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FOCUS: Scaling Up Grassroots Development

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Cover photo: An artisan in Tolima, Colombia, stacks cooled pots after they have been fired in the kiln. Opposite: Potters remove a recently fired kettle from the kiln. (See article on p. 13.) Photos courtesy of the Museo de Artes y Tradiciones.

grassroots development

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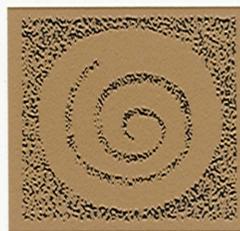
Mary Morgan

- dev. strategies & theories
- NGOs / PVOs
- economic dev.

During the past decade, development resources have been scarce at all levels. Bilateral and multilateral donors have been under increasing financial pressure due to budget deficits and domestic agendas; Third World governments have staggered under heavy debt burdens; and political leaders and private commentators have questioned whether development assistance really works anyway. The situation is likely to get worse before it gets better. Events in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union have reduced the strategic importance of Third World development assistance, and pent-up domestic demand will probably absorb most of any "peace dividend," East and West.

Much attention is thus being paid to maximizing the impact of every development dollar. One phenomenon receiving increased scrutiny for its potential cost-effectiveness is "scaling-up." Although widely used in the development community, the term means different things to different people. In the context of grass-

Thinking big
about
funding small.



roots development, "scaling-up" usually means a conscious effort to expand operations, impact, or both.

According to the expanded-operations interpretation, scaling-up consists mainly of institutional growth. That is, the organization becomes larger, takes on more activities, and either operates in a bigger arena or in a bigger way. An expansion in operations is not usually intended as an end in itself but as a means to expand impact. Whether or not this

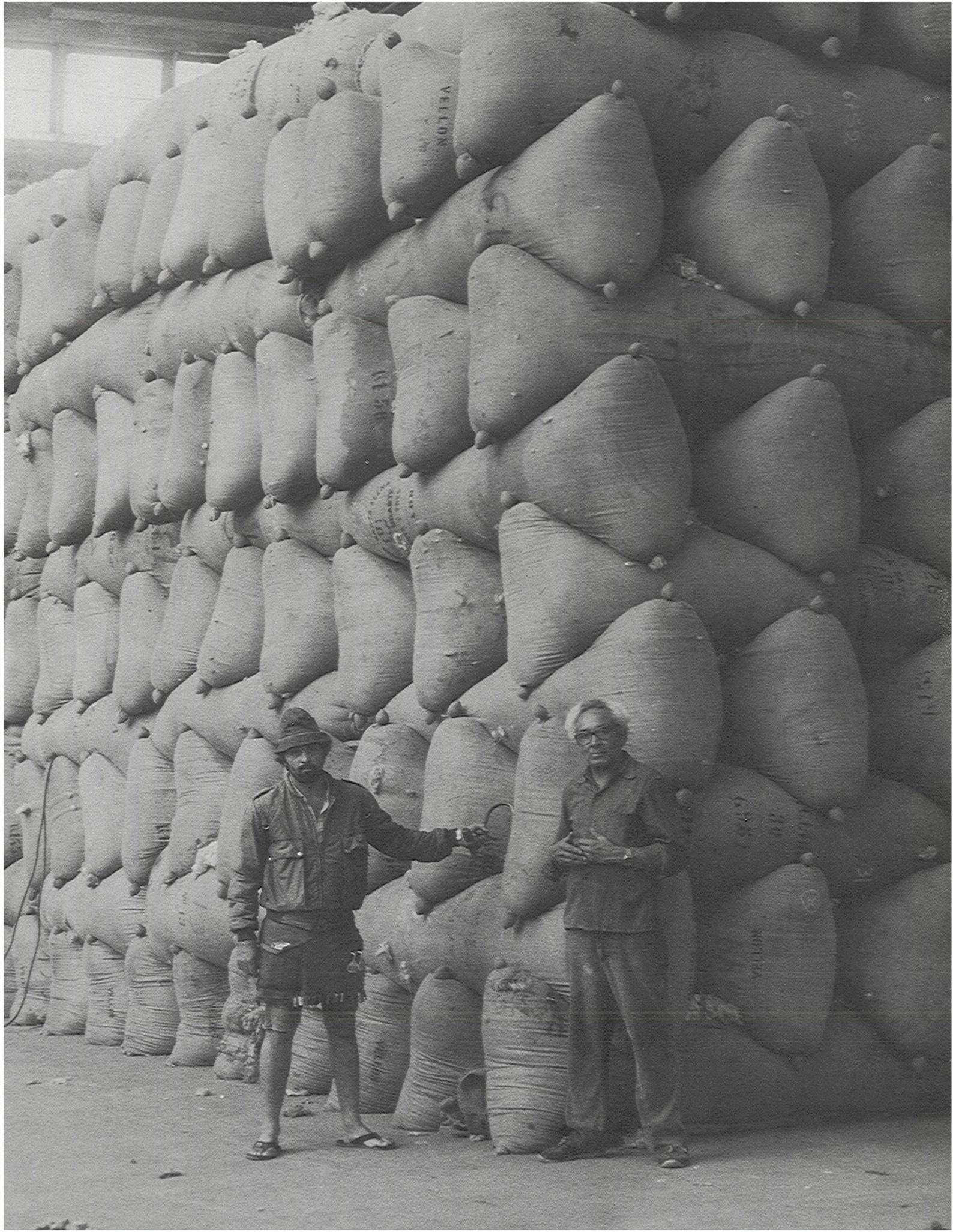
happens depends, among other things, on the play between institutional capability and institutional growth.

The expanded-impact interpretation of scaling-up focuses on projects rather than institutions. Expanded impact usually occurs in one of three ways. First, projects may be replicated; that is, they may inspire similar projects in the same region, other regions, or other countries. Second, grassroots projects—usually specific in scope and short in duration—may lead to local, regional, or national programs—usually broader in scope and indefinite in duration. Third, projects (or programs) may lead to national policy reform.

Expanded impact does not necessarily mean an expansion in operations for the institution carrying out the "seed" project. Often, another organization replicates the project, develops and implements the program, or carries out the policy reform.

The Focus section in this issue of *Grassroots Development* examines the expanded-impact type of scaling-up from the perspective of grassroots

Kathryn Shaw



Preceding page: Workers pose before a mountain of wool at Central Lanera Uruguay, a producer-managed enterprise in Montevideo. From its small start in 1967, CLU has scaled up to fourth place among Uruguayan wool exporters.

development projects carried out by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Two articles—one on artisanal production in Colombia, the other on educational methodology in Trinidad—look in detail at how specific grassroots projects have scaled up to have a national impact. The present article explores a wide range of perspectives and thinking on the general proposition.

Six major questions should be answered before the phenomenon of scaling-up can be elevated to a strategy or a methodology: (1) What kinds of projects scale up successfully? (2) Why does it happen? (3) How does it happen? (4) What keeps it from happening more often? (5) Can we make it happen and, if so, how? (6) How does scaling-up sustain itself over time? This article does not provide definitive answers to any of the questions, and it does not even try to answer the crucial fifth and sixth questions. What it does attempt is to review what some key actors think about scaling-up and to provide insights that may inspire further reflection.

THE TERMS OF THE SCALING-UP DEBATE

Not surprisingly, everyone involved in the debate over the significance of scaling-up—micro-oriented donors such as the Inter-American Foundation (IAF), macro-oriented donors such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Latin American governments, and the NGOs themselves—approaches the issue from a different perspective, conditioned by their own interests. For most at the IAF, scaling-up as both a recurring phenomenon and a possible methodology has great appeal, although much caution informs discussion of it as a methodology. Scaling-up is one means of maximizing and legitimizing the success of the grassroots development approach



Courtesy IDB/Carlos Conde

and of validating the IAF's emphasis on innovation and experimentation in the projects it funds. While most people at the IAF applaud all three types of expanded impact described above, it is scaling-up to have a national impact on programs or policies that they find particularly intriguing.

As Senior Representative for Brazil Brad Smith noted, "It is good to fund oasis-type projects, but how do we irrigate the valley? To do that, we must involve the government, and that is quite a leap for many grassroots developers." For Smith, the key development issue for the 1990s is

Left: Martin Olivares clamps a baby shoe using equipment financed through a Colombian NGO supported by an IDB Small Projects loan.

how NGOs will collaborate with the public sector to plan and implement programs on a broader scale. Others at the IAF disagree. Chuck Kley-meyer, Foundation representative for Ecuador and Bolivia, is troubled by the "scaling-up enterprise." He worries that too much emphasis on scaling-up will jeopardize the grassroots approach. "Are there ways of expanding grassroots development while staying at the base?" Kley-meyer asks. "Must we move upscale, and must we make all the pieces bigger, thereby increasing many of the well-known risks of top-down macrodevelopment?"

For others at the IAF, scaling-up goes to the heart of the grassroots development methodology. Vice President for Learning and Dissemination Charles Reilly says that the essence of scaling-up is to create space for projects to "glow and burn," noting that "not all do and not all should scale up. The point of the IAF's emphasis on experimentation and innovation is to find and nourish sources of social energy that can move from a project to a program to a policy."

THE VIEW FROM THE DEVELOPMENT BANKS

Both the World Bank and the IDB see scaling-up in a different light than the IAF. Their relatively recent interest in grassroots projects and NGOs sits rather oddly with the traditional development-bank emphasis on macropolicy, multimillion-dollar projects and programs, and work with national governments. Frustrated by the inefficiency of relying on government channels to reach the very poor, and under pressure from NGOs both in the United States and Latin America to cooperate more closely, development bank officials are expressing more and more interest in the grassroots approach. The World Bank, in particular, has been harshly criticized for its failure to ad-

dress the problems of poverty and, indeed, for deepening the plight of the poor by pressuring debt-ridden developing countries to make structural economic adjustments.

Whatever their motivation, both the World Bank and the IDB have begun to look seriously at small projects and NGOs, although both institutions still fund NGOs only through government-linked programs. As might be expected, "small" is a highly relative term. When the IDB talks small projects, it means \$500,000 minimum, not \$5,000 nor even \$50,000. But small is in the eye of the beholder, and the IDB is beginning to devote serious time and resources to assisting NGOs scale up their efforts

grassroots projects, trying to use them to catalyze development."

The World Bank also has increased its emphasis on NGO involvement at both the policy and project levels. The Bank's commitment to NGOs is serious, according to David Beckmann, Asia officer for the Bank's Strategic Planning and Review Department. He notes that the Bank now disseminates a biannual list of projects in which it is seeking NGO involvement (see page 54 for information on how to obtain this list), and also has been instrumental in setting up "social investment funds" in a number of Latin American countries to focus on alleviating poverty and to provide funds for NGO activities.

Frustrated by the inefficiency of relying on government channels to reach the very poor, development bank officials are expressing more and more interest in the grassroots approach.

with the grassroots poor. According to IDB Senior Project Officer Roberto Mizrahi, "We have only been interested in small-scale projects for the past year. The biggest factor has been the economic crisis in Latin America. The microproducers are no longer a minority; the poor are a majority. They are not part of the problem; they must be part of the solution." Says Mizrahi, working with NGOs at the grassroots level is "a good and necessary complementary strategy" for the IDB. Kenneth Cole, IDB small projects coordinator, says that the "small projects program is intended to be catalytic, and the IDB's national programs of microenterprise development are intended to reach people and activities that conventional credit programs are not reaching. The national programs in themselves are scaling up what have been small

According to Beckmann, "the Bank is interested in scaling-up to the extent it is interested in NGOs." And its interest in NGOs is largely tied to their ability to elicit participation by the poor and make official programs more responsive to the needs of the poor. In terms of "pulling official programs in the right direction, making them more responsive to the poor and to environmental issues, NGOs need to critique programs and raise national issues and policy issues. Not all NGOs are very good at that; they need more precision and accuracy about their alternative ideas now that people are beginning to listen to them."

Many at the IAF and elsewhere in the development community, including some in the mega-institutions themselves, are trepidatious about what might happen to NGOs if the

development banks make a real effort to scale up grassroots projects. Roberto Mizrahi notes that the IDB recognizes that "on a small scale, NGOs have achieved much and the IDB does not want to spoil that. Rather it wants to preserve these achievements while replicating them." According to many at the IAF, this is far easier said than done.

IAF Representative Cindy Ferrin, citing her experience in Uruguay, gives an example of the many difficulties that can arise: "In a literacy education program a teacher came up with an educational methodology that taught reading in a much shorter time than any other approach. She taught other teachers to use it, but the Uruguayan Ministry of Education would not permit it to be used in schools. It is still not adopted by educational authorities for wider use. It was a very low-cost methodology, and we hoped it could be used more widely, but that has not happened."

Some at the IAF suggest that the whole matter of scaling-up as a strategy for the development banks is a false issue, that the mega-institutions should scale down, not expect NGOs to scale up. IAF Vice President for Programs Steve Vetter draws an analogy between money and fertilizer. "Like fertilizer, money can be a growth agent or cause death by burn-out. The difference between the amounts required for each is very small. The development banks need to be sensitive to this point in terms of allocating large amounts of money to NGOs. The big organizations should scale down."

The IDB's Kenneth Cole agrees that the IDB and the World Bank must learn to work with NGOs, but observes that "it is a two-way street. The NGOs must understand the IDB's foibles and learn to work around them." The World Bank's Beckmann does not necessarily agree, saying that "NGOs need to scale up, not to work with the Bank but to deal with pov-

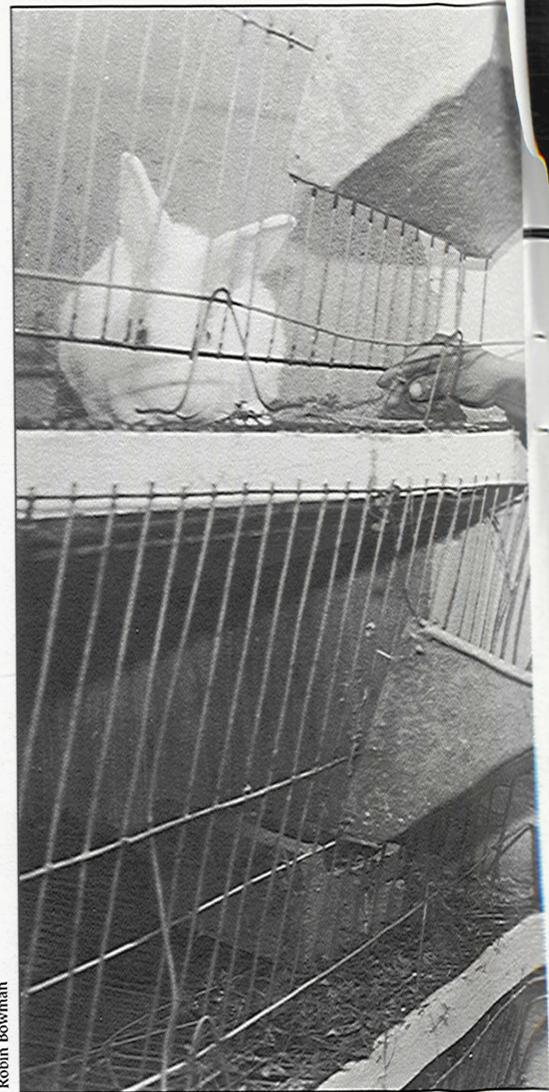
Informal networks and word-of-mouth demand led to the expansion of women's training programs pioneered by the Capacitación Integral de la Mujer Campesina in Bolivia. Here, trainees examine rabbit hutches.

erty on the scale on which it exists. They must find a way to have a much bigger impact. The World Bank is not a good place to come for \$50,000 or \$200,000. We want NGOs involved in the planning process, and if they want to do that, they have to be able to make a commitment of time without necessarily receiving any money. NGOs with their own agenda and their own money are in a position to really make a difference."

Sheldon Annis, a senior fellow at the Overseas Development Council (ODC) and veteran Bank observer, is not sure the World Bank can or even should fund NGO projects. "The Bank cannot and does not do what the IAF does. It should not fund a lot of grassroots projects, nor should the IDB." The proper role for the development banks, he believes, is "to create propitious conditions—legal frameworks, social structures, economic systems—conducive to smallness thriving. The big institutions can affect environments in a way that lets small things grow."

Annis's views are shared by the World Bank's staff, which sees a clear need for NGOs to scale up "conceptually" to contribute to the creation of these "propitious" conditions. Says Beckmann, "There is a lot of promise in NGOs, but agricultural pricing policy, for example, has done far more damage to the poor than anything NGOs have done to help the poor. Yes, the Bank should spend more staff time per dollar spent with NGOs; but, no, we should not scale down to be another IAF. We should work on the big issues and so should the NGOs, and they should work with increasing sophistication."

Chris Hennin, Latin America officer for the Bank's Strategic Planning and Review Department, says that the Bank's experience in getting NGOs to look at the macropicture has been relatively positive thus far. "In some countries where we are working on social emergency funds, the NGOs



Robin Bowman

have been skeptical about working with the governments and about the efficiency of the funds, but they have never organized to address their role in the funds. Our work with the NGOs is an educational process. The more successful they are, the better they articulate what they are doing; and the more they demonstrate the social and economic benefits of their work, the more they will be taken seriously. It is in their interests to help change macropolicy so they can work under more supportive policies."

The IDB's Kenneth Cole would seem to agree, noting that in its microenterprise program, the IDB is "looking for a commitment from the national government to program for microenterprise, to create a policy environment conducive to small efforts by using market concepts as opposed to economic subsidies, eliminating credit impediments and/or



strengthening nontraditional credit-delivery institutions with a low-income orientation, and to support public/private collaboration."

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AND NGO PERSPECTIVES

At the national government level, the fiscal crisis is the primary motivator for interest in scaling up NGO programs. Over the past several years, there has been a largely undramatic but visible movement in Latin America away from highly centralized, often military, national government control and toward power-sharing with other governmental levels and the creation of space for a more vocal civil society. One result has been a rapid proliferation of NGOs demanding government services on behalf of the poor. Another has been increased government interest in NGO projects,

in part because of their reputation for succeeding on a small budget.

"In some ways," says Charles Reilly, "the fiscal crisis is mending the fissures between the governments and popular organizations, between the state and civil society. The crisis is such that reduced goods are available to governments to give away. They must find new ways of dealing with organizations that can deliver services to the poor." Scaling up NGO programs may offer hard-pressed Latin American governments techniques and assistance in delivering services. But, cautions Kevin Healy, IAF representative for Ecuador and Bolivia, "the government's interest is not always benign. It may try to co-opt the NGO to keep control, or the program may not satisfy its original goals."

Governments themselves have a different perspective. According to

Charles Maynard, minister of agriculture, industry, tourism, lands, surveys, and trade in Dominica, "There is a very critical and significant role for NGOs to play in development, but they need to be fully informed and aware of the public policy perspectives related to their work. The impact of some NGO projects has been frustrated by the tendency of donors as well as NGOs to minimize the role of the public sector. There should be strong interaction between governments and NGOs, not just a government role of rescuing NGOs in time of trouble or of signing off on NGO funds. One reason is that accountability of NGOs is a problem. The government in the end must be accountable to the people because it will feel their wrath if it does not meet their needs, but to whom are NGOs accountable?" He concludes, "Some NGOs are anxious to cooperate and really work with the government, but others only offer what I call 'unwilling' cooperation."

At the NGO level, there is even greater uneasiness about scaling-up, particularly when it comes with the embrace of national governments and development banks. Many Latin American NGOs have historically operated in opposition to the government and with a high degree of independence and autonomy. They have worked with little regulation from the government, filling a void many governments chose to ignore. With the national political environment changing around them, many NGOs are facing an unfamiliar new world in which their role is not yet clear. As the IAF's Brad Smith notes, "One of the real issues for NGOs is how much money can they take from the government while still carrying out advocacy activities that may involve criticizing the source of those funds."

In discussing NGO unease with development bank ideas about how they should scale up, Charles Reilly

noted Peruvian NGO leader Mario Padrón's opposition to any declaration of a "Decade of NGOs," to go along with the failed decades for water, women and children, and health. It is Padrón's view, says Reilly, that the last thing NGOs want and need is "to be saddled with responsibility for another failed decade," for "NGOs cannot take the major responsibility for development."

IAF President Deborah Szekely observed that discussions of scaling-up should be tempered with greater realism. "Sustained development to benefit growing numbers of poor people is a long, long journey. Whether our emphasis is on micro- or macro-impact, we all must learn to cross new middle grounds—networks to be fashioned, teachers trained, social entrepreneurs encouraged, proven ideas shared, access to credit expanded, economies of scale achieved. Old debates may not serve us well if development efforts are to be sustained in the long term."

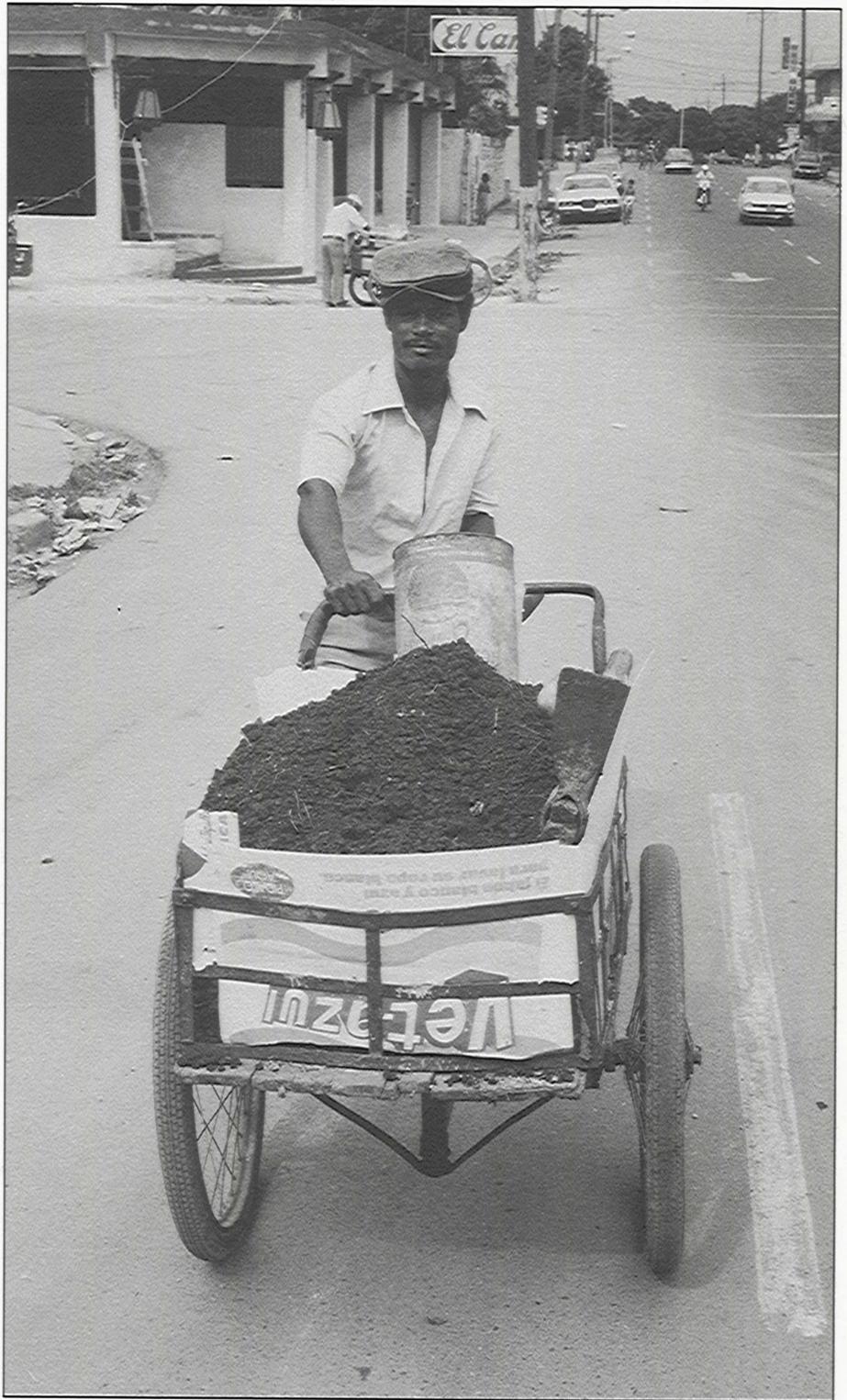
These, then, are some of the issues in the scaling-up debate. Whatever its merits in theory, it is undeniable that scaling-up occurs in practice, and regularly enough to suggest that it can be turned into a planned strategy. If this is to happen we must be able to point to features common to projects that have successfully scaled up so that we can build those features into projects still on the drawing board.

WHAT KINDS OF PROJECTS SCALE UP SUCCESSFULLY?

Projects that have successfully scaled up are found in virtually all development sectors and in virtually every Latin American nation. The following provides a sampling:

- In Mexico, a coalition of local peasant organizations evolved into first a regional, then a national organization called the **Unión Nacional de Organizaciones Regionales Campesinas (UNORCA)** to deal with a range

Stephen Vetter



of agricultural financing issues. Because of the number of peasants the organization represents, the amount of land they control, and the organization's own gradual expansion and continued credibility, UNORCA was able to attract the attention of the banking system and bring about reforms.

- In Paraguay, where organizing has been historically frowned upon in official circles, the **Centro Paraguayo de Cooperativistas (CPC)** has successfully extended its program from one area to six subregions. The CPC methodology is to build from local committees, to multi-village committees, to subregional marketing organ-

Some 15,000 people earn their living as tricleros in Santo Domingo. An IAF-funded program to assist these vendors has been replicated in other cities in the Dominican Republic.

izations with consumer stores, processing facilities, agricultural credit, and technical assistance. Other NGOs have looked at the CPC experience and undertaken similar efforts.

- In Uruguay, a federation of wool-growing cooperatives for small producers was so successful that the Central Bank adopted for all growers the cooperatives' policy of providing its members with payments in advance against the expected sales price for their wool. Meat marketers, dairy farmers, and grain producers all picked up the cooperative idea from the wool growers.

- ✓ In Recife, Brazil, an NGO called Centro de Cultura Luiz Freire has been instrumental for 10 years in developing alternative education for slum dwellers. The key force behind the organizing of a national movement of NGOs, the center succeeded in arranging for federal funding for these schools to be built into the new Brazilian Constitution.

Even these few examples suggest that the potential for scaling-up exists in many types of projects. It appears, though, that some types scale up more easily than others. "Credit programs scale up best," says Charles Reilly, "because they are the easiest to measure. They may not be the most significant, though." Educational methodology also scales up well, partly because it is easy and usually inexpensive to adapt. Marketing programs, too, notes Reilly, are good candidates for scaling-up "because the marketing bottleneck in some cases requires scale; organizations and producers must move into diversification."

WHY DOES SCALING-UP OCCUR?

In analyzing why some projects are able to scale up successfully, it soon becomes clear that many known factors are at work, and probably an

even greater number of unknown ones. The most apparent relevant factors are serendipity, capability, visibility, osmosis, and a changing political environment. In a given project, any number of these may be at work.

Cindy Ferrin says that "other than those projects with a policy reform objective, it is happenstance if projects come to wider notice. A happy coincidence is what it takes." Susan Pezzullo, IAF representative for Paraguay and Argentina, has a different perspective. "Scaling-up is not a linear process, but it is not hit-or-miss, either. Astuteness, knowing key people, having the ability to seize opportunities in the marketplace or policy arena, political judgment, and knowledge are all factors." And, she adds, so is "a sufficient level of sophistication to propose to a government what

explains the great demand for expansion of the project." On the other hand, Healy explains, a Bolivian potato project that is using an 800-year-old Andean technique to increase production has received a lot of radio and television publicity throughout the region. The technique appeals to national pride because it uses an Andean solution.

ODC's Sheldon Annis notes that "situations in which scaling-up occurs are complex, not the result of one project. But a grant to the right project in the right place can produce great things. The process cannot be orchestrated—critical masses occur, enough happens, the environment becomes rich enough that connections start being made, and the forces in favor of scaling-up become strong and impressive." According to the IAF's Steve Vetter, good projects scale up as

Situations in which scaling-up occurs are complex, not the result of one project. But a grant to the right project in the right place can produce great things.

actions need to be taken on behalf of the poor."

Visibility also helps. IAF's Research and Evaluations Officer Patrick Breslin notes that "small projects may not fit into the conceptual framework of donors and other big institutions so they may not see the application to their work unless someone points it out."

Kevin Healy believes that the causative factor in scaling-up can be the project itself, especially when it is shockingly original and innovative in its regional context. In the Bolivian Capacitación Integral de la Mujer Campesina (CIMCA), "informal networks and word-of-mouth through individuals who have been trained

a result of an organic process. "The NGO community in Latin America has very active networks at all levels—local, regional, national, and hemispheric," says Vetter, "and anything promising gets tremendous attention and scrutiny. Some concepts are so good they scale up almost immediately. In stagnant areas, poor people and the NGOs grab an idea and go."

Finally, scaling-up seems to be associated with less centralized, more democratic governments, particularly when NGO staff move into government, as is happening in Mexico, Brazil, Chile, and elsewhere. People from an NGO background are more comfortable working with NGOs and

These children attend one of a network of community schools formed by the Centro de Cultura Luiz Freire in Recife. The Centro shares what it learns by providing data and training to public and private educational organizations throughout Brazil.

know how to assess the potential of NGO projects.

HOW DOES SCALING-UP HAPPEN?

As to how projects scale up successfully, the short answer is "slowly and carefully." Clearly, the process is not mechanistic, and perhaps pace is the weightiest factor. Charles Reilly points out that "projects can only grow so fast and get so big or they get into trouble. In Mexico, for example, a couple went into the barrio in Chihuahua and started a program to introduce urban school dropouts to socially useful activities such as house visits to talk with people about the maternal and child health clinic. The youths wrote up the people's answers as homework. The project did very well. The national government noticed and asked the couple to scale the project up from 100 kids to 10,000 in about six months. The importance of

scaling-up, but over a seven-year period. And some feel that scaling up to the regional level is far more realistic than looking for national impact. The IDB's Roberto Mizrahi says, "All the talk is about moving from local to national, but what lies in between? To take a program serving 500 and jump to one million is a big jump. We may need to do regional and subregional projects first."

Giorgio Solimano, former director of the Programa de Salud y Políticas Sociales of the Universidad Academia de Humanismo Cristiano in Santiago, Chile, thinks the issue of how NGOs scale up is in flux in much of Latin America because of political and governmental changes. "Mechanisms and channels for NGOs to affect government are not yet in place," he says. It is Solimano's view that national governments do not recognize the role of the nonformal, nongovernmental sector, and in turn NGOs have not elaborated how they could

bureaucracy. NGOs need to discover the middle ground that is opened up by increasingly democratic, decentralized governments. A well-organized citizenry, such as a large peasants' organization, that has worked on problems should seek to gain local political control, permitting a synthesis of the micro and macro. This has happened in Mexico, and it means that public services will be handled in the same style as grassroots development."

WHAT MAY KEEP SCALING-UP FROM HAPPENING?

Not all projects should scale up, of course, and many will not, simply because they offer nothing innovative or transferable. For those that do, however, the impediments to success—institutional, political, and financial—are formidable.

The institutional capability of NGOs is a matter of great concern. As Craig Hafner, deputy director of the Water and Sanitation for Health Project, puts it, "Talk of scaling-up runs right up against the issue of pushing money at NGOs fast, too fast. This flies in the face of sustainable development. Unqualified staff, inadequate management skills, and the political minefields of national programs all make it difficult for NGOs to scale up. It is difficult enough to do small integrated projects, without trying to do larger programs."

The IDB's Kenneth Cole echoes Hafner's concern about the danger of "pushing money" at NGOs. Cole says, "The money part of the development community demands competence—know your business, do a good presentation, design projects that are financially and economically sound, not just intuitive and reflective of heartfelt sympathies."

The clash of value systems implied here is all too real. Cole notes that "a

Scaling-up does not necessarily mean going from a small group to a bureaucracy. NGOs need to discover the middle ground.

pace and scale was ignored in the quest for bigger numbers."

Not only projects, but also institutions are affected by pace and scale. Steve Vetter points out that "NGOs often do not grow into big organizations well. They usually have a good methodology that is slow-acting and suitable for sustaining projects over the long term."

Cindy Ferrin believes "a partnership over a long period of time is the best way to help organizations scale up." She is working with a small-farmer development project in Panama under a partnership grant intended to achieve substantial

be part of the national environment. "For governments like Chile, Costa Rica, and Peru," says Solimano, "it is important to recognize that there are other, noncentralized actors, but the NGOs must recognize they do not have all the answers. The transition will be hard." In March, Solimano was appointed director of planning and budget in the Chilean Ministry of Health.

Gabriel Cámara, a long-time NGO activist in Mexico, sees at least one very clear role for NGOs in the changing political environment. "Scaling-up does not necessarily mean going from a small group to a



Xirumba

lot of NGOs were created and operate with very romantic notions. They are imbued with U.S. values from the 1960s and under the enchantment of Don Quixote and the poor. These are fine values, but they need to incorporate technological change and other realities."

Roberto Mizrahi agrees: "If NGOs can do a serious job and make it work, the banks will continue to support them. If they behave with economic irresponsibility and just focus on social justice and helping the poor, they will fail. Many people are socially committed, but they must meet economic and financial standards without losing that social commitment."

Other hindrances to scaling-up are more political in nature, usually connected with national politics. Brad Smith points out that "the biggest, trickiest issue is the role of partisan politics. In many Latin American countries, goods and services are distributed based on political patronage

and support. How can NGOs cooperate without being politically co-opted? Problems with corruption, partisan politics, and bureaucracy all work against scaling-up. Also, there is no effective mechanism for community oversight of government programs." And local politics may be a threat. Steve Vetter says that "one of the fundamental political changes in Latin America is decentralization to the mayors' offices. NGOs are being hired as consultants and as providers of services. Does this expand NGOs or swallow them?"

Finally, even the relatively modest resources typically required for NGO programs may be too much for many Latin American governments. Kevin Healy says that in much of Latin America "program ideas are being scaled up in NGOs, not in governments, because the governments are so broke they cannot undertake new initiatives."

In summary, much of what is

known about scaling-up suggests that it offers potential but must be handled with care and sensitivity to the issues raised here. Scaling-up may at times "just happen," but most people interviewed for this article state, or at least imply, that donors like the IAF should support experimental scaling-up projects so that someday we will know the answer to those crucial fifth and sixth questions: How can we make scaling-up happen, and how can it be sustained over time? One thing is clear: Scaling-up does not represent a quick fix or short-term solution to the development problems of Latin America. Institutional capacity building, the essential factor in scaling-up, requires both persistence and that most elusive of commodities—time. ♦

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John Orwell



Mastering the Craft of Scaling-Up in Colombia

Brent Goff

An NGO is preserving crafts by investing in artisans and turning the nation's rural schools into "living museums."

- Colombia
- education
- Culture
- community dev.
- (artisans or crafts)

"Twenty-five years ago, not many people were even aware that Colombia had a national tradition of artisanal production, much less that it was on the verge of being lost." Cecilia Duque, executive director of the Museo de Artes y Tradiciones Populares in Bogotá, speaks with quiet resolve. She is sitting in her office at the museum, surrounded by stunning examples of Colombian arts and crafts, many of them no longer being produced. In playing a leading role to revitalize those traditions, she is determined that the museum will not be simply a repository for prized artifacts, but also a center for reviving the artisan communities and popular cultures that bring those artifacts into being. Nevertheless, she knows the outcome of this struggle is far from certain.

Throughout Colombia, and in much of Latin America, craft traditions are being undermined by a variety of factors, among them urbanization and the increasing popularity and availability of low-cost

manufactured goods. On one level, factory products can simply be a better buy: Cheap plastic buckets and assembly-line shoes can be as functional and as long-lasting as more costly ceramic pots and handmade sandals. On another level, factory goods are more attractive because they evoke the desire for modernization while craft goods reflect an archaic past. Artisans, who are typically unorganized, poorly capitalized, and cut off from regional, national, and international markets, find it hard to compete with manufactured goods without lowering product quality. Items incorporating traditional standards of craftsmanship and high aesthetic values are being replaced by shoddy goods, such as neon-colored ashtrays and stamped-out replicas of Incan gods, made explicitly for the tourist trade. These factors undermine not only traditions of craftsmanship but also the living, breathing culture of which crafts are an expression. If artisans cannot make a living from their work and do not enjoy the respect of their community, then their children will not follow in their foot-

steps. When a craft tradition dies, the community and the nation lose a vital link with their past and a portion of their identity.

The general trend may be irreversible, but there are hopeful signs of improvement in Colombia. At the center of that change is the Asociación Colombiana de Promoción Artesanal (ACPA), a unique institution that has developed a comprehensive strategy for reviving craft traditions during the past two decades. ACPA first concentrated on informing the Colombian public of its cultural heritage through the Museo in Bogotá, hoping thereby to increase demand for quality handicrafts and create broad support for artisanal production. A second stage involved working directly with local artisanal groups throughout Colombia to help them revive and preserve their craft traditions and improve their socioeconomic well-being. A third level of activity is now taking place as ACPA is joining with the Ministry of Education and other public and private institutions to design and implement an innovative program of rural educa-

tion grounded in local and regional culture. This article discusses each of these three phases and describes how it was eventually possible to scale up ACPA's approach.

LAYING A FOUNDATION

ACPA was the offspring of an earlier private voluntary organization, *Unidad Femenina*, which brought upper- and middle-class women's associations from throughout Colombia under one umbrella to address some of the country's pressing socioeconomic problems. Although *Unidad Femenina* dissolved in 1966, its crafts committee continued to function and soon reorganized itself as the *Asociación Colombiana de Promoción Artesanal*.

As Cecilia Duque makes clear, ACPA had unique organizational advantages from the start. "Our strength came from the regional committees that had been organized earlier. We knew it was important to call the nation's attention to a part of its culture that was on the verge of vanishing before it could even be recorded. It was decided to hold exhibitions in Bogotá, and the regional committees made that possible. They documented the artisanry of each department, and scoured the countryside for older artisans who still practiced traditional techniques and might be able to teach others. They raised money from local governments and commissioned works for display and sale in Bogotá. In this way, they hoped not only to preserve the country's cultural heritage but also to create employment."

The exhibits were a resounding success. During the next three years, several were held at various sites in the capital, including the Museo del Chico, the Museo Nacional, and the Caja Agraria. Participants recall these occasions almost as festivals. At each, crafts from a featured department were displayed, and many of rare beauty were offered for sale. To emphasize that these were products of a living tradition, artisans were invited to demonstrate how their work was made, and folklore groups performed dances and songs. The exhibit openings were attended by Colombia's first lady, the governor of the featured department, and many local notables. Media coverage was extensive and



Courtesy Museo de Artes y Tradiciones

Preceding page: A young girl from Râquira, Colombia, learns the traditional craft of molding clay as she fashions a small pot. Above: The Museo de Artes y Tradiciones in Bogotá has become the center for reviving artisan communities and popular cultures throughout the country.

enthusiastic. As Berta Llorente de Ponce de Leon, a founding member of ACPA and president of its board of directors, notes, "For the first time, people began to see the crafts as art."

Soon the search was on for a permanent exhibition site to consolidate that success. With enormous volunteer effort and the support of the Colombian government, ACPA acquired and restored a decaying 18th-century convent in Bogotá's colonial district

and transformed it into the Museo de Artes y Tradiciones Populares. Opened in 1971, it is an architectural gem, a national treasure, and the premier museum of arts and crafts in Colombia. Through permanent displays and special shows it promotes public awareness of traditional crafts in the context of the customs and daily life of the communities that produce them. The museum store provides an outlet for artisans to sell their prod-

ucts, and the staff refers interested buyers directly to master craftsmen.

Although the museum soon became a focal point for artisans throughout the country, Duque and her board of directors began to realize that a new level of involvement would be needed if the facility was not to become a reliquary. Supporting a few master craftsmen by preserving and marketing their work did nothing to broaden the base of production so that craft traditions would not die with this aging generation.

PUTTING RESEARCH INTO ACTION

From the beginning, ACPA believed it was important not to become "just another buyer" of handicrafts. For one thing, *Artesanías de Colombia*, the government crafts organization, was already trying to stimulate the crafts sector as a whole by purchasing large quantities of goods for resale both domestically and abroad. For another, ACPA had begun to wonder if the creation of artificial demand was the right medicine for the country's ailing crafts traditions. The commercial approach of the government program did not ensure the preservation of traditional techniques and designs, and in making scattershot purchases from only a few artisans in each locality, it tended to further fragment already divided communities.

Consequently, ACPA decided on a radically different approach. It would try to use its limited resources to maximum advantage by organizing communities of artisans to help themselves. "We decided," Cecilia Duque says, "that the crisis in crafts production was deeply rooted, and finding an answer meant focusing first on the artisans themselves rather than on what they produced." Beginning in 1977, with grant support from the IAF, ACPA launched an intensive program to help artisan communities create their own development programs. Three criteria were used to target assistance to artisanal groups: the lasting aesthetic and cultural value of a given craft tradition, the danger of its disappearing without outside assistance, and its potential for economic viability. ACPA's previous experience documenting crafts traditions helped it identify likely candidates for assistance and provided



Mitchell Denburg

Cecilia Duque, executive director of the Museo, has led the way in revitalizing Colombian artisanal traditions.

invaluable contacts within communities to begin organizing.

The first phase of ACPA's program is one of applied research in conjunction with the community itself. "You can't go into a community and expect to find answers unless you are prepared to listen," Duque notes. "But this is active listening, geared toward helping people uncover what they can do to improve their situation." Duque emphasizes this work is not for disinterested academics, but people capable of evaluating information in terms of community promotion. The research teams must blend a composite of skills: an instinct for human relations, some knowledge of social science methodologies, and a familiarity with craft techniques.

After clearing the project with municipal authorities, ACPA's outreach team visits local artisans in their homes to gather data on income, health, production techniques, output, raw materials, relations with buyers, and other pertinent economic and social conditions. "It's important for these initial contacts to be informal, almost conversational," Duque says. "This stage requires great patience and tact. People who feel like they are being looked at under a microscope aren't likely to be inspired

by the person at the other end to feel greater confidence in themselves or their craft." The conversations usually include the entire family. Craft production is typically a family enterprise, and by giving everyone a voice from the beginning, Duque stresses, it is much more likely that benefits and decisions from future participation in a community action program will be shared by the family as a whole.

This initial phase can take six months or longer. Then the seeds begin to sprout. A series of community meetings are convened in which artisans can discuss problems in common. To stimulate discussion at these meetings, ACPA has developed an extensive library of booklets and audio-visual materials that target key issues for craft communities. Once the ice is broken, however, field workers are careful not to impose solutions. "We are very aware of the danger of paternalism," says Álvaro Chaves, a noted anthropologist and member of ACPA's technical staff. "We have to remind ourselves that we are not here to teach. We are invited into communities to learn something from them."

The airing of common problems at community meetings is a powerful impetus for organizing common solutions. Most artisan communities are highly fragmented, sometimes because of family or political disputes, but often because artisans are competing on unfavorable terms for access to markets. In most cases that situation is exploited by intermediaries, who buy crafts on consignment or in return for a little cash and enough raw materials to keep production going. Organizing as a precooperative, which entails fewer legal requirements than a cooperative, is one way to remove some of these bottlenecks and increase production. By pooling resources together in a credit fund, a precooperative can buy raw materials in bulk, providing members with a steady, economical supply of inputs to increase production. Sometimes ACPA agrees to buy a group's first inventory, either to encourage the formation of a precooperative or to help it capitalize its production fund. This first inventory might be sold through the museum in Bogotá. In general, though, ACPA helps groups develop their own strategy for direct marketing in order to provide higher rates of return for members and en-

courage the group's independence. The precooperative is typically run by a board of five officers, elected annually.

ACPA's degree of direct involvement in the new organization varies, depending on the history and capabilities of the group. At the beginning, ACPA may exert considerable influence over group policies and activities, usually through elected officers to the precooperative board who agree to consult with the association and represent it within the board. "We maintain very close relations with each community," Cecilia Duque explains. "We put capital into a fund for the new organization when it forms, usually as a loan, but on oc-

casión as a grant if the group shows itself responsible but remains strapped for cash. Our representation on its governing board gradually tapers off to one member. The group should be mature after five years. After 10 years, the group is expected to be independent."

times the best intentions cannot save a craft, but even then we can at least document the tradition so that it does not vanish without a trace." To that end, ACPA is compiling detailed descriptions, drawings, and photographs of craft technologies and products for an archival center at its museum in Bogotá.

Not all crafts are preservable, however. "Some traditions inevitably disappear," de Wiesner says, shrugging her shoulders. "Before intervening, one must weigh various factors—the artistic value of a craft, its practical uses, whether it is marketable. Some-

seemed least likely to make it." It is commonly remarked that "Pastuzos eat Pastuzos"—meaning that the people of Pasto tend to undercut each other habitually—and the barnizadores were no exception. An attempt to form a cooperative in the early 1970s had already failed, rubbing salt in old wounds and inflaming traditional rivalries. Several craftsmen had been able to sell their work through Artesanías de Colombia, but most were at the mercy of a few local middlemen who commissioned cheap curios for the tourist trade that were a pale reflection of past standards. The barnizadores also suffered from unsteady supplies of mopa-mopa gum, the crucial raw material for their craft. The only source was a relatively small area of the Putumayo jungle, a 12-hour bus ride from Pasto. Prices fluctuated wildly, in part because intermediaries occasionally tried to corner the market. A better supply system was necessary to ensure the barnizadores' survival, but for that they needed to organize and build up a capital fund, neither of which seemed likely.

For three years ACPA's team of specialists worked patiently with the barnizadores, listening to their troubles and looking for ways to bring people together. A turning point came when de Wiesner commissioned works from several craftsmen for presentation at a group meeting. The one requirement was that the work had to express each artisan's creativity. Freed from the restraint of producing for traditional intermediaries, many of the barnizadores made objects of striking beauty. Asked to comment on each other's work, men who looked past one another in the street began to express feelings of grudging admiration that soon gave way to questions about how a certain effect had been accomplished. A meeting became a workshop.

In 1982, the workshop became a precooperative of 18 barnizadores. With a grant from the IAF, the new organization took its first step toward regularizing access to raw materials. A fund was established to ensure a steady supply of mopa-mopa gum from the Putumayo. The group also made arrangements with local woodcarvers, and opened its own wood-working shop, to obtain a dependable supply of objects for decoration. Each

The tension between maintaining tradition and meeting market demand does not have to be destructive; handled the right way it can also spark creativity.

THE BARNIZADORES OF PASTO

Since 1977, ACPA has assisted nine artisanal groups, with varying degrees of success. Perhaps the most notable have been the *barnizadores* of Pasto. This relatively small group, primarily men, practices a unique craft whose roots extend back to pre-Columbian times. Using a complicated process, craftsmen convert the gum of the *mopa-mopa*, a tropical shrub-like tree, into paper-thin sheets of dyed material, or *barniz*, which are applied with freehand artwork to wooden trays, boxes, animal figures, and other articles. The resulting products look something like Japanese lacquer ware, but are in fact unique.

When ACPA began its assistance in 1979, the barnizadores were in dire straits. "Of all the groups we've worked with," says Duque, "this one

member received inputs free of charge, but finished work had to be submitted to a quality control committee for payment. When a piece was accepted, 5 percent of the payment would be deducted for the precooperative's capital fund. Another 5 percent would go to the group's solidarity fund, from which interest-free loans can be withdrawn for medical or family needs. The product was then marked up in price by 60 percent to cover the costs of raw materials and administrative overhead, and put up for sale.

With ACPA's help, the group attacked the marketing problem next. Several members traveled to craft fairs in Colombia and abroad, and a brochure was prepared detailing the group's history and promoting the artistry of its products. In 1986, the group used a loan from ACPA to buy an old colonial house in central Pasto to provide office and meeting space, a gallery, and a store for retailing finished goods. After a year of renovation, the Casa del Barniz opened its doors for business. The Casa's store has become the precooperative's primary source of income, and sales have been brisk. Artisan income has risen commensurately—nearly quadrupling in the eight years the group has been together. In 1988, per capita earnings were around 80,000 pesos monthly, or about US\$250—more than three times the national minimum wage. Several barnizadores earn considerably more.

Asked how their lives have changed, members are quick to note improvements. "Things are better now, no doubt about it," said a young barnizador as he hunched over his work, deftly adding layers of gold barniz to a handsome jewelry box. "A few years ago most of us would have discouraged our children from taking up the trade. Now I want my two sons to learn it."

Over a meal at a local restaurant, another member in his mid-40s summed it up this way: "Today we feel more secure. I used to resist the idea of organizing, of training and working on human relations. Now I see I was blind, that working together is the key to getting ahead."

Most members now own their own houses; they work shorter weeks but have an assured source of income; and they can tap a solidarity fund for



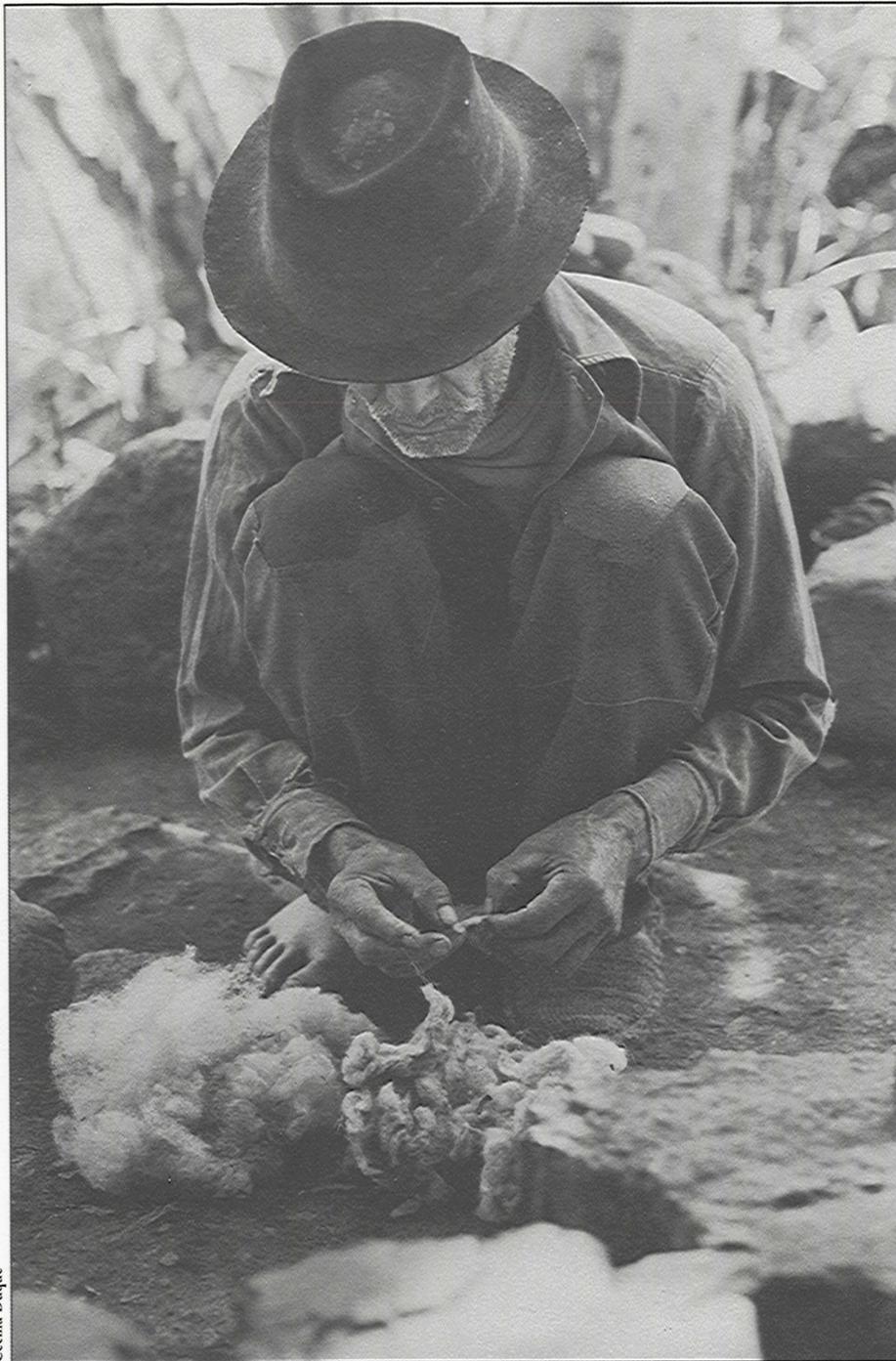
Cecilia Duque

An Indian woman in Boyacá prepares the natural fiber fique for weaving. Because the demand for the original handicrafts—sandals and small weighing baskets—is vanishing, this traditional technique is being preserved by making newer, more marketable products.

assistance if someone in the family gets sick, has an accident, or dies. But most of all, what you sense is a fierce pride in their work, in their skill at turning ordinary woodcarvings into objects of intricate and dramatic beauty.

Although these accomplishments are real, and the group has been celebrated by both local and national

media as a model for artisan organizations, there are troubling signs about the durability and extent of that success. The fault lines of personal and professional differences run deep, and tremors are still felt periodically. Although members are required to market their work through the precooperative, some continue to trade with outside intermediaries,



Cecilia Duque

An artisan in Boyacá cleans wool to be woven into large carrying baskets.

giving rise to recriminations. More troubling, some artisans have left, and the group has actually shrunk in size to 16 members. Many other barnizadores would like to join, but the group is reluctant to admit them, fearing that production might outstrip demand, or that new members would undermine solidarity and production standards. This impasse cannot persist indefinitely, however, since Co-

lombian law limits the lifespan of precooperatives, and becoming a full cooperative requires at least 25 members.

In assisting the formation of artisan organizations, ACPA hopes not only to preserve dying craft traditions but to generate jobs. Although quality production has been revitalized by the barnizador precooperative, it remains unclear whether or not the

overall market has in fact expanded enough to support more than a few artisans. In that case, ACPA's best intentions would only have succeeded in winnowing out the winners from the losers, creating a guild rather than a cooperative business.

A second, unintended result may also be occurring. The barnizadores have traditionally prospered by adding value to the products of local woodcarvers. As the barnizador pre-cooperative has grown more affluent, resentment has developed among a local group of woodcarvers that prices for their primary products have not kept pace. Agreements between the two groups have broken down, and the woodcarvers fear that the barnizadores hope to bypass them altogether by setting up their own expanded woodworking shop. The barnizadores contend that the new shop will assure a steady stream of low-cost materials and give regular work to "interested" woodcarvers at the same time.

THE POTTERS OF RÁQUIRA

The limitations and ambiguities of trying to revive craft traditions through artisanal organization are also apparent among the potters of Ráquira, in the department of Boyacá. ACPA began working there in 1982 to preserve some of the traditional styles of ceramics, such as the fabled *caballitos*, or clay horses, that were disappearing. Ceramics production in the region can be traced back to the pre-Columbian Muisca culture, but the thread has frayed during the past two decades. The hills that rise above the town have been stripped of trees to expand wheat production and to feed the small kilns that sit behind many of the houses. The mode of craft production has progressively shifted toward larger, coal-burning ovens equipped to handle masses of standardized planters and animal figures, principally pigs, that have been stamped out in molds suited to the specifications of middlemen from Bogotá. Some 30 small ceramics factories have sprung up around the town, casting a pall of coal-black smoke over the valley.

"When we came to Ráquira and began talking to potters about the possibility of reviving some of the older designs, people were stunned,"

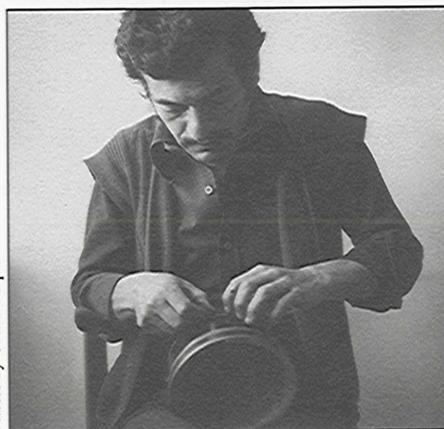
Duque recalls. "Producers of traditional pottery were at the bottom of the ladder in the community, and their children were often ashamed to admit their parents worked with clay. But once we convinced artisans that we were there to help, they began to open up and talk about their needs. With time, we even saw children begin to take up the craft again."

Just as in Pasto, the potters of Ráquira suffered from being unorganized. Dependent on marketing through middlemen who often only took pottery on consignment at cut-rate prices, the potters found it ever harder to keep pace with the rising cost of raw materials. Strapped for cash, they steadily sank deeper into debt. ACPA's technical team realized that formation of a precooperative similar to the one in Pasto was the obvious answer to lowering the cost of raw materials and gaining direct access to consumer markets.

Unfortunately, the artisans of Ráquira are even more divided than those of Pasto, primarily because of politics. During the 1940s and early 1950s, Colombia was shaken by La Violencia, a period of protracted conflict between supporters of the Conservative and Liberal parties. The region around Ráquira was deeply scarred, leaving a bitter legacy of feuding among local families that has yet to heal. ACPA realized that the level of personal animosity, complicated by the differences between small and large producers, was a gap too great for a cooperative to bridge. Instead, the association decided to open a small museum as a neutral space where potters could meet, learn more about their own ceramic traditions, and hopefully begin to discover common ground for mutual action.

The museum is housed in an unobtrusive, colonial-style house on the town's main square. Photographs of local potters and texts describing their work grace the walls, and display cases hold examples of ancient and more current styles of traditional pottery. There is a small store, a stock

Artisans demonstrate the process of converting mopa-mopa gum into barniz. Top to bottom: grinding the gum; measuring the resin; stretching the barniz into paper-thin sheets; applying sheets to artwork.



Photos by Cecilia Duque

room that sells ceramic materials at cost, and a studio for holding workshops and demonstrations. Changing exhibitions of local work and periodic juried competitions have made the museum a point of informal contact for potters, and it has fostered closer ties between town residents and those in the surrounding countryside. The exhibitions and workshops have encouraged local potters to be more creative by exploring new techniques and designs. A new form of popular art has emerged—tiny human and animal figurines set in typical village scenes—for which there is a growing market.

Although the museum represents a step forward for local artisans, instilling greater pride in their work and even renewing interest in some traditions, such as the previously mentioned caballitos, it has not put food on the potters' tables. The high cost of materials and the low prices for finished goods make small-scale production nonviable. As one potter put it, "What I do is more like a sport than a job." ACPA continues to look for alternatives that would lower production costs, such as finding ways to convert kilns to handle a more economical mixture of coal and wood. But even that modest step seems thwarted, since many artisans are reluctant to add to the foul air already choking the valley. More tangible economic progress awaits the time when the potters are able to overcome their differences and organize effective methods for working together.

The complex intertwining of development and cultural issues that ACPA has encountered during its efforts to assist artisanal communities, such as those in Pasto and Ráquira, has fostered the realization that self-help programs, even when they can tap able promotional and technical support from a concerned NGO, are only part of the solution in reviving craft traditions and making them economically viable. As a result, ACPA has tried to broaden its impact by seeking out partnerships with other public and private agencies such as universities, government ministries, and the Federación de Cafeteros, an influential network of coffee growers.

One early effort that helped set a precedent for this pattern involved the Cholo Indian woodcarvers of the



Chocó rain forest. This group faced an array of development issues that made collaboration with a number of organizations essential. For that reason, ACPA worked closely with the Cholos' own tribal government, as well as with teams from the Universidad Javeriana and the Ministry of Health.

Another, more recent example is a joint project to help the barnizadores gain access to steady supplies of the mopa-mopa gum. Many of the trees that produce this resin are now old and have become less productive, and the zone in which they grow is plagued by guerrilla activity and drug trafficking. For some time the barnizadores have tried to gain support for the creation of a preserve in which the cultivation and harvesting of this tree would be controlled. Until recently, the idea had met with little success. Now, however, a consortium backed by several important Colombian institutions—including **INDERENA**,

the government natural resources institute—has been created to tackle the problem. ACPA played a vital role in facilitating this effort.

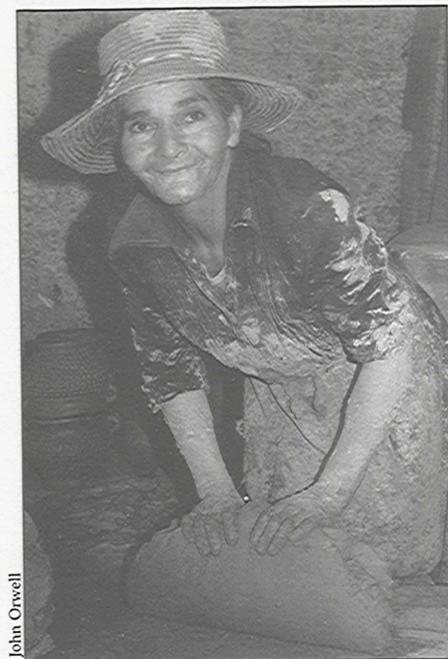
SCALING-UP AND THE CRAFTING OF KNOWLEDGE

Over the years, ACPA has come to realize that its **community development programs** might contain the seeds for a more systematic approach suitable for adaptation by others. To digest what it had learned and to devise more effective ways to aid craft communities, ACPA in 1984 began a project called the Center of Artisan Studies. An umbrella effort, bringing together old staff such as Ligia de Wiesner with new people, the center forms temporary research teams tailored to pursue specific lines of inquiry, including research on particular types of artisanal production, on marketing and promotion, and on the underlying conditions that con-

tribute to the success or failure of craft organizations. These studies not only feed data to ACPA's ongoing community development programs, they are increasingly being used to influence government policy toward the crafts sector. For example, ACPA has presented the departmental government of Tolima with a plan for constructing gas-burning kilns in the ceramics community of La Chamba, where deforestation is rampant, and with a proposal to remodel the crafts workshop at the penitentiary in Ibagué. In Quindío, it has recommended opening a craft school to revive local handicrafts production and boost employment. And in Bolívar, it has proposed creation of a crafts microenterprise in the Free Trade Zone on the Caribbean Coast. ACPA hopes that recent changes in Colombian law that provide for the direct election of mayors and delegation of greater budget authority to local levels will allow increased cooperation



Opposite: A pottery maker fashions a large clay cooking pot. Left: An artisan removes an item from the kiln. ACPA is searching for ways to make the ovens more economical by burning a mixture of coal and wood. Below: A Ráquira woman kneads and prepares the clay for use.



John Orwell

and financial record-keeping. In addition, the center's audio-visual unit has produced numerous videos, slides, and tapes on Colombian craft and folk traditions. It is the only facility in the country devoted to producing this kind of material, and it has received numerous contracts and grants from domestic public and private institutions, as well as from the Organization of American States. Productions have included a 12-part, prime-time television series on traditional culture aired in 1989; a series of national radio programs on the oral history of various regions in Colombia; and a series of audio tapes on the traditional songs and games of Colombian children. The Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar has found this last production an invaluable tool for linking cultural awareness with early childhood education, and has distributed the tapes through Madres Educadoras, a network of community day care centers located in poor barrios throughout the country.

and dialogue with municipalities.

The center has also expanded ACPA's educational role and the services it can provide to artisan groups. Specialists have developed training programs geared to the needs of artisans, and booklets and manuals have been produced dealing with ways to streamline production and improve marketing, management,

Perhaps the most significant expansion of ACPA's activities, however, involves its decision to work through the national school system. In the early 1980s, Cecilia Duque approached the Ministry of Education

with a proposal to incorporate elements of traditional popular culture into school texts and curricula. ACPA's work with artisan communities had yielded abundant examples of the native genius of Colombia's craftsmen, knowledge that could help forge a stronger sense of cultural identity among schoolchildren. "Working with artisans has been important," she says, with a rueful smile, "but we felt we had to reach young people to have a chance of really preserving these traditions for future generations."

There is a story told at ACPA that illustrates the depth of the problem that must be overcome. Some years ago at a pottery exhibit at the museum in Ráquira, several of the potters were disconcerted when their coffee was served in locally made clay mugs. Shaking their heads, they announced a preference for factory-made cups instead. Duque and her peers had founded the Museo de Artes y Tradiciones Populares nearly 20 years before to dispel the blindness that had prevented so many people from seeing that Colombia possessed a rich national crafts tradition until it was almost lost. Yet this was a cultural blindness so pervasive it afflicted even the people who pro-

duced crafts, preventing them from seeing the beauty they had made with their own hands.

The initial response of the Ministry of Education to Duque's proposal was negative. "No one had thought of combining popular culture and education before, only elite culture," says Vicky Colbert, vice-minister of education at the time. After several years of effort, however, and with Colbert's backing, an agreement between ACPA and the ministry was finally signed in 1984. ACPA assembled a team of technical specialists and, with the support of an IAF grant, began to develop curriculum materials for a rapidly expanding national education program known as *Escuela Nueva*.

Escuela Nueva had been started in 1976 to revitalize the nation's rural school system by making it more flexible and relevant to the needs and interests of its students. Nearly 40 percent of Colombia's rural schoolchildren have to stay out of school at least part of the time to help their families with farm work. Previously, these students were often held back and not promoted. Under the *Escuela Nueva* program, which mainly involves primary schools, the grade system is fluid and students are al-

ACPA's first task in developing the cultural components of the program was to prepare materials for an area where the *Escuela Nueva* was already well established—the stretch along Colombia's Pacific Coast with its rich heritage of black culture. ACPA's technical team spent months gathering information on the region's music, dance, plastic arts, rituals, folktales, and dress that could be adapted into multimedia classroom materials. These materials were then tested in the schools and revised based on feedback from teachers and pupils. This procedure has since been extended to other parts of the country, and ACPA is in the process of creating comprehensive standardized packets—of books, pamphlets, audio-visuales, and games—that can be used nationally, in combination with specialized materials targeted regionally.

Grounded in popular culture and pragmatically oriented, the curriculum of the *Escuela Nueva* is designed to promote involvement and to nurture the sense of self-worth and identity that is the keystone of community development. Students begin by working with the concepts of culture and personal identity, then move on

teachers, parents," reports Marina Solano, coordinator of ACPA's curriculum project. "People are discovering that culture is all around them, not just in museums or concert halls, and that it is the very stuff of life."

Since the introduction of this curriculum on the Pacific Coast four years ago, teachers there have reported improved attendance and greater interest and self-confidence among students. Even the teachers say they take greater interest in local culture. The program has won praise and support from the World Bank, UNESCO, and UNICEF, and has been studied by officials from 46 nations around the globe. By all indications, the program will continue, and with it, ACPA's involvement. According to Vicky Colbert, "You can expect to see an even greater marriage between ACPA and *Escuela Nueva* in coming years. The scaling-up of this project is assured because it works, and the government knows it."

Despite this growing influence over national policy, ACPA's directors are aware that their organization has traced a circle in the course of its evolution. They remember how their goal of preserving craft traditions by raising public awareness led them to develop strategies to help the artisans themselves, and how the knowledge they have accrued in the process has deepened the nation's understanding of what needs to be nurtured. "We are not going to abandon our earlier work," says Cecilia Duque, "because success depends on integrating where we have been with where we are going. We will continue to work on both levels—assisting local groups and developing a process of national education—because both are needed if either is to succeed." ACPA's challenge at the local level is to help create strong organizations, self-empowering and self-sustaining. Its challenge at the national level is to help people understand that this vitality echoes the nation's heartbeat.

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People are discovering that culture is all around them, not just in museums or concert halls, and that it is the very stuff of life.

lowed to proceed at their own pace. Strong emphasis is placed on classroom interaction rather than learning by rote, and the school extends itself out into the community. Traditional subjects, which once bore little relation to the daily lives of students, are placed in their local and regional context. Students are encouraged to actively investigate the world around them, to understand how local stories and legends can be examples of history and literature, and to recognize crafts as forms of popular art. In short, the program is designed to help young people see their own communities as worthy classrooms for study, and to find within them the seeds for community development.

to manual skills—such as the making of crafts. Children are encouraged to think of the family as a productive unit, as a *microempresa*, and they are urged to contribute to or help start small family businesses. The program culminates in the establishment of a *Museo Vivo*, a "living museum" in which students and their parents can create displays that highlight local crafts, customs, and traditions.

The *Escuela Nueva* program is now in place in over half of the nation's 26,000 rural schools, reaching approximately half a million students. Although ACPA's materials have yet to reach them all, initial results have been encouraging. "The response has been tremendous, from students,



Mitchell Denburg



Scaling Up Jacob's Ladder

Community Development in Trinidad and Tobago

Ron Weber

Using what it learned from 20 years of listening carefully to the poor, an NGO is educating the nation and being heard throughout the Caribbean.

When two men, alone and unmasked, crossed the Queen Street bridge over the Dry River and climbed into the Laventille hills in September 1970 to "dialogue" with the poorest of strife-ridden Port of Spain's poor, no one would have dreamed an organization was being born that would one day be asked by the prime minister to help educate the nation. One of those

- Trinidad + Tobago
- Community dev.
- Caribbean
- education
- youth

men was Gerard Pantin, a 42-year-old Catholic priest of French Trinidadian descent who had just resigned his position as science teacher and senior dean at St. Mary's College, the country's premier secondary school. Leaving the comfort of middle-class life, he was embarking on a quest prompted by what might be called a crisis of conscience. One of his former students, "a brilliant young man of unlimited promise," had been shot to death during the Black Power disturbances surrounding an aborted military coup earlier in the year. He vividly recalled their last conversation, when the young man asked if Pantin still believed social change could be achieved nonviolently, and the boy's solemn and angry withdrawal when Pantin said "yes." The futility of the boy's death left his former teacher haunted by the feeling "we never touched him in eight years of schooling."

The other man, the towering black Barbadian walking beside Pantin, was Wesley Hall, a star fast bowler on the West Indian cricket team that now dominated the sport invented by the English. Hall, an imposing but genial man, had left his temporary coaching assignment in Trinidad to escort this priest so intent on asking the people of Laventille a question.

It was a question, following a brief introduction, that would become a refrain. "Hello. My name is Gerry Pantin. I am a Catholic priest; this is Wes Hall, the West Indian fast bowler; we'd like to talk. *How can we help you?*"

What Pantin and Hall discovered, as they talked to more and more people, was that beneath the roof-to-roof uniformity of tumble-down houses in Laventille were 12 separate and jealously guarded territories, each with its own kinship ties and history of settlement, whose boundaries could be traced through allegiances to steel bands with names such as Desperados, Renegades, Tokyo.



Ron Weber

If the area was divided in its loyalties, it was united by suspicion of outsiders offering assistance. One young man from Quarry Street responded this way: "You say you want to talk. So what? For 10 years they sent us the police, nurses, Eric Williams [the prime minister] himself. So far as I am concerned you is the last in a long line of speakers. What we want is somebody to stay and *do* something, not just speak and go away."

From their first day across the Dry River, Pantin and Hall tried to do just that. A group in Shanty Town mentioned that a rotten beam had made their community center unsafe; that once the roof was secure, benches were needed for meetings; that they had managed to save a few dollars so far, and a petition had been made to a government agency for help with the rest. Of course they were still waiting three years later. The next day, Pantin and Hall returned in a truck with a large wooden beam a lumber yard had been talked into donating, and with 50 used chairs purchased from a dealer "for a song." Astonished, the group unloaded the cargo and set

Preceding page: Adolescents attend a coeducational class in electrical wiring at the Beetham Life Centre in Trinidad. Left: Father Gerard Pantin, founder and director of Servol, has helped develop a program to tap the human potential of teens and children.

about repairing the center.

No one said, "Thank you." No one in Shanty Town, no one else who benefited from the two men's work during the next few months. The pain of that silence was blinding.

It was a man named Chaca, one of the few immediate friends Pantin encountered, who put the silence in perspective. "Why are you talking about giving up? Don't you see that everyone in Laventille is watching you and hope for great things from you? Don't be fooled if people say little. They are afraid to believe in anything. Make no mistake, you have brought hope into this area, and when a man has hope he can live again."

And one day the veil of silence began to lift. From across the street people began to wave as Pantin and Hall made their rounds, or smiled shyly as the two passed by. Occasionally, someone would stop them and start to talk. If people wanted to see them, it was time to open an office. A local man donated an empty building in Ovid Alley; office-supply firms tossed in a desk, a typewriter, other odds and ends; volunteers, middle-class women from parishes in Port of Spain proper, arrived to pitch in. As Pantin later wrote, the arrival of these volunteers was "a muted trumpet call" across the battle lines of a polarized society. Quite casually, someone suggested that the organization taking shape should be called Service Volunteered for All (Servol).

The "All" part of the name, of course, was misleading. More than 40 percent of Trinidad's population were East Indians whose ancestors had arrived as indentured farm laborers a century before. There were few East Indians in Laventille, and for many years Servol would be branded as a Christian, indeed Catholic, organization catering to blacks. But the name, like so many other aspects of the new organization, was straightforward in its intent. Confronted with the limitations of the present, it envisioned an

all-encompassing future—catholic with a small c.

Indeed, the need for Servol eventually to scale up was foreshadowed from the outset. Within six weeks of his arrival in Laventille, Pantin drafted a report of his findings. Beneath the trappings of poverty—unemployment, ramshackle housing, lack of public services—a corrosive force was at work that seemed beyond repair. Many children had no father living at home, and often no mother either. Young women were leaving for work as domestics, sometimes as far away as the United States, putting children in the care of grandmothers or aunts. Unwatched children from the earliest years could be found walking the streets, even at night. Deprived of the richness of family love, they grew up unable to love. Although primary school attendance was compulsory, few profited from it, and many passed through without learning to read or write, never acquiring the most basic skills to hold down a job. Growing up this way “conditioned people to failure.” Pantin had not the slightest clue about solving the deep problem of poverty, so he determined to do what could be done.

That is unsurprising; what is unusual is how Servol got down to work. Lacking the resources for grandiose programs, Pantin decided, almost intuitively, that any action taken had to attack the psychology of poverty, in particular the lack of self-esteem rooted in powerlessness. Recalling that time, he has said, “It seemed everyone was approaching the poor with fixed ideas and plans, all of which, however well intentioned, betrayed cultural arrogance, the unconscious belief that poor people were too stupid to know their own problems or solve them when given a chance.” Embracing a “philosophy of ignorance,” its own, Servol began by listening. Sometimes it listened as long as three years before attempting

an organized project. “Once the cultural arrogance was drained,” Pantin continued, “people’s voices began to register, and that put the wonderful schemes turning around in our busy brains in their proper place.” When people made clear what they wanted, Servol undertook only projects that were affordable. Their tiny size was conditioned not only by Servol’s limited purse, but by an awareness that the community must contribute enough to take credit for the outcome. Servol then let “things grow in their own way and time. Whatever the result,” Pantin explained, “there was a gain. A community that implements an idea genuinely its own, always takes another step forward. If the idea intrudes from outside, it may prosper for a while through the dedication of the outsider, but the development process does not continue for the simple reason that it never began.”

Pantin called this process “respectful intervention.” Servol would not

In February 1971, Pantin introduced himself to 12 volunteers who were being seconded to Servol at full pay for the indefinite future. The unspoken ironies must have given the meeting an air of unreality. Many of these men had recently been patrolling Laventille, the center of the Black Power demonstrations, with submachine guns to enforce a dusk-to-dawn curfew. Could they be flexible enough to win a hostile population’s trust? And how did the men size up working with a priest? Would he ask them to say prayers, go to church, keep a tight guard on their language?

It helped that some were from Laventille already. Teams were formed to get to know each neighborhood intimately, to identify and meet as many leaders as possible by spending time “liming,” or “shooting the breeze,” with the groups of jobless young people who congregated at street corners all hours of the day and night. Pantin

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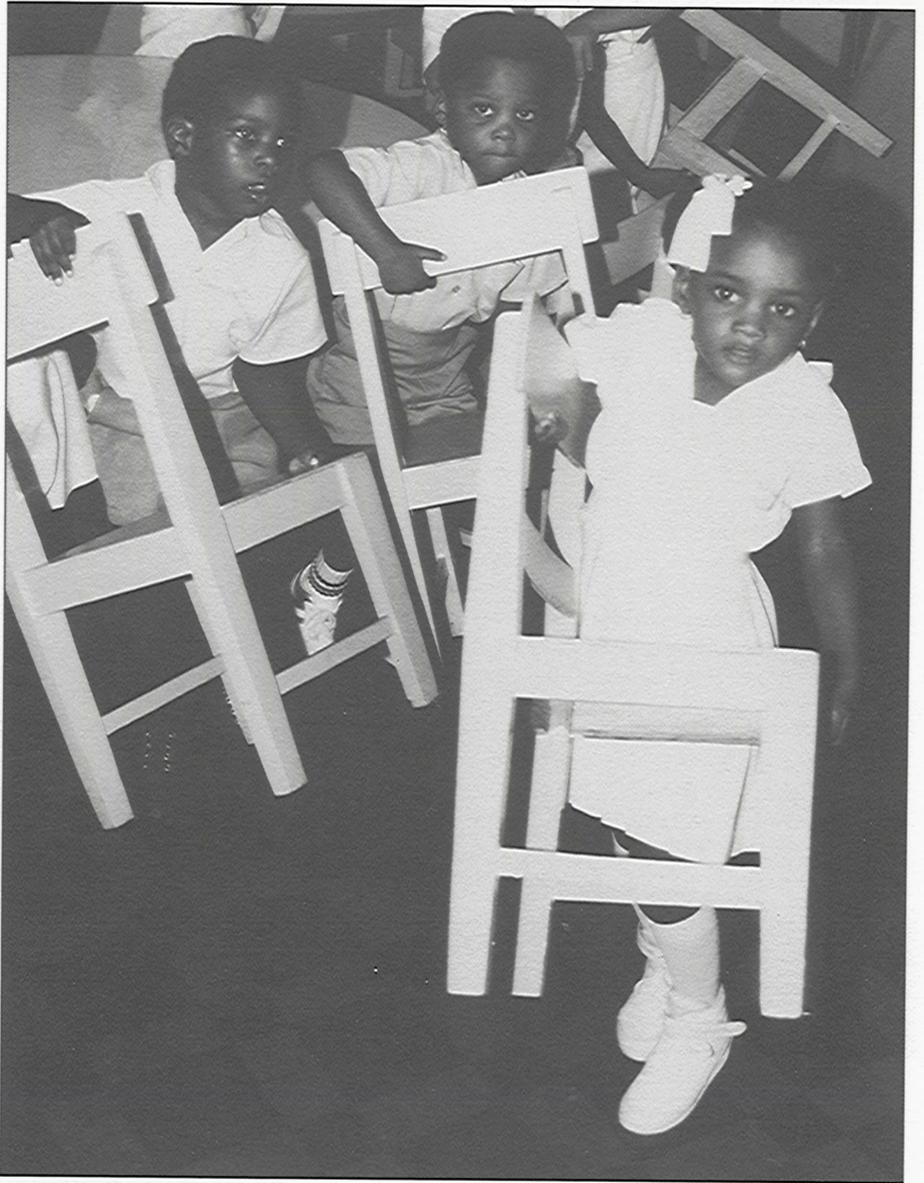
ignore its own views and methods; it would allow those views to impinge gently on the community’s in a way that encouraged mutual respect, and commitment to a shared learning process. Even if Wes Hall had not left for Barbados late in 1970, the task of starting such a dialogue with 30,000 people from fragmented neighborhoods was too complex for two men and a handful of part-time volunteers. Pantin’s inspired solution was to ask the commander in chief of the Defence Force if soldiers were available for community development.

had come to Laventille to listen, but he was, by temperament, a restless man, impatient to get on with the job. His new coworkers slowed him down to the tempo of the community. Gradually the men gained people’s trust, and out of their encounters small projects took shape: community centers to house nursery schools, basketball courts, a bakery. The Servol workers began to think of themselves as community promoters, catalysts who without pushing the pace or giving orders inspired people to act together. During the next four years the

promoters took courses in social work at the University of the West Indies to understand what kind of animal Servol was. What they found was a lack of validating theory, which led to the realization that they were innovators in a new approach to community development whose only justification was that, like a bumblebee defying the laws of physics, "the animal" could fly.

International donors were intrigued by Servol's uniqueness. The Bernard Van Leer Foundation in Holland began its long-standing relationship with Servol's preschool program early in 1971. The foundation sponsored worldwide seminars for project representatives, and this encouraged Pantin and his promoters to regularly examine their work for threads that might be woven together to benefit their program and others. The Inter-American Foundation, whose early credo was "They [the poor] know how," sensed a kindred spirit. One of the IAF's first grants in the region went to Servol in 1974, providing US\$193,000 to underwrite loans through the Trinidad and Tobago Development Foundation (FUNDAID) so that communities could upgrade projects.

By that time, Servol's projects were assuming odd shapes. In St. Barb's, requests for skills training and medical care led to construction of a combined welding institute/health clinic/pharmacy. The institute led to a teen center, with basketball courts and cricket nets. The health clinic, in turn, was informally tied to Servol's new Integrated Education Development Programme (IEDP). Enrollment in the seven IEDP kindergartens was conditioned on children coming to the clinic for exams and vaccinations, during which parents and guardians would be informed about proper nutrition and hygiene. Finally the project in St. Barb's, Pantin has said, "looked like nothing on earth, except perhaps an amoeba slowly engulfing



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whatever crossed its path. Whoever heard of mothers and babies waiting for doctors amid the noise of transformers and the flashing of sparks?"

Answering requests from scattered constituencies had produced this ungainly creature, which mirrored the process of a community being born. During that prolonged and often painful delivery, Servol learned to find multiple uses for its limited resources. It discovered that a clinic could not only treat illness but promote health, that a training center could become a teen center, that a teen center could lift morale in the welding shop, which soon demonstrated that young men who did not fit into formal classrooms learned quickly and confidently as apprentices to skilled craftsmen. By winning

outside contracts, the welding center showed that on-the-job training could be self-supporting.

Lacking land to expand the model, Servol transplanted the idea, renting space on St. Paul's Street for a plumbing institute/dental clinic, which quickly became self-financing. Soon carpentry, masonry, electrical, sewing, and crafts workshops were springing up alongside other Servol projects around the city.

By early 1975, tempers were stretched to the breaking point as the organization struggled to keep track of all the strange hybrid creatures emerging. Servol had evolved beyond dialoguing with street-corner groups to involving them in training courses that operated as separate businesses. The institutes were

Children from Paradise Heights, one of the first MOE/Servol preschools, move their chairs to a "learning corner" for a language game to prepare them for reading. The furniture was made by apprentices at Servol's Beetham carpentry workshop.

swamped with applicants, and tighter management of resources was needed to assist more people. The servicemen/community promoters had difficulty with this, especially when contracts required coordination among the various institutes.

The obvious solution was to bring the institutes under one roof. Much of the venom in the debate that ensued about whether or not this tighter structure would cut Servol off from its roots listening to the community probably stemmed from an inner fear that the ordinary men who had overcome enormous odds to become "innovators in a new kind of development" were now about to be passed by. Servol had arrived at the point where it had to restructure itself if it was to grow. During the next few years, the soldiers and sailors would return to active duty, and a new kind of project coordinator would appear. Characteristically, Pantin would tap an undervalued resource—middle-class housewives and nuns who had learned management skills from balancing household budgets and mediating among families of tender egos.

When the National Housing Authority offered a patch of land on the Beetham Estate, an urban redevelopment site rising on the ruins of Shanty Town, Servol jumped at the chance. Servol already had, in embryonic form, its own construction company, so the trainees of the various departments would hone their skills by building an integrated vocational center, which would also house medical, dental, and legal clinics, an outreach office for the elderly, a day care facility, and playgrounds for both toddlers and adolescents. In building its Beetham center, Servol would discover a process for recycling development funds that would eventually make scaling-up feasible.

The decision to bring together nearly every aspect of Servol's program was not just a question of effi-

ciency, however. Supervisory sub-committees had begun to report curious happenings when projects had to share space out of expediency. Gangs of teens in youth centers became fiercely protective of the children in nursery schools; the opening of training programs for girls, and their influx into skills traditionally reserved for boys, had an electrifying effect on students' morale; a new program to distribute food stamps to the elderly poor had a softening effect on the wider community. Was there, Pantin wondered, a common thread running through all of them? When Servol first began its work, no one knew what to call it, and the promoters—employing that *picong*, or stinging wit, which calypsonians use to amuse as they disarm—had nicknamed it "the animal." Now Servol was being compared to a mole cricket, that innocuous insect that burrows among the grassroots and seldom appears in daylight. Since the creature now had a name and a home, Pantin sensed it was time for the cricket to

on reclaimed swampland, and the idea of a skills center took hold.

The community's doubts rekindled, however, when they saw the ragtag collection of 105 apprentices and their instructors who assembled on a sweltering July morning to begin clearing the land to drive pilings and lay a foundation. More than one bystander was heard to whisper bemusedly under his breath, "Those little boys are going to build us a center?"

They did, although the building took two-and-a-half years to complete. When the minister of education arrived in early 1978 to dedicate the new Servol Vocational Centre, he found the program already up and running. While construction progressed, literacy classes had been organized, counseling had been given to resolve home problems and peer conflicts, and each of the workshops had continued to function as a self-sustaining business. Above all, Servol's instructors and senior staff had discovered how to proceed by listening to the adolescents.

Servol discovered that a clinic could not only treat illness but promote health, that a training center could become a teen center, that a teen center could lift morale in the welding shop.

poke its head up and begin softly singing.

The building of Beetham would be a formidable task. The first step was consulting with the community, some 6,000 people who were strangers to each other, many of them migrants from rural Trinidad or the Eastern Caribbean. Nightly meetings were held in the IEDP nursery school that had opened the previous year. Attendance was small but began to swell after an engineer convinced skeptics a large building could be constructed

In describing what happened, Pantin says, "They told us everything: of their need for affection and acceptance, their hostility to the adult world, their terribly low opinion of themselves. So we created real-life situations in which relationships could develop." Adolescents would be led toward self-awareness and caring for others through interactions carefully designed to break down class, age, and gender barriers.

Beetham became a living laboratory that crystallized all Servol had

learned. When the center opened, there was a casualness about coursework and counseling. These activities were fit into gaps in trainees' work schedules during the year they spent at the center before leaving for four months of trial employment with a business. Usually that led to permanent placement, but often enough even the brightest trainees failed to catch on. Employers were contacted to see why, and one of them explained succinctly: "I would rather train an unskilled illiterate myself than take on a skilled man with no manners." It became apparent that helping students to deal with their interpersonal problems was not just a way of greasing the wheels so that the center operated more smoothly. Training for life was a precondition for job training, and for the real world of work. This realization gave birth to the Adolescent Development Programme (ADP) that Servol would one day be asked to scale up nationally.

In constructing Beetham, Servol had noted how the nursery school had acted as a magnet to bring local people together. Realizing that the painstaking task of seeking out street-corner groups might no longer be necessary, Servol began to visualize preschools as "listening devices" for opening dialogues with new communities. This concept of scaling-up was tested in rural Trinidad, where several neighboring black and East Indian villages were invited to open IEDP kindergartens, which eventually led them to join hands and transform an old pig farm outside of Grand Couva into the Forres Park Life Centre, a facility that complemented Beetham's.

In January 1981, the *Trinidad Express* announced a surprising twist in making its "Individual of the Year" award. Father Gerard Pantin had been picked from a distinguished list of nominees but had declined the honor. Saying that the country

needed to awaken from the notion of "messianic leadership" so the focus could shift to the many dedicated people who were working unheralded and often at great personal sacrifice among the poor, he stepped aside in favor of Servol. The editors of the *Express* agreed. Refuting the notion that development was a lifestyle that could be imported for ready cash, they wrote: "The true wealth of the country lies in its people, and it is reassuring in today's materialistic [society] to learn that acts of human compassion are taking place around us. . . . Servol's example may yet be the turning point of our nation."

Response to the award was galvanic, prompting the Beetham staff to examine their lives in light of their work together. Most of Beetham's departments were self-sustaining, but the clinics and nursery ran deficits. When the administrators tried to levy a surtax on the profit-making groups to prop up the others, the staff of the skills-training departments rebelled. They were already underpaid; did they not deserve to keep, or reinvest in their own departments, the money they had earned fairly?

Neither side had been listening carefully to the other. The staff was more than willing to support any department in need; what they resented was the idea of a tax, the notion that virtue needed to be imposed from above. Recognizing that some framework for transferring resources was necessary, the staff formulated and signed the "Beetham Life Centre Charter." This document proclaimed that long years of working with troubled youth had been mutually transforming. "In their own way, they have reached us, matured us, brought out inner qualities we never realized we had." To demonstrate to the skeptical young that these sentiments were more than words and to underline their emergence as a surrogate family, the staff pledged to financially support, in consultation with the ad-

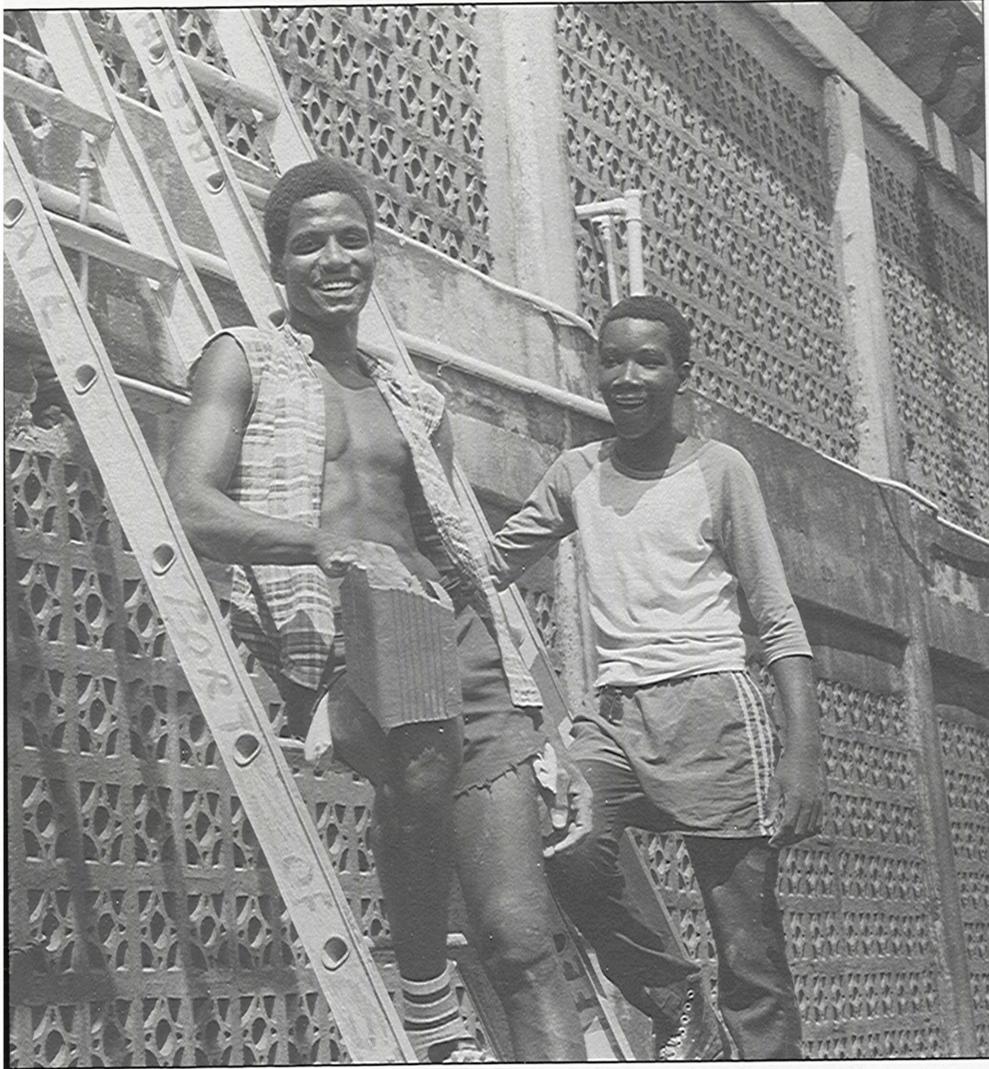


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ministration, any department, staff member, or boy or girl in need. "By doing this, we hope in some small way to influence the tired old society around us. We are Servol and we care."

For Pantin, this document signaled a most improbable metamorphosis of the organization. Listening to the poor in order to help them form their own communities had transformed the ordinary people of Servol into a community. Pantin, the ex-science teacher, would later say, "Not even the most fervent disciples of Darwin or Lamarck would admit the possibility of an insect evolving into a village. But that is what happened to the Servol mole cricket. We became an interdependent village."

The *Express* award also provoked "Servolmania" among the population at large, leading to requests that the organization take over the utilities, join every imaginable committee,



Two masonry students at Beetham repair a workshop building. Servol has found that adolescents at ADP centers do not vandalize schools they consider their own.

lands. Wary of starting dependent colonies that would tax already limited resources, Servol decided to train people eager to launch their own projects, hoping they might one day spark regional development. The IAF, trying to encourage grassroots organizing in a region where private development initiatives were scarce, particularly for women and children, joined with MISEREOR of West Germany, HELVETAS of Switzerland, Save the Children of Canada, the Bernard Van Leer Foundation, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund to support Servol's new Caribbean Life Centre (CLC). If Beetham and its sister life centers had been building blocks for Servol's integrated program, the CLC would become the keystone locking those blocks together into an overarching vision of the national programs to follow.

The CLC opened in 1983. By 1986, 100 Eastern Caribbean educators had been trained and had gone home to start community-based preschools. When CLC staff visited these interns for follow-up instruction, they interacted with local ministries of education. These dialogues paved the way for regional conferences to exchange views and set national goals for early childhood education. Eventually, Grenada, St. Lucia, Antigua, and Guyana would establish their own training centers staffed by CLC graduates. In the process, Servol learned how cooperation with government ministries could extend the reach of a program, and how bureaucratic reefs could be navigated successfully.

This savvy would one day pay dividends in Trinidad and Tobago, but the CLC also pumped new life into Servol's life centers. The oil bubble had burst, bringing Trinidad's building frenzy to a halt. Construction of the three-story center provided much needed work for the departments at Beetham. More subtly, the recycling of material resources was mirrored by an enriched recycling of knowledge.

form a political party and run for office. Of that time Pantin later wrote: "People had been told so often there was nothing worthwhile in their society that they reacted as if unexpected treasure had suddenly been discovered in their back yards."

Writing in *The Trinidad Guardian* a year later, the columnist Ernest Tracey tried to see the Servol experience in the cold light of the real world: "... Servol is considered by donor countries to be an outstanding example of a programme that affected significant socioeconomic impact at acceptable costs... There are observable changes in the work ethic and productivity of its graduates [but] Servol considers these benefits to be spinoffs rather than final objectives... It would be difficult if not impossible to duplicate Servol's spiritually based leadership commitment on a national scale."

What Tracey might have added

was that donors increasingly considered Trinidad and Tobago to be wealthy enough to finance its own development. Though Servol was becoming adept at "scrutinizing" out resources through productive activities and private fundraising, the government remained aloof. Servol seemed in danger of becoming a Potemkin village, a showcase to reassure visiting dignitaries.

It is one of Servol's ironies that for much of its history the organization has been more esteemed abroad than at home as a development model. As Servol's message sharpened, Pantin was asked to deliver it as far afield as Australia, Kenya, Israel, and throughout the Caribbean. By 1982, visitors were flocking to Trinidad to see firsthand what had been accomplished there.

Those from the Caribbean urged Servol to branch out to the other is-

Servol trainer Marcelle De Govia (far left) briefs three intern teachers on how preschools can catalyze community action.

The CLC consolidated Servol's preschool program, which began to interact with the ADP in a way that finally addressed the deep problems of poverty Pantin had diagnosed more than a decade before.

The CLC's curriculum was called SPICES, suggesting that teaching is a blending of flavors to release a distinctive, savory taste. SPICES distilled all that Servol had learned from a decade of working to realize the social, physical, intellectual, creative, emotional, and spiritual potential of "the whole child." Using Piaget's ladder of child development, among others, young women with little formal education learned to fashion imaginative teaching materials, adapt them to the varying abilities of three- to five-year-olds, and guide play sessions into a step-by-step, unforced climb toward not only reading, writing, and counting, but a confident love for learning. For that to happen, what

their first child, why wait for the second?

"During this five-year period, when we did not seem to grow [in Trinidad], we were refining things, pulling things together," says Sister Ruth Montrichard, Servol's deputy executive director. "When the government opened up the field to us in 1986, we were ready to move forward. If that had happened even three years before, we would have made a mess of it."

In 1986, with the national economy in shambles, a new government was swept into office, the first change in ruling parties in 24 years of independence. The new prime minister, as one of his first acts in office, asked Servol to bring its nonformal education programs to the nation. Pantin listened carefully before replying with a qualified yes. He did not pause because scaling-up

out the programs in greater detail. Each community would form a school board, supply a building, and collect small monthly fees—TT\$20, or about US\$4.70, per preschooler and TT\$50 per teenager—to supplement teachers' salaries. No students would be turned away for lack of money, so communities were encouraged to raise funds locally to cover their tuition and to maintain and improve the centers. The MOE would pay teachers' base salaries, and eventually assume back-up support of the programs. Using US\$295,400 from the IAF to expand the adolescent program, funding from the Bernard Van Leer Foundation to scale up the early childhood program, and additional support from MISEREOR and HELVETAS, Servol would train teachers, equip the centers, and monitor progress through teams of field officers.

Despite the initial euphoria, it was apparent that scaling-up had to be phased in. Each donor had its own mysterious formula for processing grants, making it difficult to anticipate where project activities would intersect with awaited streams of funding. The communities themselves were not equally far along in forming representative boards and finding suitable space. Finally, Servol had to interview teachers nominated by communities, recruit others, and begin training both.

Implementation of the programs proceeded on two tracks, partially because the training requirements were different. The early childhood program had enormous advantages—the CLC training facility was firmly in place, and there was a sizable pool of experienced teachers who could be tapped as field officers. On the other hand, the program suffered a real handicap—full-time training at the CLC took a year, long enough for community enthusiasm to burn out and for boards to fall apart before the schools even began. To keep momen-

"During this five-year period when we did not seem to grow, we were refining things, pulling things together. When the government opened up the field to us in 1986, we were ready to move forward."

was learned in preschool had to be deepened rather than undone at home. This required teachers to become community promoters—visiting parents, starting PTAs, and holding informal seminars in nutrition, hygiene, child development, and even crafts so that mothers could earn income. The goal was not only to fulfill the potential of each preschooler, but to ensure that the next generation would have the best possible head start. Discovering that a cumulative impact was possible, Servol adapted what had been learned about childhood development into a parenting course for the ADP. If one could reach teens before they had

might wreck a small NGO whose 95 paid staff members finally seemed to have meshed gears to operate four life centers and a dozen preschools efficiently; he hesitated because the program he envisioned did not belong to Servol.

The new preschools and adolescent centers would be the offspring of local communities and the Ministry of Education (MOE), with Servol acting as midwife. In January 1987, a documentary on national television and ads in local papers asked interested groups to contact the MOE/Servol committee. Representatives from the 200 communities that responded were invited to a meeting that spelled



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tum, Servol took a step backward, to when teachers received minimal theoretical training and learned their craft while practicing it under backup supervision. An in-service program—with full-time classes shortened to six months—was begun for untrained teachers from communities with pre-existing day care centers so that they could begin upgrading as soon as September 1987. By September 1988, 39 MOE/Servol preschools were open throughout Trinidad, with 40 more scheduled each of the next two years. These goals not only would be met, but would be surpassed.

Although the adolescent program sailed off to a faster start, it soon ran into choppy water. Servol knew that a life center like Beetham took years to evolve. Few communities had vacant buildings large enough for a full range of vocational training, and even if they did, there was no complement of tradesmen and administrators to

run them, and no donor or private funds to equip them with tools and machinery. What Servol could rapidly scale up was the ADP, which was a precondition for effective skills training and permanent employment anyway. The attitudinal awareness course took 14 weeks to complete, and by matching the training period for teachers to that time frame, Servol hoped to add 6 centers per term, or 18 per year. A field officer would be picked from each batch of instructors to monitor the new centers. After three years, there would be 54 community centers, and one large regional facility to divert some of the overflow from the departments at Beetham and Forres Park.

When communities had difficulty forming representative boards and finding suitable space even for the scaled-back life center program, however, it became apparent that this schedule was too ambitious. Scaling-up would be achieved in two phases

to better reflect the pace of community involvement. During the first three years, 12 community centers would be opened annually to establish a firm bedrock for the program. During the next phase, the five centers with the strongest boards and performance records would evolve into regional skills-training centers, and 24 more community centers would leave the drawing board.

Twelve community centers did open by the end of the first year, but midway through, indications surfaced that the ADP faced a hidden barrier that the preschool program could sail smoothly over. In Servol's January 1988 newsletter, which was devoted to the reactions of parents and guardians to the new nationwide programs, Pantin noted a disturbing anomaly. Parents of preschoolers were confident of their role and the community's role in educating their children. The parents of ad-

olescents, while grateful for the help being offered, seemed bewildered by the changing world their sons and daughters were trying to enter.

These reactions can be thought of as two sides of the same coin—the commonly held notion in the Caribbean that most parental responsibilities end when children reach the age of 12. This is the age at which grade-school children take the common entrance exam—that relic of colonial education intended to separate the sheep from the goats, determining what sort of formal secondary schooling will follow, what sort of life can be expected. Servol had long noted the near universal interest of Trinidadians in the welfare of young children, and had made preschools the cornerstone of its community development program. It is not surprising that community involvement would be high when hope had not been extinguished that such involvement still mattered. The general apprehension that one's fate was sealed by the onset of adolescence also made it understandable why many ADP centers were having difficulty forming active boards and PTAs. As ADP assistant coordinator Gerard D'Abreau points out, resignation runs deepest among those who have already been failed by the formal school system and who are "tied up looking, almost foraging, to support themselves and their families."

The lack of widespread involvement exposed the weakest link of the MOE/Servol program—the inability of new boards to find jobs in the community to compensate for the inability of Beetham and Forres Park to absorb the graduates pouring out of the ADP. That weak link nearly snapped in midsummer 1988, when an interagency committee representing four government ministries announced the christening of the Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP) to provide "free" skills-training for 20,000 job-



Ron Weber

less young people between the ages of 16 and 25. Even though the MOE was represented on the committee, the program was under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Sport, Culture, and Youth Affairs, and there was no prior consultation with Servol about how YTEPP might interact with the ADP. Enrollments plummeted—from 28 to 5 adolescents per term in Toco, one of the oldest community life centers, and from 35 to 7 in Moruga, one of the newest.

YTEPP, however, also had weak links. The program was poorly funded: Many instructors would wait months to be paid; students paid no fees but had to provide their own work materials. There was no consultation with the teachers' union, which reacted to the new program with disdain, alienating a potentially valuable source of volunteer literacy and vocational trainers. Disdain turned to apprehension when YTEPP, lacking buildings of its own, announced plans to "borrow" space from formal schools during hours when they were not in session. What

might have seemed, from the top, like a rational husbanding of scarce resources sent out all the wrong subliminal signals. No one had asked school administrators if they wanted to loan space, and principals and staff voiced alarm about who would be responsible for maintaining tools and classrooms. More important, YTEPP students would be implicitly accepting the status of "after hours" people, worthy of only makeshift training, who would be expected to return to the scene of their earlier failure eager to learn.

Pantin was convinced that YTEPP, as constituted, could not succeed, but would that failure become apparent before the ADP went under also? Servol had graduated 2,000 adolescents from Beetham and Forres Park, steered them toward national trade certificates, and found them jobs. Changing the low self-esteem of young people who had become conditioned to failure and providing help to the 20 percent who were functionally illiterate were clear preconditions for successful skills training. On the



FUND-AID officer Mahindra Satram-Maharaj (right) tells Cranston Galindo his loan to open an ice-cream vending business has been approved. ADP graduates will soon qualify for similar loans.

intact, but practically in abeyance. YTEPP's Servol-trained instructors had abridged the ADP course to a few days, rendering it pointless. No new YTEPP personnel were arriving for training, and Servol did not ask why.

Several things should be noted about this stand-off. First, the struggle is not over turf, but operating philosophy. Servol has consistently tried to protect the potential for local groups to build communities while building and learning to run their own centers. From YTEPP's perspective, such a process must seem achingly slow and roundabout. If the nation confronts a youth unemployment rate soaring past 45 percent, the problem should be met head-on with a program that musters every public resource and deploys the assembled army under the efficient directives of a general staff to launch a headlong assault. Of course public resources are in short supply, and the real problem is persuading people to mobilize themselves and to commit their own resources.

Servol also wanted to preserve the integrity of the learning process in the ADP. YTEPP's administrators, perhaps accustomed to thinking of unemployment in terms of "manpower training," reduced the attitudinal awareness course to its text, which could be force-fed so that "real" training could begin. The ADP takes 14 weeks to complete because it is a process of human liberation. In Paolo Freire's terms, it is a user's, not a consumer's, education. Servol was anxious to protect this process because experience proved it worked and because a way had been found to train trainers and vastly extend the program's reach.

The preschool program had the CLC in place to scale up the training of teachers, but the ADP began from scratch. Searching for a similar multiplier effect, Servol turned the introductory ADP at Beetham into a school for both incoming adolescents and future teachers. For the first

month, teacher/trainees were instructed to sit and listen, but not say a word. The intent was to give them an opportunity to observe without the pressure of performing and to give adolescents the time to find their own voices. During succeeding months, the trainees would gradually move from interacting in the classroom, to teaching alongside Servol staff, to taking sessions on their own.

When teacher/trainees were asked to evaluate this system, most reported that the period of silent listening had been among the most trying experiences of their lives. How hard it was to sit and *watch* a class of teenagers grope for the most obvious of life's solutions. As troubled adolescents searched for answers amid the rubble of their lives, however, the trainees began to hear the muffled cry of unresolved pain from their own childhoods. That empathy was leveling, leading them to reach out to the young people beside them and begin a process of mutual inner healing. "What we have discovered," Pantin would tell a group of graduating teachers, "is that effective training is not just a head trip but a heart trip. To be effective, teachers must care, and we learn to care by being exposed to caring situations."

In developing its training program for scaling up the ADP, Servol managed to replicate in a few short months the years-long process that had transformed its original staff and inspired the Beetham Charter. The similarity of those experiences has helped newly trained personnel blend with long-time staff members, strengthening organizational cohesion in the midst of scaling up. The ability to forge close-working teams of field officers and teachers has made it possible to identify trouble spots in midstream and change training methods to steer around them. This flexibility has allowed 20 community centers to get on their feet, and has

other hand, a viable YTEPP might provide an outlet for the flood of ADP graduates wanting to learn a trade.

The obvious solution was melding the programs to accentuate their complementary strengths. That is what seemed to happen. Servol would open community life centers to offer the ADP; it would also train YTEPP instructors to introduce attitudinal awareness into their programs. Former enrollees of the community centers would return to complete the ADP; graduates of the ADP would be accepted by YTEPP for skills training. A blueprint was drafted that called for opening 48 community life centers and 138 YTEPP centers by 1992, with the latter being gradually converted into community-based centers by the turn of the century.

Servol's biennial report on the nationwide adolescent program, published in mid-1989, admits that "while it is easy to set desirable and clear objectives for a programme, the journey towards them is long and often tortuous." By January 1990, the agreement with YTEPP was formally

made it possible to introduce two regional skills-training centers two years ahead of schedule. Six new regional centers are being brought on stream, including one in Morvant that will specialize in auto mechanics, and has on its board supervisors and workers from nearby Neel and Massy, the country's largest car assembly plant.

Although both the ADP and the preschool programs seem to have found secure footing, Servol recognizes that the territory ahead remains uncharted. Gillian Slocum, a field officer in the preschool program, wonders if Servol has become too good at training. Recently Oxford University agreed to certify MOE/Servol preschool teachers. The Oxford seal of approval is vital not because it reassures Servol personnel their work is valid, but because it announces to the larger society, especially the middle and upper classes, that a program working closely with the poor meets standards of universal merit. Now Slocum wonders if that recognition "will tempt private schools to hire away our best teachers."

One suspects that there will be few takers. Obtaining the Oxford certificate involves not only a written test, but a field exam of how well a teacher has intertwined her preschool with the lives of parents and the life of the community. Breaking those bonds by leaving would be an agonizing decision for such committed teachers. But if they do so, they will take their teaching methods with them, and that may have a silver lining. If middle-class parents learn firsthand that their preschoolers can benefit from a different kind of education, they are more likely to press for bringing those changes into the primary schools that follow. Pantin has long hoped that Servol's preschool and adolescent programs would act as pincers on the formal system, providing an alternative model that would eventually break the cyclical

inequities enforced by the common entrance exam.

There are signs that such a process may be under way already. Recently, the MOE decided to end its separate operation of 50 kindergartens and merge them with the new community-based system. The MOE then charged its kindergarten supervisors with the task of easing the transition of community-based preschoolers into the formal educational system. Simultaneously, Servol's field officers are reporting that first-grade teachers are visiting community-based preschools on their own, to learn about the children who will enter their classrooms next year. When these teachers leave, they often take Servol's ideas with them.

The ADP also faces challenges. Its relationship with YTEPP remains unresolved. If both programs compete for the same adolescents, whichever provides better access to jobs will probably prevail. Servol seems to have used the breathing space from the truce between the two wisely, while YTEPP is still trying to overcome considerable organizational problems. If it cannot reach all its targeted beneficiaries, it may yet opt to work more closely with Servol or perhaps simply scale back its goals to reach the 20- to 25-year-olds ineligible for the ADP.

Today, the fate of the community centers seems to hinge less on YTEPP than on adjusting to changes in the national economy. The formal sector in Trinidad has been steadily contracting since the early 1980s, and jobs have grown scarce even for skilled and highly motivated workers. To widen opportunities for graduates of the ADP and the regional centers, Servol is negotiating with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to capitalize a large credit and technical assistance program for micro-entrepreneurs through **FUND-AID**, the organization started with an IAF grant 16 years ago. If the program

works, Servol will play a role in restructuring the nation's educational system and reviving its economy.

Faced with the uncertainty of working for the first time with such a large funder, with solidifying community boards to survive a sudden shift in the political climate, Pantin hesitates to draw ironclad lessons from the Servol experience. The only thing transferable, he suggests, is the "philosophy of ignorance." A project begins by listening, and grows by becoming attuned to the voices of the people it is intended to benefit. Projects mature in their own time—like the people within them.

Ruth Montrichard, writing at the beginning of the last decade in the book *Servol Faces the 80s*, wondered what lay in store for the mole cricket—would it become an eagle soaring across the sky, majestic and keen-eyed? One cannot help but notice the startling variety of groups that have begun to adapt Servol's training methods. Recently a group from the national Water and Sewerage Authority arrived at Beetham for a modified version of the ADP that led to a company-wide program to improve communication, morale, and job performance among employees and administrators alike.

Trinidad has always been a place where outsiders arrived with their illusions. For the Spaniards it was a jumping-off point for vainglorious expeditions to El Dorado. For the English, it was a gateway to vast unrealized markets in South America. Today one wonders if Servol is not like Jacob's ladder connecting earth and heaven, inviting the people of Trinidad and Tobago to turn toward each other and for the first time dream their own dream, invent their own history together. ♦

RON WEBER has been a contributing editor for Grassroots Development for seven years.

- IAF
- grantee
- dev. strategies + theories (ICS)

New Perspectives on Evaluation

When Jeffrey Avina was selected to gather data on a sample of projects illustrative of the Inter-American Foundation's grassroots development approach, the IAF's research officer, Patrick Breslin, challenged him to solve the measurement dilemma: Find a way to evaluate grassroots projects that does not miss the whole point of such projects and that will be accepted by donor agencies that view development as a process of building local organizations.

A significant part of IAF grantmaking concentrates on small grassroots organizations—many of them new and untested. It strives for the elusive goal of empowering the poorest segments of society so that they can solve their problems on their own. When the term of the grant is up, the IAF hopes that the grantee organization will be strong enough to move forward with minimal assistance from the outside. Given this approach, intangible outputs—changes in attitudes, growth in organizational acumen, influence on other organizations—are just as important as tangible outputs—houses built, crops produced, incomes raised, and the like.

"Avina may not have completely solved the dilemma," says Breslin, "but he did come up with an intelligent way to combine qualitative and quantitative data. His method is a solid start in orienting the evaluation of projects around indicators truly reflective of the Foundation's approach."

To carry out the assignment, Avina assembled a team of research assistants and selected eight IAF-funded projects for evaluation. These were representative of the IAF portfolio, but no known failures were chosen.



Miguel Sayago

A PROTERRA technician surveys lots in Peru's Lurín Valley. PROTERRA helped write and pass national legislation on the environment and the productive use of agrarian reform land.

Avina was chosen for the assignment because of his successful participation the year before in a project history program for the Foundation. At the time of the field visits, he was working on a combined degree in law and public administration at Harvard Law School and the Kennedy School of Government. Also, he had considerable previous experience as an activist in development, having carried out field research on the situation of migrant workers in Mexico for the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies of the University of California at San Diego.

Assisting Avina was Alan R. Lessik, an economist and community organizer. A graduate of the Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies, Lessik now works in the Office of Eastern African Affairs, Bureau for Africa, of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

An evaluator from the team spent an average of 12 days with each grantee organization, reviewing rec-

ords, observing the interaction between the organization and its beneficiaries, and interviewing grantee representatives, beneficiaries, technical assistance agents, and others with knowledge of project events. Avina personally visited seven of the projects to assure uniformity in information-gathering and evaluative focus. It was a long process, but one that made it possible to develop evaluation criteria applicable to most IAF grants.

When the field visits were completed, the team wrote case studies for each project, and using the studies as the raw data, Avina prepared a final report. The team's overall finding was that "all eight IAF grantees demonstrated significant organizational development, provided specific economic and social benefits to their beneficiary groups, and at least seven (and probably all eight) of the organizations functioned cost-effectively."

The final report was published by the IAF in April 1990 as part of its working paper and monograph series. The real value of this paper lies in the method it outlines, although the individual evaluations of the grantees are also interesting. It is hoped that other organizations facing the evaluation dilemma will find this method useful and stimulating.

THREE EVALUATION "PERSPECTIVES"

Avina was able to steer clear of the qualitative-quantitative dichotomy by incorporating both kinds of measures in the evaluation. The projects were subjected to traditional cost-benefit analysis and assessed according to indicators that Avina and his team devised to analyze the performance of the organization and its impact on the

lives of its beneficiaries. The three parts to the method are more accurately three "perspectives." Rather like a museum visitor stepping back to view a painting from different angles and in different lights, the evaluators tried to take three fresh looks at the projects.

• *Organizational Performance.* First, the team looked at the performance of the organization to see how the grant may have advanced the process of institution building. They considered such topics as the number and status of the organization's beneficiaries, how the organization adapted to change and planned for the future, what mechanisms were in place to assure accountability to members, and so on. The report provides sample questions for each topic as a "checklist" to ensure that all aspects of organizational performance are considered, not just the outstanding accomplishments. For example, the evaluators acknowledged that, despite the IAF's goal of broad participation, beneficiaries generally did

economic improvements; providing the poor with new channels to voice their needs to the state and increasing self-confidence are social improvements. The team found that "tangible gains earned through participation in organizational activities have sparked new initiatives by individuals" in most of the projects.

In examining the beneficiaries as a group, the team considered five types of improvements: market share, control over resources, organizational momentum and capacity, and institutional recognition. One organization, for example, was able to increase the export market for members' products from 0 to 30 percent in three years and to provide credit, a company store, and transportation services.

• *Costs and Benefits.* The third perspective is provided by standard cost-benefit analysis. Total fixed and operational costs were compared with discernible economic returns. Both net present value and internal rate of return methods were used to assess cost-effectiveness. In the study,

clearly had a "contagion effect"—a term, broadly synonymous with scaling-up, that Avina uses to describe projects that grow and are replicated wholly or in part elsewhere. For example, after three years of operation, the Asociación Comunitaria de las Tolderías, an organization in northern Argentina that helps channel assistance to local Indian farmers, was playing an influential role in a new regional advocacy organization for indigenous groups. After seeing how successful Las Tolderías was in marketing members' cotton, other communities have also started to market their own cotton.

FUNDASOL, a confederation of cooperative federations in Uruguay, has not only successfully provided credit to the rural cooperative sector, it has generated a "demonstration effect within the Uruguayan financial system," bringing about changes in the credit practices of the Bank of the Republic. In Colombia, a government housing agency has adopted methodologies from the dynamic self-help housing program pioneered by the Corporación Diocesana de Cartago.

In Peru, PROTERRA's land-titling activities in the Lurín Valley helped pressure the government to pass new laws to distribute agrarian reform lands and have spurred the formation of a national organization representing the interests of peasants. In Costa Rica, the "contagion effect" of Coopechayote, a cooperative for squash producers, has extended internationally. Representatives of both Costa Rican and foreign-based cooperatives have visited the organization's headquarters in El Paraíso to learn firsthand about Coopechayote's packing plants, marketing programs, and management practices.

Most of the remaining projects have grown in size and do exert influence locally, but it is probably inaccurate to say they have scaled up. The evaluators found that powerful fac-

While the "contagion effect" is important, it cannot be a bottom-line indicator of success.

not participate in management or decision-making, and several organizations were dominated by one strong leader. Project success in other areas should not be used to disguise the difficulty of effectively promoting democratic participation.

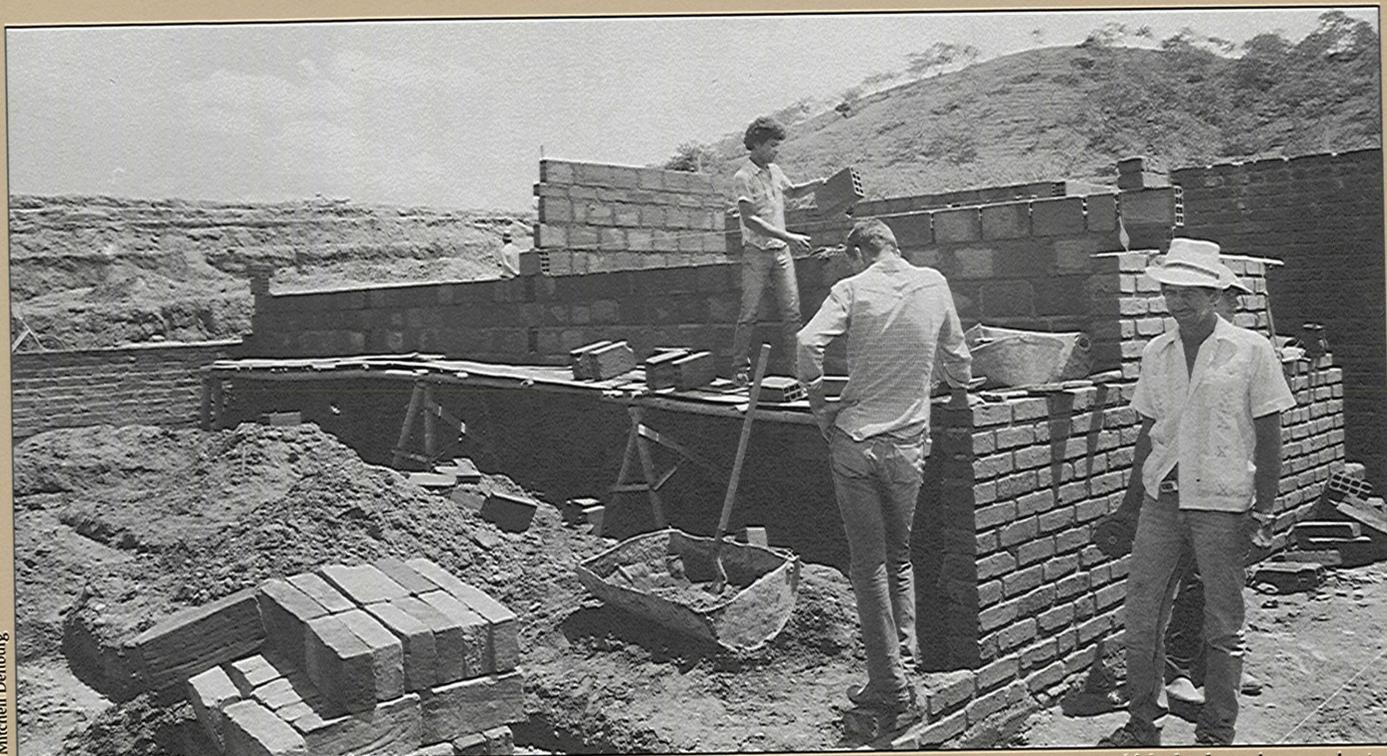
• *Impact of the Grant.* The second perspective focuses on changes in the living conditions of beneficiaries, both individually and collectively. For individuals, both economic and social improvements were considered. Increased incomes, titles to land, more jobs, and access to credit are

all organizations analyzed demonstrated a positive return, and the evaluators concluded that the projects of IAF grantees were able to compete successfully with other development projects when appraised by standard economic and financial criteria.

THE CONTAGION EFFECT

Scaling-up, which is examined in some detail in this issue of *Grassroots Development*, is one of the topics Avina considered in the report. He found that about half the projects

Cooperativa Agrícola Industrial de los Productores de Chayote



Mitchell Denburg

New homeowners build a communal wall with help from the *Corporación Diocesana de Cartago*, a self-help-housing project in Colombia. Avina's report contains a detailed case study of this project.

tors restrain the ability of a small organization to scale up: isolation, the importance of unique local situations, lack of energy and motivation, and preoccupation with the day-to-day. Exchanges and visits to and from other projects might take place, but this does not mean the project is being replicated. Further, what works on a small scale may not work on a large one. While the "contagion effect" is important, it cannot be a bottom-line indicator of success.

WISHES AND WORRIES

In the final chapter of the report, the evaluators assess the three-part method and make a number of suggestions and some provocative comments. First, they recommend that the method be refined through use so that it becomes a better tool. This will require a considerable commitment on the part of the IAF since the method is time-consuming and therefore expensive. Hence, the team recommends that it be used selectively.

Second, the evaluators found some resistance to the method among IAF staff members. Some found the evaluation process too intrusive and antithetical to the IAF belief that donor intervention should be kept to a minimum. Others were worried that the cost-benefit part of the evaluation might overshadow the other two parts, leading ultimately to avoidance of risky innovative projects whose benefits are difficult to quantify.

Third, the team discovered that some of the projects could have benefited from more technical assistance. The fact that such assistance was unavailable reveals a potential weakness of the IAF's noninterventionist approach to development. "The danger," says the report, "is that grantee organizations in dire need of technical/administrative support may not receive it from the [IAF]. This is a critical failing for a development agency concerned principally with organizational development." Technical and administrative assistance provided through the In-Country Support

(ICS) teams organized by the IAF in recent years is one way to help fill this gap.

These are issues the IAF will confront as it strives to build on the findings of the evaluation team. In the meantime, the IAF and other donors should be encouraged to learn that both the cost-benefit analysis and the qualitative indicators confirm the basic efficacy of grassroots development that strengthens local NGOs.

To obtain copies of this working paper free of charge, write to the Inter-American Foundation, Publications Office, 1515 Wilson Boulevard, Rosslyn, Virginia 22209. ♦

—Diane B. Bendahmane

(Bendahmane, a Washington, D.C.-based editor and writer specializing in international relations and development assistance, edits IAF working papers and monographs. Currently she divides her time between the Water and Sanitation for Health (WASH) Project and the Inter-American Foundation.)

We Have Enough Helping

- Chile
- Community dev.
- Leadership

Eduardo Walker

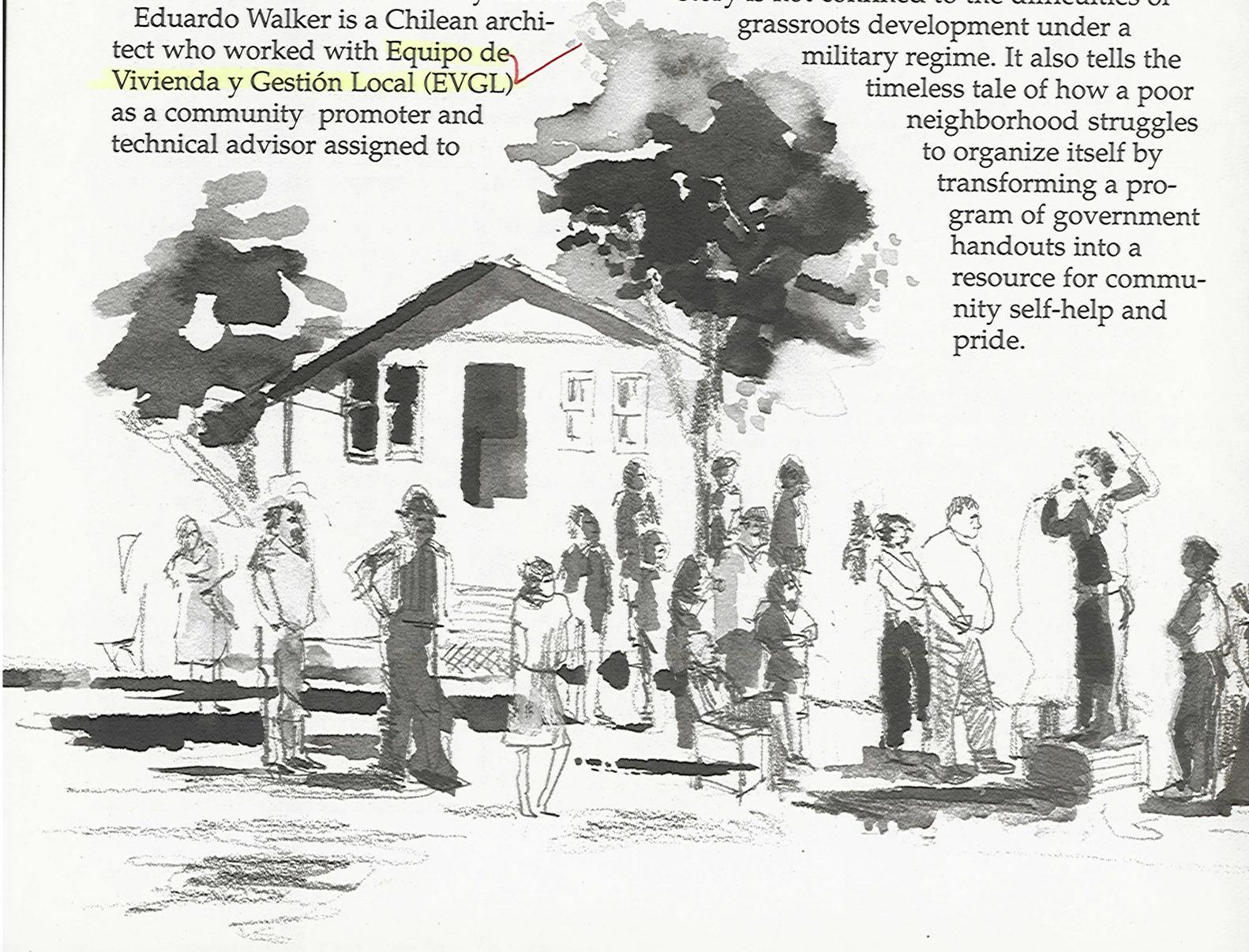
Illustrations by Bill Firestone

Almost all IAF funds go to grassroots groups or to the private nonprofit organizations that support them. In describing grassroots development, we generally focus on the people for whom a project is intended and how it affects their lives. Often there is a shadowy figure, a local organizer or technical expert, who is associated with the project and comments upon it or is quoted for historical context or evaluation of progress. In this article one of those figures steps forward to write about a project with which he has been closely associated.

Eduardo Walker is a Chilean architect who worked with Equipo de Vivienda y Gestión Local (EVGL) as a community promoter and technical advisor assigned to

a neighborhood organization on the outskirts of Santiago. Walker's dual role as participant and outsider provides a unique perspective on the triumphs and frustrations of work at the grassroots. Chile's national life was profoundly altered by a military coup in 1973 that overthrew the elected government of Salvador Allende. Although the events Walker recounts in this article took place between 1984 and 1987, when the recent transition to democratic rule seemed barely imaginable, his story is not confined to the difficulties of grassroots development under a

military regime. It also tells the timeless tale of how a poor neighborhood struggles to organize itself by transforming a program of government handouts into a resource for community self-help and pride.



Hands Already, Thank You

On Good Friday in 1984, the sun was beating furiously down on my head and, I imagined, on the heads of all the other people listening closely to the round and sonorous words of one of the local leaders.

The crowd had gathered in the back yard of a neighbor's house, leaning against plywood panels that dated back to the days when the land for this settlement was first taken over by squatters.

The president of the settlement organization, Francisco Rojas, better known as Don Pancho, stared at the ground as if unwilling to meet even a passing glance. Perhaps the grizzled old man with deep-set eyes and shaky hands did not want to let on that he lacked the eloquence of the man holding forth. Or else he had simply heard the other man's speech so many times that he allowed his mind to wander.

In any case, the speaker sounded marvelous. It was not only his tone of voice and his use of gestures and pauses, but also his command of words. He stirred people's pride, their self-esteem and sense of worth.

It was then that I understood the importance of good public speaking. The audience was silent, as if mesmerized before a television screen. Did they actually listen to what the leader was telling them? Or was it the magic of his rolling cadences?

The speaker was not rousing them for a frontal attack upon oligarchs, entrepreneurs, or land-

owners. He was talking only about the neighborhood's own projects and its own potential. And he dealt circumspectly with these subjects, knowing full well that if people suspected he was a politician, the meeting would suddenly break up in fear of reprisals. He was unquestionably a good leader—charismatic, educated, and self-confident.

I had attended many such meetings in "4 de septiembre," a community of some 500 families whose lots were grouped into 16 blocks. Usually each block sent one delegate to the meetings of the settlement organization, which were regularly held to discuss matters of common concern. The current round of meetings summoned together the residents of each block to discuss a government proposal for fixing up their houses.

Every block meeting had its own chemistry. They might occur in a delegate's home, in a yard, an alley, or on the square. In the more private places, one could speak more freely. In public places, it was always the same familiar voices along with those of a few local people who, stimulated by the Holy Week wine, lost their inhibitions and launched into long tirades against anything and everything.

"Mr. President," they would say, addressing the old man, whom they recognized as an authority, "we've lived in poverty for 11 years and haven't made any headway. What are you leaders accomplishing, anyhow? Nothing. You like being up there, in charge, but you don't *do* anything. All we get is talk! Tell me what good it does?"

"This," said another, "is politics pure and simple, just as before. What say have we got in what has to be done in the neighborhood? Nobody's ever asked our opinion about anything. Look at the latrine program. Did anybody ask if that's what we wanted?"

No sir, nobody, because the

gentlemen in the municipal government think they're entitled to do as they like with us. So I ask you, what's the use of deciding what we want to do, if they're going to come from the government and do what they want anyway?"

"I agree with you," said Carlos, the young leader with the strong voice, "but if they made us latrines and we said nothing, or they gave us a course in hygiene and we felt humiliated but said nothing, whose fault is it? It's the municipal government's fault of course. But it is also because we lacked the courage to put a stop to it."

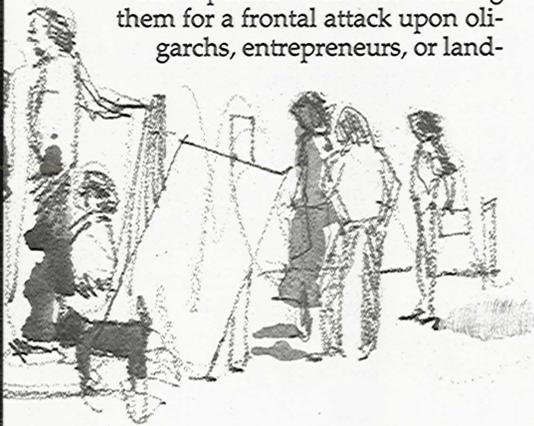
"We have to get organized," Don Pancho broke in. "If we don't organize, pull our forces together, we will always get stepped on. The present leadership isn't to blame for what happened before. You know very well that the previous leaders were appointed. Who did you expect them to work for—the neighborhood, or the municipal government? But now we do things differently."

Pausing to catch his breath, he turned to Carlos and said: "You talk so well, why don't you tell them what we're doing?"

The young man blushed, but proceeded to speak. "We're working in committees," he explained. "Every Thursday evening the leaders and delegates get together to make plans and report on progress made during the week. Each committee is in charge of scheduling work in the neighborhood. There are committees for electricity, latrines, green spaces, housing, health, paving, our headquarters, and training. We are working on several fronts at once, and with technical help from Eduardo we progress little by little."

"The reason for today's meeting, for all the block meetings, is that the municipal government has offered us a POJH home improvement program. But we have decided this time not to simply accept it right off."

The program he referred to was



sponsored by the Programa Ocupacional para Jefes de Hogar, a national public works project started in 1982 to combat unemployment. Administered through local municipalities, the program provided menial jobs at paltry wages for unemployed residents of the settlement to water lawns, clean streets, pave roads, and, in this case, work on housing projects.

"The program would provide 660,000 pesos for materials—including lumber, nails, and sheets of roofing—as well as 100 day laborers to fix up our homes," explained Carlos. "We have 10 days to respond since Eduardo persuaded the municipal government to let us decide for ourselves how we could best use the program to our benefit. It would be like an experimental . . ."

Before the sentence could be completed, someone in back blurted out: "This program is the same 'Operation Winter' they stage every year. They dole out a few sheets of roofing to keep us happy. It's just aspirin—something to dull the pain without curing it. What good is one piece of roofing—more or less—to us?" he snorted. "Nothing. What is needed

are complete panels and roofs, even if we must pay for them."

One woman who had not yet spoken now piped up: "Couldn't they give us wall panels and we'd pay for them in installments?" Looking from side to side to see if anyone was listening, she added, "We need to fix up our houses once and for all and not go on patching them up year after year, as we've always done."

"What do the rest of you think?" the young leader asked.

"The majority rules!" answered a woman who suddenly felt an urge to reply.

"Yes, agreed," said another voice. "We need panels and materials that last, not patching materials, like the lady said."

The others agreed as well—the majority rules, that's the way it has to be, no more aspirins, who do they think they are, let's not take it any more, and on and on.

THE LITTLE CARNIVAL

It was late and dark when the meeting broke up. Going down an alley to the main street, and from there to the

home of the treasurer of the settlement organization for a review of the meetings of the last few days, I suddenly found myself in the midst of a carnival. The alley was thronged, throbbing with music and movement. I immediately recalled a carnival in a small Bolivian town, which I entered one day by chance and could not leave until three days later, when the festivities finally ended.

The impression passed in seconds when I realized that the scene in the alley was no carnival, but just the normal holiday situation in the abnormal situation the country found itself in.

There were children playing ball or chasing one another. Clusters of youths were enveloped in marijuana smoke, and one could detect a trace of neoprene. Adults passed around a *chuica*, or demijohn of wine. And women, some in white aprons, fried potatoes and sold them in cones of newspaper.

Over it all blasted the songs of Zalo Reyes, the Argentine rock singer, at full volume, and of some Mexican cowboy singer with a good voice.

As I walked with some of the leaders from the meeting, one nudged my shoulder and spoke softly into my ear: "You know, Eduardo, this did not exist before the coup. We had a first-class organization. No alcohol could be sold in the neighborhood. If anybody showed up a little lit, we'd carry him home and put him straight to bed, where he stayed because he knew he had to. And if he was thoroughly drunk, we'd never take him home, but to our headquarters. We'd put a blanket over him, and there he stayed to sleep it off. Then we would talk to him, persuade him to see reason. In this way, little by little, we reduced drinking in the neighborhood. In the end, if a man drank, he wouldn't do it here, out of shame at having to face his neighbors.

"And you never used to see those young men there either. They are all delinquents and addicts. They're like that from having lost respect for their parents. Even older people, some of them good leaders in their day, spend their time drinking wine. Jobs are hard to find and keep. Why, that poor fellow," he said, indicating with a sidelong glance, "just took a beating from the police. He was coming home from work, and since someone put





the word out on him, they grabbed him coming off the bus. Without a word of explanation they shoved him face down into a car and drove off. Five days later he showed up limping on his left foot and his hair shaved off at the scalp, just as you see him now. When he went back to his job, the boss had already replaced him with someone else.

"When these young guys are high, they get mean. They stop caring about everyone, even their own neighbors. If they ask you for 10 pesos you better have it, otherwise they'll give it to you good."

I shuddered slightly at what he was telling me, knowing it would be after midnight when the meeting at the treasurer's house broke up. I saw myself alone in the street, waiting for a bus, which was bound to take its time coming. I would be approached by a gang of these young thugs, be asked not for 10 pesos but 100 or 1,000 because I was an outsider, with blue eyes and light brown hair, which they would consider "blond." I would have to tell them I had nothing to spare because I really did not. After buying cigarettes, both for myself and

to pass around, and some food for the meeting, all I had left was 150 pesos for the three bus rides needed to reach my quiet, peaceful house where the kids, at that hour, would be fast asleep and my wife already in bed watching "Great Events" on public television.

Submerged in my thoughts, I was startled when one of the guys approached and asked for a cigarette. Before I could reach for mine, the leader walking beside me handed him one he had just lit. Our small group kept on walking, turned the corner, and left the alley behind.

PARTICIPATION

At the treasurer's home, tea was being served. We sat down and chatted a bit with the lady of the house.

"Well," said the old man, after a few minutes, "let's concentrate on what we're here for, if we want to get this settled by tomorrow." And with a gesture of complicity among men, he changed the subject to the purpose of the meeting.

"Let's make a summary of the main ideas suggested in the block meet-

ings," I proposed. "And with those ideas we'll draw up a program to present to the delegates."

"Okay," they all agreed. "Let's get started."

"How was attendance?" Don Pancho asked.

"Good," answered the treasurer. "I wrote down who came, and I'd say that 80 percent of the people turned out for the block meetings."

"The meetings have been a success," said Carlos, "giving us several ideas to work on."

"Yes," said the treasurer, "but too few people speak out. Ideas always come from the same ones, and most of the rest clam up. I don't understand them—people who only come to the meetings to listen. Maybe they're asleep from always having things done for them, but it can't go on that way."

"We have to change the way they think," said Carlos, "but a little at a time. Just getting to meet with all the blocks is an accomplishment in itself. How long is it since that happened here?"

"Huh!" said Don Pancho. "Not since before the coup."



"Well, then," Carlos went on, "It's no wonder that few of them speak up, after being completely pacified for 11 years."

"But it isn't just now," the treasurer hastened to say. "People here have always been passive. They are used to everything being done for them by the leaders, whether they belong to political parties or not."

"I don't agree," said Carlos. "I wasn't in the neighborhood before, so I cannot say what did or did not happen here. But I can talk about my own experience in Concepción. As a member of the party, I helped in several land invasions to open up empty land for housing. Though at first the neighbors followed our lead, once the settlement was established people organized by blocks and decided what to do for themselves. Those were times when things were discussed

fully and anybody could give or knock down an opinion. With the coup, that disappeared."

"I know nothing about politics!" said the treasurer, as if trying to extricate himself from the argument he had started.

Carlos was annoyed. "That doesn't matter!" he retorted. "You don't have to know about politics to realize that people are afraid to speak up in meetings."

"That's my opinion," said the treasurer in confusion.

"Gentlemen," said Don Pancho, "we're straying from the subject. We are all tired, and if we don't say what we have to say we won't finish today. It's already one o'clock in the morning and," he said, looking this time at me, "if you want to get home before curfew, you'd better get going."

"What bus comes at this hour?" I

asked no one in particular.

"None!" they answered in chorus.

Carlos added, "But Juancho will take you in Miguel's Citroën." Remembering the man snatched off the bus and the young tough asking for a cigarette in the alley, I gratefully accepted the offer.

We quickly took our farewells after agreeing to meet two days later to draft a counterproposal to the municipal program.

YOU CAN FIGHT CITY HALL

Several days later, with an alternative proposal in hand, I joined the leadership group to present it to one of the top officials at the POJH. The offices were mobbed. People from every part of the city stood in long queues to make sure their names were on the waiting lists for the government's

minimum employment program.

Wedging in through the crowd, the delegation from 4 de septiembre managed to reach a corridor that led to the administrative offices of the program. Just inside the building's inner sanctum, we were intercepted by a receptionist. Or rather, the young woman intercepted the leaders, for I was trailing several steps behind.

"Where do you think you're going?" she said curtly. "The application forms for the waiting list are out there."

Don Pancho, who was in the lead, did not reply, but looked back seeking my eye, as if asking me to intervene, as if there was no point in his saying anything because although the receptionist was also from a settlement, her manner indicated that she wasn't going to pay him any attention. And he was right. In a few minutes of waiting, one could see how the girl behaved. For every program chief, coming and going, she had a smile. But to the neighborhood people who came politely to ask whether an official was in, she was surly.

I took a few steps forward, and the receptionist switched gears. "What did you want, sir?"

"We have an appointment with Mr. Ramírez," I replied firmly.

The receptionist shed her relaxed pose, straightened up, and after nervously looking for the appointment register, found a name.

"You are Mr. Francisco Rojas?" she asked.

"No," I answered, pointing to Don Pancho. "He is Mr. Francisco Rojas. He asked for the appointment along with the other leaders of his neighborhood."

"And who are you, sir?" she asked pleasantly.

"I am the technical adviser to the settlement organization."

"Very well," said the girl, rising from her chair. "I'll tell Mr. Ramírez you are here."

A few minutes later Mr. Ramírez opened the door and invited us in. He courteously greeted each of the four leaders and myself, invited us to be seated, and commenced the proceedings.

WE WORK IN COMMITTEES

"Well," said Don Pancho. "We want to present a counterproposal to the

program that has been slated for the neighborhood. Perhaps you, Carlos," he said, looking at the young leader, "would like to explain to the gentleman the process by which we arrived at our proposal."

"Yes," said Carlos, warming to the topic he had expounded upon at so many neighborhood meetings. "I think it's important." And, straightening himself, he placed his elbows on the arms of his chair and set about describing precisely what the old man referred to as "the process."

"We work in committees set up to address the needs of the neighborhood. That is, first we see what our needs are and then we form committees to address them. Each committee consists not only of delegates but leaders, too, because we're in this together. Its function is to present a program to the settlement organization, and to carry it out if it passes by majority vote."

"Interesting," Mr. Ramírez interrupted. "Can you give me an example of what you're doing?"

"Yes, of course," the young leader replied confidently. "The first thing we did was to build a headquarters,

others. The course on plans is conducted by Eduardo, who's an architect."

"What you're doing sounds interesting," said Mr. Ramírez. "I already had some idea from talking to Rosario, the head of social services. What do you think about our program for home improvements in your neighborhood?"

"We're coming to that," said Carlos. "We have presented it in detail to the whole neighborhood—block by block. From their responses we've worked out a program we want to present as an alternative." And, pulling a sheet of paper out of a folder and sliding it across the table, he explained: "We've written down here what we want to ask for."

Mr. Ramírez took up the paper and read it carefully. He breathed deeply, implying that what was asked for would not be easy to get, or perhaps playing for time to think before answering. He rose from his chair, opened the door and paused before calling someone, apparently his secretary. Turning his head toward us he asked: "Would you like some coffee?"

"Yes," we answered in unison,

Mr. Ramírez took up the paper and read it carefully. He breathed deeply, implying that what was asked for would not be easy to get.

since we didn't have one and were always borrowing the premises of a group of women working in the neighborhood."

Turning to Juancho, he said, "Juancho, why don't you explain to Mr. Ramírez what your committee has been doing."

"Right," said Juancho. "The first thing we did was make a survey to ask our neighbors what kind of training they wanted. We went through each block, from lot to lot, leaving a copy of the survey. In a week we got about 80 replies. Based on that, we organized courses on how to read plans and in electricity, mechanical drawing, first aid, reading and writing, hair cutting, and shoe repair. Normally they're conducted by neighborhood people with experience, who teach what they know to

which provoked some laughter and broke the tension. He ordered six coffees and walked out with no explanation.

WE CAN'T THROW EVERYTHING OUT OF KILTER

"Please excuse me," said Mr. Ramírez on returning. "The mayor had asked me to do him a favor this morning and I had forgotten to do it. Now," he went on, "what you ask isn't easy." And, as if the right words were hard to find, he finally said, "Let's take this point by point."

"The first item on your list is that the 100 day-laborers all be local people. Unfortunately that's impossible. Right now we're not in a position to hire anyone new. I'm sorry, but the

100 slots are for people already working under existing programs."

"The neighborhood already has more than 100 people employed by the POJH," I said. "What the leaders are asking, Mr. Ramírez, is that those people be transferred to the neighborhood's program. That is, instead of being dispersed throughout the city, they want to be brought together to work in their own settlement. Is that possible?"

"Yes, I know there are people in the 4 de septiembre neighborhood employed by the POJH. But it would be very difficult for me to transfer them because it would leave gaps in many other programs. Do you understand what I am saying? Everything works by computer here. It is all programmed, and we cannot make changes that will throw everything out of kilter."

"We understand, Mr. Ramírez," I said, "but think of it this way. Look at our program as experimental. You don't have to give us your answer right now. Take your time to study it. You'll appreciate what a tremendous effort the community's leaders have put into working up the proposal."

"Well," Mr. Ramírez interrupted, "I share your views, but you have to understand that we are handling programs involving 12,000 people. Such large numbers leave our management no room to maneuver, and what you propose would create such a mess that I wouldn't know how to clean it up. I propose the following. Given that what you want to do is experimental, which I find interesting, I am going to consider what we've said. Later on, maybe next week, we'll get together again and I can give you a definite answer."

WE FELT POWERLESS

We walked along, after the meeting, discouraged, as if anticipating that all the days of block meetings and then the meetings with delegates and leaders would turn out to have been for nothing.

We felt impotent at not having been able to say that what was behind all this was a desire to strengthen the settlement organization. That an organized community was vital to improving its living conditions. And to get an organization, Mr. Ramírez, you have to put funds,

tools, and power in the hands of the residents themselves. Not the power you think, which scares you. Not the power that would pull you out of your desk chair and put you to work shifting rocks for a living to open your eyes, which would do you some good. Power to get something done. It's as simple as that. Power to act on our own decisions. Even if we make mistakes, Mr. Ramírez, because that is the way to learn, to grow.

We felt impotence at not having been able to say what was forbidden: to tell Mr. Ramírez that, if he gave us the nod, we would organize a materials bank in the neighborhood. Just imagine, Mr. Ramírez, a materials bank, in which we would make wall panels, roofs, doors, and windows. We would use the POJH inputs as seed capital, Mr. Ramírez. And we'd make loans to community members in the form of materials, which they would repay in fixed installments. We wouldn't give anything away because giving us things paralyzes us, makes us increasingly passive and dependent. We are aware that doing this would violate POJH regulations, which prohibit the sale of materials provided as inputs.

We have no choice but to break that rule, Mr. Ramírez, because we don't see any reason for it. In doing this we're not competing with private enterprise in any way, Mr. Ramírez. Private enterprise doesn't make the panels we want, nor does it lend us the money to buy them with. Our bank, on the other hand, would make the panels for us. And would give us loans without collateral and without proof of regular employment. We would pledge only our word, which is all we have. Besides, Mr. Ramírez, we would use some of the bank's income to support our other committees. We would buy chickens, rabbits, woolen yarn for weaving, leather for shoes, and cloth to make school uniforms. We would buy metal barrels to make stoves, which we would also sell on credit. There would be a lot going on in our neighborhood, Mr. Ramírez. We'd form work teams, and the women would get out of their houses and mingle with their neighbors. So would the young people, who would quit smoking pot and take up the hammer and saw instead. They would leave the street corners and go to music and theater workshops in-

stead. We would change, Mr. Ramírez, I tell you we would change.

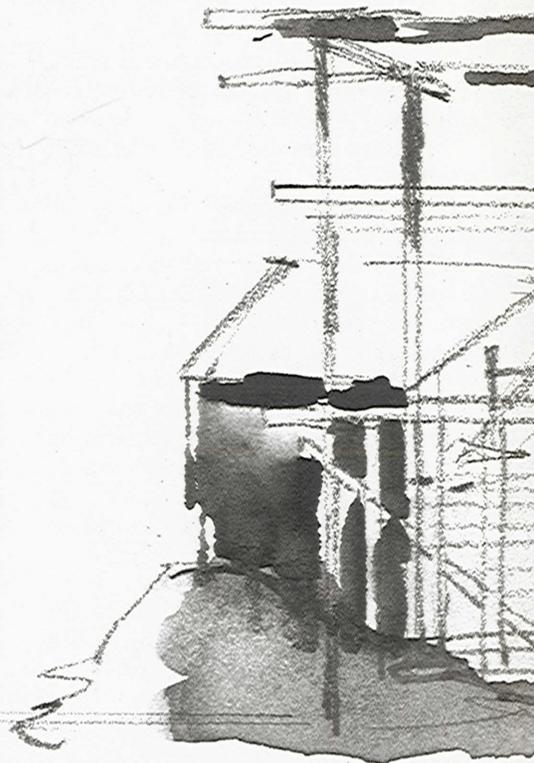
During those last three weeks in April, we went, the community leaders and I, from one appointment to another. From Mr. Ramírez to the head of the POJH, from him to the chief of social services, from her back to Mr. Ramírez, and from him back to the chief of social services, who was the only one we convinced. We knew she had no influence since the POJH was independent of her unit, but she promised to speak on our behalf to the mayor, the only one who could ignore administrative problems and go over the heads of Ramírez and the chief of the POJH.

THE PROGRAM WAS APPROVED

Against the will of the head of the POJH, who as we learned much later was the only one who opposed it, the program presented by the leaders was finally approved.

When I arrived in the neighborhood, I found the leaders waiting to give me the news. They were happy, proud of their victory. We thought back for a while on what the negotiations had cost and then, almost unconsciously, started planning—beginning with the launching of the unauthorized materials bank.

In two weeks the bank was making its first loans. Of the 100 day-laborers, 40 were working with the bank,



which had a staff consisting of a receptionist, a warehouseman, someone to handle the money, people to make wall panels, doors, and windows, and field staff divided into teams of four workers to install panels in the houses of the borrowers.

In six months, twice as many panels were made as would have been under the original program. And this thanks to the contributions made by the residents themselves through buying their panels, which made it possible to purchase more wood and make more loans.

TWO DIFFERENT VIEWS

Since the first day of the project in 4 de septiembre, a nasty struggle had begun between two different points of view. On one side was the POJH, represented by a supervisor and five foremen from outside the neighborhood, and on the other side stood the settlement organization, represented by its five leaders and me as a technical advisor.

For the supervisor and his foremen this was just one more project like so many others they had run. For them it was a matter of organizing the 100 day-laborers into gangs of 25 and putting them to work at what they

thought was necessary for the neighborhood.

For the leaders and myself, this project was part of the settlement organization's long-range program. Each resident was asked where he wanted to work, and instead of gangs, there were work teams, which were given great leeway in deciding for themselves what needed to be done and how best to do it.

"If we let ourselves be given things," Juancho would say, "we will never learn to make decisions for ourselves. We'll be caving in and joining the others who have been so beaten down by bad experiences that all they can do is go along with everything."

"It is a matter of awareness," Carlos would put in. "If all our neighbors were conscious of the situation, by this time we'd be throwing out the supervisor and his foremen, even at the risk of losing the project, even if we wound up without jobs. But if we let the POJH go on giving the orders, we'll lose control."

So, in a small settlement of 500 families, a struggle was fought that went beyond the local community: It was a broader contest between those who wanted to do things as they had decided and those who insisted on deciding for them.

A HOLLOW VICTORY

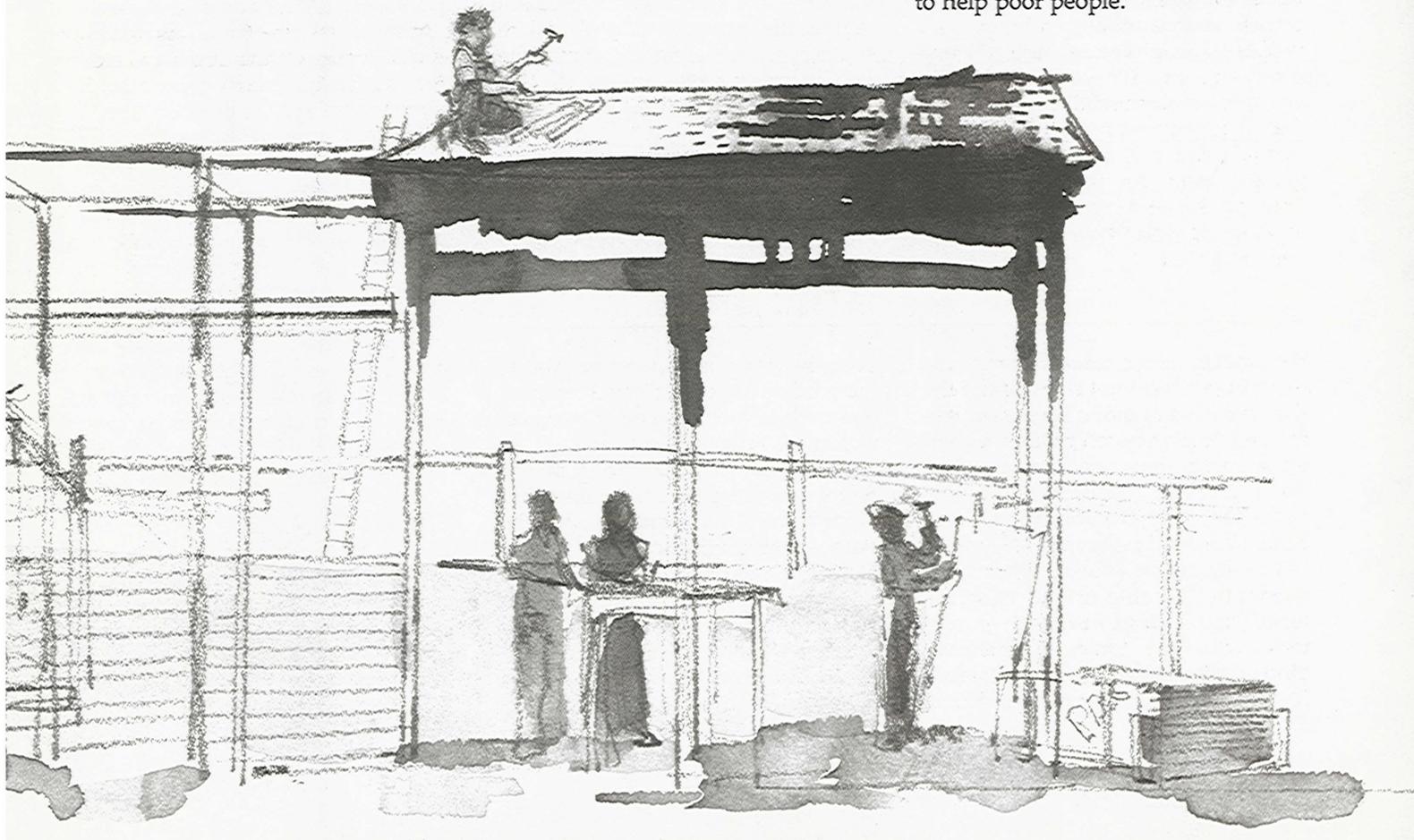
The leaders chose to fight for the project. They joined the work teams to watch what the teams were doing. The foremen found that every order they gave was met with stubborn resistance inspired by one of the leaders. The POJH exerted pressure by delaying deliveries of materials, and the leaders spoke out against the situation. Finally, the leaders succeeded in having the foremen removed from the neighborhood and themselves put in the vacated positions.

It was the POJH that finally won, however, when 15 months into the program the authorities discovered that in 4 de septiembre, residents were selling POJH inputs through the materials bank.

"That is unfair competition with private enterprise," said the official in charge. "I want it stopped now."

WE ARE PERFORMING A COMMUNITY SERVICE

On Thursday the neighborhood received the order forbidding the sale of materials to local families. "From now on," the social worker from the municipality told the leaders, "you can only give panels away. After all, the whole point of these programs is to help poor people."



"But lady," said Don Pancho, "if we hadn't made the materials bank work with loans, the government funds wouldn't have done half as much as we've accomplished with them."

"Besides," Carlos put in, "what we've done here is approved by the residents. And everything has been done openly and aboveboard. Our account books are open to inspection by anyone."

"I am very sorry," said the social worker. "Either you obey the order, or we will be forced to stop the program. Besides," she continued, "I don't see any great problem. You can go on as you are now, but more on a community welfare basis. Just like the work we do in municipal government. Do you think the municipality charges for its services? No! We provide a service to the community, and especially to poorer ones like yours. Look at it as social work. It's nice to do it that way because then people are grateful. And they're satisfied with so little, aren't they?"

The leaders just stared at her.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

They thought about the 15 months that the program had been running. They realized the organization could no longer raise money as it had become used to doing. Money with which to continue the rabbit-raising project; to provide seeds for family gardens; to buy bread and milk that

away panels in the future. That would be unfair to those who were making monthly payments now. Borrowers would turn against the organization for not playing by its own rules. "Why should I go on paying," they would say, "if the bank is now giving panels away?" And they would be right.

What would it cost if the leaders stood fast and refused the rules laid down by the social worker, rules they were already aware of, and which the mayor was aware of but had turned a blind eye to because . . . , well, maybe because he understood? If they stood fast, then the POJH would stop the program, and they would be saddled with 100 people from their own neighborhood who would no longer be earning the day wage. It was not much money, but it provided something to put into the pot and fool your stomach with, even if it was just a little greasy broth, the stuff rich folks gave to their dogs. They would wind up like rabid dogs. All in all, it's better to go by the rules and get your lousy 5,000 pesos than to put up a fight and wind up with nothing.

EPILOGUE

The materials bank and the other activities started with the bank's resources—the hutches for breeding rabbits, the weaving and dressmaking shops, the kindergarten, the model family-garden plot—continued in operation for a few months more. How-

Small initiatives closer to the residents than to their leaders have started to spring up again in the settlement.

the kindergarten needed; to repair the machine that sanded the soles of the shoes that were made by the organization and now worn by many community members; and to complete the shelves in the library that had been built brick by brick in the very heart of the neighborhood.

They thought about what they would not be able to do. They listened to each other discuss the implications of the order and found themselves trapped in a blind alley. Following the rules meant giving

ever, most residents who had taken loans from the bank stopped repaying them when they learned that panels were now being given away.

At the end of 1987, the POJH cut off its support to the community, and the municipal government asked the settlement organization to vacate the plot on which the community headquarters and training facility had been built.

Faced with the threat that municipal trucks would carry off the wood panels used to construct the center,

leaving the neighborhood with none, the leaders and a few members of the community dismantled the structures to reassemble at some other site. In the dark of the night, however, other residents broke into the enclosure, and in a few hours dismantled and looted whatever had not been removed the previous day.

The event was a watershed in the long history of this neighborhood and its settlement organization, and in my organization, the Equipo de Vivienda y Gestión Local, as well. For us, it brought out the vulnerability of neighborhood work in the absence of democratic institutions that respect a grassroots organization, preserve its continuity, and enhance its capacity to make its own decisions, conduct its own affairs, and take its own actions. It brought out the uncertainty of support for neighborhood work that relies chiefly on those who direct the operations rather than on the community itself, which must help plan activities if they are to be sustained over time.

However disheartening such questions are, today 4 de septiembre still shows signs of how resilient communities can be. Small initiatives closer to the residents than to their leaders have started to spring up again in the settlement. Block delegates, who were part of the boom and bust of community work, have organized a social welfare committee, which in turn has set up a training program for young people of the neighborhood in an attempt to prevent drug addiction. First in one block and then in another three, a variety of activities have been implemented to improve living conditions—small textile workshops, a general store, improvements to some houses. And many are the men and women of the community who say that, for all its difficulties, the ill-fated housing project changed their lives: It showed them how much they can accomplish through their own sweat and ingenuity when they are allowed to do so. ♦

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- dev strategies & theories
- microenterprise
(private sector)
(Business)?

The Private Sector and Development

Harold K. Phillips

The private sector in Latin America and the Caribbean has historically maintained a low profile in the formal development process, preferring to work through nonprofit and governmental organizations. But many government efforts have failed over the past few decades, especially in the area of land reform. It is now time to apply business principles—and the personal expertise of successful businessmen—to development efforts.

It is abundantly clear that giveaway programs do not work, and projects that keep the beneficiaries dependent on outside agencies do not work either. But programs that give people economic power and expertise can succeed over the long run. They also give participants a stake in the economic system and help prevent the instability that often leads to violence and revolution.

The Fundación del Centavo (Penny Foundation) in Guatemala is one example of a successful voluntary land reform project that has received substantial support from international donors (close to \$10 million in funds from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)—and \$102,000 from the IAF) but has succeeded largely because of the participation of local business people and the application of bottom-line business principles to the administration of the project.

This 26-year-old foundation has developed a successful program to transform landless farmers into successful, self-supporting landowners. The foundation purchases land and recruits landless farm workers to till that land, plant a cash crop on it, and eventually become landowners. The participants are provided with an initial package of supports that includes the services of an agrono-

mist, a teacher for both children and adults, credit for agricultural inputs, a salary equaling one half of the minimum wage, and the materials to construct a rustic shelter.

The participants form an association and come to group decisions on issues such as what materials to buy and how much debt to incur. After the first year, equal parcels of land are purchased by each family, with the mortgages being held by the foundation.

As the farms start producing a cash crop, the individual farmer

is required to produce: If an employee is not performing satisfactorily he is fired, and if a farm family does not comply with the rules it is asked to leave. Third, the business community is deeply involved with this project, providing expertise in everything from purchasing, to accounting, to negotiating contracts and marketing.

Finally, the Fundación Centavo gives people control over their own lives. Through education programs provided by the foundation and mentoring provided by business people, participants master the skills they need to succeed both as farmers and as entrepreneurs. Each farm involved in the project receives ex-

Business people have invaluable skills and connections that can be used to help others.

pays the foundation for both the land and the inputs. While the project requires that families work harder than they probably ever have before, it offers an entrée to land ownership and a middle-class income that is virtually impossible for most campesinos to achieve on their own. The goal is to increase the members' earnings from less than \$1,000 to over \$4,000 a year—a middle-class income in Guatemala.

About 2,000 families—a total of 8,000 to 10,000 individuals—have become landowners to date. Most families that start out with the Fundación Centavo remain with the program: The dropout rate is a mere 5 percent.

One reason this project has succeeded where others have failed is that business principles have been consistently applied and enforced. First, no money is given away: It is only loaned for a limited amount of time, and then repaid. Second, everybody involved with the foun-

tensive technical and educational assistance initially, but as farmers gain skills and expertise the assistance diminishes until the association is completely self-sufficient.

Over 200 Guatemalan business people have joined the foundation, each investing about \$500 a year, for a total of more than \$250,000. Most of the business people have been active with the foundation for more than 10 years, using their contacts to open doors with the government, the military, banks, merchants, supermarkets, packers, truckers, and others.

A number of international agencies, including, as mentioned earlier, USAID and the IAF, have also contributed millions of dollars to support this project.

The Fundación Centavo is just one example of business people successfully getting involved in the development arena. There are many others, including:

- a businessman in Argentina who

Development Notes

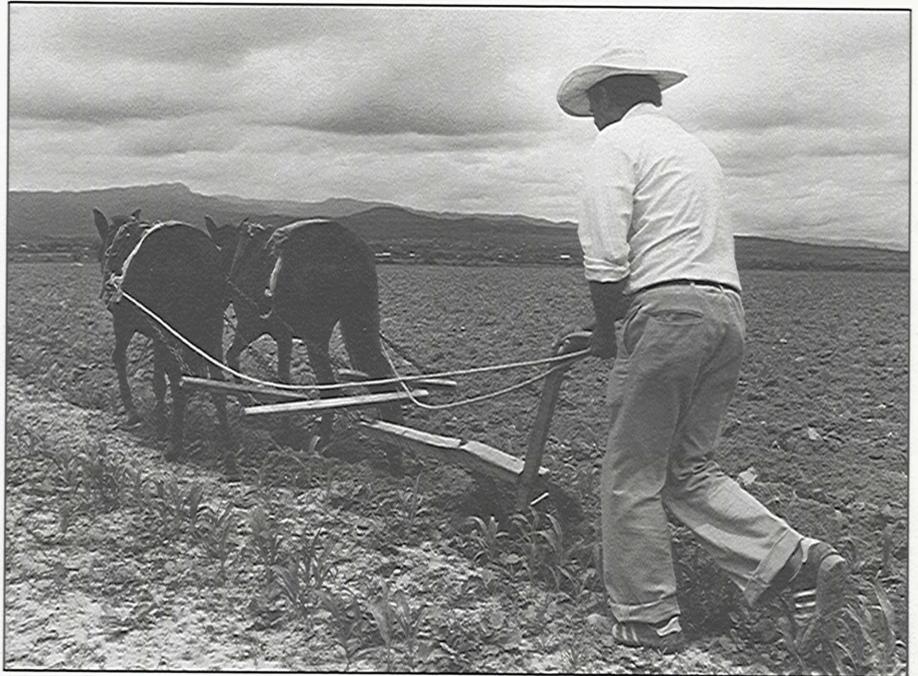
established a school to train street children as electricians, mechanics, and other technicians;

- the Fundación Paraguaya para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo in Asunción, which helps business groups provide expertise to micro-entrepreneurs;
- the Pan American Development Foundation, headquartered in Washington, D.C., which carries out programs to get the business community involved with development throughout Latin America and the Caribbean;
- the activities of ACCION International, an organization that has provided credit and training to thousands of the hemisphere's microentrepreneurs; and
- the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which also has a microenterprise division.

A start has been made, but much more needs to be done. Business people have invaluable skills and connections that can be used to help others. And the work brings rewards that are not merely altruistic. A stable political climate is necessary to the success of economic progress in any country. Although stability has not been the hallmark of many Latin American nations, with more business involvement, real opportunities for the region's poor people to improve their lives—as well as the stability of their governments—can be vastly increased. ♦

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Opinions expressed in this column are not necessarily those of the Inter-American Foundation. The editors of *Grassroots Development* invite contributions from readers.



Mitchell Denburg

UNORCA's regional credit unions are transforming rural banking for Mexico's small farmers.

SCALING UP THE RESOURCES OF SMALL FARMERS

Providing credit efficiently and effectively to Mexico's millions of small-scale farmers has challenged rural development specialists, bankers, and policymakers for years. Now a national peasant organization has stepped forward to provide some solutions.

During the 1970s, the Mexican countryside was in crisis. Development programs were siphoning resources from rural areas to promote urban industrial development. The government began to promote regional peasant organizations to help counteract the problem. (For more on the evolution of the regional organizations, see Fox and Hernández, "Offsetting the Iron Law of Oligarchy," *Grassroots Development*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1989.)

- Mexico - econ. development
- credit - agriculture

By the early 1980s several dozen autonomous regional peasant organizations had emerged and began holding annual meetings. In 1985, 30 organizations banded together to create a national alliance called the Unión Nacional de Organizaciones Regionales Campesinas (UNORCA), which would raise issues ignored by the official peasant federation. UNORCA soon captured public attention as a major representative of farmers throughout Mexico.

Faced with a 46-percent decline in the amount of credit channeled to the rural sector between 1981 and 1987, UNORCA decided to develop alternative methods for capitalizing farmers. In 1986, UNORCA received an \$80,600 grant from the IAF to allow teams of peasants and professionals from 13 regional organizations to study the feasibility of creating peasant-operated credit unions. These studies eventually led

to the restructuring of regulations governing rural credit.

Under Mexican law, a credit union may borrow up to 20 times the amount of its deposits (social capital) from private and public banks. UNORCA was enthusiastic about this device because it would not only increase capital flows to farmers but also give them greater control over how the credit would be used. In order to qualify for loans, the new credit unions would have to develop regional investment plans and supervise their implementation.

After careful research and months of negotiations, 10 regional credit unions were approved by the Central Bank in 1988 and 1989. These small peasant-controlled banks amassed approximately \$6.5 million in assets from over 1,000 individual depositors, 14 regional organizations representing thousands of farming families, and more than a dozen rural enterprises. When the time came to apply for loans from commercial and government banks, however, only 14 percent of the \$18 million requested was approved. Commercial banks believed loans to small-scale farmers were insufficiently profitable. BANRURAL, the government rural bank, also dug in its heels, asserting that it had neither a mandate nor guidelines for lending to credit unions. Faced with this impasse, UNORCA appealed to the Finance Ministry, which ruled that BANRURAL should work with UNORCA to develop appropriate policies and procedures.

UNORCA's imprint is clearly stamped on the new BANRURAL manual stipulating the procedures for channeling loans to credit unions. Although inroads have been made for present and future peasant-run credit unions to follow, the challenge ahead is to ensure that BANRURAL branches throughout Mexico abide by the new rules.

As the Mexican government con-

tinues to privatize the economy, the need grows more pressing for organizations of rural producers to develop viable proposals for filling gaps in the delivery of basic goods and services. With the official crop insurance agency about to close its doors and no signs that commercial insurers will pick up the slack, UNORCA is formulating a proposal for peasant organizations to set up their own insurance funds, which would be backed by a government fund in the event of a major catastrophe.

UNORCA demonstrates how well-organized regional organizations joined in a national alliance can scale up their operations and influence broader credit policies. Much of that success also stems from the government's search for more cost-effective policies. As the Mexican economy undergoes major restructuring, however, UNORCA cannot stay idle. UNORCA and other networks of peasant organizations must be alert to how changes in macro-policies can be used to open up

rather than shut off resources for small-scale farmers.

—Susan Pezzullo and Luis Hernández

NETWORKING FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

—women
—econ-
dev-
conference

There is much that women in the Third World can teach their peers in developed countries about economic empowerment and strategies for combating poverty. So agrees Sara Gould, director of the Economic Development/Technical Assistance (ED/TA) project of the Ms. Foundation for Women, based in New York. Believing that effective transmission of those lessons required personal contact, the Ms. Foundation, with the cooperation of the Association of Women in International Development (AWID), sponsored several sessions during a three-day AWID international conference in Washington, D.C., in mid-November 1989. The three panel discussions and round tables brought together 32 participants

IAF GRANTEES IN THE NEWS

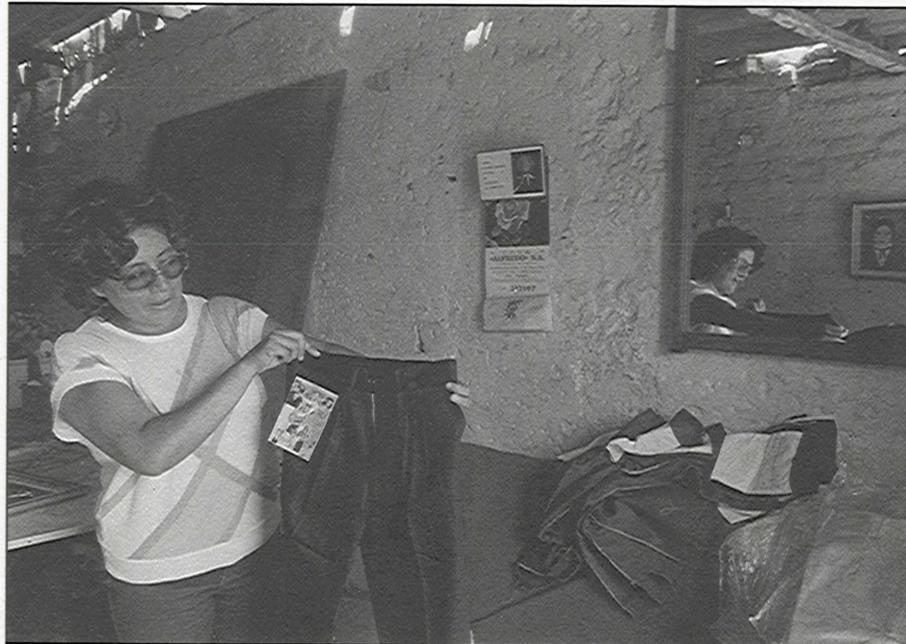
The Women's Construction Collective of Jamaica, a participant in the Tools for Training program of the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF), will receive 350 tools from The Stanley Works, a manufacturer in New Britain, Connecticut, according to the PADF's newsletter. • A newspaper in Bucaramanga, Colombia, recently reported that the city's domestic workers can now qualify for social security benefits through the group **Mujer y Futuro**, which will act as an intermediary among employers, employees, and the government agency. • An article in *tercer*

mundo, a transnational publication based in Brazil, lauded the alternative communications network ALTERNEX founded by **IBASE**, calling it a "pioneering initiative in Latin America, not only in the implementation of computers, but also in the improvement of communication" throughout the hemisphere. • The Inter-American Development Bank's newsletter, *The IDB*, stated that the **Fundación Eugenio Espejo** will receive a grant through the Bank's Small Projects Program to provide credit and training to 300 microentrepreneurs near Guayaquil, Ecuador.

from 11 countries and 14 U.S. states to share insights and experiences about women's efforts to start microenterprises, the importance of the informal sector, and cooperative businesses. The response of the 80 to 100 people who attended each of the three sessions was enthusiastic, leading to a proposal that AWID's future conferences should make a special effort to bring grassroots organizers together with academics and development professionals to learn from each other and strengthen their pursuit of common goals.

The ED/TA project was established to provide technical and financial support to organizations that aid low-income, minority, and rural women in the United States. Assistance is provided both to grassroots groups that help women start their own businesses and to groups working to improve the climate for economic development in their communities through organizing and policymaking initiatives. The project provides internships so that women from one organization can visit successful programs to receive on-site training, and also every year it sponsors the Institute on Women and Economic Empowerment that brings representatives of women's groups together to share ideas and coordinate strategies for making public policies more responsive to poor women and their families.

As a result of the successful conference in Washington, the ED/TA project has decided to broaden its networking by inviting a group of men and women from India to attend the 1990 Institute on Women and Economic Development, which will be held in Berkeley, California, on June 6-10. Classes and workshops will be organized by specialists on all aspects of women and economic empowerment. Sara Gould describes the upcoming event as a "celebration of common work" that is intended to lessen the sense



Miguel Sayago

Women's microenterprise programs, such as ADIM's in Peru, can advise U.S. NGOs that are trying to help poor women in the United States.

of isolation among women at the grassroots and practitioners working in a variety of grassroots settings, and to develop strategies to increase economic opportunities for women.

—Cathy A. Rakowski

ESCAPING THE PESTICIDE TREADMILL

—agriculture
—ecodevelopment pesticides

The International Development Exchange (IDEX), a San Francisco-based organization, has devised a formula for encouraging ecologically safe farming methods without compromising its mission to "follow the lead of communities" in developing nations.

The "Green Revolution" has enabled rural communities to double and triple crop yields since the 1950s, making more small farmers self-sufficient and sometimes producing surpluses for export. The hidden cost of this bounty has been its reliance on highly toxic pesticides, herbicides, and defoliants that pose

long-term hazards to human health and to the environment. In 1989, IDEX was approached by several communities requesting funds for agricultural development projects. IDEX is firmly committed to letting communities make their own decisions. Yet these communities were planning to use pesticides and other chemicals IDEX believed were harmful. IDEX was faced with the dilemma of reconciling its responsive development methodology with its environmental beliefs.

Becky Buell, IDEX's executive director, canvassed opinion in the development community. According to *IDEX Update*, the organization's newsletter, there was no consensus. Some thought that IDEX should support only those projects that exclude pesticide usage. They reasoned that the best way to fund was by example. Others believed IDEX should focus on the promotion of alternative farming techniques. Inform grantees of their options, they said,

but support them whatever their final decision.

Carefully weighing its options, IDEX devised a funding policy that was weighted in favor of the environment. The "IDEX Criteria for Pesticide Funding" pledges to give priority to projects that avoid pesticides. If a community requests support for a worthy project that includes some pesticides, IDEX will provide funding if it is available, while providing information on the dangers of toxic agrochemicals. As Buell put it, "We couldn't just say 'no' to groups that needed pesticides, especially when there are few alternatives." To increase options for communities, IDEX will fund trainers in nonchemical food production. Although some use of agrochemicals may be unavoidable, the organization vows not to fund any project using pesticides that are banned in the United States or are included on the "Dirty Dozen" list of the Pesticide Action Network, a coalition of international grassroots environmental groups. Finally, herbicides and defoliants will not be funded since these products can be replaced by manual labor.

Buell is the first to admit that implementing the new policy was not easy. She says that "[Many of the groups] don't share our level of concern. Most groups respond in two basic ways—'these pesticides are no problem, we've always used them,' or 'we would be happy to, but . . .' It seems unfair to community organizations when they face a no-win situation." Even among those groups that willingly comply with IDEX's guidelines, problems arise. Many IDEX beneficiaries receive training in nonchemical food production from their governments. However, Buell notes that "government training officials are not completely adequate. Many [have] received their training from the chemical companies."



Miguel Sayago

A small farmer sprays his crops in the Lurín Valley, Peru.

Despite these obstacles, IDEX has managed to keep its pledge. Nongovernmental environmental organizations are being sought out to replace inadequate government agricultural extensionists. As environmental groups in both developed and developing countries publicize this issue, small farmers and their support organizations are slowly discovering that they can escape the "pesticide treadmill" and still create a sustainable agricultural system. Policies like the "IDEX Criteria for Pesticide Funding" represent a practical step forward in harmonizing effective agricultural development with ecological responsibility.

—Frank McLoughlin

ENVIRONMENTAL CONFERENCE TARGETS POLICY ISSUES

Over 600 scientists, business people, members of NGOs, and policymakers met for four days in early August

1989 in Concepción, Chile, for the Tercer Encuentro Científico sobre el Medio Ambiente (Third Scientific Conference on the Environment). Like the two previous conferences also organized by the Centro de Investigación y Planificación del Medio Ambiente (CIPMA), a nongovernmental Chilean research institution, this event was the result of a highly participatory planning process. It is the starting point for three more years of research and policy dialogue.

Planning began in early 1988, when CIPMA assembled environmentally conscious researchers, development specialists, and business people to form the scientific and organizing committees for the conference and proposed its topic: the role of science and technology in sustainable development. Sponsors included the Chilean Academy of Sciences, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL), and the University of Concepción. Twenty corporations and donor agencies provided most of the money, and additional contributions were received from 25 other groups. Working groups were formed to define the issues relevant to each sector—agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining, and manufacturing—and to each level—local, regional, and large urban areas. A thought-provoking, 40-page document was issued as an invitation to submit papers.

Considerable coverage of environmental topics in Chile's major newspapers preceded the conference, whose theme was Chile Piensa a Chile (Chile Thinks about Chile). Interest was heightened by a series of expositions, lectures, and performances on "Culture and the Environment," organized in Santiago by the Chilean North American Cultural Institute and CIPMA.

The conference included several plenary sessions, one of which pre-

Inside IAF ^{-Education} ^{-IAF} ^{-NGO/PVO} ^(conference) ^(environment)

sented contrasting views on sustainable development from the perspectives of science, business, nongovernmental organizations, international agencies, and the state. An overflow crowd attended a session devoted to "Sustainable Development and Political Proposals," in which Chile's two principal presidential candidates participated. Forty papers were presented and discussed in eight panel discussions, while ninety more were given in seven working groups. Conclusions drawn from each working group were presented in the final plenary session and are being refined into a final report from the conference.

Exhibition boards prepared by thirty-five NGOs and seven corporations imaginatively portrayed each institution's work in sustainable development and highlighted the range of efforts under way throughout the country, particularly those of Chile's many nongovernmental development organizations. The conference drew significantly on these institutions' experience and, unlike the two preceding conferences, focused on policy issues more than on the diagnosis of environmental problems.

During the next three years CIPMA will pursue an ambitious program of research and technological adaptation, information exchange, and seminars. Consistent with the underlying concept of this third conference, the activities will integrate the environmental dimension into the normal policy formulation process. Therefore, instead of pressing for the creation of a ministry or a national policy for the environment, participants will, for example, aim to integrate the environmental dimension into the policies of the Ministry of Agriculture, agricultural entrepreneurs, and rural labor unions in each region of the country.

—Diane Edwards La Voy ◇

Basic Education for All

In the resort town of Jomtien, Thailand, close to 2,500 representatives from 135 countries gathered March 5-9, 1990, to launch a campaign to meet basic learning needs around the world. The conference, with major sponsorship from the World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), ratified a "Declaration on Education for All" and a "Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs." Although it was not a development conference per se, it attracted several organizations that, like the IAF, view education as an essential ingredient of equitable development.

In attendance were the presidents of Ecuador, Nigeria, and Malaysia; ministers of education from 97 countries; official delegations from the participating countries; and hundreds of representatives from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The Inter-American Foundation helped finance attendance at the conference of a number of leaders from Latin American and Caribbean grassroots support organizations that specialize in basic education. They joined NGO representatives from around the world in insisting that the NGO role and contribution in education be recognized.

During the conference, workshops were held on a wide range of topics, the wording of the World Declaration was debated and modified, and a host of ideas about how education could be more effective was exchanged by the participants.

Among the major themes addressed was the need for equity in education—with special attention required to redress the shortfall in education for girls and women throughout much of the world.

Environmental education was recognized as a major challenge, and successful experiments by both official school systems and NGOs were reviewed. In Malaysia, for example, the entire fifth grade curriculum has been rewritten with all subjects integrated around an environmental theme. Classroom teachers from many countries intervened frequently to keep intellectuals and administrators in touch with the reality teachers face every day. Educators who work with the handicapped insisted that greater attention be paid to that minority, and the Declaration recognized this need.

The importance of networks of educators and researchers was emphasized, with Patricio Cariola from the Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Educación (CIDE), an IAF grantee in Chile, explaining the role of the Red Latinoamericana de Documentación en Educación (REDUC), a nonprofit network of research centers that collects, abstracts, and disseminates the results of educational research to 25 participating countries. Before REDUC was established, policymakers looking for information about educational programs in their region often came up empty-handed.

Vicky Colbert, speaking from her experience as undersecretary of Colombia's Ministry of Education, described the "Escuela Nueva" program that has changed the approach of 18,000 rural schools in that country. She underlined the role of Colombian NGOs such as the Fundación Volvamos a la Gente in correcting the shortfalls of "scaling-up." When programs are expanded and the numbers of beneficiaries increase, quality may suffer. Then NGOs can play a key role in restoring quality and in supporting creative experimentation.

IAF President Deborah Szekely committed the Foundation to still greater efforts in basic education.

Reviews



NGOs are helping community schools, such as this one in Colombia, form learning networks to educate the urban poor.

She encouraged other donors to make specific commitments to programs for children in their most formative years, especially by testing new models for teacher training in normal schools. She called for better integrated curricula and incentives for school teachers to become more effective community catalysts. (The Inter-American Foundation applies more than 40 percent of its funds to education, training, and technical assistance—a proportion higher than many major donor agencies.)

Who Learns What, When, How?, a paper presented by IAF Vice President Charles Reilly, underlined the role of NGOs as laboratories for basic education. "What," he asked, "have nearly 20 years of experience supporting grassroots development in Latin America taught the Inter-American Foundation about 'education for all'—with the emphasis on all?" His answer is that certain basic propositions about how development works have corollaries in the field of education. For example, it is almost a truism in development circles that effective developmental processes are best governed by participant interests. The corollary of this proposition for education is that more attention should be paid to student needs. Another example—

this one growing out of recent experience with "redemocratizing" Latin American countries—asserts that just as democratization and development build on both formal and informal activities, so must education blend formal and nonformal approaches.

Reilly's paper also describes several IAF-supported programs that feature collaboration between NGOs and the educational establishment to examine how NGO experiments can influence education systems and—perhaps more important—how systems can become "more responsive to demonstrated good teaching outside their orbit."

The conference ended with a commitment from Barber Conable, president of the World Bank, to increase that organization's contribution to education from its current annual level of \$890 million to \$1.5 billion in the next three years. The IAF will also continue its high level of funding for education and will be alert to future opportunities to support additional joint ventures between NGOs and governments.

For a copy of *Who Learns What, When, How?* write to the Inter-American Foundation, Office of Learning and Dissemination, 1515 Wilson Blvd., Rosslyn, Virginia 22209.

SEEKING SOLUTIONS: FRAMEWORK AND CASES FOR SMALL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS, edited by Charles K. Mann, Merilee S. Grindle, and Parker Shipton. West Hartford: Kumarian Press, 1989.

Hugo Pirela Martínez

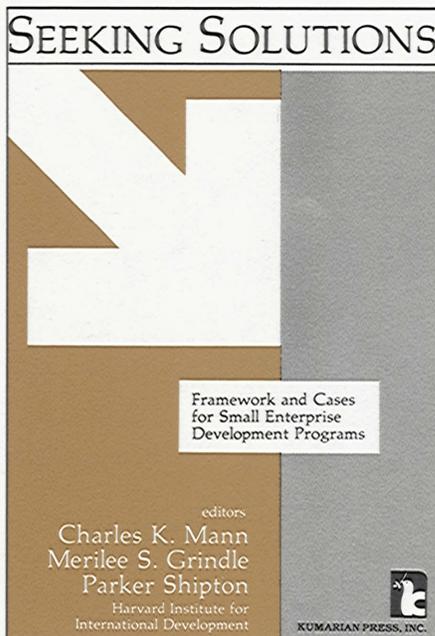
C. West Churchman, in *The Design of Inquiring Systems*, suggested that if a science did not help us change the world around us, then that science did not represent true knowledge. Yet, can we really achieve true knowledge without first attempting to change the world around us? As a hands-on book, *Seeking Solutions* embodies this symbiotic tension between knowledge as a guide to action, and action as a means to refine knowledge. With so many still-unsettled questions about the appropriate development context and role of small-scale enterprises, it is somewhat startling to see how extensively programs for them have proliferated around the Third World. Since intervention has so outpaced research, there is little doubt that these programs can greatly benefit from more systematic knowledge about the subject matter of their intervention. The book's basic contention is that the action programs themselves are a prime source for deepening that knowledge.

Edited by Charles K. Mann, Merilee S. Grindle, and Parker Shipton of the Harvard Institute of Development, *Seeking Solutions* is a highly structured work resulting from the 1985 "ARIES" (Assistance to Resource Institutions for Enterprise Support) project of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Following the earlier "PISCES" projects (Program for Investment in the Small Capital Enterprise Sector, USAID, 1978-1985), ARIES shifts the agency's attention

from the development role of small enterprises to the role of organizations implementing support programs.

Accepting as fact the basic conclusion of the PISCES projects that such programs have a significant role to play in development, the book focuses entirely on a pragmatic discussion of how programs have increased their efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability in the field. As its title aptly suggests, the book does not pretend there exists a single "best answer" to building the capacity of resource institutions and improving microenterprise programs, but it suggests that enough practical experience has accumulated to develop a "thinking framework" for finding optimal answers. Drawing from the rich literature in this field, Part I of the book develops a structure for discussing target populations, program design, implementation strategies, recurrent problems, and techniques for strengthening resource organizations. Chapters I and II crisply describe the main patterns observed in small enterprise and microenterprise behavior, how programs resemble and differ from one another, and the dilemmas posed by various task environments. A streamlined discussion of existing program "models," the challenges they face, and the several "capacity areas" that resource institutions may improve is presented in Chapters III through V.

The discussion of appropriate designs and strategies explores two sets of variables. The first helps define the target population, considering factors such as the size and age of enterprises, the branch of activity (retail and service versus manufacturing), and location (urban versus rural). The second set focuses on the best mix and sequencing of credit, technical assistance, and training; the identification of weaknesses in an organization's strategic, technical, administrative, and communication



abilities; and the choice of tools for institutional capacity building.

In its introduction, the book quotes psychologist Jerome Bruner on the relationship between pattern building and practical knowledge: "Perhaps the most basic thing that can be said about human memory, after a century of intensive research, is that unless detail is placed into a structured pattern, it is rapidly forgotten." Part II of the book builds on this insight by filling in with bold strokes the structured pattern sketched in Part I. Previously discussed issues emerge with remarkable sharpness in the 21 case studies presented here. Each depicts a critical juncture in the evolution of a pioneer program such as ADEMI (Dominican Republic), UNO (Brazil), CARE (Philippines), the Grameen Bank (Bangladesh), and the Carvajal Foundation (Colombia). Following the pedagogical methodology of the Harvard Business School, issues are presented in an open-ended fashion that describes the problem at hand and the goal of the decision to be made without suggesting a "preferred" solution or without working

backward from the decision eventually adopted. Strategic options discussed in these case studies involve decisions on program size, target population, methodology, and purpose, among others.

Seeking Solutions offers program designers, analysts, and decision-makers in the development community an invaluable resource. ♦

HUGO PIRELA MARTÍNEZ is the technical cooperation officer for the Division of Microenterprises at the Inter-American Development Bank.

World Bank Resource Facilitates NGO Involvement

The World Bank welcomes increased involvement by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the development projects and programs that it supports.

The Bank finances projects through the governments of member countries, and seldom provides funding directly to local organizations. However, in recognition of the valuable contributions NGOs are making to development, the Bank compiles twice yearly the *List of World Bank-Financed Projects with Potential for NGO Involvement*, cataloguing current and upcoming operations that welcome NGO participation.

The *List* includes the names and phone numbers of people to contact within the Bank to explore opportunities for collaboration.

To obtain a copy of the *List*, or for further information, please write to the World Bank, International Economic Relations Division, Strategic Planning and Review Department, 1818 H Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20433.

Resources

Once each year, Grassroots Development introduces its readers to noteworthy new publications developed or inspired by IAF grantees. Some of these materials are the direct products of grants; others are outgrowths or spin-offs of grant activities. All of them reflect the desire to share information with other interested groups so that projects can have the widest possible impact, whether the goal is to improve housing for the poor in Jamaica, preserve tropical forests through encouraging the farming of iguanas, monitor the use of pesticides, or catalogue the burgeoning NGO sectors in Chile and Brazil. For information on how to obtain copies of the materials reviewed, contact the organizations listed.

It was a fateful coincidence two years ago when, just as Hurricane Gilbert hit Jamaica, the Construction Resource and Development Centre (CRDC) in Kingston published *Hurricanes and Houses: Safety Tips for Building a Board House*. Some 70,000 copies of the manual were hurriedly distributed, and it has since been used for training sessions on safe home construction throughout Jamaica.

With illustrated and easy-to-read frames, the manual tells how to prevent the most common forms of structural damage from hurricanes—houses blown off their foundations, roof sheeting ripped off by wind, and walls collapsing because of weak braces and joints. CRDC Director Steven Hodges says basic and inexpensive safety measures could have prevented much of the destruction caused by Hurricane Gilbert, which damaged half the homes in Jamaica, many beyond repair.

Hurricanes and Houses is the first publication in a planned resource bank of construction training materials directed toward Jamaica's informal housing sector, which accounts



Illustration from *Hurricanes and Houses*.

for 64 percent of the homes on the island. Since 1983, CRDC has helped the island's low-income residents prepare for disasters, obtain land titles or leases, and gain access to water. Since the hurricane, CRDC has conducted training sessions with government and relief organizations to encourage safer family housing.

Hurricanes and Houses has been translated into Spanish, French, and Creole and distributed throughout the Caribbean and Central America. For further information on obtaining copies, contact the Construction Resource and Development Centre, 166½ Old Hope Road, Kingston 6, Jamaica.

The information network being developed by the Fundación Natura in Ecuador allows environmental groups throughout the hemisphere to keep abreast of late-breaking worldwide and regional ecological news and to share information about their own projects.

The Fundación, which has worked

since 1978 to inform the Ecuadorian public about environmental problems such as deforestation, erosion, and pesticides, now provides a Spanish translation of the bimonthly international newsletter published by the World Wildlife Fund. Starting in mid-1990, the Spanish edition, called *Noticias WWF*, will also include a supplement produced by the Fundación that will focus on regional projects, issues, and resources in Latin America.

The Fundación also publishes *Enlace*, the bulletin of the Red de Acción de Plaguicidas de América Latina. First published in 1985, the bulletin is the only periodical in Latin America to focus on the use and abuse of pesticides. Complementing *Enlace*, the Fundación, through an IAF grant, produces educational materials on pesticide use for distribution throughout Ecuador. Through radio programs, pamphlets, and workshops, the program emphasizes safe-handling techniques and pesticide substitutes that minimize health hazards and damage to the environment.

For additional information about these materials, contact the Fundación Natura, Av. 6 de Diciembre 5043 y El Comercio, Casilla 253, Quito, Ecuador.

Once an abundant source of nutritious food in humid tropical lowlands throughout Central and South America, the green iguana has become yet another victim of deforestation. *El Manejo de la Iguana Verde* is the first in a series of booklets chronicling efforts to re-establish iguana populations in areas where they now verge on extinction.

The booklet is published by the Fundación Pro Iguana Verde, which since 1983 has studied and bred green iguanas for eventual release onto farms and protected areas, first in Panama and now in Costa Rica.

Beautifully illustrated by Deirdre Hyde, the booklet focuses on the biology of the green iguana, which is the only reptile that inhabits tree-tops and whose future therefore is inextricably tied to reforestation efforts. Three more booklets detailing project research on the iguana and its habitat are also planned.

Project funding has come from a variety of sources, including the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute and the World Wildlife Fund. Additional funding from the IAF has focused on community education, promoting local involvement in reforestation efforts, and exploring the commercial prospects for iguana breeding by small farmers.

Copies of *El Manejo de la Iguana Verde* can be obtained by writing to the Fundación Pro Iguana Verde, Apartado 1501-3000, Heredia, Costa Rica.

Sem Fins Lucrativos: As Organizações não-governamentais no Brasil marks the first attempt to profile Brazil's diverse and growing community of nongovernmental organizations.

Based on a survey by the Instituto de Estudos da Religião (ISER), *Sem Fins Lucrativos* describes the work of more than 1,000 Brazilian NGOs— which the publication defines as organizations that focus on development issues; operate independently of governmental, political, and religious institutions; and work closely with community groups. Organizations listed in the publication are divided into three types: environmental groups, those oriented toward women, and a broad category called *a serviço do movimento popular*, which includes those involved in education, human rights, land reform, community development, the arts, and numerous other activities.

Some estimates of NGOs in Brazil double the number listed in *Sem Fins Lucrativos*, which makes no pretense

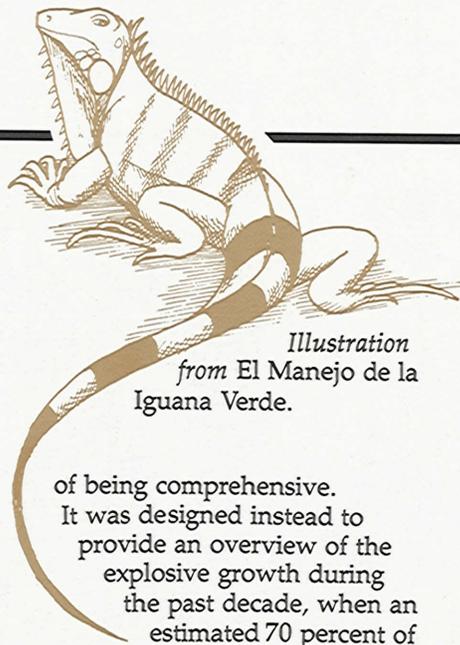


Illustration
from *El Manejo de la Iguana Verde*.

of being comprehensive.

It was designed instead to provide an overview of the explosive growth during the past decade, when an estimated 70 percent of the country's NGOs were formed. ISER Director Rubem César Fernandes, the co-author of *Sem Fins Lucrativos*, emphasizes that much needs to be done in knitting diverse organizations together to increase program impact and in making NGOs more self-sufficient. Most Brazilian NGOs are funded from abroad, yet they remain autonomous and informal, preferring to work independently of one another. *Sem Fins Lucrativos* is a valuable resource for those who wish to encourage greater collaboration, and for those interested in the prospects for development offered by an enriched civil society.

Sem Fins Lucrativos is one of several ISER communications projects that focus on development themes and NGOs. Founded in 1970 to conduct research and disseminate its findings on issues affecting the poor, ISER also publishes *Comunicações do ISER*, a bimonthly magazine that examines the religious, philosophical, and cultural aspects of development. Under an IAF grant, ISER produces videos about successful grassroots projects in Brazil, including a recent production about community development in the *favelas* surrounding Rio de Janeiro.

For information on these materials write: Instituto de Estudos da Religião, Publicações, Ladeira da

Glória, 98, 22.211 Rio de Janeiro RJ, Brazil.

Can community-level work by NGOs, scattered across a variety of development sectors, provide a foundation for national social policy? In Chile and throughout much of Latin America, a changing political climate, a deepening economic crisis, and a growing nongovernmental sector have combined to pose that question forcefully.

In *Social Policy from the Grassroots: Nongovernmental Organizations in Chile*, a number of authors from Chile's community of NGOs analyze a range of successful small-scale projects in such fields as primary health care, community education, appropriate technology, agriculture, and income generation. Project methodologies are examined for their potential to scale up—that is, the degree to which they can provide insights for shaping new public policies now that much of Latin America is moving toward democratization, privatization, and decentralization.

Social Policy from the Grassroots was originally published in Spanish in 1986 as *Del Macetero al Potrero* by UNICEF and the Center for Social Policy and Planning in Developing Countries at Columbia University. Eight of the twelve chapters are written by or about IAF grantees, two of whom—Giorgio Solimano and Humberto Vega—have since been selected to serve in the new Chilean government as director of planning and budget and treasurer, respectively. This timely book is sure to be increasingly scrutinized for signs of what may occur in Chile and other Latin American countries as governments seek new strategies for maximizing scarce resources. Copies may be ordered from Westview Press, 5500 Central Avenue, Boulder, Colorado 80301. ◇

—David Einhorn

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IAF Fellowships The Foundation has created three fellowship programs to support Latin American, Caribbean, and U.S. scholars researching development activities among the poor. Two of these programs support field research in Latin America and the Caribbean at the master's and doctoral levels; the third brings Latin American and Caribbean scholars and practitioners to the United States for advanced training.

Fellowship topics of primary interest are: 1) the nature of effective grassroots organizations among the poor; 2) the nature of effective intermediary or service organizations; and 3) systematic appraisals of local development activities such as studies of development programs and projects designed to reach the poorest populations, including small businesses in the informal sector, female-headed households, isolated indigenous populations, and artisanal fishermen.

Applications and inquiries should be directed to:

Fellowship Office
Inter-American Foundation
1515 Wilson Boulevard
Rosslyn, Virginia 22209

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