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FOCUS: NGOs Face the Challenges of a New Decade

The Inter-American Foundation, which was created by the United States Government in 1969, provides direct financial support for self-help efforts initiated by poor people in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Foundation makes about 200 grants a year to support projects carried out in more than 25 countries. Approximately half of its funds are appropriated by Congress. The remainder comes from the Social Progress Trust Fund administered by the Inter-American Development Bank.

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Grassroots Development
Inter-American Foundation
1515 Wilson Boulevard
Rosslyn, Virginia 22209

Vice President for Learning and Dissemination
Charles A. Reilly

Editor Kathryn Shaw
Foreign Language Editions Leyda Appel
Editorial Coordinator Maria Lang
Publications Assistant Sharon L. Hershey
Contributing Editors Ron Weber,
Diane B. Bendahmane, Patrick Breslin
Art Director Tom Suzuki
Designer Constance D. Dillman

Cover photo: Staff of National Research and Development Foundation in computer room of new offices in Castries, St. Lucia. NGOs throughout the hemisphere face diverse challenges, from information management to government relations (see Focus section beginning on page 2). *Photo by Jeff Perrell.*
Opposite: Co-op members dry corn in Chile's Cachapoal Valley (see page 20). *Photo by Miguel Sayago.*

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FOCUS: NGOs Face the Challenges of a New Decade

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In creating the Inter-American Foundation, the United States Government called for an approach to development assistance that was

timely, flexible, and actually reached the poor. The IAF responded not by launching a crusade of North American “experts,” but by offering to help fund the initiatives of people in Latin America and the Caribbean to improve their own lives and communities. Those initiatives surfaced by

the thousands, often led by local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), which became the yeast for strengthening self-help movements in the barrio and the campo.

Twenty years later, the IAF has identified nearly 11,000 NGOs in the region (representing the tip of the iceberg), and has given grant support to more than 2,000, in 37 countries. Realizing that the poor often know their needs but lack the technical skills to attack them successfully, the Foundation has channeled nearly 75 percent of its funding through such “intermediary organizations” staffed by development professionals and paraprofessionals.

The phenomenon of grassroots activity encouraged by the IAF two decades ago has begun to spawn NGO networks at the regional, national, and even hemispheric levels. Large multilateral development agencies have joined the bandwagon, raising the profile of and demands on the sector. The potential for NGOs to turn innovative projects into public policy is heady—but are they up to the task?

This issue of *Grassroots Development* explores the challenges the sector faces entering a new decade. Patrick Breslin begins with a thought provoking essay on the social history of NGOs in the region, wondering if they are a sign that lasting democracy is taking root after centuries of effort. In the next article, Brian Loveman examines the Chilean experience, where dynamic NGOs led the way to restor-

ing democracy and now face the difficult task of making it work. Anthony Bebbington then takes a cross-country look at how agricultural NGOs and government might work together as the public sector downsizes, overcoming traditional rivalries by a division of labor that makes the sum of services to the poor greater than the parts.

Lest NGOs be regarded as magic bullets, the Research Report summarizing Thomas Carroll’s recent study emphasizes that donor demand for quick fixes sometimes prevents NGOs from doing what they alone do best—help grassroots groups find their own voice and become more self-sufficient. Analysis of institutional performance characteristics led him to identify two subsectors within the NGO universe—grassroots support organizations (GSOs) and membership support organizations (MSOs)—providing a powerful new lens for evaluating project performance.

The section concludes with the Forum by Jim O’Brien, which argues that donors can best extend the reach of NGOs by supporting the emerging networks and consortia of these organizations. Just because redemocratization is underway, donors must not presume their assistance is no longer vital. NGOs have gotten a foot in the door, but the work of opening the door wide so that the poor can enter as full and productive citizens of their societies has only begun.



DEMOCRACY *in* *the rest of the* AMERICAS

If Alexis de Tocqueville were to wander through present-day Latin America and the Caribbean, as he wandered through the young republic of the United States in the 1830s, he would probably write a book about non-governmental organizations (NGOs). More than a century and a half after it was published, de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* continues to be the classic study of politics and soci-

Patrick Breslin

ety in the United States. The aristocratic Frenchman was fascinated by the country being created along the Atlantic seaboard and in the wilderness to the west. And nothing fascinated him more than the great profusion of associations.

Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of disposition are forever forming associations. . . . There are not only commercial and industrial associations in which all take part, but others of a thousand different types—religious, moral, serious, futile, very general and very limited, immensely large and very minute. Americans combine to give fetes, found seminaries, build churches, distribute books, and send missionaries to the antipodes. Hospitals, prisons, and



Mitchell Denburg

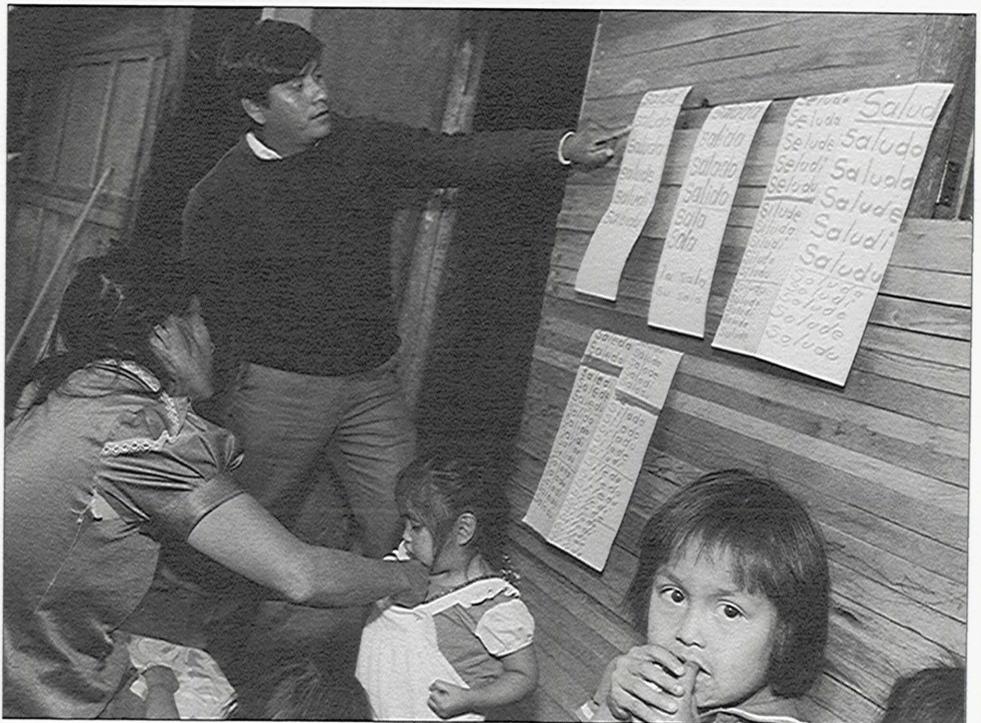
schools take shape in that way. . . . In every case, at the head of any new undertaking, where in France you would find the government or in England some territorial magnate, in the United States you are sure to find an association.⁽¹⁾



Leonardo Miño

Today's visitor to Latin America and the Caribbean would be likewise struck by the profusion of associations, generally called NGOs, the vast majority of which did not exist a quarter century ago. What is particularly striking is how, in such a short time, they have come to play such key roles in their societies. Economist Albert O. Hirschman, for instance, has noted how this "impressive, loosely integrated network of . . . international organizations . . . at the level of any single Latin American country, performs important functions of education, public health, housing improvement, agricultural extension, and development promotion of handicraft and small business."⁽²⁾

But the significance of these organizations goes beyond their developmental and public welfare roles. In Brazil, NGOs were an important force in writing a new national constitution. In Colombia, an ad hoc coalition



Philip Decker



of NGOs prepared a plan to insure that feedback from tens of thousands of grassroots members will be heard in the drafting of a new constitution and that the document will be socialized with base groups. While pioneering efficient, nonbureaucratic methods of supplying social services, NGOs have become channels for voicing concerns about social justice, and for influencing national public policy.

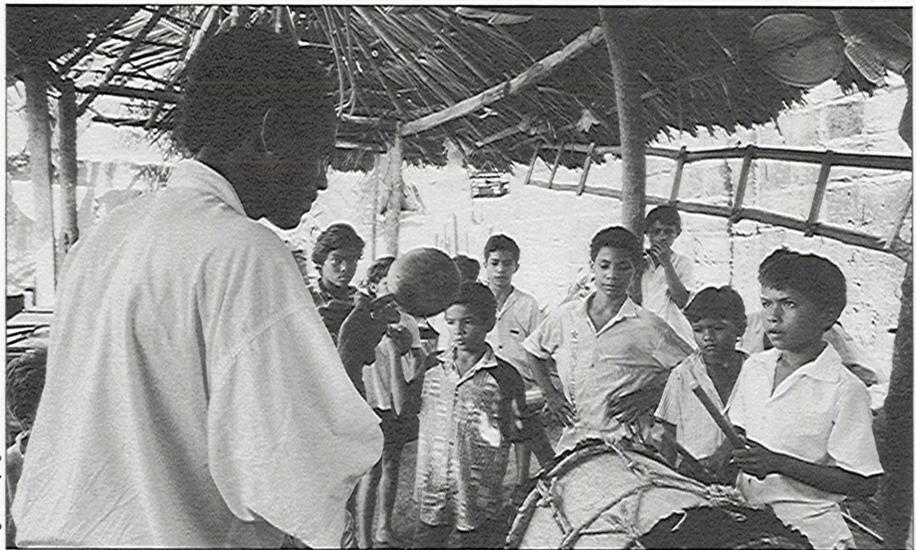
This movement constitutes a new phenomenon for most countries in the region. In a tradition that dates from colonial days and in a few cases back to hierarchical Indian empires, the central state has been the dominant institution. There were, in the nineteenth century, many bitter internal struggles waged by the forces of federalism, emphasizing regional autonomy, which were generally defeated by those who favored a strong unitary state. In this century, as middle-class and working-class

been shaken by violent political oscillations. Aspiring dictators, conservative, centrist, reformist, and socialist political parties, right-wing and left-wing military factions, and guerrilla revolutionaries all vied for control of the state as the necessary first step in putting their particular agenda into practice.

In the midst of this turmoil, people began to discard the view that the national government was the only locus of power to implement programs. Private initiatives emerged in every corner of the region. Some stemmed from community groups seeking solutions to local needs—a building for a community center, for example, or infrastructure for a water system. Some came from members of religious communities, expressions of the Catholic Church's "preferential option for the poor" or of increasing social activism within other denominations. Some sprang from the example of social change in other coun-



Miguel Sayago



Thousands of NGOs—most of which did not exist 25 years ago—now support development efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean. Clockwise from above: A cultural preservation project in Colombia; a community health project in Argentina; a "door-to-door" adult literacy program in Mexico; a vocational training program in Trinidad; and a cottage industry in Paraguay.

groups emerged from the shadow of the traditionally dominant oligarchy, their struggle was carried on in the political arena and the goal was control of state power.

After World War II, the clamor for resolving massive social problems grew louder, and the struggle for control of the state intensified. As a result, many nations in the region have

tries; some from failed or frustrated government reforms. Still others formed around issues such as human rights and the environment. Many of these initiatives were institutionalized through the formation of private organizations at the grassroots level among the poor and at an intermediary level where professionals began to join together to contribute their

Eduardo Gil

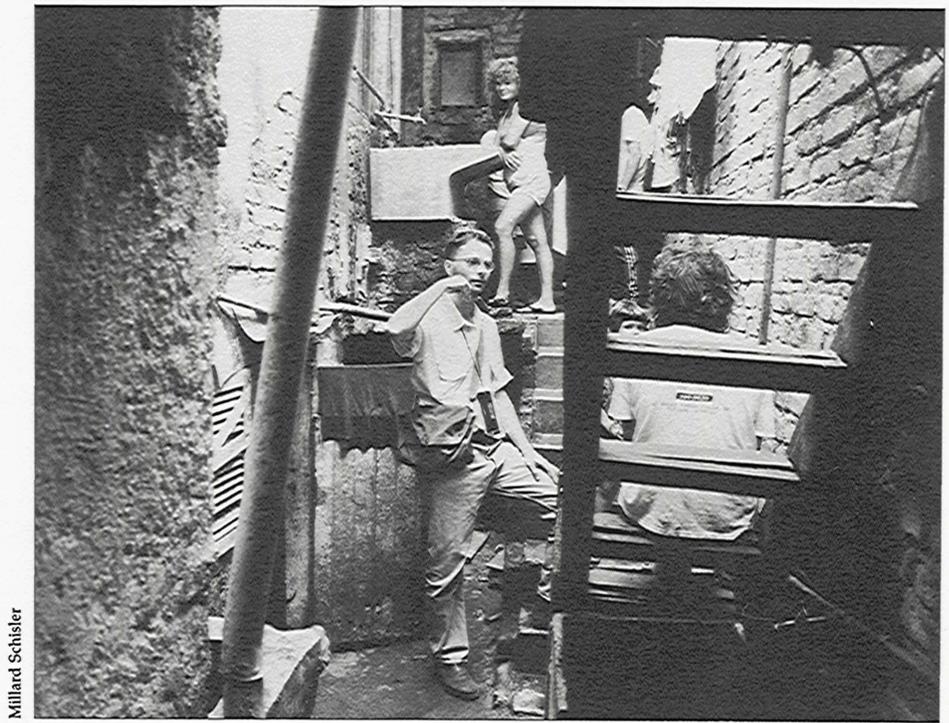
skills to development efforts.

Many of these organizations were able to secure international support for their projects when local resources were scarce. The turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s, which raised the profile of human rights issues and other problems in Latin America, also persuaded many donor agencies in Europe and North America to channel funds to these emerging groups to offset the policies of hostile governments.

Some of the professionals who began to tackle social problems were motivated by the example of the poor. Patricio Wills, an architect at the Centro de Estudios Comunitarios Aplicados in Colombia, recalled that he first became interested in development work through "the experience of finding people who weren't waiting for the government to help them but were doing something for themselves." They also seemed to be opening a door out of what he saw as his country's central political problem. "Paternalism is what's wrong with Colombian politics," Wills explained. "Housing, especially, is pivotal. A housing project is the government's way of giving favors. But this paternalism, the idea that the government will do everything for you, is corrupting, and it aggravates the political differences, the mindless political strife here, the violence. We find that the political differences disappear when the people are engaged in their own project."

Other professionals dedicated to social change saw NGOs as more efficient mechanisms after frustrating stints in government service. Carlos Morales was head of Colombia's national agency for community development and Indian affairs for two years. "After becoming the director," he recalled, "I thought at last I could get things done, but I found myself hamstrung by all the bureaucratic and political considerations. One day I decided I was fed up with experiences like having to take up a collection in the office to buy medicines to combat a measles outbreak around Santa Marta, or finding the only way to feed some mules we needed was to reclassify the grass they ate as 'fuel' so the bureaucracy would pay for it."

In other countries, like Peru and Chile, changes in governments and policies in the 1970s ended many ex-



Millard Schisler

Many NGOs support citizen participation in local government. Here, a staff member from the Instituto de Estudos, Formação e Assessoria em Políticas Sociais in São Paulo, Brazil, counsels slum dwellers involved in a housing project.

perimental public programs to encourage social change. Bereft of official resources and support, many of the people who had staffed such experiments in Peru eventually created intermediary organizations to continue working for social and economic development. Chile changed course abruptly in 1973, after a violent military coup. The military regime dismantled most of the social development efforts of previous civilian governments. In response, private and church-supported initiatives multiplied to help fill the gap. Many professionals and academics who were forced out of their positions or left because conditions were becoming intolerable discovered ways to pursue their interests and their social commitments outside the government structure.

"We were so focused on the state before," said Rodrigo Egaña, who worked with the Programa de Economía del Trabajo, a private, nonprofit research organization serving many of the tiny businesses that sprang up in Chile. "I think all this experience will have a democratizing impact on Chile. We have learned to act without the state, that even when the state is totally opposed, things can be done.

We know firsthand now that one can live and do things without being a political officeholder." As the current executive secretary of the Agencia de Cooperación Internacional, a new government agency charged with coordinating international aid with public sector institutions and the NGO community, Egaña will now have an opportunity to test those beliefs.

Many initiatives, many organizations failed, of course. But as the survivors began to make headway, their efforts introduced significant changes into Latin American society. NGOs working with microentrepreneurs in the informal economy or with rural agroprocessing cooperatives began to see the opportunities as well as the constraints of market concepts. Working with limited budgets, and subject to the demands of beneficiaries and the evaluations of outside donors, NGO professionals learned to measure success with concrete results rather than ideological rectitude. Ideals were tempered by reality, stimulating innovative approaches to service delivery that involved the poor in their own development. The proliferation of private institutions extended beyond NGOs to include urban and rural associations, which

have in turn begun to form regional federations and national confederations, what Sheldon Annis of Boston University has called a "thickening web of organization among the poor."

Whether it is the self-help housing movement in Colombia and Argentina or the organization of Central American, Mexican, and Caribbean small coffee growers to market their produce in North America and Europe, NGOs have provided technical assistance and training to strengthen these popular movements and help them leverage changes in public policy and mobilize their own resources. The challenge of NGOs then is not simply service delivery but institution building.

Ronnie Thwaites, who helped introduce legal services for the poor in Jamaica, echoed this sentiment. "The problem in societies such as ours," he said, "is to found stable institutions and give them strong roots in a brief period of time. . . . We need to graduate from being a good idea, run by do-gooders, into a settled institution for the service of poor people in this society."

As NGOs got on their feet, formed tacit alliances with each other, and reached out to membership organizations among the poor, it became clear that other centers of power and influence than the state could be created, allowing politics to be seen as something other than a zero-sum game. Alternative ways of winning became feasible. And losing a political struggle no longer necessarily resulted in unemployment or exile.

Alternative career paths were being developed as well. The growing number of private organizations created new niches in society so that commitment to work with the poor could persist beyond a burst of youthful idealism and become an occupation.

Yet the projections are not all rosy. The economic problems of the region, the crushing debt burden above all, are daunting. As public resources shrink, the rescheduling of debt is accompanied by demands for "privatization" of the state. NGOs are reluctant and probably unable to pick up the slack by themselves. All are not efficient, few have the time and resources for even medium-range planning or critical self-examination, and many are hindered by the same tradi-

tion of paternalism that keeps the state from working with the poor to encourage self-development.

Closed markets, lack of access to credit and raw materials, widespread environmental damage, and a host of other problems require policy coordination at the public level, while mobilizing resources for self-help requires action at the local level. NGOs seem ideally perched to play a brokering role, but finding a workable balance between public and private initiative is still in its formative stages, even in Chile, where the new government has made NGOs a centerpiece of its program. The search for effective cooperation is further hampered in several other countries where governments have tried to rein in NGOs through public regulation.

Although it is increasingly common for NGOs to form networks or consortia to influence national policymaking, the best fit for NGO-state cooperation may lie on the regional or municipal level. The move to decentralize program administration and strengthen elected local governments in Colombia, Brazil, and Chile may open up new opportunities for expanding NGO projects without diluting them, encouraging wider citizen

these would seem long compatible with a thriving nongovernmental movement that permeates a society and rests on widespread grassroots participation. Writer Tad Szulc published a book in the late 1950s called *Twilight of the Tyrants*, an optimistic survey of several Latin American countries where democracy had replaced caudillos. In retrospect, the optimism proved premature. The democracies that emerged were short-lived, and a new generation of tyrants was back in control by the 1970s. Democratic political institutions in many countries proved fragile. Their roots did not reach deep enough in their own societies to withstand buffeting winds from internal challengers, and, in some cases, foreign pressures. But there is basis for renewed hope in de Tocqueville's observation a century and a half ago that "civil associations pave the way for political ones."

Today, NGOs span the political spectrum. The solutions they propose are divergent, but they share two common elements—a pragmatic insistence on results and a belief in the potential of civil society. With the appearance of an intricate, multilayered, and extensive movement of popular

The emergence of a vibrant movement of grassroots and nongovernmental organizations may turn out to be the most significant trend in Latin America in this century.

participation while proving that "the best government is the one closest to the people."

Despite the great challenges, then, there may be historic opportunities opening around us. The emergence over the past three decades of a diverse and vibrant movement of grassroots and nongovernmental organizations may turn out to be, on reflection, the most significant trend in Latin America in this century. There are many traditions that have bedeviled political life in the region: the *caudillo*, or strongman, who has been grist for dozens of novels by Latin writers; the ideological polarization; the constant intrusions of the military into government. None of

and nongovernmental organizations throughout the continent, there is genuine hope that the democratic optimism of today will not be misplaced tomorrow. ♦

PATRICK BRESLIN, who received a Ph.D. in political science from the University of California, Los Angeles, is the IAF evaluations officer. He is also the author of Interventions, a novel about Chile.

ENDNOTES

1. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988), 513.
2. Albert O. Hirschman, *Getting Ahead Collectively* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1984), 92-3.

Nowhere in Latin America did nongovernmental organizations multiply and diversify as in Chile after the 1973 military coup that brought General Augusto Pinochet to power. Yet, nowhere in Latin America do NGOs face a greater challenge today: how to secure and sustain their development role in the "new" Chile that has emerged since the inauguration of the country's first elected president in 20 years.

Patricio Aylwin took office on March 11, 1990. He heads a coalition government that includes 16 political parties. Its program focuses on reconstructing democracy, overcoming the legacy of the military government's human rights abuses from 1973 to 1990, stimulating economic growth, attacking environmental deterioration, and improving the living conditions of some five million citizens who live in poverty.

This program was devised by party leaders, intellectuals, and professionals who had opposed the military regime. Almost all of them were also affiliated with a network of NGOs that had expanded dramatically under the military dictatorship. Some of these nongovernmental organizations were academic research centers; others focused on defense of human rights and charitable activities. Many provided technical, health, educational, and organizational support to community groups, producer cooperatives, farmers, microenterprises, and other grassroots entities.

Following a brief overview of Chilean NGOs since 1973, this article examines some of the challenges these organizations and their staffs now face, including: loss of personnel to the Aylwin government; resolution of issues of internal organization and operation; reassessment and modification of relationships with clientele and constituency groups; improvement of inter-NGO relations; reshaping



Reuters/Bettman

NGOs and the transition to Democracy in Chile

Brian Loveman

Leading the way back to democracy is just the first step in making it work.



Patricio Aylwin (left) assumed Chile's presidency from General Augusto Pinochet (right) on March 11, 1990.

ing relations with national and municipal governments; management of shifting and sometimes ambiguous ties with external donors; and uncertainty about the relationship between NGOs and political parties in the transition to democracy.

NGOs, THE CHILEAN STATE, AND THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT

The challenges democratization poses to NGOs must be understood both in relation to the country's re-

cent past and to the historical role of the state in Chilean society. As a state-centered society, Chile relied throughout much of its history on government direction and resources for development initiatives. This held true under both conservative and reformist governments, with the pattern intensifying from the 1930s to the 1970s. Most investment came from public budgets, and from the 1960s, government policies increased state participation in social and economic matters. While NGOs—particularly charitable, educational,

health, and relief agencies related to the Catholic Church—had existed since colonial times, and had expanded in number and function from the 1920s onward, they played a minor role in Chilean society before the 1970s.

In 1970, President Salvador Allende and the leftist coalition government accelerated Chile's statist tendencies as a means to build a socialist society. Policies implemented from 1970 to 1973 induced extreme political polarization and led ultimately to a military coup in September 1973, when a military junta replaced the elected government.

Led by General Augusto Pinochet, the junta and its civilian allies committed themselves to eradicating the "vices of the past," meaning Chile's traditional system of democracy, upon which they blamed the political and economic crisis of the early 1970s. To fulfill this commitment, the junta repressed labor unions, political parties, and opponents of the new government. It also introduced extensive policy changes that reduced the role of the state and emphasized privatization of many activities previously performed by the public sector.

Public administration, schools, and universities were purged of political adversaries, leaving numerous intellectuals, scientists, and professionals unemployed or subject to repression if their work seemed to challenge the military government. Many of these people, committed to research, to the country's long-term development, to replacing the services lost to the urban and rural poor due to government cutbacks, and to survival under the dictatorship, sought alternative institutional settings for their endeavors.

Thus, the policies of the military government unintentionally encour-

aged the development of a complex network of NGOs working in various projects from human rights and legal services to health care, nutrition programs, agricultural extension, and urban development. In the words of Daniel Rey of AGRARIA, an important NGO engaged in research and development activities, "The dictatorship gave birth to institutions that resolve—and here we must be honest—not only the needs that social groups have, but also the problems of professionals—[those of us] who had no place to work; not only no place to work in the field we wished, but no type of work at all."

NGOs increased in number as professionals, intellectuals, former government officials, and returned political exiles sought occupational alternatives in the private sector related to their previous commitments to socioeconomic development. By the mid-1980s, most leading opponents of the military government worked in NGOs. After 1983, some of these NGOs served informally as key nodes in opposition networks, at times with the implicit support of donor agencies.

Numerous initiatives by international agencies and foreign governments to support social science research and grassroots development fostered a dramatic expansion of the NGOs' role in Chilean society. Seeking alternative channels for development assistance when reluctant to collaborate with the military government, donor agencies from Europe, the United States, and Canada strengthened existing NGOs. They also made possible the creation of new NGOs and diversification of nongovernmental efforts to include many services previously available only from government agencies, if at all. The experience of NGO personnel in this growing network modified perceptions by Chilean intellectuals, development agents, and grassroots organizations about the nature of so-

cial and economic development, and about the role of the state in society.

STRENGTHENED BY ADVERSITY

Years of devising survival strategies—scrounging for resources, experimenting with organizational forms and development projects, compromising, accommodating diverse interests, and negotiating with donor agencies, foreign governments, and international agencies—forged a new generation of Chilean political leaders, and reformed an older one. During these years, NGO members learned the value of pragmatism and efficacy. From the mid-1970s until 1990, whatever political and ideological differences had previously separated them were superseded by the common challenges of survival, the opposition to the military regime's policies, and the need to produce measurable results.

NGOs also discovered the variety of opportunities—as well as the vagaries—presented by external development assistance. The foreign policies of European and North American governments, the changing emphases of private and public donor agencies, and the conflicts within organizations that offered assistance all became familiar to Chilean professionals. "Informal diplomacy," as it was called by the new Chilean experts on private international cooperation, sharpened their understanding of international politics and their awareness that virtually permanent attention had to be given to international assistance programs if they were to play a positive role in Chilean development.

This development was not without a certain irony, since most of the NGO leadership had favored a state-centered, government-directed transformation of Chilean society. The practical experiences from 1973 to 1990 and the enforced adaptation to the government's "privatization"



photos by Miguel Sayago

Supported by the Catholic Church, hundreds of neighborhood mutual-help groups were organized during the military regime, such as these two handicraft workshops served by the Vicaría Zona Oeste in Santiago.

schemes and to the reduction in government services changed long-held ideas about development processes and the relationship between the state and society. What were initially survival strategies with NGOs as instruments eventually generated a more reasoned and permanent commitment to the NGO role in democracy, development, and local initiative. By 1990, NGO leadership defended the significance of NGO programs and expressed concerns about protecting NGO autonomy as the country made a transition from authoritarian to democratic politics.

By then, also, many NGO personnel had learned the importance and potential of nongovernmental initiatives in social and economic development. The freedom from bureaucratic regulation, the need for creativity, and the consequences of failure for themselves and their clientele reframed development strategies and gave new meaning to the sometimes abstract notion of "grassroots development."

Perhaps no one better stated this new consciousness than Francisco



Vio, associated with the Centro Canelo de Nos, a prominent NGO engaged in adult education and agricultural development that publishes the magazine *El Canelo*. Speaking at a conference in July 1989, Vio declared:

The realization of national and local plans should not be the exclusive preserve of the state. NGOs can be efficacious channels for expression of civil society, enhancing popular participation at the local level. . . . The [new] democratic government should avoid the temptation (as occurred in Argentina, Peru, and other countries) to manipulate and/or control the NGOs. . . . The network of international solidarity that operates through the NGOs. . . is a powerful vehicle of democratization from the base of society and a source of new ideas, in the North as well as the South. The Chilean case may help to demonstrate that in Latin America it is possible to strengthen civil society and, thereby, to strengthen the process of democratization.

Just a year later, several months after Aylwin took office, Vio's misgivings regarding the role of the state and the role of NGOs in democratization highlighted the dilemmas and the challenge for Chilean democracy:

The tendency to manage the transition "from above" persists. . . . Political par-

ties again run the show. The political class re-emerges after a long period of marginalization and begins to reimpose its authority. [In some respects] this is positive, in relation to our recent experiences. [But in other respects] the result is the absence of the people in the discussion of their own future.

Vio's dilemma, a desire to support the transition to democracy and avoid confrontation with a government facing numerous constraints while simultaneously wishing to prevent a return to old habits, epitomizes a central issue in Chile and much of Latin America at the beginning of the 1990s: how to encourage democratization and socioeconomic progress that overcomes traditional Hispanic statism without succumbing entirely to the new neo-liberal orthodoxy.

One important aspect is the role of NGOs in the democratization process. And as Vio suggests, Chile may be a test case for whether strengthening civil society and increasing participation in grassroots development may contribute to authentic democratization in Latin America.

NGOs AND THE PROGRAM OF THE AYLWIN GOVERNMENT

The increasingly salient role of NGOs in Chile was recognized in the elec-

toral program of the Aylwin coalition, the Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia, and also in declarations by leading policymakers before March 1990. Several days before taking office, President Aylwin and other soon-to-be officials of the new government reaffirmed a commitment to NGO autonomy, to their participation in national development, and to the legitimacy of private channels of international cooperation.

Among the first initiatives of the new government was the creation of the Ministerio de Planificación y Cooperación (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation—MIDEPLAN). Within the Ministry, the Agencia de Cooperación Internacional (Agency for International Cooperation—AGCI) and the Fondo de Solidaridad e Inversión Social (Fund for Social Solidarity and Investment—FOSIS) were created as key institutions to implement the government's international and socioeconomic program. MIDEPLAN would coordinate the complex network of international cooperation with government agencies and the nongovernmental organizations that had developed after 1973. FOSIS would be an instrument for the government's nontraditional approach to investment in socioeconomic development through NGOs and community organizations.

In early 1991, Acting Director Jorge Chateaux, previously affiliated with the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), one of the country's most important research NGOs, defined FOSIS's role as "financing and supporting projects and activities proposed by communities, groups, municipalities, public or private agencies, or nongovernmental organizations designed to overcome poverty and marginality." In collaboration with community groups, NGOs, and other government agencies, FOSIS-supported programs would reach the poorest sectors of

Chilean society to "improve the conditions of work and production of those sectors with the lowest incomes."

At MIDEPLAN and in AGCI and FOSIS, academics, professionals, technicians, and political leaders from dozens of NGOs brought a new spirit and new methods of work to government. Bred in opposition to the dictatorship, NGO staff working in the new government and those who continued in the NGOs now faced the challenges of democracy.

The subsequent appointment of Rodrigo Egaña as executive secretary of AGCI within MIDEPLAN signaled awareness of the importance and complexity of relations among NGOs, donor agencies, and the government. Egaña was an active participant in a well-respected NGO, the Programa de Economía del Trabajo, and the editor of an important book on NGOs called *Una Puerta Que Se Abre*. With co-authors Sergio Gómez of FLACSO and Consuelo Undurraga of the Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Educación (CIDE), he had written that donor agencies (some of them European and North American NGOs) dedicated to international cooperation "had earned their citizenship papers":

They exhibit great variety. . . . Some are linked to churches, political parties, unions, business groups, universities, and so on. Some specialize in particular sectors; others operate across the spectrum of development ambits. Some manage tens of millions of dollars, others tens of thousands. Some cooperate with autonomous organizations in each country; others send their own personnel to implement projects they support.

Egaña and his collaborators at AGCI were aware of the complexity of the NGO and donor agency universe. Nevertheless, they faced the dilemma of creating a viable framework for acquiring and channeling in-

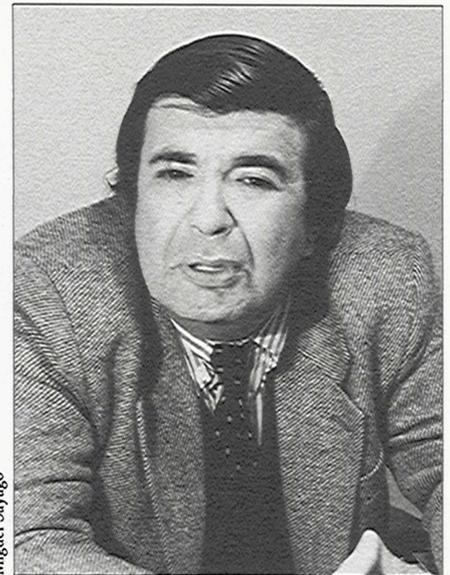


Kathryn Shaw

ternational assistance under the new administration.

FACING THE CHALLENGE OF DEMOCRATIZATION

Egaña's appointment, and that of professionals from numerous other NGOs to AGCI and FOSIS, also indicated the immediacy of a variety of challenges to NGOs posed by the new administration. These included the movement of personnel to the government sector; competition among NGOs for access to and influence with the new administration; the tension between NGOs and the government as focuses of policy initiatives; and the competition among NGOs, and between NGOs and the government, for external funding. The return of key NGO personnel to careers in universities, the liberal professions, private business, religious organizations, political parties, and unions also threatened the efficacy of some NGO operations. Renewal of political competition and the tendency of political parties to penetrate and influence other groups and movements, including NGOs, la-

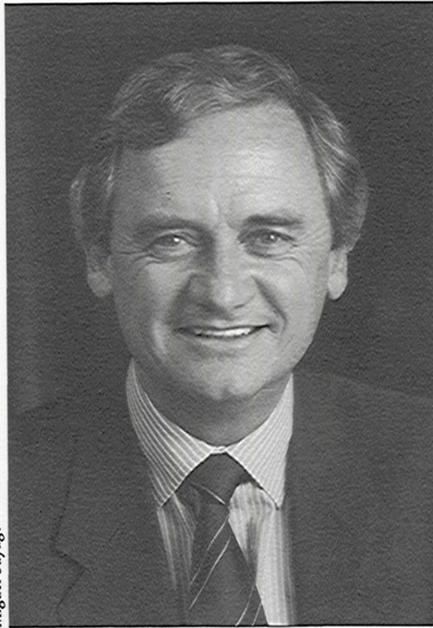


Miguel Sayago

Large numbers of NGO personnel quickly moved into a variety of government positions after President Aylwin took office. Among them are, clockwise from above: Carlos Catalán, an advisor for communication and culture to the Ministry of the Secretariat General of the Government; Alejandro Foxley, Minister of Finance; Humberto Vega, Treasurer General; Mónica Jiménez, an appointee to a presidential committee on human rights; and Sergio Molina, Minister of Planning.



Paul Kennedy



Miguel Sayago



Miguel Sayago

bor unions, and student, women's, and local community organizations, also altered the ambiance for NGO programs.

FROM NGO TO GOVERNMENT OFFICE: PERSONAL CHOICES AND DILEMMAS

In March 1990, large numbers of NGO personnel moved quickly into a variety of government positions—from the presidential palace, to technical extension offices in the far south, to embassies abroad and nu-

merous ministries. Some had experience as elected officials or appointed policymakers in the 1960s and 1970s; others felt the daily stress of coalition management, office politics, and the need to respond publicly to popular demands for the first time. In each case, the immediacy of cries for social and economic programs to overcome years of authoritarian rule contrasted markedly with the relatively insulated, informal, forgiving, and unscrutinized routine of life in NGOs.

Relations with small constituency groups and grassroots organizations differed markedly from responsibility for overcoming poverty and the legacy of authoritarian rule on a national scale. The Chilean expression *otra cosa es con pelota*, or "it's different when you have the ball" (from when you watch someone else and criticize), was heard frequently among even the most optimistic and energetic of President Aylwin's collaborators. Public scrutiny of each decision, each policy, and of organizational performance by the press, political parties, interest groups, and supporters of the past administration added a new dimension to the daily life of many government officials.

Inevitably, recognition of and loyalty to the NGO role warred with a tendency to press for government initiatives to solve social and economic problems. Sergio Molina, the minister of planning and international cooperation and an experienced professional and policymaker in past administrations, commented on the "obvious" inability of many NGOs to move from local experiments to larger-scale programs, and on the "natural" role of government in carrying out national programs. Frustration quickly developed over the slowness with which FOSIS took shape, its tendency to compete for funds from donor agencies, and the perception by some NGO staff that it desired to screen NGO programs and "suggest" to donor agencies which should be funded.

The ambiguity in some policymakers' attitudes toward NGO queries or criticisms and the sloppy, incoherent, or simply inadequate performance of particular ministries or government offices in the first months of the Aylwin administration quickly imposed a certain reality upon the initial elation produced by the end of the authoritarian regime.

All this put pressure on policymakers and staff unfamiliar with the "hot seat" and unaccustomed to public criticism. It foreshadowed the likely return to private sector activities—including NGOs—of many who found government employment less satisfying or more frustrating than anticipated. The formality, routine, and constraints of bureaucratic life were exacting their toll. By the end of 1990, some personnel "on leave" from NGOs or on "temporary assignment" with the government openly expressed their preference for the private sector. Others were rethinking their decisions to resign rather than "take leave" from NGOs when they entered government service. But the opposite also occurred, with some NGO staff wanting to participate in governmental programs or at least to secure closer collaboration in project design and implementation. Decisions such as these will continue to influence, and be influenced by, the political transition and especially the stability of the Aylwin coalition. The flow of NGO staff to and from government positions could be seen as a form of cross-fertilization beneficial to both; however, it could also mean instability of leadership and operations for the NGOs.

INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

As safe harbors for professionals, technicians, and politicians, and as nuclei of opposition to the Pinochet administration, Chilean NGOs rarely concentrated on internal organiza-

tion, personnel systems, accounting, or routine professional development. Evaluation that might have questioned individual or group performance yielded to justifying the next funding proposal to donor agencies. These agencies, in turn, recognizing the urgency of the Chilean situation and the "political" or "humanitarian" nature of support for many NGOs, were frequently less demanding in program review than they might have been in other circumstances.

Despite many successful and partially successful programs, the lack of systematic evaluation sometimes led NGOs to overlap projects, duplicate rather than correct errors, and fail to share information among themselves and even within their own organizations. Solidarity in opposing the Pinochet government permitted issues of internal organization and performance to be de-emphasized or ignored.

However, the increase in NGOs between 1983 and 1990 and the elimination of the need for clandestine or disguised political work challenged these old practices. The new programs of the Aylwin administration also made the tests of relevance, competence, efficacy, and cost-effectiveness more necessary and appropriate. NGOs now had to justify their activities more clearly in relation to project objectives and contributions to the tasks of development—education, health care, technical services, increased production, community organization, and many other everyday challenges of socioeconomic improvement.

These changes required that NGOs define their role precisely and perhaps further specialize their functions, streamline their operations, and devise formal systems of personnel administration and accounting. They also necessitated more-critical program evaluation.

A good example of response to this challenge comes from a small NGO called FORMA, which provides technical assistance to artisan *talleres*



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(workshops) in some of Santiago's *poblaciones* (poor neighborhoods). Shortly after March 1990, this NGO began to experiment with a new evaluation system that involves several European donor agencies, clientele groups, and NGO personnel right from the start of program design, with periodic reviews to assess the extent to which goals are being met and to determine any necessary revisions. Whether this innovation will work, and whether other donor agencies will accept such responsibilities, remains to be seen. However, the general issue of internal reform and more-professional evaluation cannot be ignored.

Ironically, some NGOs must now also pay attention to labor relations, to the costs of adhering to safety, health, and labor codes, and to promotions, retentions, and layoffs. This has been made clear by lawsuits NGO personnel have brought against their former employers, including the Catholic Church and Church-supported NGOs.

Without the threat of the Pinochet administration, daily life in the NGOs comes to resemble other workplaces more closely, with most of the interpersonal, institutional, and extra-organizational problems of any formal organization. Democratization, thus, eliminates some of the glamour, risk, and spirit of solidarity from NGO life and now presents the challenge of finding an organizational role, style, and internal ambiance suited to a more democratic political order.

NGOs AND THEIR CLIENTELE

For the last 17 years, NGOs have served a diverse clientele, filling the vacuum created by a reduction of public programs and the suppression of political parties, traditional community organization, and union activity in poor urban neighborhoods and rural areas. NGOs also mediated between donor agencies and community groups that supposedly benefited



The democratization of national politics will also encourage the democratization of NGO-clientele relations. For example, these participants in a training session in Santiago sponsored by the group Cordillera are learning how to plan and carry out their own community development projects.

by social and economic programs. In this sense, the justification for NGO funding has often depended on the existence and activities of a variety of self-help organizations, small producer or consumer cooperatives, and other "base" or "membership" organizations.

Despite the need for more NGO services than were available, NGOs in the past "adopted" overlapping clientele, using the same organizations and projects to justify funding from different donor agencies. Members of these favored organizations recognized the technique, but took advantage of such funding strategies to en-

hance the meager resources available. Often overlooked prior to March 1990, this practice will be scrutinized in the future. At the least, NGO dependence on clients to justify funding requests will make some local organizations more demanding in their relationships with NGO staff.

Donor agencies and FOSIS will also more closely monitor and evaluate membership organization-NGO relations. Democratization of national politics will permit, indeed encourage, democratization of NGO-clientele relations. If NGOs do not respond to the challenge, they will put their funding, their prestige, and even their survival at risk.

Another challenge NGOs face is the need to modify the way they work with community groups. Educational and class differences between NGO staff and base organizations, for example, have often resulted in paternalism. The desperate economic conditions of the poor during most of the post-1973 years also frequently produced a spirit of charity, social-welfare administration, and "helping" among some NGO staff rather than a clear commitment to cultivating autonomous and energetic base organizations.

The tension between these two approaches survived the change of government in March 1990 and will likely continue for the foreseeable future. Although both are necessary and are not mutually exclusive, such differences in emphasis and approach have divided NGOs and significantly influenced NGO-clientele relations. To the extent that more-politicized and autonomous base organizations appear or reappear with democratization, NGOs will find themselves less able to orchestrate project planning and implementation and more likely to face direct demands from clientele to behave as service providers rather than as tutors. If NGO staff cannot make these changes, they will lose the reason for their existence. If they

do make the needed changes in style and methods and update their mix of technical and consulting services, they will become even more important in the process of grassroots development.

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG NGOs

From 1973 to 1990, NGOs paid little attention to building inter-institutional relationships. Often, even groups that worked in the same communities or on related projects, or that received funding from the same donor agencies remained relatively compartmentalized, divulging little information about their activities and funding sources to others. The Asociación de Organizaciones No Gubernamentales (ASONG), created in 1981, affiliated 35 NGOs ranging from the Red Cross to Missio, the Instituto de Educación Rural (IER), the Instituto de Promoción Agraria (INPROA), and to human rights organizations, such as Servicio Paz y Justicia. Most ASONG members were older and more traditional NGOs, but some worked in urban and rural grassroots development programs parallel to the post-1973 NGOs. ASONG's limited efforts to unite NGOs did not extend beyond its small membership nor induce broader collaboration among the hundreds of newer NGOs.

Despite some efforts to translate the NGOs' 1980s slogan, "let's talk to each other," into meaningful action, empathy among the majority of NGOs as opponents of the military government rarely translated into concrete cooperation or even informal contacts. Personal and organizational jealousies, competition for funds, old political rivalries, and different visions of the political transition to come complicated inter-NGO relations.

An important exception to this generalization was the effort in Region IX

(Temuco) to create a formal association of NGOs. Many NGOs in the Temuco region specialized in rural development and concerns of the Mapuche Indian communities. Encouraged by participants in the Taller de Cooperación al Desarrollo (established in 1985 to disseminate information on donor agencies and international cooperation) and supported by the Departamento de Acción Social del Obispado de Temuco of the Catholic Church, more than 20 NGOs created the Comisión Relacionadora de Organismos No Gubernamentales in 1988. The Comisión was to inventory the work carried out in the region, coordinate activities, serve as a liaison with donors, and prevent uncoordinated encroachment by larger NGOs from Santiago in the Temuco programs.

Although the new atmosphere introduced by the Aylwin administration exacerbated many of the conflicts among NGOs, it also inspired new efforts to coordinate NGO response

of institutional concern, such as financing prospects and the juridical status of NGOs.

In addition, some NGOs working in similar areas (such as health care, community services, technical assistance, marketing of artisan products, and environmental education) or with common clientele (such as urban neighborhoods, smallholder communities, and Indian farmers) made tentative plans to share information and cooperate in project planning and implementation. By March 1991, some of these plans had developed into effective working relationships.

To further advance in this direction, however, long-standing animosities must be overcome. While the inevitable (and useful) competition among NGOs inspires them to better serve clientele and design more-effective programs, the concomitant threat to their survival or scale of operations may at the same time hinder open collaboration among them. On the other hand, further specialization

litical contacts or commitments determine funding), will disappear or reduce operations. Others will prosper through collaboration with NGO counterparts; still others will "go it alone" and find niches for their programs. In all cases, however, they must pay more attention to relationships among themselves, from information sharing to joint programming and project implementation. The first year of the Aylwin administration has seen a number of efforts in this direction.

NGO-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS: NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Prior to the elections of December 1989, almost all the technical commissions of the Concertación proposed that NGOs be incorporated into government programs in health, education, agriculture, urban development, environmental education, technical assistance, and other grassroots efforts. A variety of potential methods for such incorporation surfaced: subsidized service delivery, traditional service contracts, consulting services, temporary government assignments for NGO personnel, government-funded research projects, and even adoption of NGO programs as national policies where such "scaling-up" was possible.

These alternatives posed several risks, including further politicizing NGO life, the "domestication" of NGOs as government contractors or "transmission belts" for government policies, the loss of autonomy, and, logically, an unwillingness to "bite the hand that feeds." They also provided great opportunities to benefit from the abundance of professionals in the NGOs, to generalize successful programs, and to enrich government policymaking with the lessons of firsthand NGO experiences.

In practice, different ministries and agencies within the ministries

While the inevitable competition among NGOs inspires them to better serve clientele and design more-effective programs, the concomitant threat to their survival may hinder open collaboration.

to government initiatives regarding FOSIS, NGO autonomy, and contractual relations between NGOs and government agencies. In October 1990, a meeting at Punta de Tralca organized by CIDE, the Oficina Coordinadora de Asistencia Campesina, the Comité de Defensa de los Derechos del Pueblo, the Comité Servicio Cuaquero, and the Programa de Acción Solidaria brought together numerous NGOs to discuss their relations with community groups, with one another, with the national government, and with municipal governments. They also considered matters

and the integration of NGO activity through informal agreements and formal joint projects could considerably enhance NGO contributions to Chilean development.

It is unlikely that either blissful cooperation or unrestricted compartmentalization will ever characterize inter-NGO relations. Rather, NGOs will adopt diverse strategies for inter-NGO relations, dependent in part on donor priorities and on government policies toward NGOs. The least efficient NGOs, or those least effective in securing financing (not necessarily the same thing, particularly when po-



Agricultural NGOs such as AGRARIA, which serves these small-scale farmers in Longavi, have formed consortia to contract services to government agencies. This would allow the public sector to offer rural programs without expanding its own bureaucracy.

adopted distinctive strategies, as did the NGOs, for establishing new NGO-government relations. With numerous NGO personnel now in government positions, personal and organizational affiliations determine some of the NGO-government relationships.

In other cases, NGOs took initiatives to form consortia of service providers to offer government agencies a "full service" purveyor. For example, among important NGOs working in agrarian development—such as IER, INPROA, AGRARIA, Grupo de Investigaciones Agrarias, Grupo de Estudios Agro-Regionales, and others—efforts to offer the Instituto de Desarrollo Agropecuario (INDAP) a number of services may prove a useful method to improve inter-NGO collaboration and allow the government to offer rural programs without excessively expanding the INDAP bureaucracy. The outcome is far from certain, however, because these NGOs have different organizational histories and styles, and because INDAP and other government agencies must accept, even support, indirect service delivery. This involves high risks for the government: If the programs prove inadequate, the government will be blamed for the NGOs' poor performance yet be unable to intervene directly; if the pro-

grams are successful, the NGOs will receive accolades while the "contracting agency"—that is, the government—reaps little political harvest.

Given the realities of electoral politics—whether in Chile, other parts of Latin America, the United States, or the rest of the world—being blamed for others' poor performance or failing to reap the political benefits of successful programs has limited appeal to politicians of any ideological persuasion. Whether such a complex array of government-NGO relations can be successfully established and institutionalized—with all Chileans focused upon elections in 1993—is an open question.

NGO-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS: MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Since March 1990, relations between NGOs and municipal governments have been even more puzzling than those between the NGOs and the new national administration. During the previous administration, municipal "reform" had eliminated all vestiges of elected local government and of democratic politics. Appointed mayors replaced elected *regidores* (councilors); local administration formed an integral part of the national administration, with expanded

responsibilities and budgets. The military government's policies of administrative decentralization thus paradoxically reinforced the centralist tradition of national politics.

NGOs were forced to work around local government and only rarely did collaboration or even mutual tolerance prevail. Nevertheless, expanded municipal government created vast potential for collaborative programs with NGOs, including municipal government authority to make direct grants and subsidies to nonprofit institutions that cooperated in municipal programs.

The Aylwin administration sent proposals for the democratization of local government to the congress shortly after taking office. During its first year, however, the government was unable to persuade the opposition to approve the proposed constitutional reforms—essentially for election of mayors and *regidores*.

Meanwhile, most NGOs hesitated to collaborate with the mayors appointed by the previous administration, concentrating instead on 15 large urban municipalities where the constitution permitted President Aylwin to designate the mayors. By June 1990, however, some NGOs recognized the need to extend the territorial scope of their activities and began to experiment elsewhere; mayors appointed by the outgoing administration gradually began to take advantage of NGO skills and resources to make local public programs more effective, perhaps looking ahead to elections in the next two years.

Almost 17 years of authoritarian rule could not easily be overcome, however, and such cooperation remained tentative, with mutual doubts about motivation and sustainability of projects. Despite these political constraints, the experience of NGOs and the scale of their programs fit municipal government needs much more closely than they did those of the national government. A "natural"

alliance of municipal government and NGOs could significantly improve local government performance and provide an ideal arena for further NGO experimentation and program development. Whether this alliance can be solidified before fundamental reform of local government, except in municipalities with particularly creative or flexible mayors, remains questionable. It is nevertheless a possibility that raises hopes for an enhanced role for local government and the potential contributions of NGOs to local and regional development.

NGOs AND FOREIGN DONOR AGENCIES

From 1973 to 1990, private and public European and North American donor agencies used NGOs as alternatives to providing direct assistance to the Chilean government. Even now, although anxious to establish direct relations with the Aylwin administration, donor agencies still value NGO contributions and capabilities. However, with resources limited, competition for funds has inevitably emerged between NGOs and govern-

made to encourage collaboration between NGOs and government agencies by channeling funds into projects that linked NGOs to preferred government programs.

During the first year of the Aylwin government, anxiety arose in the NGO community from tension between NGOs and government agencies and also from donor agency doubt as to the best way to revise their Chilean programs. NGOs sought clarification and reassurance from donors while simultaneously elaborating new projects to attract fresh external support. Some NGOs were immediately successful; others were forced to cut back operations and reduce overhead. Still others phased out their operations or closed their doors. In most cases, however, it was evident that March 1990 signaled a change in NGO-donor agency relations. As the Aylwin administration entered its second year, the eventual outcome of the quest for funding and the redefinition of donor-NGO relations could not be predicted for the majority of NGOs.

Donor-NGO relations were further complicated by world events. The ap-

Latin America and the Third World:

We agree that the poor economic conditions in much of Eastern Europe call for political and economic assistance... However, the funds necessary for Eastern and Central Europe should never come at the expense of the poor countries in the South[ern hemisphere]. Every dollar that is spent in Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, or Romania should be matched, at least, by the same amount for developing nations.

In practice, the resources available for development assistance will not meet the needs of Eastern Europe, Africa, and Latin America. As a better-off Latin American nation, Chile may be seen as a less-needy recipient of funds, especially under its new political conditions. This perception leaves Chilean NGOs vulnerable to cut-backs just when their efforts to solidify a role in the post-1990 society require continued external support. If donor agencies prove unwilling to support NGO consolidation in the transition to democracy the way they supported NGO opposition to the Pinochet government, many of the gains of the last decade could be lost.

POLITICS AND NGOs

Chilean NGOs were an undeniably political response to the policies of the military junta after September 11, 1973. So, too, are their fortunes linked in part to political changes in Chile after March 1990. If the historical dominance of political parties in Chilean life is restored, and if the party system again permeates society—from its sports clubs, student elections, women's organizations, and professional associations to its labor movement—NGOs will find it difficult to insulate themselves from partisan politics in their internal affairs or their programs. To some extent, the degree to which NGOs allow

The degree to which NGOs allow partisan politics to determine staffing, programming, and external relations will influence the outcome of the national redefinition of democracy and pluralism.

ment agencies, in particular the newly established FOSIS.

In some cases, donor agencies have decided to maintain their commitments to NGOs or to guarantee several years of post-1990 funding before changing priorities or funding patterns. In other cases, donors decided to reduce NGO funding and shift resources to directly assist the new government. Efforts also were

parent end of the Cold War and the new emphasis on Eastern Europe shifted the attention of many European and North American donor agencies (and governments) toward Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union. In April 1990, Annemarie Beaulink, president of an association of European development-oriented NGO donor agencies, noted the potential adverse impact of this shift on



Miguel Sayago

An instructor from the Programa de Economía del Trabajo (PET) (right) conducts a workshop in Santiago on small business development. Pressures to improve the living conditions of Chile's poor will tax government resources—and give NGOs such as PET an opportunity to consolidate their role in the country's socioeconomic and political development.

partisan politics to determine staffing, programming, and external relations will influence the outcome of the national redefinition of democracy and pluralism.

This challenge, defined in an article titled "Power Derives from Below" by Orlando Fals Borda, president of the Consejo de Educación de Adultos de América Latina, may be a key to the success of democratization in Chile and the rest of Latin America. Writing in August 1990 on the topic of "participatory democracy," Fals Borda referred to a theoretical distinction between participatory democracy and more "tutelary" or "restricted" democracy. This distinction, and a conscious effort to encourage gradual democratization of society from below, poses the fundamental challenge for Chilean NGOs:

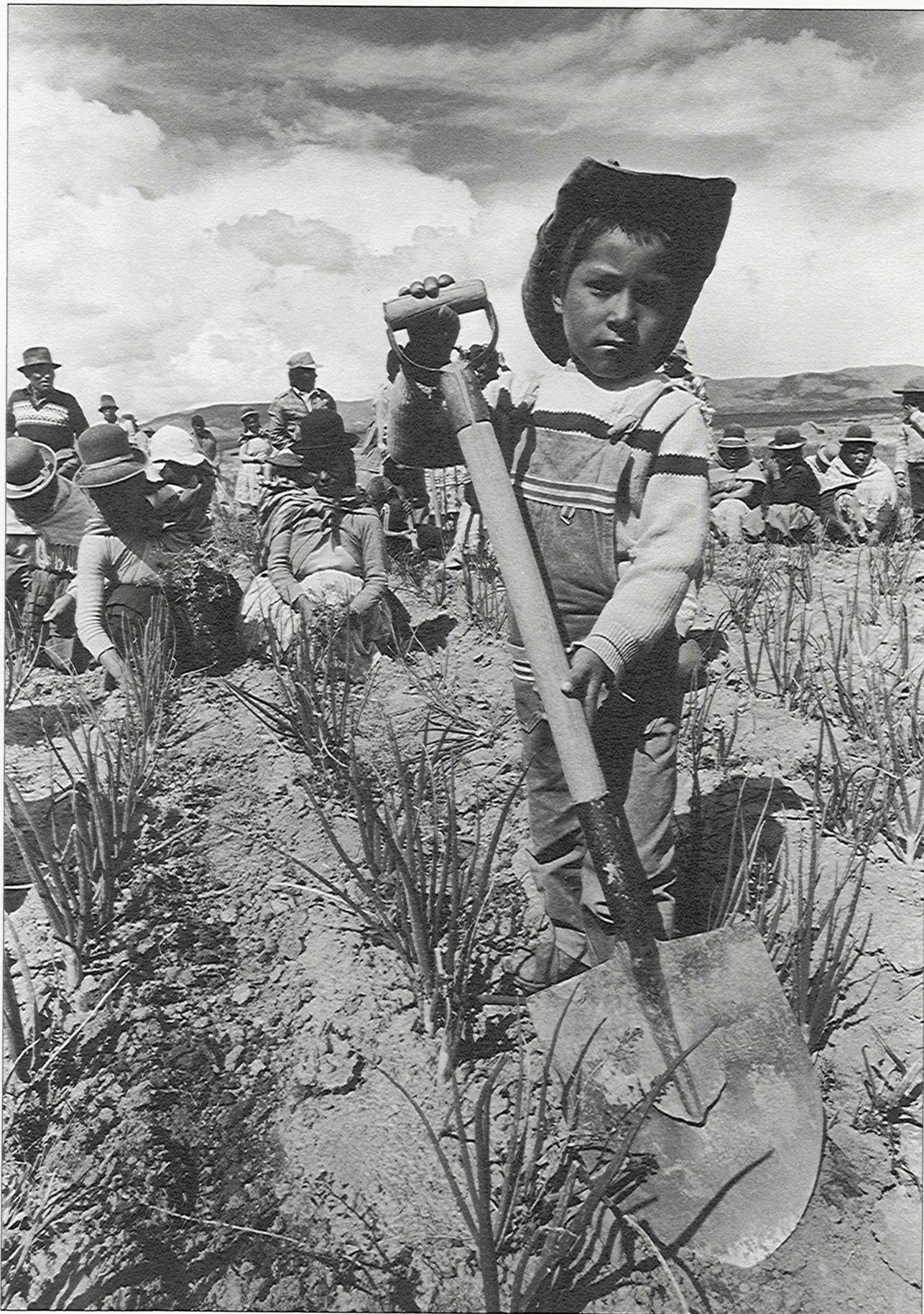
Participatory democracy results more from the action of social, regional, ecological, gender, professional, ethnic, cultural, etc., organizations, based on popular support, and not of elitist and verticalist political parties, or van-

guardist philosophies, as was common with the old sectarian left [in Latin America]. In this sense, [it is important] to build participatory democracy gradually and nonviolently . . . among base organizations, [rather than] wait to "take power" to impose it from above by force.

If Chile is to avoid the political polarization of the past, a balance must be struck between the need for effective political parties that present clear policy options, aggregate interests, and permit democratic political competition on the one hand, and the need for the autonomy of other social groups and movements, including NGOs, on the other. Democratization will not come easily. The legacies of the military regime, from the constitutional and legislative barriers to democratic government to the horrors of the human rights abuses, will frustrate President Aylwin and the leaders of the Concertación. Pressures to ameliorate the dismal conditions of the poorest sectors of society will seriously tax government resources.

These pressures present NGOs with an opportunity to consolidate their role in Chilean socioeconomic and political development. Many of them participated in ousting the military regime, in facilitating the creation of the political coalition that became the Concertación, and in creating the program of the Aylwin government. Now they face the challenges of the transition to democracy. Not all will succeed. There is cause for optimism, however, that some Chilean NGOs will meet the challenges and continue to provide leadership, innovative programs, and a dedication to democratic development that will allow them to play a significant role in building democracy from the grassroots. ♦

BRIAN LOVEMAN is a professor of political science and Latin American studies at San Diego State University. His most recent books include Chile: The Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism (Oxford University Press, 1988) and The Politics of Antipolitics: The Military in Latin America (University of Nebraska, 1989).



Mitchell Denburg

Sharecropping Agricultural Development

The Potential for GSO-Government Cooperation

An era of austerity is leading many grassroots support organizations (GSOs) and government agencies to ask how they can help each other work with small farmers.

Anthony Bebbington

In their attempts to assist peasant farmers left unattended by government agricultural programs, grassroots support organizations (GSOs) have developed new approaches to agricultural technology development and extension that make beneficiaries co-partners in the search for solutions. Although in less repressive situations some GSOs have collaborated with government agencies, hoping to persuade them to redirect public resources more equitably, most have not. Indeed, their projects were intended to highlight the shortcomings of public programs while strengthen-

ing the organizational capacity of the peasantry to pressure the state for services and for sociopolitical change.

Outside observers have long lauded the projects of these rural GSOs: for their efficiency in resource use, their attention to the social context of production, and their ability to stimulate grassroots participation and articulate the technological concerns and knowledge of peasant farmers. Oversimplifying, these claims typecast the GSO as an efficient hero and the state as a bureaucratic, heavy-handed villain.

Judging by current trends, these arguments have been persuasive. Governments and donors increasingly speak of key roles for GSOs, raising expectations that the 1990s might become the decade of "GSOs in public sector agricultural development programs." Cooperation could improve the effectiveness and the legitimacy of both parties, but unless it is carefully thought out, it could also exact a high price. By underestimating the diversity among GSOs and the complexity of their relationship with the state, it could undermine the very innovativeness it was intended to build on. Moreover, if the claims for GSOs have been overstated, then any policy based on them will expect too much and lead to disillusion, and another decade of disappointments.

As Argentinean economist and ru-

ral sociologist Oswaldo Barsky (1990) has noted, it is not accidental that heightened interest in GSOs comes at a time when the Latin American state is in fiscal crisis. Rural GSOs are being asked to participate in the privatization and rolling back of the state. The public sector Instituto Boliviano de Tecnología Agropecuaria (IBTA), for instance, is proposing that GSOs should do all future agricultural extension in the highlands. This is a difficult invitation to accept for GSOs that have concentrated on changing the state, not replacing it.

But it is also difficult to reject the offer out of hand. Many of these same GSOs have pushed for rural and national democratization, developing institutional and methodological innovations for agricultural development that could become building blocks for future public programs and policies. Now that democratization is occurring, many governments are less antagonistic to the goals and work of GSOs, and are potentially more open to their influence. Since governments are (to some degree) now being democratically elected while GSOs are not, it may be time for the latter to establish relationships with the state (without, of course, weakening their accountability to peasant organizations) and to press for the introduction of some of their innovations into government agricultural programs: in

Opposite: With democratization occurring in many Latin American countries, there is increased potential for cooperation between rural GSOs and government agencies in their efforts to assist small-scale farmers, such as these peasant families tending a community onion plot in highland Bolivia.

short, to "scale them up."

Many GSOs remain unsure of taking such a step. They are understandably concerned that the new democracies are far from stable, and that a return to more repressive government remains a real possibility. They also fear that collaboration with the state will taint them if programs are undermined by administrative red tape and political machinations.

To take advantage of this potential opportunity for improving agricultural services to peasant farmers, one must carefully consider prior relationships between agricultural GSOs and governments, as well as the relationships they could have. One also ought to analyze how GSOs are actually responding to invitations to join government agricultural development programs, and what peasant organizations think about this. Such are the concerns of a research project into GSO-public sector relations currently in progress in Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. This article presents some of the tentative, early findings from discussions with GSOs, public sector institutions, and donors in Bolivia, Chile, and Ecuador.

After discussing the strengths and weaknesses of agricultural programs offered by the public and GSO sectors

What the article does not consider in detail is the role that peasant organizations should play in influencing institutional change and resource allocation in the agricultural sector. This issue merits a separate discussion, and the following should be read in light of that.

PUBLIC SECTOR AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Several lessons have emerged from two decades of social and agronomic research aimed at improving the public sector's ability to generate and disseminate appropriate technologies to small farmers. Viable solutions must address the context of the whole farming system. This requires peasant farmers to be involved in every aspect of the agricultural research and extension process: the design of crop experiments, the selection of which alternative technologies to investigate, the evaluation of field trials, and the dissemination of results. This "farming systems" and "on-farm participatory research" literature argues that the downstream stages of technology research should be moved to peasants' fields, and that active decision

poses almost absolute."

Efforts have been made to address these problems by introducing "client-oriented research," research-extension "linkages," and participatory extension methods into government services, but they have encountered difficulties. Many of them are documented in two multi-country studies, including several Latin American cases, currently being undertaken by the International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR) in The Hague.

One overriding problem has been finance. On-farm research is expensive in equipment, time, and personnel. Consequently, as the ISNAR study notes, "activities that encourage farmer participation in the research process are often the first to be cut back in periods of austerity" (Biggs 1989,31). Chronic underfunding cuts not only fat but muscle, forcing trained staff to leave the public sector for better wages (often in GSOs) and depriving extension services of the gasoline and spare parts for vehicles needed to schedule timely meetings with farmers. It is important to stress that many field-level problems in the public sector stem from resource constraints and general disillusionment rather than dishonesty, laziness, or irresponsibility among field technicians.

Other obstacles are systemic and political. Organizational instability has severely hindered institutionalization of client-oriented research. Large farmer interests may obstruct the rechanneling of resources, and on-farm peasant-oriented research implies a costly commitment to a social group not all governments wish to support. Each of these situations leads to ever more severe financial constraints.

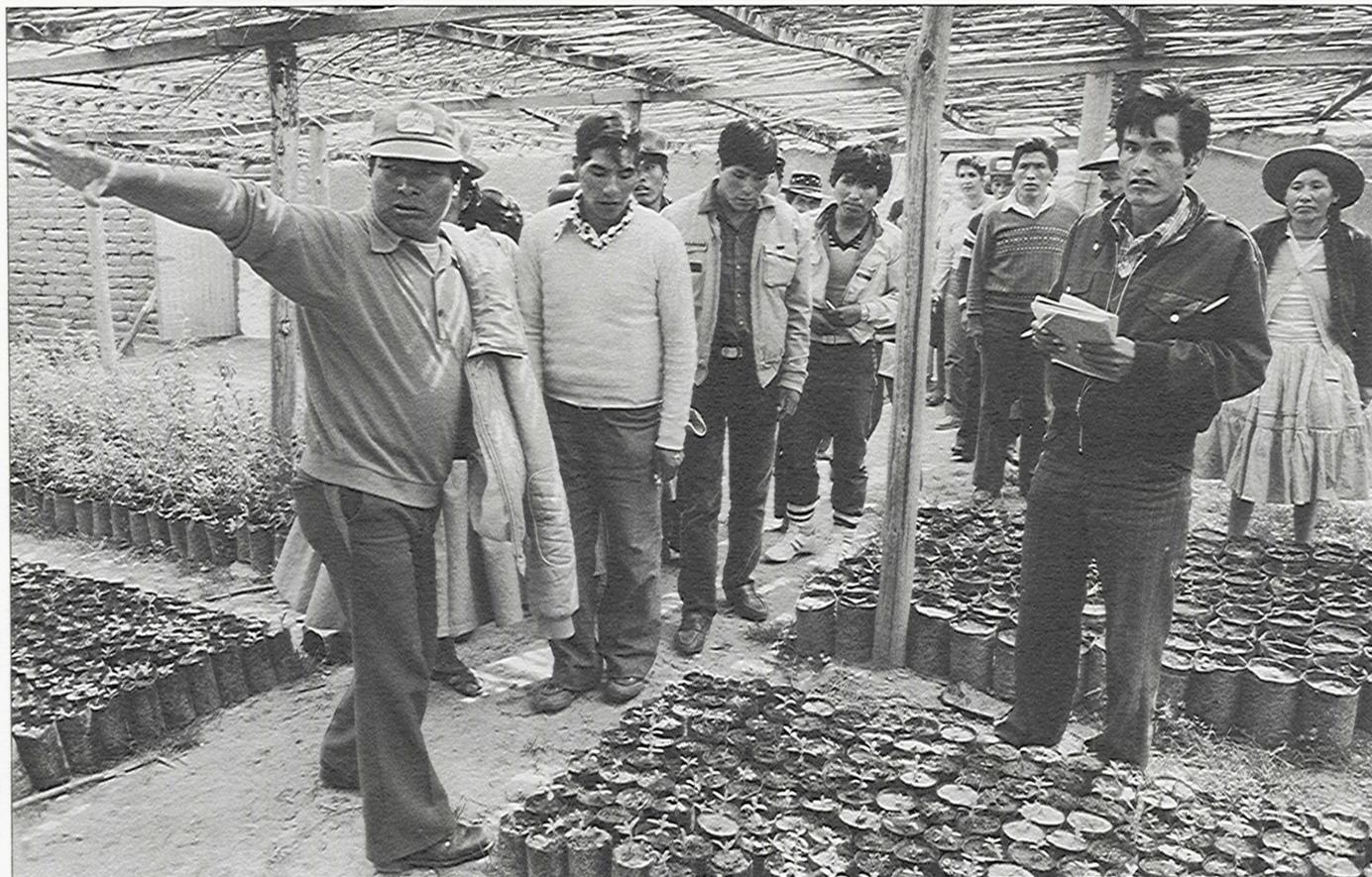
In Ecuador, for instance, the Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Agropecuarias (INIAP) initiated an on-farm research program in the late 1970s with some success. But these efforts were largely undone between 1984 and 1988 when the government emphasized agroexports and large farmers, offering, as the ISNAR study concluded, "little support . . . to rural development" (Soliz *et al.* 1989). Throughout, INIAP's emphasis on crop-specific research frustrated the extent to which the program's systems focus could influence basic lab-

Unfortunately, most governments compartmentalize research and extension activities into separate agencies so that innovations in the former have no assurance of being implemented in the latter.

operating in isolation, the article uses examples from Bolivia, Ecuador, and Chile to suggest that certain types of collaboration between the two sectors could increase the effectiveness of both. These cases show that successful collaboration depends on the trust and mutual respect generated by previous *informal* contacts, and on the understanding GSOs have of their relationships with representative rural social movements. After examining four types of relationships agricultural GSOs are developing with public agencies, the article concludes by looking at how donor policies might influence this new dialogue.

making by those farmers leads to successful extension of services.

Unfortunately, most governments compartmentalize research and extension activities into separate agencies so that innovations in the former have no assurance of being implemented in the latter. In Chile, for example, farming systems expert Julio Berdegue (1990, 5) notes that "the informational and operational gap between the Instituto de Desarrollo Agropecuario (INDAP) [the agency responsible for extension] and the Instituto de Investigaciones Agropecuarias (INIA) [the agricultural research institute] is for all practical pur-



Robin Bowman

An agronomist from the Centro Agropecuario del Desarrollo Altiplano (left), a government-run research station, conducts a workshop for representatives of Capacitación Integral de la Mujer, a GSO serving peasants in the highland department of Oruro, Bolivia. Such collaboration can increase the effectiveness of both organizations.

oratory and experiment station practices. This led one U.S. Agency for International Development official in Quito to conclude that since "public sector extension doesn't work, is not plugged into the research system, and doesn't facilitate information flows from farmer to researcher and vice versa, more emphasis must be placed on the private sector to carry out these functions."

Nonetheless, it is important to note that the public sector has relative strengths often lacked by GSOs. The centralization of research resources in the public sector allows it to do basic crop research that GSOs need but which they lack the laboratories, libraries, and experiment stations to perform. This centralization of resources could be located outside of public agricultural agencies in universities or in a private business or non-profit foundation, several of which already exist in Latin America.

There are, though, advantages to public control of basic research. The

first is efficiency. Much of the infrastructure already exists in the public sector and in universities, although it is being increasingly decapitalized. Secondly, since government operates on the macroeconomic level, it can coordinate agricultural technology within the context of national fiscal, currency, and price policies. Finally, making research a business would probably orient it away from poor farmers' needs. While the public sector is often shaped by the needs of rich farmers, there is greater likelihood of poor farmers influencing a public sector technology development agenda than a market oriented one.

GSO AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

As previously mentioned, an emerging body of literature documents how GSOs have combined on-farm, client-oriented research with systems

perspectives to improve the effectiveness of, and linkage between, research and extension services. For instance, since the mid-1980s, the Grupo de Investigaciones Agrarias has been giving other Chilean GSOs year-long courses on introducing these innovative concepts into their agricultural projects.

Compared to many government agencies, GSOs have shown a greater willingness to work in more complex and riskier environments. The literature also suggests that they have developed close relationships with peasant farmers. In a recent study, agricultural economist Thomas Carroll (1991) notes that "[a] number of GSOs . . . that rated high in participation have a code of ethics applicable to all members of the organization. Every staff member is expected to keep appointments with beneficiaries, making it a point to be on time." He adds: "When both the participatory ethic and technique have permeated an organization, it is observable

in almost all day-to-day activities." (See Research Report on page 31.)

A Swiss technical corporation official in Ecuador similarly commented that "many NGOs present the comparative advantages of knowing a region well and of working with seriousness and motivation. They have a work morality." Farmers recognize this mystique and willingness to work overtime, which stand in sharp contrast to the low morale of many government technicians and the bureaucratic inflexibilities that keep motivated extension agents from getting vehicles needed to work on weekends.

GSOs are also more willing to ask farmers what they think, to take their farming practices seriously, and consequently to orient technology adaptation and transfer towards real concerns. GSOs generally are far less likely than the public sector to push for higher-cost technologies, preferring instead technologies that minimize production risks, recuperate frequently degraded resource bases, and improve family nutrition levels.

In the best GSOs, much of the decision-making is shared with farmers, who as a result have a far more active role than in typical public sector projects. The extension methods of World Neighbors, an Oklahoma-based private voluntary organization,

But even the best GSOs suffer certain serious limitations.

GSOs are not immune from ideological biases, which can cause them to pursue inappropriate technologies. Efforts to promote "indigenous" Andean crops for which there is little market demand have had scant success in parts of highland Ecuador. A focus on acting locally in order to work alongside peasant farmers frequently impedes information flow among different organizations. When this is heightened by competition between GSOs, it can mean duplication of mistakes and lost opportunities to multiply successful innovations. The many problems with GSO-installed greenhouses and solar covers in the Bolivian altiplano suggest one example of how poor information exchange can lead to multiplication of faulty technologies.

This underlines a serious limitation of GSOs. They lack the resources, the time, and often the expertise to do the basic research needed for technology development. GSOs should not attempt on their own to fill the social and technological gaps in government programs but should push for reallocation of government resources. If the government has no agroecology or crop rotation program, GSOs may be able to develop methodologies on which a larger program could be

force in Latin America. The technological and methodological information (successful and otherwise) they generate should be available for all small farmers. Where the rural state is administered by an elected government, GSOs should work to consolidate that government by making it effective. If GSOs stand off to form an uncoordinated parallel state, they put democracy itself at risk and stand to lose all the benefits to be gained from a coherent public sector agricultural development program. In this vein, Ecuadorian and Bolivian public services have complained that GSOs are in danger of doing just that.

BUILDING LINKS BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND GSOs IN BOLIVIA, ECUADOR, AND CHILE

Of the three countries examined in this article, the relationship between GSOs and government is perhaps closest in Chile, where the presence of former GSO staff in the new administration of President Patricio Aylwin has helped build various bridges in agricultural research, extension, and rural development. In Ecuador, there have been times, such as the early 1980s and, potentially, in the period since 1988, when GSOs have felt greater affinity for the state and have had some contact with it. However, with changes in governments, these relationships have then suffered reversals. Links seem weakest in Bolivia, where the public sector has the least to offer GSOs.

The offsetting strengths and weaknesses of the two sectors point to several areas of potential complementarity that could magnify the capabilities of each party. Three such overlapping areas of cooperation are explored in the following discussion: representative administrative structures, functional specialization in agricultural research, and operational style.

Representative administrative structures: As previously stated, the proliferation of unelected, uncoordinated, and macropolicy-dependent GSOs will scatter scarce resources unless there is better coordination at the local level among GSOs and between their programs and national policies. If GSOs are to "scale up" their ideas, "pull" research in the direction of

GSOs should not attempt on their own to fill the gaps in government programs but should push for reallocation of government resources.

are now famous, but many other GSOs also use farmers as extension agents. In Ecuador, for instance, the Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progreso has recently trained a group of farmers to use agroecological techniques. The farmers are now planting demonstration plots on their own land for their neighbors to visit, observe, and discuss.

GSOs should not, however, be canonized. They are a mixed bunch, as they themselves realize. A subset of Bolivian GSOs has begun to label itself "Private Institutions of Social Development" in order to differentiate itself from others whom it considers to be ineffective and opportunist.

based, but they should never *be* that program.

A local orientation of GSOs also frustrates their ability to deal with regional problems—seed or irrigation systems, for instance. As GSOs proliferate, there is a danger that they will spawn a crazy quilt of uncoordinated micropolicies that fail to address such regional issues and thereby confuse the rural poor. A report prepared by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization in Bolivia (Peters and Méndez 1990) has counted some 385 GSOs in that country, of which 153 work in agriculture, with 49 in the department of La Paz alone.

GSOs have been a democratizing

poor farmers, and bring their expertise to bear on agricultural development policy, they must establish a working relationship with governments.

This relationship can be indirect, with GSOs devising and disseminating ideas about viable agricultural alternatives. Or it can be direct, through institutions comprised of government, GSO, and peasant farmer representatives. Such institutions could exist at a national level, playing a key role in coordinating local projects with national policy, and in collecting, systematizing, and disseminating GSO methodological and technological innovations. Initially, however, this relationship may be easier to establish through committees at the provincial or departmental level.

In Bolivia, Ecuador, and Chile, governments are moving in this direction. As has been noted, the highland work of IBTA in Bolivia is to be re-



Technicians from the Acción Rural Agrícola de Desarrollo, a GSO assisting peasants near Lake Titicaca, Bolivia, vaccinate sheep. Research shows that GSO staff typically develop closer relationships with farmers than do government extension agents.



photos by Miguel Sayago

structured (and resurrected) with a World Bank loan. IBTA will conduct agricultural research and provide technical assistance and training to GSOs and their field technicians who will in turn be responsible for extension. As plans stood in late 1990, there will be a GSO representative on the national technical directorate of IBTA, as well as GSO and farmer representation on regional councils.

In Ecuador, another multilateral loan to fund a new five-year national

rural development program, the Programa Nacional de Desarrollo Rural (PRONADER), also looks to GSOs as vehicles of implementation. Officials have stated that GSOs and farmer organizations will be represented on committees managing regionalized technology adaptation and transfer systems.

Under the Pinochet regime in Chile, agricultural technology transfer for peasant farmers was contracted out to private business, effectively ex-

cluding GSOs. The new Aylwin government, however, has opened the door, contracting technology transfer to GSOs. Similarly, a revamped agricultural research system will have GSO and farmers' organization representatives sitting on the local, regional, and national committees that will define on-farm research priorities through a network of, by 1993, 55 "Technology Adjustment and Transfer Centers."

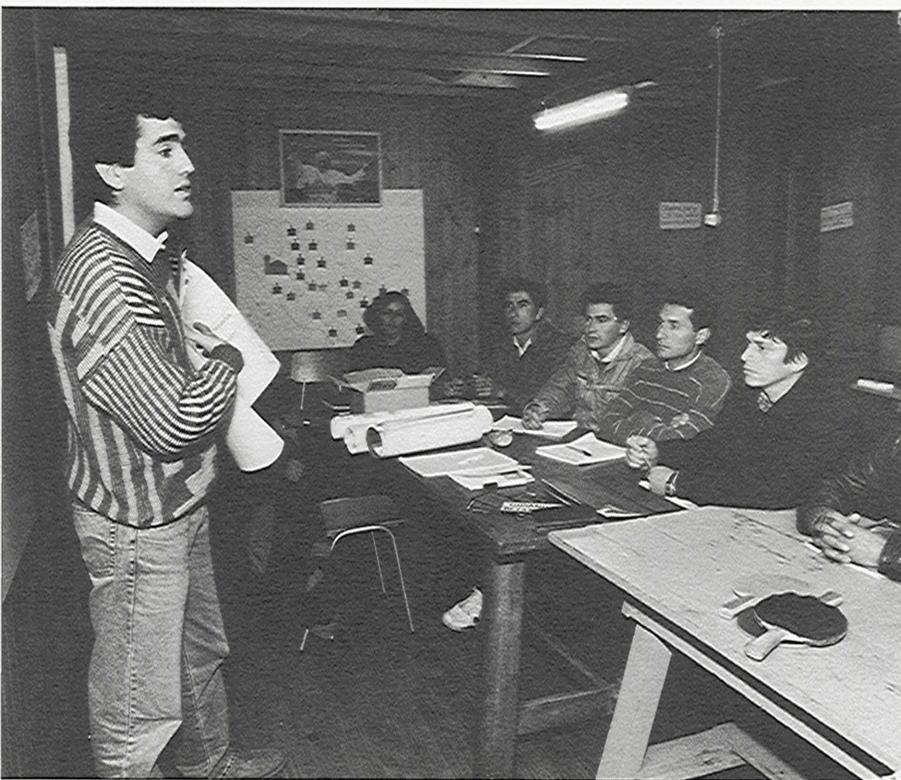
Unprecedented possibilities are opening in all three countries for GSO participation in setting research and extension priorities and monitoring activities. To the extent that regional committees guide not only public sector but also GSO technology work, the distinction between governmental and nongovernmental activities will begin to blur. To make sure these committees function in actuality and not just on paper, however, much must be done to overcome the governments' traditional lack of knowledge of GSOs.

Functional specialization in agricultural research: The strengths and weaknesses of both the public sector and GSOs suggest a second dimension of collaboration that is linked to the first. While the public sector may have a relative advantage in basic and experiment station research, it lacks the time and personnel for many adaptive and on-farm trials and for gaining knowledge of peasant needs. The transmission of local feedback to researchers through GSO representatives on regional and national research councils would help fill that gap.

There are already experiences of this. In Chile, the GSO AGRARIA has an experimental farm in the south of the country for adapting technologies to regional agroecologies. AGRARIA is aware of constraints on its research capacity and knowledge of trial design and evaluation techniques. Even under the Pinochet government, its staff in other parts of Chile had collaborated unofficially with sympathetic technicians in INIA. With the change of government and INIA's interest in commencing research in this region, these relations will be formalized through joint administration of a research station, drawing upon the regional expertise of AGRARIA and the professional expertise of INIA.

The case of the Centro de Investigación Agrícola Tropical (CIAT) is also significant. CIAT is the public sector research institute for the department of Santa Cruz in Bolivia. The planned restructuring of IBTA in the highlands is based largely on CIAT's experience working with GSOs to conduct on-farm trials, distribute seeds, and train GSO technicians and farmers. The collaboration has worked because CIAT's competence as a research institution was matched by its willingness to share technological expertise with GSOs that were uncertain about appropriate technologies for that region. Indeed, the CIAT experience suggests that research centers may be particularly helpful to GSOs in colonization areas, where knowledge of microecologies and appropriate technologies is often lacking among both extensionists and small farmers.

However, the public sector may not be equipped much longer to sustain this comparative advantage. While the current funding crisis has elicited



Miguel Sayago

An AGRARIA staff member leads a training session on animal husbandry in Longaví, Chile. Future plans call for AGRARIA to jointly administer a research station with INIA, the government research institute, drawing on the regional expertise of AGRARIA and the professional expertise of INIA.

governmental interest in GSOs, the same crisis is rapidly making the public sector a less attractive partner on technological grounds alone, political uncertainties aside. In Ecuador, and especially Bolivia, there are grave concerns about the low level of investment in public sector research facilities. IBTA lost many high quality staff members during the 1980s. According to one official, the main altiplano research station, Patacamaya, had only six researchers in late 1990 and published only ten copies of its annual research report in 1989-90, of which three were distributed. Consequently, many highland GSOs argue that they should be training IBTA technicians, not vice versa. In Ecuador, INIAP's funding fell from \$2.9 million in 1987 to \$1.3 million in 1988. Although 75 percent of its funds are spent on wages rather than research, INIAP, like IBTA, has also recently lost many quality staff members. In the three countries considered here, perhaps only INIA in Chile is sufficiently healthy to be an immediately attractive source of technological support for GSOs.

There are three prerequisites for beneficial functional specialization between GSOs and government. First, particularly in Ecuador and Bolivia, the quality of public sector services must be raised to attract GSOs. Second, task specialization must not centralize decision-making in the public sector. GSOs are unlikely to take more responsibility for the "downstream" stages of technology development and transfer if they have no voice in the "upstream" stages of decision-making that set agricultural policies and priorities.

Finally, collaboration will depend on the ability to agree on which technological alternatives are desirable. There is, in this regard, an ideological cleavage between agroecologists and modernizers. Purist agroecologists, opposed to the use of agrochemical technologies and frequently of modern crop varieties, are well represented among GSOs. Governments, meanwhile, tend to emphasize maximizing urban food supplies by increasing yields through intensive use of agrochemicals. For this reason, one senior, pro-GSO official in the Ec-

cuadorian government's Subsecretaria de Desarrollo Rural suggested that agricultural technology remains the most difficult area for GSO-state collaborations.

In Chile, agroecological GSOs are also lukewarm about closer contacts with the public sector; others, however, who see a role for modern technologies in peasant agriculture are working closely with the government's extension program. This debate over sustainable agriculture is just beginning. Nonetheless, it is a debate, and contact with GSOs increases the possibility that public agencies will accept some of the agroecologists' criteria.

Operational style: If their functional strength lies in field methods and relationships with the peasantry, GSOs should be responsible for much agricultural extension. It does not follow, however, that the state should abandon extension. Rather, its structure, methodology, and attitudes must be altered to provide a framework for scaling up innovative project ideas. There is great scope for GSOs to train government workers in extension methods and peasant farm reality. Those that prefer to maintain their operational independence, such as the Centro de Educación y Tecnología (CET) in Chile, can offer specialized courses. GSOs interested in closer collaboration with the state may use joint projects and staff exchanges to deepen the learning process, as the Central Ecuatoriana de Servicios Agrícolas (CESA) has attempted in Ecuador.

The question of operating style is important because the scope of collaboration rests as much on informal social contacts as on optimal functional specialization. These social relationships are influenced by the history of prior contacts. In Bolivia, for example, partisan conflicts between GSOs and an authoritarian government that attempted to set up a register to tax and regulate GSOs have increased suspicions about working with a revamped IBTA. In Ecuador, the atmosphere is less charged because GSOs were often formed in response to negligent, rather than repressive, government. Here too, however, difficulties between 1984 and 1988 remain fresh in many minds.

In such contexts, it is vitally important that formal collaborations be preceded and constantly supported by strong informal contacts. Almost all examples of successful collaboration between the two sectors have been based upon prior face-to-face meetings which convinced GSO staff that their peers in government agricultural agencies were also concerned for the rural poor and were honestly searching for innovative appropriate technologies. In Chile, the active dialogue between GSOs and government has been strengthened by friendships between people currently in GSOs and others who left to join the state sector. In Ecuador, CESA's collaborations with the public sector were strongest in the early 1980s when former staff members occupied positions in the ministry of agriculture and the agency responsible for rural development.

The ambitious changes proposed in IBTA and PRONADER in Bolivia and Ecuador do not yet rest on a solid foundation of prior trust and communication. It is too early to predict the outcome, but experience suggests it may be easier to begin building contacts locally rather than centrally. For instance, collaborations have often begun when a public sector technician acquires a new seed strain for a GSO, which leads the way for techni-

tor: This strategy exists among GSOs in all three countries. It rests on two assumptions. First, GSOs are unelected and lack a mandate for overall rural development, which is the responsibility of the state. Direct pressure on the state for policy reforms should come from representative rural social movements.

Second, because of their small size and limited capacity, GSOs should specialize in areas where there are gaps in the state's agricultural technology or policy research. The quality of the research and the innovativeness of the results will make follow-up actions by the state and social movements more likely.

By acting as independent innovators, GSOs can provide the intellectual yeast for stimulating new ideas in public agencies and representative organizations that are often bogged down by day-to-day activities. Potential areas of innovation include agroforestry and low-input agriculture (as provided by CET in Chile), and project administration.

• **The GSO as public sector contractee:** The second strategy builds on the first while initiating close contacts with the state. It argues that GSOs have pioneered methodologies in anticipation of a return to social democracy when they could then be

By acting as independent innovators, GSOs can provide the intellectual yeast for stimulating new ideas in public agencies that are often bogged down in day-to-day activities.

cians to participate in each other's field days or on-farm trials.

GSO STRATEGIES FOR COLLABORATION

Research to date indicates that the preceding areas of potential complementarity have helped shape four broad styles of GSO response to the new opportunities of working with the public sector. Each has its rationale; none is inherently better. Nor are they mutually exclusive. Debates over the most appropriate strategies or how to achieve the best mix are ongoing in most GSOs in the study.

• **The GSO as independent innova-**

scaled up. Now that an approximation of democratic government exists, GSOs should collaborate with it.

This approach is strongest in Chile, where GSOs are aligned with the new government and committed to its survival (see the article by Brian Loveman on page 8 of this issue). Several forms of collaboration in agricultural research and extension now exist there. These build largely on how GSOs understand their own strengths and weaknesses. Those who see their principal weakness as technology generation argue that GSOs should adapt technologies developed by the more specialized crop researchers in INIA. Several large ru-

ral GSOs have now contracted to adapt and disseminate INIA technologies in defined geographic zones. GSO staff participated in the design of these programs and are sharing in the planning of regional and on-farm agricultural research and extension, opening the door for GSOs to directly influence future national agricultural development policies.

Ecuadorian and Bolivian GSOs are less sanguine about their "fragile democracies." Even in Chile, some GSOs remain cautious. All insist on a degree of financial autonomy allowing them the freedom to develop alternative projects, programs, and policies.

• **The GSO as persuasive collaborator:** This strategy overtly attempts to change government agricultural services by diverting state research, extension, and credit resources to the peasantry and encouraging participatory methods of program planning and administration.

A large Ecuadorian GSO has relied greatly on the principle that the public sector is more likely to change in response to "bait" rather than pressure. It has invited the public sector to co-finance projects while retaining primary financial responsibility. The GSO uses this leverage to ensure local participation in project management and the planning of research and extension. In the process, state extensionists learn firsthand how to work closely with peasant farmers. The GSO hopes that these technicians will eventually pressure their own agency to adopt these methods, setting the stage for GSO-state collaboration at a higher level.

Opinions are divided in this Ecuadorian GSO about the wisdom of this strategy. Several staff see little progress beyond the local level. The possibility of influencing the state itself depends largely on the social and political disposition of the government in power. This GSO was most influential in the early 1980s when former members worked in the government. After a change in administrations in 1984, many of the GSO's achievements were overturned and its contacts ruptured.

• **The GSO as networker:** The final strategy comes from Bolivia, where specialized networks to coordinate agricultural activities are emerging as subsets of national GSO networks

that have existed for over a decade. In the 1980s, two such efforts were initiated. One of them, the Programa Campesino Alternativo de Desarrollo (PROCADE) of the network UNITAS, embraced, by late 1990, 12 GSOs working in 322 communities in 19 provinces across 5 highland departments, drawing on a field staff of around 45 agronomists and 45 *educadores*, or popular educators. To coordinate inter-GSO research of agrarian alternatives, PROCADE has devised a plan for 1989-91 that assigns research topics and channels funds among member GSOs. It also coordinates the internal distribution of results, publishing 58 documents in 1989 and 40 more through October 1990. This agenda has added coherence to disparate and proliferating GSO activity by setting basic research and policy norms across a wide region and improving inter-organizational information flows.

The research agenda revolves around four conceptual areas: agroecology, farming systems, food security, and self-management. Model technologies are regionally adapted, and span efforts to improve indigenous methods among semi-subsistence producers in Potosí and Oruro with experiments using modern inputs and mechanization among more-commercialized peasant growers in Tarija.

The program was started largely to compensate for the weakness of IBTA in highland peasant communities, but its goal is not to replace the government agency. PROCADE's technical coordinator still believes benefits can flow from a strong IBTA. Indeed, before setting its research agenda, PROCADE conducted an inventory of unpublished IBTA research. Although largely inappropriate from an agroecological or systems perspective, some of IBTA's pastures and livestock research was helpful. PROCADE's challenge is (i) to use its strength to reorient IBTA so its research can be tailored to peasant needs, and (ii) to serve as an interface between IBTA and member GSOs.

This concern to interface and negotiate also underlies the recent formation of departmental networks. The director of one of these suggested that the national network could negotiate macroagrarian policy, while the departmental structure coordinated lo-



Robert Torske

cal members' activities, sharing knowledge of what works and reducing waste from duplicated activities. The departmental forum would also allow member GSOs to devise an alternative agenda for regional agricultural development. The Bolivian state is looking to GSOs to implement agricultural programs, and a united front at the departmental level could promote government decentralization of agricultural policymaking and programming, making it easier for GSOs to steer public resources to meet local



needs. Confident that they are speaking in behalf of the regional peasantry, these GSOs clearly seek to influence state policy.

Networks now exist at the regional, national, and even continental levels, increasing the need for role specification to avoid conflicts and overlaps. One possible vehicle for achieving that is suggested by the Consorcio Latinoamericano sobre Agroecología y Desarrollo. This consortium has a multicountry mandate to (i) support agroecological GSOs with training,

information, and services; (ii) strengthen agroecological activities and training programs at a national level; and (iii) negotiate with donors about which agricultural models they should encourage in working with the public and GSO sectors of various Latin American countries.

THE ROLE OF DONORS

The drive for increased cooperation between GSOs and governments has come from shrinking public budgets

Farmers such as this one in Ecuador's Chota Valley will soon benefit from a rural development program funded by the World Bank. GSOs and farmer organizations will participate through committees managing technology adaptation and transfer.

and a return to democracy, but donors and lending agencies have not been passive. Some have clearly favored an *acercamiento*, or rapprochement, between GSOs and govern-

ments, suggesting that competition and communication between the two sectors can both reorient and jump-start inefficient public agricultural programs, while helping GSOs address their own technological constraints. One European donor official, who doubts GSOs can influence governments directly, thinks indirect influence is possible if donors support GSOs and hint to government agricultural services that their continued funding depends on ending inefficiencies. Such a strategy would strengthen efficient GSOs so that their programs become the standard for measuring what can and should be done.

Donors can also foster direct communication between the two sectors. One strategy would fund the same research and extension program in both sectors. GSOs would be encouraged to use public sector facilities to fill basic research gaps, thereby creating a new demand to help reorient public research services. Governments would be encouraged to work with GSOs to improve extension services and obtain feedback from

be given to ensure that the groundwork for collaboration is well laid, and that both the public sector and GSOs realize that working across institutional boundaries requires changes in methods, attitudes, and decision-making.

Although direct financing of small organizations is difficult for large donors, steps can still be taken to help strengthen GSOs. Using existing training programs for business people as a model, program funding for the professional upgrading of agricultural technicians would allow large donors to increase the skills base of the whole sector without having to administer countless small disbursements.

Funding could also be used to install information and data retrieval systems that would link the public and GSO sectors, providing access to national and international agricultural bibliographies and allowing timely recording and dissemination of local innovations. GSOs have begun participating in a similar U.N. project in Bolivia, to overcome the information vacuum many identify as a major obstacle to quality work. Such sys-

ods of participatory research, extension, and so forth. This capacity for innovation requires financial independence to encourage experimentation and institutional development. If small-scale farmers are to continue benefiting from such innovation, donors must protect GSOs against becoming mere service agencies for the state, or becoming solely dependent on funds channeled through the government. Moreover, while the winds of political change are blowing throughout Latin America, the storm is not yet over, and currently receptive governments may be replaced by less sympathetic ones. Relationships with the state will always be dynamic and changing, and the prospects for democracy and broad-based rural growth depend on a healthy and lively GSO sector to keep the dialogue and innovation buoyant. ♦

ANTHONY BEBBINGTON, who holds a Ph.D. from Clark University, is a geographer at the Centre of Latin American Studies at the University of Cambridge in Cambridge, England. An IAF doctoral fellow from 1987-89, he is currently one of the coordinators of a study examining NGOs working in agricultural development and their relationship with the public sector. Other project coordinators include a British research NGO, the Overseas Development Institute; a Bolivian public sector institution, the Centro de Investigación en Agricultura Tropical; and a Colombian NGO, the Centro Latinoamericano de Tecnología Rural.

The goal should be to knit both sectors together in planning coordinated research and extension programs that exploit each sector's strengths and offset its weaknesses.

farmers that could help generate more appropriate technology. Finally, donor-supported staff exchanges and new hirings would help ensure that cash-starved, government research services recruit professionals committed to assisting small farmers over the long term. The goal should be to knit both sectors together in planning coordinated research and extension programs that exploit each sector's strengths and offset its weaknesses.

By requiring state-GSO collaboration in agricultural programs, donors are exerting a powerful influence they ought to wield sensitively. If they and their public sector counterparts merely see these collaborations as technical fixes to economic problems or as part of "rolling back the state," the effort may well die on the vine. There is no quick fix. Attention must

terms would also arm small farmer advocates in the public sector with better information about GSO innovations. Smaller GSO donors could support these programs by earmarking funds to enter project experiences into the data base. It is important that donors encourage the write-up of failures by ensuring grantees that they will not suffer for making their failures public. This is vital because more resources are probably wasted in the duplication of failure than in the reinvention of success.

In pursuit of windfall benefits from collaboration, donors must not, however, be blind to the fact that even those GSOs most sympathetic to cooperation stress the importance of maintaining their independence. Donors are currently capitalizing on prior GSO innovativeness—in meth-

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Performance Review for NGOs

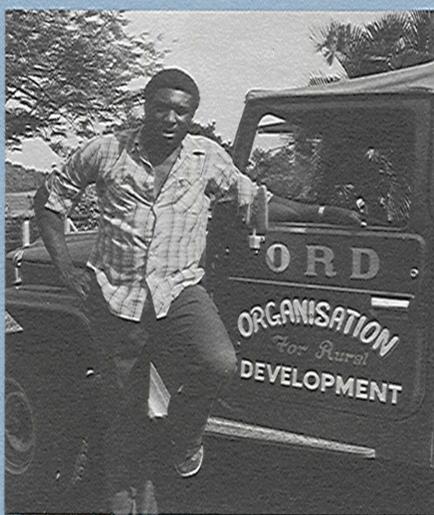
Flagship study shows that, over time, grassroots capacity can be built up, even in unpromising circumstances.

The Inter-American Foundation's just-completed, flagship study of nongovernmental organizations breaks down the universe of NGOs into meaningful functional types and then concentrates on one particular subset—grassroots support organizations, or GSOs. The study is still in press, but the new acronym has already entered the public domain. Foundation personnel familiar with the study have carried the term with them into the field and into development forums, introducing "GSO" into the standard development lexicon. The study, *Intermediary NGOs in Grassroots Development: Characteristics of Strong Performers* is based on an in-depth examination of 30 highly rated support organizations—all rural IAF grantees—in a dozen Latin American and Caribbean countries. It was written by Thomas F. Carroll, with the assistance of research associates Denise Humphreys and Helga Baitenmann.

THE ABCs OF NGOs

GSOs and their close relatives, MSOs, or membership support organizations, form a subgroup of NGOs distinguishable by their purpose, primary activity, and level of operation. They have an overall developmental purpose, be it economic or social; they work directly with grassroots groups or individuals; they are private but not profit-making; and they operate on a regional or national level better than an international level.

According to Carroll's definition, "A GSO is a developmental civic entity that provides services for and channels resources to local groups of disadvantaged rural or urban households and individuals," providing a "link between the beneficiaries and



Mitchell Denburg

Staff member Olson Mandeville of the Organisation for Rural Development in St. Vincent, one of the GSOs analyzed in the recent study by Thomas Carroll.

the often remote levels of government, donor, and financial institutions." MSOs, like GSOs, serve and support local groups, but groups supported by MSOs belong to them as members. MSOs represent their members and are accountable to them. The prototypical MSO is a federation of co-ops. Both GSOs and MSOs operate on the next level above primary grassroots organizations, those small base groups of individuals or households involved in a joint development activity.

GSOs are sometimes labeled "outsiders" because they are managed frequently by middle-class professionals belonging to a different social stratum than the beneficiaries they serve. Conversely, Carroll notes that MSOs are termed "insiders" because they are normally "extensions of the base groups themselves . . . [and] their

leaders come from and represent the same social classes."

MSOs and GSOs make up a large proportion of the organizations supported by the IAF. Between 1972 and 1986, nearly half of all Foundation grants were awarded to these "intermediaries." Judging by the great number of such organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean and elsewhere, other donors are also channeling significant proportions of their support to intermediaries. (*A Guide to NGO Directories*, recently published by the Foundation, identified some 11,000 NGOs in the region, of which perhaps one-third are developmental intermediaries—and this is believed to be just the tip of the iceberg.)

How can one sort out this great mushrooming of groups at the interstice of state and market? What can they do that neither government nor business seems able to do? And how can donors help them do it better? The Carroll study was commissioned to help the Foundation find answers to these questions.

THE CRUX OF THE MATTER

Carroll's self-described experience "as a hybrid, straddling the scholarly world and the world of the practitioner," qualified him to direct this study. He has spent the better part of his career as an agricultural economist with multilateral development assistance organizations, including the Inter-American Development Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. He worked with various farmer organizations before the term NGO had even been coined. As an academic, Carroll has served as adjunct professor of economics at George Washing-



Marcelo Montecino

Participants in a program sponsored by the Centro de Educación y Tecnología (CET) dig raised beds for an urban garden in Santiago, Chile. Carroll found that CET attempts to reduce beneficiary dependence on outside materials and maximize use of local resources.

ton University since 1970 and has taught at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, the University of California, and the Universidad de Chile.

The "hybrid" quality of Carroll's career is reflected in this study, which

combines careful scholarly analysis of 30 GSOs and MSOs with specific recommendations for the donors that fund them. It begins with an overview of the types of NGOs, a definition of the terms "GSO" and "MSO," and an explanation of the criteria

used by the research team to evaluate performance. This material sets the stage for the analytical heart of the study: five chapters devoted to detailed examination of performance in various dimensions, including service delivery, poverty reach, participation, group capacity-building, and wider impact. The study concludes with a synthesis of the findings and a key chapter in which Carroll shifts from scholarly analyst to practitioner to offer recommendations about how international donor agencies, including the IAF, might support GSOs more effectively. Case studies of the 15 organizations visited in Costa Rica, Chile, and Peru are also included.

A study so extensive in scope and so rich in concrete field experience resists summarization. Accordingly, this research report will focus on the recommendations, particularly those related to what Carroll calls the "crux of the matter," or group capacity-building.

The most valuable trait of GSOs and MSOs—particularly GSOs—is their ability to engage in group capacity-building, which Carroll defines as the process of strengthening a grassroots group so it can act *in its own behalf on its own*. That is, local people are inspired to overcome their powerlessness and isolation by mobilizing their resources to organize cooperative self-help efforts. As its capacity increases, the group learns to manage its own resources, make legitimate demands on the public sector, and deal effectively with the outside world.

THE PARADOX OF SERVICE DELIVERY

Carroll notes, as a paradox, that many GSOs and MSOs spend most of their time and energy delivering services to their beneficiaries while stubbornly maintaining that service delivery is not their "real" mission. Most GSOs

and MSOs espouse bold goals concerning participation, autonomy, group capacity, and the like, but on a day-to-day basis are almost totally absorbed with providing services to base groups. Many organizations see service delivery as a means to an end, a way to gain the confidence of the poor in order to involve them in activities with broader social aims. In reality, says Carroll, often there is no time for the broader goals, and means are converted into ends. Providing effective services in the face of the uncertainties inherent in development work is challenge enough.

This tendency for service delivery to overwhelm wider social goals extends to donors as well as GSOs, according to Carroll. Using the IAF as an example, Carroll makes the case that donors—perhaps inadvertently—do too little to help GSOs achieve their deeper purpose. Although two surveys of IAF represen-

tatives rated capacity-building as a prime Foundation goal, Carroll found many funding practices for grants actually disrupt or inhibit the development of capacity-building potential among MSOs and GSOs. For example, GSO and MSO proposals are often judged by their ability to show concrete project results, and grants are rarely awarded for the kinds of long-term institutional support that might help GSOs and MSOs to develop their nascent group capacity-building skills.

All donor organizations are under pressure to report “success” and “results” to their contributors or supporters—in the case of the IAF this means Capitol Hill. This makes donors eager for new projects and approaches that give the appearance, at least, of progress. In Carroll’s view, donors have not worked hard enough at developing criteria for funding and evaluating capacity-building activi-

ties or at articulating clearly their importance.

SEEKING CAPACITY-BUILDING WHERE IT IS TO BE FOUND

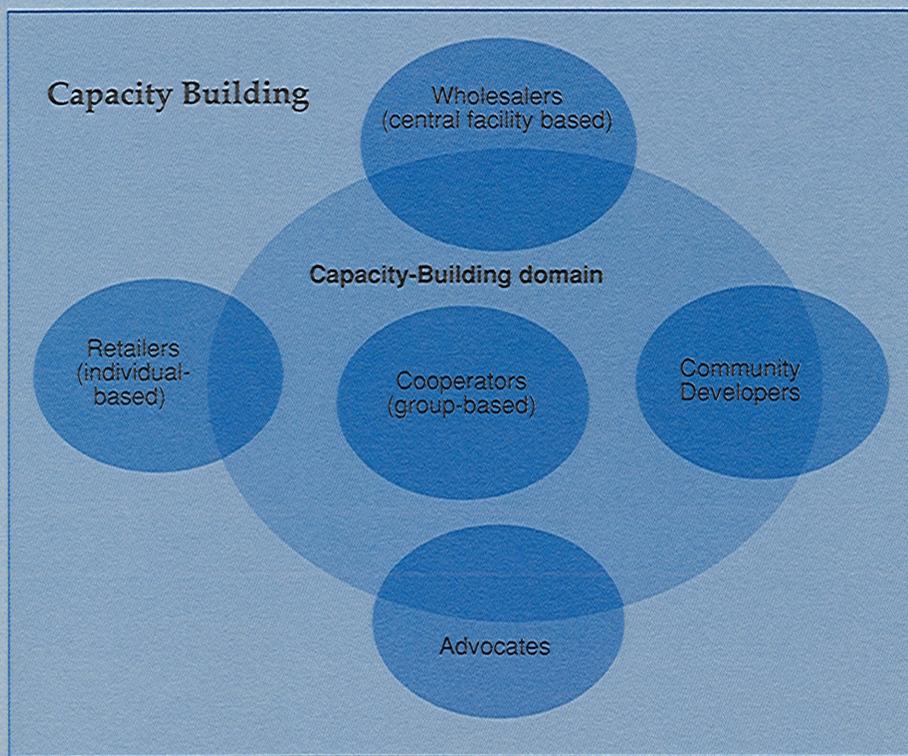
Carroll first recommends that donors should begin to *close the gap between rhetoric and action* by acknowledging that capacity-building is a priority. Specifically this means looking at the GSOs and MSOs in a given country in terms of their capacity-building potential. Carroll’s findings provide insights on how to assess this potential.

Since very little is known about how capacity is built, the tendency is for donors to believe that the process is automatic. They often assume that a nonpaternalistic style of assistance offered to a project initiated by a local group will, in itself, increase the capacity of the recipients. Not necessarily, says Carroll. Those GSOs and MSOs that succeed in capacity-building work hard at it and devise programs specially geared to strengthening group cohesion and leadership and management skills.

The diagram at left, taken from the study, shows why some GSOs or MSOs have a high potential for capacity-building and others do not. Capacity-building cannot be promoted by supporting GSOs or MSOs that operate mostly outside the large circle, the “capacity-building domain.”

For the purposes of the diagram, Carroll divides GSOs and MSOs into five types: retailers, wholesalers, cooperators, advocates, and community developers. Each type is placed in or outside the capacity-building circle, depending on whether the organizations support individual or group processes.

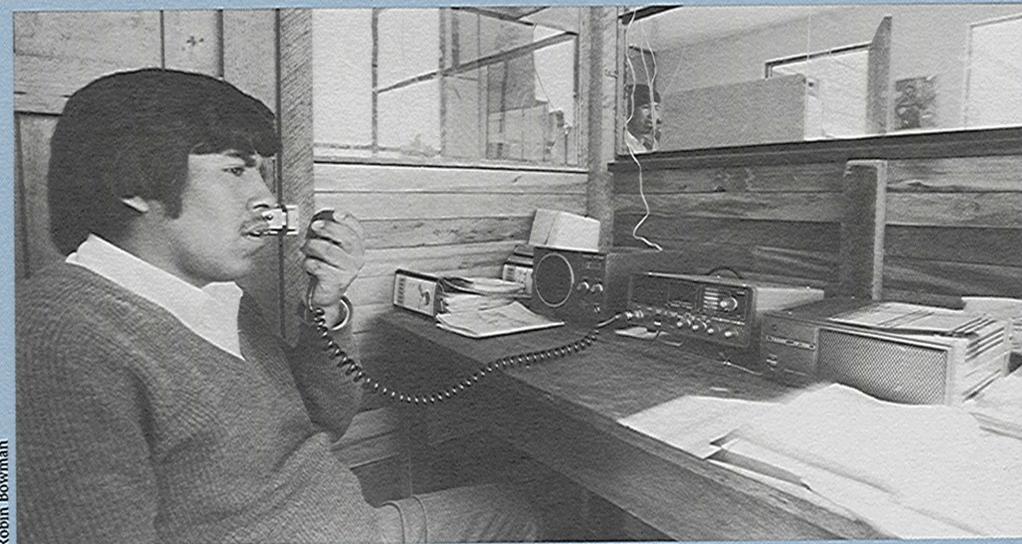
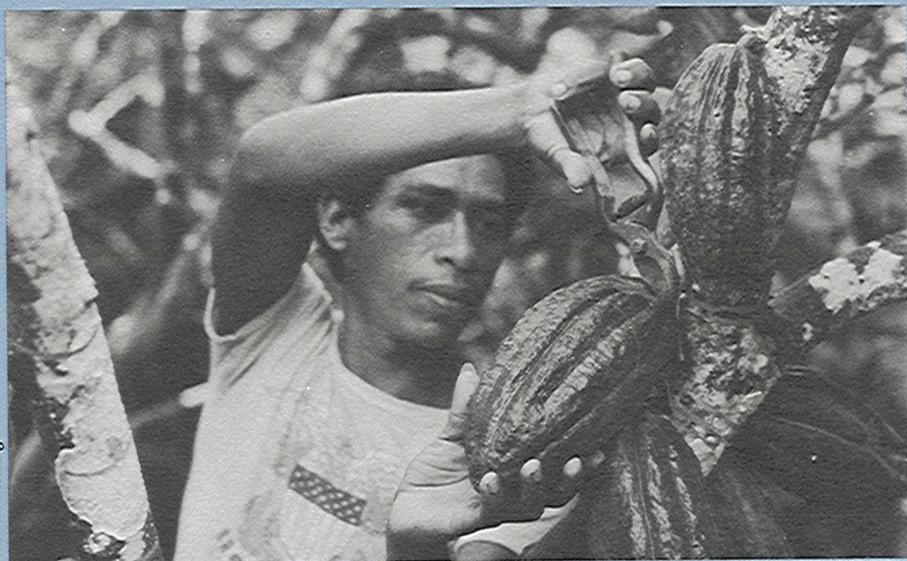
Retailers provide individualized services to households or to enterprises, including farms. A typical example would be a business-oriented



national development foundation such as the Fundación Mexicana de Desarrollo Rural and the Fundación Costarricense de Desarrollo; both provide agricultural production credit and technical assistance. Retailers lie almost completely outside the circle, as they tend to work with individual entrepreneurs, rather than with base groups.

Wholesalers, which provide services

Wilhelm Kenning



Robin Bowman

From the harvesting to the packaging of cacao, El Ceibo involves member co-ops in the decision-making process. Top to bottom: A co-op member picks cacao in the remote Alto Beni region of Bolivia; staff member at El Ceibo headquarters in La Paz uses short wave radio to arrange transport of cacao to the capital city; workers in the La Paz factory package processed cacao.

through a centralized marketing or processing facility, straddle the capacity-building domain. These generally are MSOs. Capacity is built at the association or federation level, rather than at the base. The Unión Regional de Cooperativas de la Provincia de Cartago in Costa Rica and the Central Regional de Cooperativas Agropecuarias e Industriales, El Ceibo, in Bolivia—which offer processing, marketing, and, in the case of El Ceibo, credit services to local cooperatives—are two examples. However, El Ceibo is one of the wholesalers that did foster participation by stressing membership voice in decision-making as the federation grew in size and complexity.

In contrast, all support organiza-

Robin Bowman



tions in the *cooperator* category favor group-based services and thus fall completely within the capacity-building domain. According to Carroll, because the activities of cooperators primarily involve joint action, their potential for high performance in this dimension is greater than that of other GSOs or MSOs. Examples are the Centro de Autoformación para Promotores Sociales (CAPS) in Guatemala and the Asociación de los Nuevos Alquimistas (ANAI) in Costa Rica. CAPS provides credit to small community groups as the culmination of intensive awareness training, group formation, and the accomplishment of tasks that are not dependent on external inputs; ANAI works with grassroots groups of small cultivators and has had a substantial impact on both technology adoption and community organization through communal tree nurseries.

GSOs that take up the causes of marginal or disadvantaged groups—*advocates*, according to Carroll's terminology—are half in and half out of the capacity-building circle. Some of their activities are carried out collectively; others are not. For example, the work of lawyers hired by the Fundación para las Comunidades Colombianas to represent Indian peoples or petition the government to improve their status does not by itself promote beneficiary participation, unless, in the process, the communities are encouraged and trained to gradually assume these roles themselves.

The final group comprises *community developers*, GSOs or MSOs that specialize in popular education and mobilization. In spite of their name, they do not automatically fall within the capacity-building domain. It depends upon how their education and mobilization activities are accomplished. For example, the Departamento de Educación Popular Permanente de Chimborazo in Ecuador

uses culturally meaningful training materials like street theater performed in native Quechua to build self-awareness and confidence to tackle simple collective efforts.

An understanding of the capacity-building potential of different types of GSOs and MSOs should be—but often is not—reflected in donor records. Usually, Carroll points out, each grant is treated by a donor as a separate project and is classified by country and sector. "There is no recognition of the functional difference between a marketing project carried out by a group of farm women at a local market, for example, and a co-op federation or a facilitator-type GSO."

After recognizing the potential for capacity-building, both GSOs and donors should monitor and document their efforts to fulfill that potential, targeting research by joint teams of scholars and practitioners to learn how the process can be deepened and

outsiders should provide funds and technical assistance without interfering in the internal affairs of the groups they serve. Says Carroll, such institutional convictions may outlive their usefulness or fail to respond to changing circumstances, taking on the aura of myths. Most donor organizations are susceptible to this phenomenon.

Carroll's study provides ample evidence for the wisdom of supporting GSOs. In fact, in Carroll's opinion, more wholehearted, steady funding would ensure their institutional stability and promote their potential as capacity-builders. In practice, this means that support should be long-term, not limited to individual projects, and tailored to the organizational evolution of the GSO.

Carroll objects strongly to the tendency to view GSOs as temporary, arguing that "even if local and associated membership groups emerge as a result of GSO nurturing, the GSO

The pro-active role that outsider GSOs might play vis-à-vis the poor is seen with concern by those who understandably fear paternalism and domination.

replicated. Carroll's study documents several successful ventures.

THE MYTH OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Because of its grassroots development ethos, the IAF has at times been somewhat hesitant to support intermediary organizations, especially nonmembership ones. The pro-active role that "outsider" GSOs might play vis-à-vis the poor is seen with concern by those who understandably fear paternalism and domination. It contradicts the IAF conviction that

need not 'fade away.'" It can reinforce and build on what it has accomplished or move on to a new set of clients. GSOs also can help mediate disputes and rivalries among MSOs, whose functions are considered permanent. The need is great for what GSOs have to offer.

Long-term financing of especially creative GSOs calls for a new type of relationship between GSOs and donors. Carroll writes: "[This] generally means not only a shift from projects to programs and toward institutional core support, but also a continuous dialogue about objectives and strate-

gies, rather than simply a specification of outputs and targets. Some donors are not equipped to carry on analytical or monitoring functions of this intensity."

Sustained support would enable GSOs to concentrate on meeting their "real" objectives instead of moving from project to project; they would become more secure and, Carroll adds, more likely to reach poorer beneficiaries. When funding depends on short-term project results, grantees tend to cater to "more accessible clients who already have some capacity and hence can assure a quicker pay off."

Carroll recognizes the donor fear of creating dependency by long-term or repeated short-term financing of individual GSOs, but believes that the opposite danger is more likely to occur. Just when a GSO begins to show significant results, it may lose an important donor. He suggests that one way of providing funds without "coddling" GSO grantees is for donors to

GSOs become fully self-sufficient. Carroll questions whether this is realistic or even fair. While it is reasonable to expect GSOs to develop revenue sources when possible (eventually including service fees by their clients), their overriding goal should be to serve the poor and be accountable to them, not to expect them to become self-sustaining, business-like entities. In addition, an effort to become self-sufficient may further distract GSOs from their roles as capacity-builders. Many institutions in both developed and developing countries are highly subsidized and totally unapologetic about it.

ATTACKING MAINSTREAM POVERTY

With tongue in cheek, and parodying an oft-quoted 1978 *International Development Review/Forum* article by Csanad Toth and James T. Cotter entitled "Learning from Failures," Carroll explains that in struggling

them. To substantially affect poverty, according to Carroll, donors must support GSOs and MSOs that are attacking mainstream problems among the poor in ways that might be extended or generalized.

In striving for maximum impact, donors should consider the macro-environment in which GSOs operate. Two main forces are at work currently: One is the financial crisis in developing countries that has forced many governments to cut back on social services and push responsibility for such services onto GSOs; the other is a wave of redemocratization.

These phenomena, if viewed positively, open new opportunities for both donors and GSOs. Carroll writes: "This study argues that GSOs should help their clients to 'graduate,' acquire sustainable management capabilities, and stimulate or pressure the state for improved public services . . . [however, if the state has abandoned its responsibility for public services, there is] no place to graduate to, no public service to sensitize or make more accountable."

Donors could help improve this situation by negotiating with governments to find innovative ways for them to support GSO activities beyond the usual counterpart contributions. Similarly, donors could encourage the GSOs they support "to seek collaborative arrangements with sympathetic government entities." Such advice may seem radical to GSOs which have lived through periods of political repression that ruled out collaboration with the government.

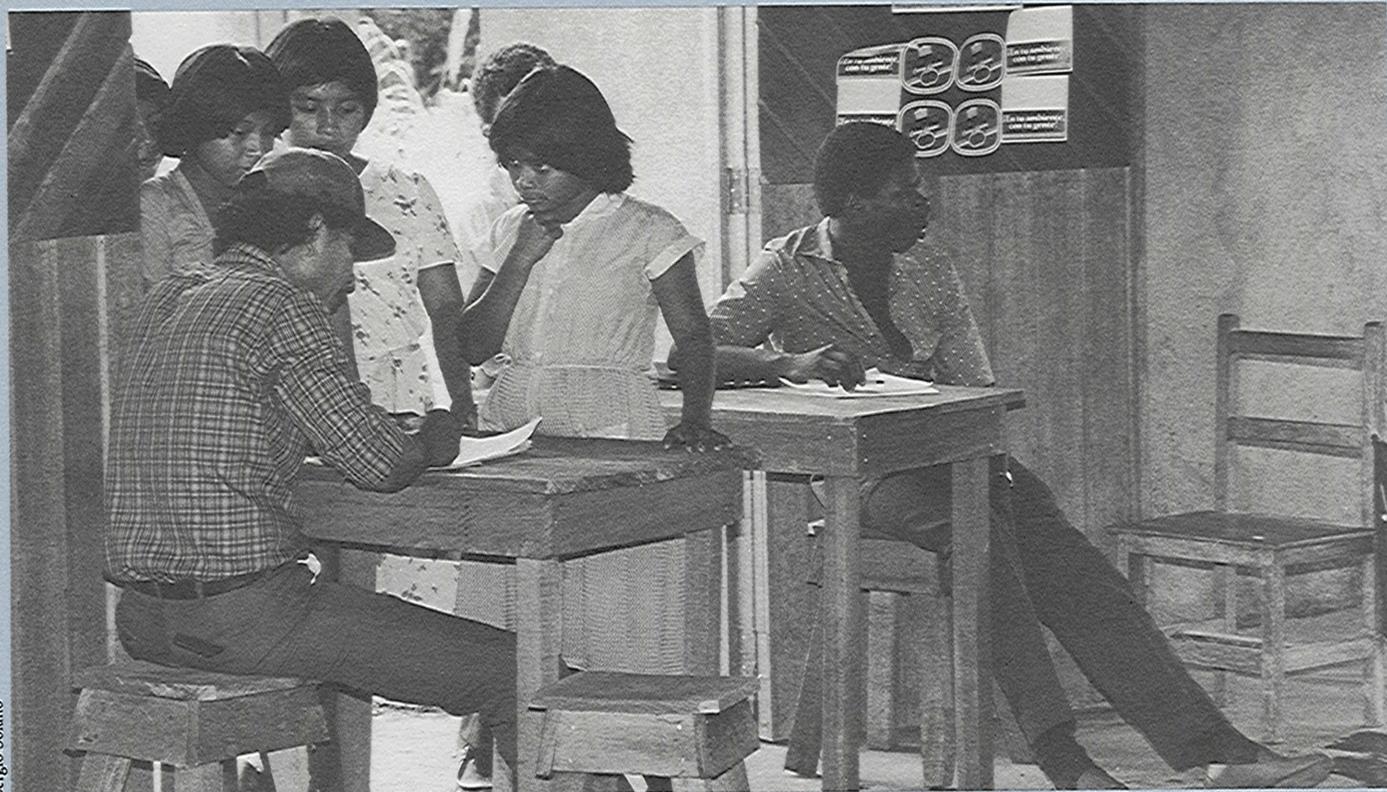
NGO-government collaboration is certainly more likely in a climate of redemocratization. A public/private alliance could solve some of the perennial problems faced by GSOs and MSOs: an inability to affect their macroeconomic context and the lack of public sector support in technology, credit, infrastructure, and other public

While it is reasonable to expect GSOs to develop revenue sources when possible, their overriding goal should be to serve the poor and be accountable to them.

establish endowment funds such as the one established by the Fundación para la Educación Superior (FES) in Colombia, which provides operating capital for GSOs. FES, a nonprofit lending institution, uses its net income for social service projects. Another way is through donor and GSO consortia that could reduce the fragmentation and competition now prevailing among both NGOs and donor organizations.

The opposite of dependency is self-sufficiency, and many donors insist that their ultimate objective is to help

against the "tarmac syndrome" (the tendency of foreign experts and agencies to stick to the vicinity of the paved roads and ignore the bulk of the needy in the hinterlands), the IAF and other donors committed to grassroots development may have driven themselves too far in the other direction. Says Carroll, they may "seek out special, isolated poverty pockets" or "obscure tribes or special constituencies." While these groups are certainly worthy of support, no ripple effect on policy or other projects can be obtained through working with



Sergio Solano

The Carroll study found that ANAI, which sponsored this training program in Talamanca, Costa Rica, has had a substantial impact on technology adoption and community organization through its communal tree nurseries.

goods. Providing this support and an auspicious policy and regulatory environment is the core of state responsibility.

Carroll writes: "If the newly democratized countries can begin to fulfill their public functions by providing a sectoral and institutional framework favorable to peasants and to rural areas, and if popular and grassroots organizations continue to legitimate and sustain poverty-oriented rural development efforts, the stage may be set for a fruitful partnership between public and private initiatives." If donors really want to make the impact they say they do, they should "nudge both GSOs and their governments toward such a symbiotic program mode."

INVESTING IN ORGANIZATIONAL CAPITAL

The case studies show that, over time, grassroots capacity can be built up, even in rather unpromising circumstances. The research team found that

in several instances GSOs, along with other outside forces, have played a crucial role in nurturing the capacity-building process. If the grassroots beneficiaries of these GSOs are now able to help themselves and obtain the information and resources they need to improve their lives and future, it is largely because donors have already invested in the "organizational capital" of the GSOs involved. Carroll calls for an increase in such investments.

For Carroll, the most important message of the study is that too many donors have "concentrated on the short-term, proximate benefits and have given only lip service to capacity-building." GSOs and MSOs have great potential as capacity-builders, but up to now little of it has been realized. Until donors restructure their assistance to nurture this nascent talent, it will continue to be more potential than reality.

Intermediary NGOs in Grassroots Development: Characteristics of Strong

Performers will be published in January 1992. To obtain a copy, write to Kumarian Press, Inc., 630 Oakwood Avenue, Suite 119, West Hartford, Connecticut 06110-1505. Other recent Foundation-sponsored research on NGOs includes the working paper *Evaluating the Impact of Grassroots Development Funding* by Jeffrey M. Avina (1991); the forthcoming examination of NGOs in Colombia, *Toward a More Civil Society*, a Country Focus study by Foundation Representative Marion Ritchey-Vance; and *A Guide to NGO Directories* (1990). All three are available free of charge from the IAF. Readers' comments are welcomed. ♦

—Diane B. Bendahmane

Bendahmane, an editor and writer specializing in development assistance, edits IAF working papers and monographs and serves on the editorial board of Grassroots Development. Currently she divides her time between the IAF and the Water and Sanitation for Health Project.

How Can Donors Best Support NGO Consortia?

Jim O'Brien

In many areas of the world, the past decade has seen a flowering of consortia among nongovernmental organizations. And it seems safe to say that these consortia, or variations thereof, will play an increasingly significant role in the promotion, representation, strengthening, and direction of the NGO sector during the 1990s. Although differing in configuration—as coordinating councils, umbrella organizations, or federations within a given sector or, perhaps, within a region—these groups often share a common goal: to unite their members in order to attain together what separately they could not. Such networks offer a rich opportunity for donors to help indigenous NGOs mobilize and strengthen themselves both as separate institutions and as confederations.

As they consider where best to focus their support, donors should look closely at the functions of a consortium. Ideally, a consortium would perform several, the principal one being to engage and unify NGOs whose activities or structure make them suitable allies. A viable consortium helps its members develop a sense of mutual trust and a shared view of what they want to accomplish together. (The process of establishing trust and common vision among members, however, can be a long one.)

Concurrently, a consortium should gather and synthesize information on member needs and critical challenges, and constructively address those concerns through specifically tailored training programs or other types of technical assistance. It should periodically

convene its members, and perhaps other NGOs, to look at sectoral planning, national policy concerns, and financial considerations. It should help its members develop potential working partnerships with international NGOs and technical agencies.

At times, a consortium may even serve as a grantmaking and grant management mechanism for particular donor funds. (To some observers this grantmaking function appears questionable, not only because of possible cronyism but also because of the disproportionate time, staff, and budget required to manage the funds responsibly. Surprisingly, the experience thus far in Latin America and Africa indicates no incongruity in the dual functions of rendering services and making grants.)

Finally, the consortium should serve as a resource center on NGO institutions, programs, and projects, compiling the relevant documentation that will help the consortium and individual NGOs relate more effectively with government and donors.

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In a 1983 study commissioned by Private Agencies Collaborating Together (PACT), Douglas Hellinger of the Development Group for Alternative Policies made two recommendations to donors seeking guidance on funding consortia. The first was to be sure that the consortium has a well-defined philosophy and objectives that move beyond narrow concerns and that also reflect donor mandates and values. Indeed, meet-

ing in New York in 1984, African, Asian, and Latin American consortia representatives identified member agreement over basic goals, purposes, and values as the most important determinant of consortium viability.

Hellinger's second recommendation was that donors provide support in a responsive and low-profile way that enhances rather than subverts the consortium's development process. Again echoing his suggestion, the representatives to the New York meeting unanimously named inappropriate funding, such as making larger grants than a group is ready to handle, as the greatest threat to consortium viability.

From 1985 onward, multilateral agencies—especially the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)—began to acknowledge the contribution of NGOs to national development. From the outset, both institutions moved in the direction of NGO consortia to gather information and to obtain entrée into the NGO community. Noteworthy has been recent UNDP support for the institutional strengthening of eight African consortia. The World Bank continues to gather data but for a variety of reasons, thus far few resources have been channeled through consortia or NGOs in general.

While these multilaterals were highlighting their newfound interest in NGOs and especially NGO consortia as entry points, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) was more pragmatically committing significant resources to NGO umbrella programs. In most cases, local NGO consortia would be the main centerpiece of these programs.

Staff reductions at USAID and the increasing perception that NGOs were vital contributors to development inclined USAID to support umbrella groups. Realizing that not

every NGO consortium or quasi umbrella group was fully mature, USAID contracted international NGOs to assist groups in five Latin American and Caribbean countries with the functions of grantmaking, grant management, technical assistance, monitoring, and evaluation. Similar experiences occurred in USAID missions throughout Africa and Asia during the 1980s.

While they are far from perfect, many of these consortia are now virtually independent and have negotiated with USAID as well as other international donors the directions they wish to pursue. They have also established well-grounded financial strategies for self-sustainment. Much of this experience is documented in PACT's 1989 publication *Trends in PVO Partnership: The Umbrella Project Experience in Central America*. The basic conclusion is: "If private voluntary organizations (PVOs or NGOs) are grouped together and strengthened via umbrella organizations, they can increase the contribution of private voluntary initiative to national development far beyond expectations to date."

THE DONORS' ROLE

How, then, can donors best support NGO consortia? First of all, bearing in mind that consortia and other NGO-support entities represent a vital link in the chain of assistance, donors should look at newly developing consortia as well as those already established. Donors need to be alert to sectoral consortia, federations, or umbrella groups that are rapidly arising, for example, in health, small-scale enterprise, or the environment; in larger countries, donors must also be aware of regional consortia as potential candidates for assistance.

As these consortia identify their interests, needs, and service gaps, donors will be able to judge which

groups to support and then work with each to determine the forms that support will take.

Both new and established consortia may profit from short-term technical assistance: Information systems, for example, are often an area of need. Without some degree of communications capability, a consortium cannot be sure that its goals and approach are understood by its membership.

Technical assistance may be helpful, also, with a consortium's government relations: Many consortia (as well as individual NGOs) retain a myopic view either of an adversarial government or of an irrelevant one. All NGOs could benefit from assistance that enabled their consortia to represent them well and to negotiate effectively with governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies, and other donors. Shrinking resources and governments' and donors' increasing recognition of the NGO role in development may together open up new possibilities for collaboration and resource-sharing. Donors could help consortia explore some of these new opportunities.

In their dialogue with donors and government, however, consortia may sometimes find it hard to guard

tium into an end in itself. Donors can help consortia avoid these pitfalls by keeping their assistance appropriate and timely.

A vital donor contribution would be in the area of strategic planning—helping a consortium clarify goals, operational style, and range of activities. Without such planning, the consortium may be unable to establish or sustain its vision, causing it to founder upon institutional rivalries and the issues of cronyism, cliques, and tribalism. Preserving a democratic and participatory organization remains a day-to-day task, one that is rarely accomplished easily and occasionally requires external assistance. The same holds true for the issue of women in development: Significant representation and genuine participation by women in key decisions and resource allocation should be a *sine qua non* of any consortium in the 1990s.

Another planning goal would be to help an organization create financial strategies to sustain itself beyond normal donor fund-raising and membership contributions. Donors might work with consortia to enhance revenues through fees for services, workshops, and publications. Care must always be taken, how-

Representatives to the New York meeting unanimously named inappropriate funding as the greatest threat to consortium viability.

against subtle donor attempts to promote their own interests or their own assessments of need. If consortia, strapped for resources, adapt themselves to survival strategies, they may redirect their original purposes and activities and thus compromise their missions. They may also lose their focus on member organizations and, thereby, on the poor, turning survival of the consor-

ever, to avoid encouraging the consortium to concentrate more on its own survival than on the needs of its membership.

One of the most helpful donor inputs may be support for a well-planned and well-executed training program involving the entire organization. At its most effective, such training is organized not as a series of isolated events but rather as a se-

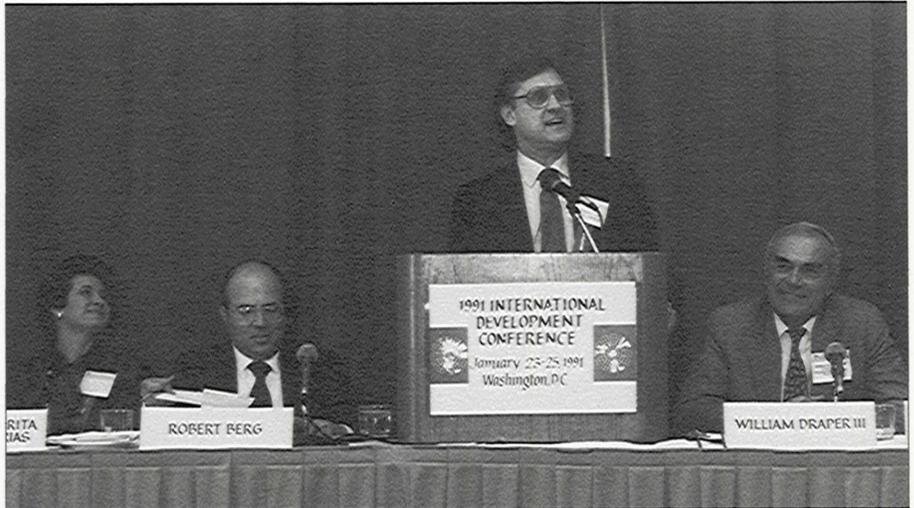
Development Notes

quence of related stages building upon each other. Initially, training in specific skills might take place, perhaps conducted by external consultants. Exchange visits with other consortia can be useful mechanisms to reinforce the training and to generate regional collaboration. Eventually, however, the consortium may want to develop its own training capability, and donors could support training-of-trainer activities for staff to learn participatory methodologies and, if necessary, sectoral skills.

These are but a few of the ways that donors can help consortia worldwide. The real significance here lies in the concept: An NGO consortium or umbrella group, if properly constituted, represents the sum of its membership and offers donors yet another channel through which to support NGO development. Assistance to the larger institution will also aid its separate parts; thus, the technical services and training programs a donor delivers to an NGO consortium will enrich its members, as well, and ultimately their grassroots constituencies. It is my hope that donors will increasingly recognize and act upon these fertile opportunities to support institutional development and networking among indigenous NGOs. ♦

JIM O'BRIEN is the U.S. Peace Corps regional director of recruitment for the tri-state area of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Prior to this, he worked for nine years as program director for Private Agencies Collaborating Together (PACT). From 1972-81, he was IAF regional director for the Southern Cone.

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



Stephen Lewis, former Canadian ambassador to the United Nations, speaks at the opening plenary session of the 1991 International Development Conference.

INTERDEPENDENCE IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER

Approximately 1,600 representatives from nearly as many development organizations gathered in Washington, D.C., from January 23-25, 1991, for the 40th annual International Development Conference (IDC) co-sponsored by the Society for International Development (SID) USA and the SID Washington, D.C., Chapter to discuss the theme "From Cold War to Cooperation: Dynamics of a New World Order."

Discussions about a new world order emphasized the interdependence of states, focusing on issues that must be resolved across political boundaries, including the environment, AIDS, and the international drug trade. This interdependence underlines the importance of local action, which has potential for rippling beyond national borders. To "think globally, act locally" suggests that changes in the world order must begin with changes at home. This theme dominated numerous seminars, including "Americans Thinking Globally and Acting Lo-

cally" and "International Aspects of a Thousand Points of Light."

One indication of the increased awareness of the interdependence of states is the growing development education movement in the United States. This was reflected by the presence of U.S. private voluntary organizations (PVOs) not usually associated with international development issues such as the Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America, the YWCA, and the Thousand Points of Light Foundation.

Since development education is being targeted primarily at the secondary school rather than the college level, special sessions were held for high school participants. Other meetings and seminars for development education practitioners were held throughout the conference.

This emphasis on development education reflects its increased standing among development professionals. David Korten of the People Centered Development Forum, for instance, opened his presentation "New Thinking on Development and Interdependence" by stating that two years ago he would have

shunned discussion of development education because it seemed "peripheral to development." Today, however, he sees it as essential for rethinking old assumptions in order to create a new vision of development.

Several seminars emphasized that the learning in this process is a two-way street. Industrialized countries have much to learn from the developing world as well as much to teach. Acknowledging that the interdependence of states is essential for building an equitable New World Order, and informing the younger generation—in the East, West, North, and South—will be key to bringing it about.

Copies of the 1991 IDC Conference Report that covers numerous presentations, examining many in depth, can be obtained for a fee by contacting the IDC at 1401 New York Avenue, N.W., Suite 1100, Washington, D.C. 20005. (phone: 202-638-3111)

—Sharon L. Hershey

WIRED FOR DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

Development education is entering the electronic age. In June of 1991, the National Clearinghouse on Development Education (NCoDE) launched its new computer network—DevEdNet. The new data base opens a telescopic window on the development world, putting NCoDE's vast stockpile of information literally at the fingertips of development educators, teachers, professors, grassroots activists, and anyone interested in learning more about international development and other global issues.

The formation of the Clearinghouse, in 1988, was the vital first step needed to assemble and organize the chaos of development-related materials being produced by a range of organizations. The new electronic

data base makes those materials much more accessible, reducing unnecessary duplication, allowing educators to stay abreast of the latest innovations, and facilitating the cooperation needed to make development education more effective and timely. DevEdNet provides direct on-line access to annotated entries of print and nonprint instructional materials, with expansion through bulletin board conferencing as a possibility. DevEdNet also fea-



Judy Schwartzstein

Staff members (left to right) Abby Barasch, Joelle Danant, and Manuel García at NCoDE headquarters in New York City.

tures a calendar of events. On-line members—including libraries and publishers—will be able to add their resources and events to DevEdNet. Design of the data base has been tailored to meet a variety of educator needs such as resources for a particular audience, geographic area, or topic, or a specific type of material. Development educators, who have often been criticized for posing provocative but rhetorical questions, can now target their inquiries more precisely and usefully.

Those questions increasingly can be grounded in actual field experience since the network hopes to become a conduit for materials produced by Southern NGOs. Previous development education materials have often been produced in the North, far from the scene of the ac-

tion. Materials produced in the South will broaden and deepen the view of the Third World beyond disasters such as famine, drought, earthquakes, floods, or war. Instead of seeing the people of the Third World as paralyzed victims of cyclical crises, direct reports will document the social energy at work in villages and towns, showing how aid can be channeled to help people take the initiative to improve their lives by forming valuable organizations, such as neighborhood associations, women's health groups, or marketing networks.

Broader application of this information will provide educators with a wider, more accurate view of what works in development, enabling them to explore issues with their students in ways that build strength and hope. The encyclopedia of material available through NCoDE allows educators access to the debates on development issues, broadening the forum for discussion and stimulating critical thinking. The organization of DevEdNet brings the promise of development education one step closer to reality.

—Carol Ann Craig

SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE OF SMALL FARMERS

Countless efforts to revise or replace poor agricultural practices, many of them generations old, have been resounding failures. Agricultural panaceas—technologies perfected at state-of-the-art research stations—have failed miserably when they reach small farmers' fields.

One explanation for these failures is that the voice of farmers is seldom heard by policymakers. Agricultural extensionists, agronomists, and researchers usually prescribe generic remedies—standardized technology "packages" intended to serve all farmers, regardless of actual need or utility. Rarely are farmers asked to

identify their most pressing problems during the growing season and what information, inputs, or technologies are needed to overcome them. If they were, policymakers would learn that extension must be tailored to different levels of farming knowledge, income, landholding, business sense, and education.

The Communication for Technology Transfer in Agriculture (CTTA) Project is showing how small farmers can become effective partners in their own development. The forthcoming *CTTA Field Manual: Practical Methods for Communicating with Farmers* explains how the process works in a variety of local contexts.

Begun in 1986, the project was implemented at four pilot sites in Peru, Honduras, Indonesia, and Jordan. It had three objectives: to apply innovative communication techniques to agricultural development; to develop, test, and demonstrate multimedia and mass media strategies that extend the reach and lower the cost of agricultural technology transfer; and to institutionalize the approach on a sustainable basis.

According to José Ignacio Mata, program field director in Peru, "The key to CTTA has been its insistence on identifying and bringing together all the major players—farmers, extension agents, and researchers—to develop a consensus about possible solutions for improving smallholder output and yields." To deepen the dialogue, CTTA has used focus groups, random interviews in marketplaces, and other behavioral research methods.

For example, in the Huaráz region of Peru, high in the northern Andes, Mata and CTTA's social science specialist, Martha Cruz de Yanes, noticed that farmer priorities did not always match researcher priorities. So, they brought members of each group together to discuss differences and negotiate common understandings. CTTA staff and local research-



José Ignacio Mata

CTTA specialists in highland Peru record a radio program that will be broadcast the next day.

ers developed a strategy of field-testing with actual farmers to ensure that new technologies were adaptable to local conditions and to help make them more user friendly.

For example, standard plant spacing seemed essential for better and more even growth of the maize crop. Specialists recommended that farmers abandon traditional methods of planting. Instead of women following behind plows to drop a continuous stream of seeds into the furrows, they suggested that farmers dig pockets for three seeds at a time, and space the holes at 60-centimeter intervals along the sides of furrows spaced 80 centimeters apart. They recommended using a pick ax or spade rather than the indigenous hoe for this task, inadvertently shifting the job to men strong enough to wield the implement repeatedly at high altitudes.

Field-testing demonstrated that the new practices were inappropriate to the environment and that remov-

ing women from a traditional role linked to the earth's fertility was counterproductive. Researchers, therefore, devised an alternative approach: a simple spacing bar. Farmer feedback then helped to refine its recommended use.

To simplify spacing, 60 centimeters was translated into "three hands" and 80 centimeters into "four hands." Farmers were urged to cut light staffs three-hands long for women to use as measures between seed drops and to place a four-hands-long stick behind the plow to properly separate furrows. This approach preserved women's traditional role in agriculture, incurred no additional labor or monetary cost, and improved plant spacing.

At the outset of the CTTA campaign in Huaráz, Peru, less than 2 percent of all farmers in the area used systematic spacing to plant corn. Within six weeks of promoting the new method through radio, printed materials, and extension vis-

its, 61 percent of all farmers had heard the recommendations and 44 percent adopted them.

Recently, CTTA has caught the eye of bilateral and multilateral donors anxious to increase small farmer participation, broaden the reach of extension services, lower costs, and maximize the use of sustainable local resources. In the case of Peru and Honduras, CTTA methodology for transferring agricultural technologies was adopted by the respective national government within three years of project inception.

Copies of the CTTA field manual (to be published in English and Spanish) and an informational magazine can be obtained by writing to: Academy for Educational Development, 1255 23rd Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037. (phone: 202-862-1978)

—Gordon Appleby

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO SAVING THE AMAZON RAINFOREST

Brazilian rubber tappers are proposing an innovative approach to help preserve the Amazon rainforest. By organizing "extractive reserves," they hope to guarantee its pristine condition while allowing residents—Indians, rubber tappers, and river dwellers—to market its bountiful harvest of renewable resources, including nuts, fruits, plants, and game. The Conselho Nacional de Seringueiros (CNS) recently held a seminar with researchers and international funders to discuss how these reserves might be established and financed.

The stakes are high for everyone. The Amazon region in Brazil contains nearly 30 percent of the world's tropical forests and supports over 30,000 species of plant life. Alarmingly, it is estimated that an area nearly the size of France, or 10 percent of the



Dominique Irvine

Participants at a recent seminar on extractive reserves co-sponsored by the Conselho Nacional de Seringueiros.

rainforest, has been deforested in the past 15 years by cattle ranchers, miners, and small-scale farmers desperate for land. This destruction has stripped away much of the area's fragile topsoil and has led to the extinction of countless animal and plant species. It has also caused the forced displacement of native populations, and now threatens to alter the climate regionally, and perhaps globally.

To slow or reverse this destruction, rubber tappers have organized a strong grassroots movement to promote environmentally sound development. Its best-known leader was Chico Mendes, whose assassination in 1988 focused international attention on the issue of Amazon deforestation. As a result of efforts by the rubber tappers and environmental groups since 1987, the Brazilian government has now legally created 14 extractive reserves, covering nearly 7.5 million acres and benefiting approximately 9,000 families.

The concept of extractive reserves gained credence once scientists realized the intrinsic ecological and economic value of natural forests as opposed to clearing them for timber

and for cattle ranching. Now that the reserves have been created, there is increasing concern to demonstrate their economic viability lest they become one more in a long list of well-intentioned but failed development "solutions." The previously mentioned CNS seminar on "Economic Alternatives for Extractive Reserves" was cosponsored by the Instituto de Estudos Amazônicos (IEA), an IAF grantee, to get the discussion off the drawing board. Held in Rio Branco, capital of the Amazonian state of Acre, from February 24-28, 1991, the meeting focused on five potential renewable resources: rubber, wood products, Brazil nuts, other nonwood products such as fruit and plants, and alternative agriculture. Participants included rubber tappers, Indian leaders, environmentalists, scientists, and representatives from international donor agencies and multilateral banks.

In addition to discussing the biological characteristics and processing requirements of various extractive reserves, attention was focused on the marketing potential of each resource, including many of the 286 varieties of fruit that botanists have identified as potential ice creams, juices, and preserves. Although many forest products are considered somewhat exotic for outside marketing, many analysts think the growing international interest in saving the forest can be translated into consumer demand. Boston-based Cultural Survival, for instance, imported over 1,000 tons of Brazil nuts from the Amazon last year and sold them to such U.S. companies as Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream.

Extractive reserves are a simple yet bold attempt to resolve one of the most pressing dilemmas of our age: preservation of the planet's last remaining forests without hindering the economic development of their inhabitants. If successful, CSN's extractive reserves can provide a grass-

roots model for sustainable development not only for people in the Amazon but in rainforests worldwide.

—John W. Garrison II

TAKING CHARGE OF THE PEACE PROCESS

The Medio Magdalena region in central Colombia suffers the notoriety of being one of the bloodiest areas of the country, surpassed perhaps only by the city of Medellín. The violence in Medio Magdalena is not the narco-terrorism featured in

the North American media, however, but the result of confrontations among leftist guerrillas, the Colombian Army, and paramilitary death squads.

Caught up in the deadly whirlwind, the local population is often coerced into taking one side or the other. The peasants of Medio Magdalena—already among Colombia's poorest—are expected to be not only ideological cheerleaders but to fork out food and supplies, transportation services, and information. But even the suspicion of providing such support can mean a summary death

sentence for entire families imposed by the opposing side.

Such promised to be the case in the village of La India in the Carare region, 100 miles north of Bogotá. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the villagers had been terrorized first by soldiers and guerrillas, and then by paramilitaries. One day in May of 1987, as the region's death toll climbed to several hundred, a group of armed death squad members entered the village and gave its residents four choices: Take sides with the military, join the guerrillas, abandon the zone, or die.

IAF GRANTEES IN THE NEWS

The Inter-American Development Bank's newsletter, *The IDB*, stated that three IAF grantees will be funded through the Bank's Small Projects Program. The **Association Haïtienne des Agences Bénévoles** will assist small-scale farmers, food processors, and rural artisans in Haiti; the **Asesoría Dinámica a Microempresas** in Mexico will expand a microenterprise program in Matamoros, Monterrey, Saltillo, and Torreón; and the **Trinidad and Tobago Development Foundation, Ltd.**, will provide loans so that trade school graduates can start or expand small businesses. ● *The IDB* also announced that the **Cooperativa Agropecuaria Limitada de Agua para Riego (CALAGUA)** is one of three Uruguayan groups sharing a new \$22.8 million loan. CALAGUA, a sugar-cane producer, will open a frozen-food plant to process cauliflower, strawberries, asparagus, and other nontraditional cash crops.

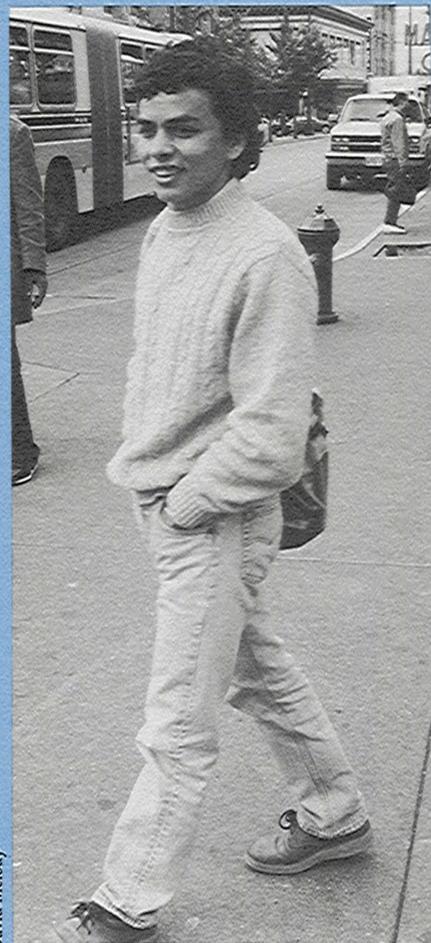
● The **Fundación Pro Iguana Verde**, which teaches Costa Rica's small farmers to raise iguanas in

their natural habitat as an alternative to slash-and-burn agriculture and cattle ranching, was among the model projects cited in *World Watch* magazine that use innovative wildlife management to preserve forests.

● *Foundation News* observes that Latin American NGOs struggling to promote democracy must turn increasingly to North American foundations for a greater share of funds. Two Brazilian groups, the **Centro Luiz Freire** and the **Instituto de Ação Cultural**, are mentioned as typical examples of NGOs that have diverse funding bases, much of which comes from Western European groups now looking to invest their money in Eastern Europe.

● Carlos Lara, an administrator of the Colombian **Fundación Servicio Juvenil**, an organization that rescues children from a life on the streets, was interviewed by the *Christian Science Monitor* about his recent

Colombian Carlos Lara on sabbatical in Seattle, Washington.



David Melody

Instead, the small farmers of La India opted to unite. Adopting the slogan, "For the right to life, peace, and work," nearly 7,000 families formed the Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos del Carare (ATCC). The association immediately notified the death squads, Army commanders, and leftist guerrillas that a fifth alternative was open: The peasants of Carare demanded that the violence and all other abuses end, and vowed no more support, of any kind, to any armed group operating in the region.

Perhaps it was their unshakable

commitment to nonviolence or their insistence upon equal and continual dialogue with all parties that led the combatants to leave the residents of La India alone, at least temporarily. Buoyed by their initial success, the ATCC moved beyond mass peace rallies—an August 1987 rally was attended by 8,000 campesinos—to tackle the underlying problems facing the Carare region: poverty and environmental degradation. In 1988, the ATCC began a series of local development initiatives, including a cooperative store, construction of a health center, and a reforestation project.

Then in February of 1990, violence struck again. Three leaders and founding members of the association were murdered in an ice cream parlor in Cimitarra, a town just 18 miles from La India. A Colombian journalist, preparing a story on the association for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), was also gunned down.

Despite this setback, the ATCC renewed its commitment to nonviolence and elected new leadership to pick up the banner. For its efforts, the Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos del Carare in 1990 received the Right Livelihood Award, often referred to as the alternative Nobel Peace Prize. Association leaders traveled to Stockholm last December to accept a \$40,000 check in the Swedish Parliament.

The future of the association's peace process is hopeful but tenuous. International recognition, while perhaps a deterrent to violence, does not guarantee that the small farmers of Carare will continue to live and work in peace. But as ATCC president Oscar Gaitán notes, the association will not be shaken from its course, and it will serve as an example to other grassroots organizations struggling for survival and development in Colombia.

—Jamie K. Donaldson ◇

Ambassador Perrin Selected as IAF President

Daphne White

Ambassador Bill K. Perrin, the newly appointed president of the Inter-American Foundation, brings a rich and varied career to bear on this latest challenge, leading the IAF in its third decade.

After 20 years as owner and manager of a variety of businesses, followed by a brief retirement, Perrin began a distinguished career of public service. Since 1982, he has served as director of the U.S. Peace Corps in Belize, director of the Peace Corps for the Eastern Caribbean region, regional Peace Corps director for Africa (based in Washington, D.C.), U.S. ambassador to Cyprus, and finally deputy assistant secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs at the State Department.

Perrin is no stranger to the Foundation's work. During his tenure with the Peace Corps, he cooperated with the IAF on several projects. "The Peace Corps's main asset is volunteers, and the main asset of the Foundation is money, but the goal of the two organizations—helping people help themselves—is very similar," he says. He particularly remembers working with the IAF to support a beekeepers' federation in Belize and to assist a candle-making enterprise in Dominica.

"Over the years, I have had the opportunity to revisit many projects that are still operating and doing very well," Perrin says. Almost all of these successful projects, he notes, worked because they were initiated and managed by local people.

"When working in development, it can be difficult to determine whether your efforts are indeed helpful to the beneficiaries in solv-

two-year sabbatical in the United States to study its social and welfare programs. ● *CIKARD News*, published by the Center for Indigenous Knowledge for Agriculture and Rural Development, noted that the **Fundación para la Educación Superior (FES)** has sponsored a study of sustainable resource use by the Awa Indians near the La Planada Nature Reserve in southwest Colombia, an area known for its rich diversity of unique flora and fauna. ● A *TIME* magazine article about the many Latin Americans turning from Catholicism toward Protestant denominations quotes Henrique Mafra Caldeira de Andrada, head of the **Instituto de Estudos da Religião**, as saying it is because "the Evangelicals met the peoples' emotional and spiritual needs better." ● *El Capital* and *La Hora Popular*, two Uruguayan newspapers, reported that the **Fundación Uruguaya de Cooperación y Desarrollo Solidarios (FUNDASOL)** received a three-year, \$500,000 loan from the IDB to further capitalize a rotating credit fund for its seven affiliated institutions.

—Compiled by Maria Lang

ing their priority problems," he says. "But since the Foundation responds to project proposals rather than proposing projects, we are well-positioned to, in a sense, become teammates with people in their efforts to improve their lives."

On January 7, 1991, the IAF board of directors unanimously selected Perrin as the fourth president, succeeding Deborah Szekely. Perrin is a long-time friend of IAF Chairman Frank D. Yturria: Both are Brownsville businessmen with ties to Texas and Mexico.

Perrin makes clear that he relishes the challenge of applying his knowledge and management principles to new tasks. "I like to take something and see if I can make it work better," he explains.

"There's a maxim I made up years ago," he adds. "You lead people, you manage objects or programs, and you administer numbers. That is, you can't lead a piece of furniture across the room—you have to marshal resources to get it done. You lead people, because people don't like to be managed. And you administer numbers, because if you manage them you go to jail. If you can



Annette Oliveras

Ambassador Bill K. Perrin (second from right) and his wife, Courtenay, chat with outgoing IAF president Deborah Szekely (left) at Perrin's swearing-in ceremony on February 19, 1991.

ment and morale problems were solved.

During his government career, Perrin has achieved great success in dealing with complex policy and

positions within the U.S. Government, he still thinks of himself as a businessman.

"I have never seen myself as anything else," he says simply. "I believe in the so-called J. Paul Getty school of management: People who are good leaders and managers can manage in any sector. If you understand the basic principles of management, you can apply them to any product."

This managerial concept fits Perrin well. After establishing his first factory in Mexico at the age of 26, he owned and operated a variety of businesses in both Texas and Mexico.

Public service has compelled Perrin to give up most of his previous hobbies, which included deep-sea fishing, scuba diving, orchid-growing, and spelunking. But he continues to indulge his love of history, delving into the pasts of China, Cyprus, the Middle East, and Latin America. "A movie or an article

"Since the Foundation responds to project proposals rather than proposing projects, we are well-positioned to become teammates with people in their efforts to improve their lives."

keep all that straight, you can make a success of just about any organization."

Perrin is a man who likes new challenges. He accepted the two-and-a-half-year tour of duty as Peace Corps director of the troubled Belize program in 1982, thinking he would go home when the job was done. Within a year, the manage-

organizational issues, culminating in his work as U. S. ambassador to Cyprus. In 1989, the Cyprus mission, under his stewardship, received one of only four Inspector General's awards for best-managed embassy and Perrin was commended by Secretary of State James Baker for his work.

Despite his recent high-ranking

Reviews

might spark my mind, and for a period of time I will read everything I can get on the subject," he says.

Facing a challenge and taking pride in an accomplishment are feelings with which Perrin identifies. He recounts a recent meeting of women microentrepreneurs in Belize, which he observed on his first field visit as Foundation president. Each one had received a loan from the IAF and had successfully turned her ideas into a small business.

"One woman had opened a store and now had several employees working for her," he recalls. "I was struck by how proud she was: She was able to save in addition to paying back her loan, and she did it all herself!"

"I welcome the opportunity to help the Foundation spread those feelings of pride and accomplishment among the poor of Latin America and the Caribbean. I am enjoying and looking forward to my work at the Inter-American Foundation."

Maybe after this assignment he really will return to private life—or perhaps another challenge will come his way. Perrin admits that his has been a "very fortunate" and unpredictable life. And it shows no signs of changing. ♦

DAPHNE WHITE is a Washington, D.C.-based journalist who writes on development and conservation issues.

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SEARCHING FOR AGRARIAN REFORM IN LATIN AMERICA, edited by William Thiesenhusen. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1989.

Gayle Morris

Agricultural economist William Thiesenhusen writes that, "farming is characterized by a great deal of social variegation, making reality complex in Latin America." In this collection of essays, Thiesenhusen and 17 other authors explore the complex role of agrarian reform in Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central America.

The range of examples is wide—from the effort by the Mexican government during the administration of President Lázaro Cárdenas to co-opt popular agrarian reform movements in the 1930s to current efforts in El Salvador and Nicaragua, where civil war and agrarian reform have become hopelessly entangled. Despite this diversity, there are four distinct themes in the book: the increased trend away from cooperative farming toward small parcels in Chile, Peru, the Dominican Republic, and elsewhere; the transformation of small farmers into agricultural laborers on a wide scale in nations as far apart as Ecuador and Mexico; the perpetuation of economic and political dualism in the rural sector; and the targeting of reform benefits to a minority of potential beneficiaries.

Agrarian reform is also a social movement that addresses the interrelationships of people as they simultaneously define their access to land. In this volume, Thiesenhusen contends that agrarian reform in Latin America, like other social movements in the region, has become "bureaucratized, gray . . . and therefore less visible." This is largely due to the obstructionist role of government in the reform process. In

most Latin American countries, state agencies have either strangled reform efforts in red tape or co-opted local attempts to change property arrangements. Although the *hacendado*, or landowner, has been replaced on many estates by the government (frequently in the person of an agrarian-reform functionary), the system of paternalism has been kept intact. The experience in Honduras suggests, however, that this type of co-optation can be thwarted by national campesino organizations, or strong producer associations.

In his introduction, Thiesenhusen states that the purpose of the book "is to increase the visibility of land reform policies and to highlight their dimensions [to stimulate] debate and discussion." He provides a context for the subsequent country-specific chapters by outlining the general issues associated with land reform, including the structure of agriculture in Latin America. Each chapter has its own bibliography—some more comprehensive than others—and the volume is indexed. By contrasting analyses on agrarian reform efforts in several countries—including El Salvador, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Peru, and Chile—rather than trying to discuss reform efforts in many, Thiesenhusen challenges readers to examine their own assumptions about the success or failure of agrarian reform in general.

Especially helpful to the reader is Thiesenhusen's concluding chapter, which discusses why the previously cited agrarian reform models have generally not met their stated economic or social objectives. Agrarian reform efforts in Latin America are still in their infancy. Whether the twenty-first century will witness their maturation cannot be predicted from the ten country cases presented in this book. What can be seen are the myriad ways various Latin American governments have in-

vented to limit agrarian reform during the past 60 years. ◇

GAYLE MORRIS, a former IAF doctoral fellow, teaches at Penn State Erie, The Behrend College. The book is available from Westview Press, 5500 Central Ave., Boulder, Colorado 80301. (phone: 303-444-3541)

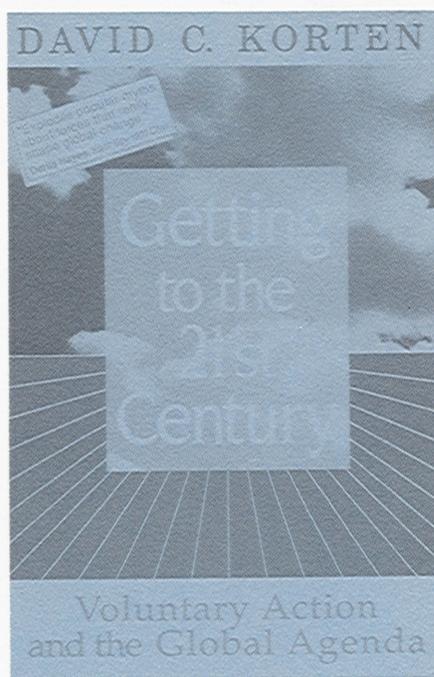
GETTING TO THE 21ST CENTURY: VOLUNTARY ACTION AND THE GLOBAL AGENDA, by David Korten. West Hartford, Connecticut: Kumarian Press, 1990.

Barbara Annis

Getting to the 21st Century: Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda above all is an account of the personal awakening of David Korten, renowned development specialist. Secondly, it is a well-articulated argument for additional decentralized, volunteer-led development efforts.

Held captive for years in the labyrinth of the development bureaucracy, Korten bursts forth on the doorstep of the twenty-first century—grizzled and war-weary—with a kiss-and-tell story of his years working for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank, and the Ford Foundation and a redemptive account of his vision for the future. The importance of the tale lies not so much in what is said (much of it, in fact, has been said before) as in who is saying it.

Korten is an incredibly prolific writer and has long been an important spokesperson for the established development world, helping to promote USAID's focus during the 1980s on increased funding to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), for instance. The legitimacy Korten possesses from having been an insider may allow him to capture the attention of agency personnel in a manner that is denied to other



critical outsiders.

If only Korten had looked beyond the narrow confines of the official development bureaucracy sooner, he might have reached some of the same conclusions when he could still influence his colleagues from within.

Much of Korten's "map" directing developmentalists and would-be developmentalists into the twenty-first century is littered with tales of projects gone awry, executed by many of the agencies for which Korten himself labored. Few of these "official" efforts to aid the poor receive praise, and many are branded with the stigmata of indifference, outright malevolence, or simple wrong-sightedness.

There is little room in Korten's development universe for honest mistakes, or even for honest, if unimaginative, efforts to address problems with the tools at hand.

Korten uses a universal "we" (as in "We Have a Problem") throughout this volume when addressing

the faults of international development, but becomes exclusive when proffering possible solutions. Writing from the mountaintop of newly acquired wisdom, he holds himself aloof from the previous collective "we" to identify himself with an abstract "people" and their untapped potential for a better future.

Getting to the 21st Century begins with a sensational list of most of the wrongs plaguing the world's poor, and the failure of "official" development agencies to adequately address them. Included in this hit list are the failures of private international assistance agencies—judged overly responsive to crisis situations—and NGOs—condemned by the self-limiting visions of their roles and potentials.

Just as the reader begins to despair, however, the tale loops back upon itself, much like a Möbius strip, to Korten himself. Like a tax accountant who scans your W-2s, shaking his head grimly, but later explaining how he has gotten you a rebate, Korten holds forth a partial solution: volunteer-led collective commitment. And to show he means business, he announces his own establishment of the People-Centered Development (PDC) Forum.

Korten's people-centered development polemic is uncontestable—what development official or anyone else would openly embrace the opposite side of a people-first argument? Nor is anyone likely to disagree with his wish list, including the need for greater equity and better conservation of environmental and human resources, apart from the few extremists who have recently asserted that equity as a development concept is dead.

Getting to the 21st Century is full of sound-bites—paragraph-long, eminently quotable sentiments—but surprisingly short on analysis. Korten's condemnation of most current development efforts and simul-

Resources

taneous praise for "the people" omits the existence of well-intentioned specialists working toward goals he shares.

His anti-statism, particularly considering the number of new democratic civilian governments, is equally astounding. Korten discounts the idea of a legitimate role for government in development, presenting civil servants as the pawns of the most powerful segments of society or simply corrupt. Are none of his "people" to aspire to public office as a means of empowering their friends and neighbors? Who is to arbitrate between real conflicting interests, for example? Has the private sector proven to be a perfect guardian of the "people's" trust?

Equally absent in this brave new development world is a role for groups that are simply task oriented; his black-and-white portrayal has no neutral shades. Sincere people who work for pay are also excluded—money corrupts—yet Korten never adequately discusses what motivates and sustains the legions making up his 1,000 points of development light.

Korten articulates well the basic priorities of real human-based development assistance, but his failure to include official efforts, development specialists, and other potential allies is unlikely to win new adherents to his abstract "people's movement." It is more likely to justify the dismantling of all official development assistance rather than replacing it. ♦

BARBARA ANNIS is editor of the Latin American Index, a biweekly newsletter published in Washington, D.C., by Welt Publishing. She is also a correspondent to numerous other international publications dealing with Latin American economic and development issues. The book is available from Kumarian Press, 630 Oakwood Ave., Suite 119, West Hartford, Connecticut 06110-1505. (phone: 203-953-0214)

The resources in this issue of Grassroots Development were all prepared by NGOs that have worked with the Inter-American Foundation. Organizations from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Uruguay offer a range of documents that address agricultural, educational, and health issues as well as income-generation for youth. While varying in focus, style, or intended audience, they are alike in seeking directly or indirectly to assist clients and constituencies.

An impressively illustrated book prepared by the Centro de Capacitación para la Acción Social (CEDCAS) in Costa Rica, **Plantas Medicinales** combines generously sized pen-and-ink drawings with simple text to identify the country's common medicinal plants and guide the reader in the step-by-step preparation of healing teas,

Illustration from Plantas Medicinales.

juices, bathing solutions, compresses, gargles, rubs, tinctures, and inhalations.

One chapter presents its information in the form of an easy-to-read chart listing over 150 plants—from *acederilla* (*oxalis acetosella*) to *zornia* (*dicliptera unquiculata*)—that can be used as treatments for some 140 dis-

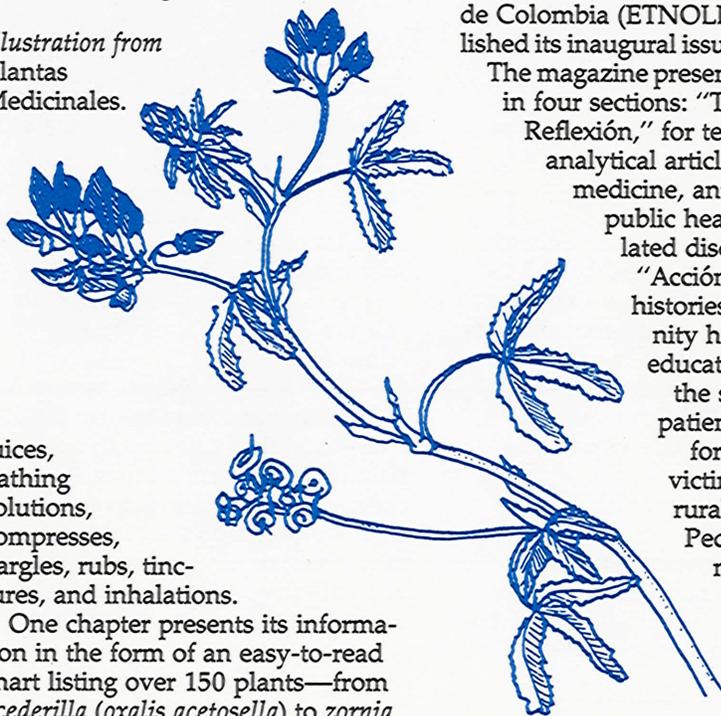
eases and symptoms. Recipes are also offered for popular remedies to treat acne, headaches, rheumatism, diabetes, and coughs, as well as for soaps, shampoos, and salves.

No such book would be complete without sections on the benefits of garlic and the ubiquitous *limón*, and this book does not disappoint, noting that *limón* cures over 170 maladies. The manual concludes with a thoughtful discussion of nutritional principles and good health, again presented clearly and accompanied with attractive illustrations.

Address inquiries to CEDCAS, Apartado 10250, San José, Costa Rica. (phone: 21-98-09)

Seeking to foster dialogue among the diverse professions concerned with community health, **Salud: Culturas de Colombia**, the magazine of the Fundación para el Etnodesarrollo de los Llanos Orientales de Colombia (ETNOLLANO), published its inaugural issue in late 1990.

The magazine presents its material in four sections: "Temas de Reflexión," for technical or analytical articles about medicine, anthropology, public health, and related disciplines; "Acción," for case histories in community health care and education, such as the search for outpatient treatments for tuberculosis victims in isolated rural areas; "Ideas Pedagógicas," for new techniques and easy-to-prepare teaching aids, such as a makeshift cardboard "television" to enliven health education;



and "Actualidad," a calendar of events and attractively illustrated bulletin board listing community health publications and activities.

Salud is published three times a year by ETNOLLANO, a nonprofit applied-research agency that works with local organizations, bilingual

Adultos, A.C. (SEDAC), relates the history of a self-education movement in the Mezquital Valley in Mexico. The participants in this movement formed "learning circles," erasing the boundary between teacher and student and pioneering a new approach to nonformal educa-

asking whether it is better to teach people to fish or to help them organize a fishing cooperative.

To order these and other SEDAC booklets, write either to Fundación Friedrich Ebert, Ejército Nacional 539, 5 Piso, Mexico City, Mexico, C.P. 11520, or to Servicios de Educación de Adultos, A.C., Juárez 12-A, Ixmiquilpan, Hidalgo, Mexico, C.P. 42300. (phone: 3-0717)

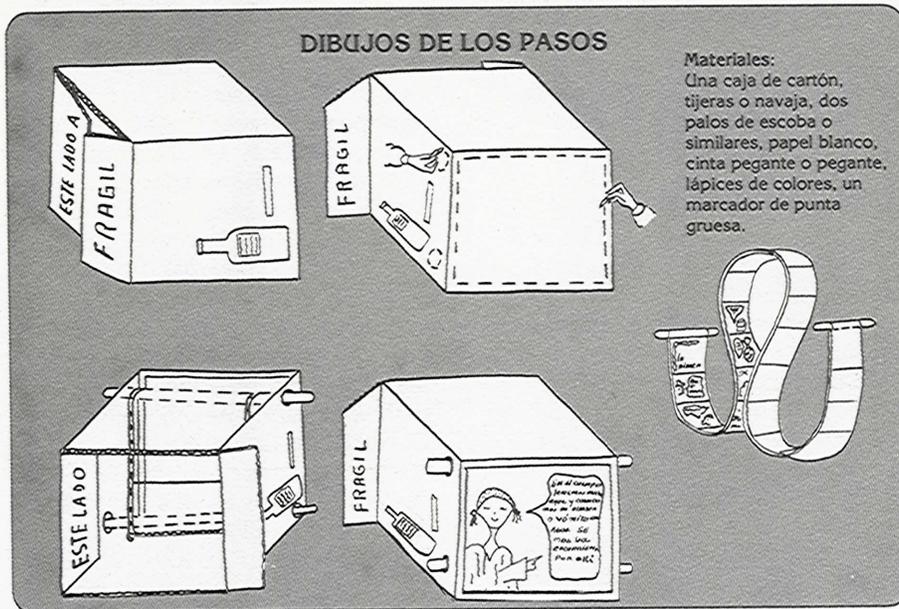


Illustration from *Salud* explains how to make a cardboard "television" to use as a teaching aid for health education.

teachers, and health promoters to improve education, health, and socioeconomic development among rural and urban Indian communities in eastern Colombia. Its editor invites Colombians and interested outsiders to submit articles that will stimulate reflection, analysis, and debate.

To request guidance on manuscript submissions, to subscribe, or to obtain information about other ETNOLLANO publications, write to ETNOLLANO, Apartado 55455, Bogotá, Colombia. (phone: 258-8098)

Autodidactismo Solidario, published by Servicios de Educación de

tion. Through *autodidactismo solidario* they became their own teachers, combining learning with self-evaluation to achieve self-reliance.

SEDAC has published numerous informative and easy-to-read booklets—including a history of San Pablo Oxtotipan; a thorough yet concise work on alternative medicine; and descriptions of artisan cooperatives, revolving loan funds, and collective stables. Designed for community promoters, these booklets pose two underlying rhetorical questions: First, is it better to give fish to hungry people or to teach them how to catch their own fish? The second expands on the first,

Although generally presented as a strategy for families to obtain more and better food at lower cost, effective home gardening can also generate income through sales of surplus produce. The Centro de Educación y Tecnología (CET), widely known for its training activities in organic gardening and appropriate technology, makes this point in its family gardening manual *El Huerto Familiar Urbano*.

Its pen-and-ink illustrations and clearly worded text guide the reader step-by-step in choosing and preparing a plot, from options that include raised beds, clay pots, buckets, terraces, or towers of discarded automobile tires; in germinating the seeds; and in growing and harvesting crops. City gardeners will be especially interested in the section on generating home fertilizers through composting, and raising a few chickens.

A second CET manual from the comprehensive series "Colección Somos Capaces" is *Cuidados de un Pequeño Plantel Lechero*, which is designed to help small-scale dairy farmers. Far more technical than *El Huerto*, it discusses the digestive and reproductive systems of cattle, how to care for newborn and young calves, the relative merits of feeds, shelter construction, and common diseases among dairy cattle. Understanding the material requires a solid grasp of written Spanish.

To order either of these docu-

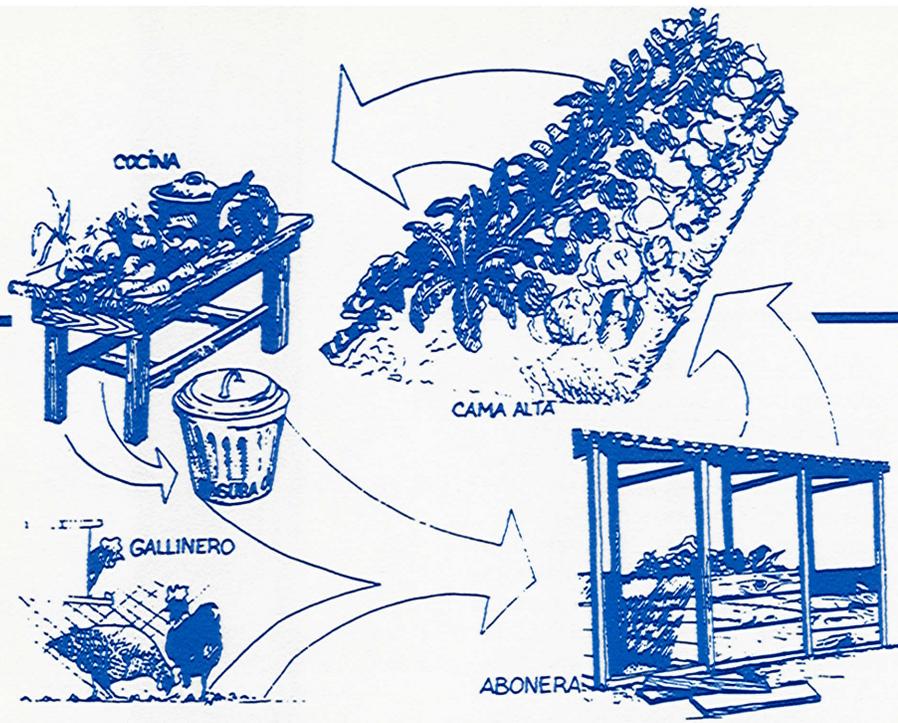


Diagram from *El Huerto Familiar Urbano* illustrates the process of making home fertilizers from kitchen waste and chicken droppings.

ments or to request a publications list, write to the Centro de Estudios en Tecnologías Apropriadas para América Latina, Casilla 197-V, Valparaíso, Chile. (phone: 234-1141)

Empresas Asociativas Juveniles, published by the Foro Juvenil, analyzes the Foro's efforts to support microenterprises managed and owned by youth in Uruguay and to create more entry-level jobs for young people.

The book is divided into three chapters and several detailed appendixes. The first chapter describes the socioeconomic context of youth employment in order to frame the goals and objectives of the Foro Juvenil's program. The second describes program methodology that builds on the strengths of young people to help them survive in the marketplace. The final chapter provides preliminary conclusions, realizing the difficulty of predicting long-term trends from an evaluation of a brief project history.

Citing the dearth of literature about youth employment, the Foro Juvenil hopes this book will spur others to explore the field, learning valuable lessons from the Foro's false starts and clear successes.

To order this publication or others

related to youth employment, write to Foro Juvenil, Maldonado 1260, 11200 Montevideo, Uruguay. (phone: 91-02-00 or 98-57-20; FAX: 92-11-17)

Effective community development work cannot be measured by houses built, sanitation improved, or income generated. These benefits will be transitory or marginal unless poor communities learn to identify, plan, and carry out their own development projects.

How do development technicians nurture this process? **Vivienda y Organización Comunitaria** relates the evolving methodology of the Servicio Habitacional y de Acción Social (SEHAS) in Córdoba, Argentina. Over the years, it has helped thousands of families in 30 poor barrios to build their own houses, improve public sanitation and health, and create jobs while training hundreds of neighborhood leaders and development professionals to promote effective community development.

The book evolved from a modest proposal to update a 1978 report of Barrio Chaco Chico's efforts to build 19 low-cost houses, into a substantive look at what SEHAS has learned from over a decade's experience in community development.

This accounts for the 170-page book's unusual format. The first section briefly describes Barrio Chaco Chico and its organization; the second reprints the 1978 report, annotated with bold marginal notes to highlight differences with current perspectives; the third summarizes SEHAS's latest methodology; and the final section outlines what the evolution in perceptions, goals, and methodology means.

Today, SEHAS no longer thinks in terms of "pilot projects"—because the concept implies a predetermined process and set of objectives to which the community must adjust. Believing that the community itself must become the protagonist of the development process, SEHAS lets the local organization set goals and manage implementation. SEHAS predefines only the basic principles of its own work, which specify that technical assistance must be truly interdisciplinary and that proposed alternative technologies—in everything from construction methods to business designs—must encourage community participation.

The book may be obtained from SEHAS, Igualdad 3585, Villa Siburu, 5000 Córdoba, Argentina. (phone: 805031)

Pina Povo Cultura Memoria, an oral history of the Pina community in Recife, Brazil, was first conceived by Oswaldo Pereira, a member of the community association Grupo de Ativação Cultural da União de Moradores do Pina. Pereira wanted to preserve his community's historical identity and to reaffirm the residents' collective memory of their struggles to ward off attempts to displace them from their land. Pina's story of community organization was told through 20 hours of recorded testimonials by community elders, chronicling the settlement's evolution during their lifetimes.

Postscript

Pereira approached the Centro Luiz Freire (CLF)—a local NGO that carries out a multidimensional education program supporting community schools, legal assistance, and communications—for help with his project. Through its education program, the CLF identifies and produces materials that reflect the region's heritage and experience. On previous occasions, the Centro had produced oral histories such as *Brasília Teimosa*, a book about life in a similar slum community.

The CLF's educational service unit undertook Pereira's project and through careful consultation with Antonio Montenegro, a professor at the Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, verified the oral histories. The CLF staff then researched the text and illustrated it with supporting photographs and maps. Children from the community also drew pictures to further enhance the book.

Pina Povo Cultura Memoria was so successful that the state education secretariat has decided to incorporate it into classroom materials for use throughout Recife. Nine public schools supported by neighborhood associations have begun to use the publication, which will be a classroom resource for history, geography, reading, social sciences, and even math through examples of local products. Training in possible uses of the publication was provided to 30 teachers, and it will be introduced to 360 students in the fourth grade who now have the opportunity to understand their community's history and learn from materials that have relevance to their own lives.

Copies of this book are available from Centro Luiz Freire, Rua Vinte e Sete de Janeiro, 181/169 (Carmo) Olinda, Pernambuco, Brazil. (phone: 429-3444) ◇

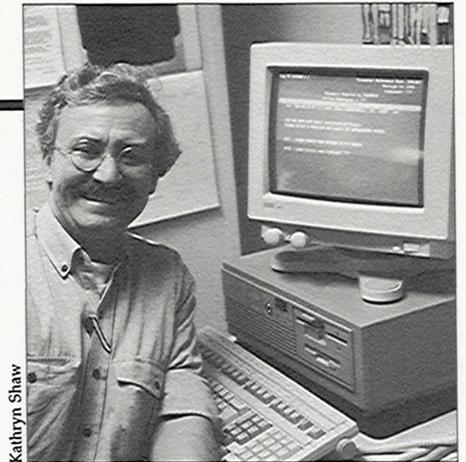
—Lynda Edwards, Diane Edwards
La Voy, and Selma Zaidi

When fiber optic cables are accidentally clipped in New York City or Washington, D.C., silencing telephones and FAX machines in thousands of businesses and government agencies, the catastrophe warrants front page headlines. However, few people realize that modern telecommunications systems are also crucial to the work of thousands of NGOs throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

Indeed, the computer is almost a leitmotif in this issue of *Grassroots Development*, which focuses on the challenges facing NGOs during the 1990s. Several contributors provide examples of how NGOs have begun to harness the tools of the "Information Age" to offset the scarcity of resources and through a realization that democracy and economic development both rest on open access to the marketplace of ideas. Increasingly, state-of-the-art computer networks and data bases are being established to share knowledge about what works and what does not, setting the stage for better policy coordination at the regional, national, and, sometimes, international levels.

A leader in this field is the Instituto Brasileiro de Análises Sociais e Econômicas, an IAF grantee in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, which launched the ALTERNEX computer network in 1988. Since *Grassroots Development* first reported on the new network in January 1989 (Vol. 13-2), it has grown to serve more than 500 NGOs in Brazil and several other Latin American countries. As part of the nonprofit network of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), the ALTERNEX system also provides low-cost e-mail exchange and conferencing services to more than 9,000 NGOs using the APC network worldwide.

ALTERNEX's effectiveness was recently confirmed when the Working Party on Information Systems of the



Kathryn Shaw

Carlos Alberto Alfonso, ALTERNEX project coordinator.

U.N. Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) proposed that the network be the coordinator (along with other APC systems' technical staff) of the electronic information exchange system project for UNCED.

This "Earth Summit," which will take place in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, is billed as the largest conference ever held on any topic in the world. It will actually be two concurrent meetings—one at the "official" site and one at a separate NGO site. According to ALTERNEX project coordinator Carlos Alberto Alfonso, "Messages generated at any work station or terminal in both sites will be sent immediately to their destinations worldwide." The network will thus play a crucial role in the outcome of the ambitious summit.

As you may have noticed from the survey card in this issue, *Grassroots Development* has also embarked on an information campaign—albeit a paper-and-pencil one. Through this questionnaire we hope to learn more about our readers and how they use the journal. Won't you please take a minute or two to fill out the postage-paid card and return it to us as soon as possible?

Kathryn Shaw

Inter-American Foundation

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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:

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1515 Wilson Boulevard
Rosslyn, Virginia 22209

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