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## Partnering for Power: Perspectives from Community-based Recycling Initiatives in Brazil, Colombia and Venezuela

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Saturday, March 18 at 4:00 PM in San Cristobal F 893//SMO 027

The Inter-American Foundation (IAF) has organized this panel to address an issue considered critical for sustainable economic development. Current development theory recognizes that the ability of marginalized communities to acquire democratic power is a central component of the development process. This democratic power is essential to enhance the decision-making capacity that enables these communities to determine their own future. The panel will analyze diverse and real life experiences that come directly from communities that have organized to address the issue of urban solid waste management. The IAF has identified these initiatives because these projects affect community groups that live in condition of extreme poverty and are some of the most marginalized and discriminated against by society. As a result of these experiences, these populations have been able to consolidate their institutions that have been able to improve their overall standard of living. The groups have also been able to address successfully political, economic and social challenges.

This panel will not focus its analysis on the financial and economic results of these micro businesses. Rather it will center the discussion on the processes and means by which they achieved these results, especially the participants' acquisition of democratic power.

In many of these cases, IAF representatives have observed that these communities have assumed power through leadership; recognition from public and private officials and other members of society; and training and education, all of which have enabled them to improve their quality of life, organize themselves more effectively, and offer informed contributions to political society. They have influenced policy at all levels of government and have participated more effectively in decision-making processes.

In "Partnering for Power: Perspectives from Community-based Recycling Initiatives in Brazil, Colombia and Venezuela", panelists will address the following points or questions:

- How has the development of each experience strengthened relationships within the community, with other similar communities, or with municipal, regional, and national governments, the private sector or international organizations?
- Discuss how the formation of partnerships has helped strengthen their democratic power.

Panelists will share their real life experiences focusing on the following:

- Association of participants in community-based recycling at different levels: in the community, with other similar communities, and with government authorities, private companies and international organizations.
- Benefits and challenges faced in developing these associations.

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Panelists include:

**Adriana Mota, Nova Pesquisa e Assessoria em Educação (NOVA):** A grassroots support organization founded in 1972. Nova is a leader within Rio de Janeiro in sponsoring popular education and democratic practices and has internationally recognized programs in these areas. Nova was also the first institution in Rio de Janeiro to establish a network of recyclers, Rede Solidariedade a Populcao de Rua, with 40 participating organizations, and has received support from the IAF in increasing resources and assuring sustainability of organizations in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

**Nohra Padilla, Asociación Cooperativa de Recicladores de Bogotá (ARB):** A cooperative organization of recyclers founded in 1990. ARB connected with the IAF through a project to establish a cooperative fund, FOCUS, with Colombian NGO Fundacion Corona. FOCUS provided grants to local groups for small-scale productive projects designed to generate employment and promote community development strategies. This project benefited approximately 1,250 low-income families in urban areas of Bogotá. One of the grants from FOCUS went to the Asociacion de Recicladores Las Marias, a recycling organization founded in 1999 by 35 families in the Bogota Barrio Las Marias. FOCUS's grant helped integrate the Las Mariás recyclers into the ARB's larger network of 23 Bogotá recycling groups.

**Beatriz Febres-Cordero, Fundación Papyrus:** A private, non-profit corporate foundation created in 1994 by the Manufacturas de Papel (MANPA). In implementing the three-year Papyrus program, Fundación Papyrus worked with over 96,000 students as well as 360 teachers who received training in recycling best practices. The Papyrus program also helped to develop a heightened awareness of the importance of recycling among the students of the targeted schools. In association with the IAF, Fundacion Papyrus also commissioned a one-year study to assess the viability of establishing small-scale, grassroots, and recycling enterprise to become independent suppliers of recycled raw materials. Fundacion Papyrus is in the initial stages of implementing a pilot project, designed based on the results of the study, in a Caracas residential area, El Silencio.

Meredith Sanderson, graduate student at Georgetown University, will provide an overview of the theoretical framework for the discussion.

Gabriela Boyer from the Inter-American Foundation will moderate the discussion.