why were so many grants made to the Government of India instead of Non-government Agencies and Institutions, October 27, 1971	box 1
A.5 The delicacy of the Ford Foundation's Relationships with other Foreign Aid giving agencies working in India, November 15, 1971	box 1
A.6 The Ford Foundation' relations with the Center and State Government in India. , November 16, 1971	box 1
A.7 The Foundation's objectives and reasons for its presence in India, November 18, 1971	box 1
A.8 Relationships with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, November 29, 1971	box 1
A.9 The significance of maintaining relations with the [Government of India] Cabinet, December 10, 1971	box 1
A.10 The significance of relations with India's Presidents., December 13, 1971	box 1
A.11 Keeping in touch with all key points in India's Central Government power structure when advancing and discussing new ideas, December 14, 1971	box 1
A.12 The importance of understanding India's foreign policy to the Foundation's operations in India.	box 1
A.13 Need for understanding the Gandhian Philosophy and different interpretations expounded by Gandhian followers. , December 16, 1971	box 1
A.14 Why an understanding of India's Caste System was important to the Ford Foundation's working in India, December 27, 1971	box 1

A.15 How were the relations defined between the Ford Foundation as an American institution working in India and the American Embassy, April 18, 1972	box 1
A.16 Why were there so few foreign institutional contracts to backstop Ford Foundation supported programs in India, April 19, 1972	box 1
A.17 In what ways did the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] issues effect the Ford Foundation's work in its relations in India, May 9, 1972	box 1
A.18 What considerations went into formulating policies for housing accommodation of Foundation's foreign staff living in India, May 10, 1972	box 1
A.19 The importance to the Foundation's recruitment in having the American International School, the Inter-denominational Church and the Holy Family Hospital., May 11, 1972	box 1
A.20 The significance of major economic, climatic, social and political crises in India to opening the doors for major changes, May 12, 1972	box 1
A.21 Importance of understanding the time and process for significant change to take place, May 23, 1972	box 1
A.22 The problems involved on India's side in assigning creative people to give leadership to new and innovative programs, May 24, 1972	box 1
A.23 The pros and cons of putting the maximum amount of Ford Foundation funds for India into grants in contrast to contributing to the maximum through high level staff in discussing ideas, examining alternatives and backing up India to give leadership to change and development as well as assist in starting new programs. (Where does the money go?) , May 30, 1972	box 1
A.24 Too much emphasis on Indian counterparts to match foreign consultants and too little concern on India's part in maximizing utilization of consultants , May 31, 1972	box 1
A.25 The pros and cons of Ford Foundation grant funds applying to both rupee and dollars costs, June 1, 1972	box 1
A.26 The problems of assisting non-government organizations, agencies and institutions and the problem of these non-government institutions becoming viable, June 5, 1972	box 1
A.27 Helping people locked in poverty, June 16, 1972	box 1
A.28 The pros and cons of the Ford Foundation making greater use of Indians as consultants in India, June 19, 1972	box 1
A.29 India's policy and practice of frequent transfer of key staff made the task of starting new programs exceedingly difficult , June 19, 1972	box 1

A.30 The performance payoff of sending Indian officials abroad for short term training is marginal and of questionable value , June 19, 1972	box 1
A.31 How did the Foundation function in its administrative services as it grew and functioned during the decade of the Fifties and Sixties , June 19, 1972	box 1
A.32 The western orientation to time and quality of performance comes in the way of the working of program advisors and consultants in India , June 22, 1972	box 1
A.33 The Ford Foundation has a fetish about evaluation of projects and programs it assists with but shows little evidence of drawing on documented evidence, June 26, 1972	box 1
A.34 The Government of India and non-government agencies and organizations' accountability for Ford Foundation grant funds, June 29, 1972	box 1
A.35 The interaction between the Ford Foundation's India Field Office and New York office, June 30, 1972	box 1
A.36 The advantages and disadvantages to the Ford Foundation's India office in using the Institute of International Education, New York to administer fellowships, travel and study awards, and contract employees, July 6, 1972	box 1
A.37 The importance of having a strategy for introducing change, October 25, 1972	box 1
A.38 Recruiting program advisors and consultants, October 25, 1972	box 1
A.39 The "Little People" of India, November 6, 1972	box 1
A.40 The Ford Foundation's Image in India, November 7, 1972	box 1
A.41 The growth of the Ford Foundation's India Headquarters Office, November 17, 1972	box 1
A.42 Recollections and Reminiscences	box 1
A.43 The Ensminger family's experience in India	box 1

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Topics Related to Specific Projects

Title/Description	Instances
B.1 The Ford Foundation's early and continuous concern about population and family	box 2
B.2 The Ford Foundation's contribution in the field of India's village and small industries, November 5, 1971	box 2

B.3 The Ford Foundation's persistent concern and role in assisting India achieve a status of food enough for its people , January 5, 1972	box 2
B.4 Why did the Ford Foundation accept and respond to Dr. B.C. Roy's invitation to assist in the development of a long range plan for the Greater Calcutta Area? , February 7, 1972	box 2
B.5 Why did the Ford Foundation assist with India's handicrafts and handloom industry, February 9, 1972	box 2
B.6 The Ford Foundation's involvement in public administration, February 11, 1972	box 2
B.7 The Ford Foundation and management education in India, March 2, 1972	box 2
B.8 The historical basis of the Foundation's involvement in strengthening India's institutional competence in economics, March 29, 1972	box 2
B.9 Why did the Ford Foundation get involved in training five hundred of India's young engineers in steel making , April 24, 1972	box 2
B.10 The Ford Foundation's support to the Delhi Center for the Orientation of Foreigners taking up with assignments in India, May 18, 1972	box 2
B.11 The Ford Foundation's support and withdrawal from the Center for Applied Politics, June 19, 1972	box 2
B.12 The sensitivity of the Ford Foundation contributing to India's art and cultural programs, June 21, 1972	box 2
B.13 India's problem of Brain Drain and the Ford Foundation's efforts to counteract it, June 23, 1972	box 2
B.14 Ford Foundation's contribution to India in educational television and mass communications, June 23, 1972	box 2
B.15 The Ford Foundation involvement and contribution in the field of law and legal education in India, June 23, 1972	box 2
B.16 The Ford Foundation's Role in assisting India in its Manpower, June 26, 1972	box 2
B.17 The Ford Foundation involvement and contribution in the field of law and legal education in India , June 23, 1972	box 2
B. 18 The Ford Foundation's early interest and involvement in Home Economics of work in India , July 5, 1972	box 2
B.19 The Ford Foundation's interest and assistance in the development of the sociological sciences in India, July 10, 1972	box 2
B.20 Why did the Ford Foundation get involved in helping India make a go of nationalizing its Banks, July 11, 1972	box 2

B.21 The Ford Foundation's nineteen years of involvement with India's Community Development Program , July 11, 1972	box 2
B.22 The Leigh Stevens village electric and water project, August 21, 1972	box 2
B.23 The Ford Foundation's interest and involvement in Indian Education, August 23, 1972	box 2
B.24 Williams College and Harvard University Public Service Fellowship program, November 6, 1972	box 2

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Programs in Pakistan and Nepal

Title/Description	Instances
C.1 The Ford Foundation's involvement in Pakistan, 1951-1953., September 22, 1972	box 2
C.2 The Ford Foundation's contributions to Nepal, September 22, 1972	box 2

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)