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Old Traditions and New Practices: Ayni Ruway of Bolivia

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Close to 14 million Quechua, the largest native-American linguistic group in the Western Hemisphere, live in the Andean mountains, spread from Colombia to northern Argentina. As in many other remote areas, few programs there during the last two "development decades" have affected the low incomes, low agricultural and livestock productivity, and apparent apathy of the Quechua. Since 1974, however, the Ayni Ruway system has forged a remarkably original rural development strategy rooted in Andean cultural traditions. The approach gives hope for economic and social advances in the area.

Starting with two communities in the Cochabamba region of Bolivia, the Ayni Ruway system now includes a network of more than 40 highland rural communities and four urban neighborhoods. It aims to increase production and employment, raise incomes, and provide access to lower priced consumer items among the Quechua. It also seeks to minimize market inequalities between rural communities and the outside world. All this is done within a cultural revitalization movement. Ayni Ruway's strategy includes the use of barter, theater and other forms of nonformal education, and diverse forms of production.

Ayni Ruway, which means "collective work" in Quechua, is the name of both the coordinating group and a system of economic organization and social communication. The core group is comprised of five rural schoolteachers (the *equipo externo* or outside team), a psychologist, an economist, 12 *jatun kamachis* (regional leaders), and 60 *kamachis* (local leaders). They work through traditional Quechua organizations such as the *ayni wasi* (house for everyone) and *pirwas* (collection-exchange centers) and with traditional concepts such as *ruway* (production units), *khuyay* (social aid and concern), and *phullay* (play and festivity).

Nonmonetary Exchange Network

In its economic system, Ayni Ruway links together communities in different ecological zones through a chain of strategically located *pirwas* and *ayni wasis*. Each rural community offers the *pirwa* a specific product such as wheat, wool, or freeze-dried potatoes. In exchange for their products, community members receive the equivalent value in basic consumer items. These nonfarm items—such as bread, noodles, flour, candles, soap, looms, clothing, hats, and furniture—are produced in small cottage industries (*ruway*), which have been organized by the Ayni Ruway group in urban Cochabamba. About 130 workers, mostly female, belong to the urban *ruway* system. They do not receive wages, but rather a quantity of goods in exchange. The values for items swapped in *pirwas* and *ayni wasis* are set regularly by an assembly of *kamachis*, *jatun kamachis*, and the outside team. Goods are transported among rural and urban *pirwas* mostly on public transportation and sometimes in Ayni Ruway's pick-up trucks.

There is also a great deal of spontaneous, undocumented barter. In a sort of multiplier effect provoked by contacts within the formal Ayni Ruway network, communities change trading partners, initiating new flows of goods. The system is fluid. New communities are always entering the network and others are leaving.

This network differs from conventional forms of rural organization because it ties communities into a mutually supportive production and exchange structure through a barter system. No cash is involved in these transactions. Although this is a departure from typical development patterns, it is consistent with Andean tradition.

Barter, a traditional means of exchange in the Andes, was undermined by modernization efforts and the commercialization of agriculture in recent

decades. The barter system used by Ayni Ruway is based on two other Quechua concepts, verticality and reciprocity. To achieve verticality, peasant households seek to maintain access to multiple plots of land in a number of different micro-climatic and altitudinal zones on the Andean mountainsides. This verticality gives households a more diversified food basket because only certain crops can be grown within each narrow zone. Reciprocity is the exchange of goods, gifts, and labor services between families, kinship groups, and communities without the intervention of middlemen or markets.

The steady progress of Ayni Ruway in bringing new rural communities into the barter network and in organizing new cottage industries for the production of basic consumer goods reflects the group's adherence to a philosophy of self-reliance and to the long-term goal of self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, the value and volume of goods transferred within the nonmonetary network remain relatively small. Not all members of affiliated communities participate in Ayni Ruway (an estimate would be about 45 to 60 per cent), nor has Ayni Ruway totally replaced the cash market with its barter system. The barter system presently is used only for a limited number of products—those which are easiest to produce and to transport in bulk. There is a parallel cash market for some goods such as potatoes and corn, and for wage labor and credit.

In contrast to the large integrated rural development schemes in vogue in the Third World, Ayni Ruway begins operations on a small scale, preferring rudimentary, simple technology amenable to *campesino* management. Where possible, they encourage the use of traditional Andean technology. This philosophy and methodology have led, for example, to the small-scale processing and marketing of various wheat and corn products.

Sharing a meal in the Bolivian *altiplano*.

Photo courtesy of Ayni Ruway.



Handicraft Production

Handicraft production is the only profit-making activity that is built into the nonmonetary exchange network. Over 450 artisans in rural communities make ponchos, bags, scarfs, alpaca fabric, and other products to be sold by Ayni Ruway's urban commercial outlet, Producción de la Promoción Campesina (PROCAM). Part of the handicrafts are exported to Western Europe. Most handicrafts, however, are sold domestically to tourists and upper income Bolivians. The business-minded Ayni Ruway managers have organized an elegant,

centrally located store in Cochabamba which sells stylish fashions to tourists and the town's elite. Over a recent three-year period, PROCAM exported handicrafts worth \$20,000. Domestic sales totalled \$60,000.

Cash profits, however, do not go directly to the participants. The artisans live in rural areas and exchange their handicraft products at local *pirwas* for basic consumer items. If their raw material, alpaca wool, is not produced and spun locally, they also obtain it at the *pirwa*. Spinners exchange the wool for consumer items at a *pirwa*. The wool is



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then delivered to another *pirwa* where it can be put in an artisan's hands. Once the artisan finishes making a sweater or poncho, the item goes back to the *pirwa* to be transported to PROCAM.

The PROCAM retail outlet generates cash for the Ayni Ruway network. These funds belong to the network as a whole and are used to invest in facilities for expanded production. An example of one investment project is Ayni Ruway's development of its own alpaca herds to increase its control over the supply and cost of alpaca wool. Communities with extensive grazing lands and herd management skills will be responsible for the herds. A veterinarian will oversee the alpaca production. Ayni Ruway views the development of its own herds as a

key to its future success in handicraft activities.

Decision Making

Ayni Ruway's system displays an interesting blend of centralized and decentralized decision making. Much of the decision making is informal. There is a great deal of interaction between the outside team, the *jatun kamachis*, and the *kamachis* administering the *ayni wasis* and the *pirwas*. Indeed, because of this highly mobile style and constant interaction between the *kamachis* and the outside team, it is often difficult to discern who actually makes any given decision.

The administrative structure also leans towards the informal. Unlike other rural

development agencies, Ayni Ruway has no central offices or bureaucracy. The outside team members spend approximately 75 per cent of the time in rural communities. The remaining time is spent in Cochabamba with PROCAM. In PROCAM, the *jatun kamachis* take turns handling specific administrative functions in bookkeeping, accounting, banking, and investment, and they work closely with the outside team in administering funds from the Inter-American Foundation* and other development agencies. They control the quality of handicraft products, coordinate transportation, production and the technical training of *kamachis*, and plan the investment of earnings in economically productive as well as social and cultural enterprises. The *kamachis* keep the *pirwas*'s books, inspect handicrafts for quality, establish exchange values, communicate with other *campesino* communities and with local authorities, organize and supervise production workshops, recruit and orient new Ayni Ruway members, and organize theater presentations.

The on-the-job training in administration and bookkeeping is part of the nonformal education provided by Ayni Ruway. As one *campesino* woman remarked:

My daughter will not attend school but rather will be educated in the Ayni. She will go with the *kamachis* to organize the Ayni, know other places, learn how to write, do calculations, sew, and whatever else, but above all helping poor *campesinos* such as ourselves.

Forty-eight of the 58 *kamachis* are Quechua women in their teens and twenties. Young women predominate partly because exchange activities and handicrafts traditionally fall in the women's domain in Andean cultures.

*IAF has made two grants to Ayni Ruway: one in 1974 and another in 1978.

Another factor is the great seasonal migration of many male heads of farm households from this region of acute agricultural unemployment and underdevelopment to other areas in search of jobs. As the Ayni Ruway network expands to include previously isolated Quechua-speaking ethnic groups, however, more males are participating as *kamachis*. The widespread presence of young women in these local leadership positions undoubtedly helps reduce the *cacique* ("boss") syndrome which still plagues *campesino* unions.

Kamachis are not elected formally by the community. Instead, with the approval of the *jatun kamachis* and outside team, they volunteer after demonstrating a commitment to Ayni Ruway activities and principles.

Cultural Revitalization

Social and cultural goals are as integral a part of the Ayni Ruway development concept as increasing rural production and employment. Ayni Ruway uses a repertoire of cultural activities to revitalize Quechua language, values, tradition, and history. One of the great concerns is upgrading the status of Quechua, which has been systematically suppressed by Bolivian central governments since the European invasion centuries ago. The cultural revitalization builds on the Quechua concept of *phullay* (play and festivity).

Ayni Ruway's use of *phullay* is best exemplified by the proliferation of theater groups within the community network. Over 15 *kamachi*-organized theater groups involving 70 people stage dramas regularly. Frequent themes are rural-urban conflicts, declining ritual practices, problems with merchants, truck owners, local bosses and schoolteachers, and the superiority of the values of Ayni Ruway. These dramas, performed in outdoor rural settings, have made theater a means for spontaneous, collective expression. Using improvisa-

tion and mime, the performers dramatize local problems, sentiments, and values. Audience participation is encouraged—the dramas frequently trigger dance and song about Quechua legend and tradition. With the exception of plays done by a troupe of *jatun kamachis*, these performances are not well rehearsed nor technically refined. Besides building solidarity within the Ayni Ruway network, theater is used to introduce Ayni Ruway to new communities.

Phullay is also embodied in the publication of Quechua newspapers. Newspapers are written by Ayni Ruway members in the various communities. One member will dictate and another, a literate *campesino*, will write down articles about current community events and popular stories in Quechua. Other *campesinos* will draw scenes from local Andean life. Once the newspaper is prepared, it is taken to the city and printed by the outside team and then distributed in the community as an organ of popular cultural expression.

Newspapers are exchanged and shared among the communities of the Ayni Ruway network. The process of creating and circulating newspapers instills pride, self-confidence, and solidarity in Quechua communities. It also presents incentives and opportunities for self-expression and for maintaining Quechua culture. The Ayni Ruway newspaper experience has demonstrated that a native who speaks both Spanish and Quechua and writes Spanish can easily learn to write in Quechua.

Ayni Ruway, among its other cultural activities, also supports ritual practices, traditional holidays, and local fairs in which participation had waned. These activities are another means of fostering cultural solidarity. Ayni Ruway has also encouraged the restoration of "sacred local places." For instance, it promotes the repair of old shrines and, in one case, of cemetery gates. This type of activity does not produce goods, but it

helps create favorable conditions and attitudes for economic development projects.

Spin-offs

Due to its success, Ayni Ruway is attracting attention. Last year, for example, in the anniversary issue of the Cochabamba daily newspaper, there was a major article on Ayni Ruway. The Bolivian Ministry of Education has asked the group to provide it with technical assistance in nonformal education through Quechua theater. In addition, the Ministry has encouraged school teachers to establish *ayni wasis*, *pirwas*, and Quechua theater groups.

Ayni Ruway is also spreading geographically. The group is expanding its network to the wool-producing, Quechua-speaking areas of northern Argentina. It has also recently gone into some of the most traditional and isolated regions in Bolivia, working with the ethnic groups generally outside the reach of other development programs. As it grows, Ayni Ruway is creating a new and hopeful chapter in Latin American rural development.

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The Foundation's First Grant

David Valenzuela

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During the Inter-American Foundation's first ten years of operation, it has made approximately 1,000 grants to organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean. Its first grant was made in November 1971 to a fishing cooperative in Peru, the Cooperativa Pesquera Chimbote (COOPESCHI). The cooperative had been formed by 43 fishermen in 1970 who were interested in developing a commercial fishing enterprise that could supply the growing market of Chimbote, a coastal city 200 miles north of Lima. The Foundation's grant of \$68,000 helped the group purchase its first fishing boat.

Eight years later, the Foundation's representative for Peru, David Valenzuela, was visiting another grant project in Chimbote and decided to see what had happened to COOPESCHI. This is his report.

After some detective work, I was able to locate the present COOPESCHI offices in a small garage next to the docks. My finding the office was a stroke of luck since COOPESCHI had moved twice since it had last communicated with the Foundation.

I found COOPESCHI in good health, although somewhat reduced in size. With three fishing boats in sailing condition, the cooperative's members appeared to be in good spirits and earning a reasonable living. COOPESCHI had successfully weathered a long period of hard times. About the time that the IAF grant enabled COOPESCHI to purchase its first boat, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) provided funds for a second vessel. COOPESCHI then took out a substantial loan to buy a third vessel so that productive employment could be provided to all its members.

Not long after COOPESCHI purchased the third boat, however, the Peruvian fishing industry entered a period of prolonged crisis. A shift in ocean currents combined with severe overfishing led to the virtual disappearance of the anchovy from the coast of Peru. The loss of the anchovy harvest, coupled with the government's erratic conservation efforts, forced a large share of the country's fishing operations into bankruptcy.

COOPESCHI's problems were compounded, first by the need to use a substantial portion of the group's sharply reduced income to repay its loan, and second by the burning out of the engine on one of its boats. COOPESCHI, moreover, lost the services of its manager because it could not afford his salary.

Membership in the cooperative dropped by more than one-half as the fishermen left to seek other employment. But even as their earnings fell, the remaining members chose to hang on in the hope they could sustain the enterprise and preserve their jobs. The members took most of the administrative

tasks into their own hands, assisted only by a secretary and part-time accountant.

With obvious satisfaction, Abraham Morales, COOPESCHI's president, explained to me that with hard work and sacrifice these problems had been overcome. The co-op was able to keep two boats operating continuously and was eventually able to generate sufficient savings to purchase a new motor for the third boat. Recently, there has been an upsurge in fishing potential, including a new abundance of sardines and other larger species—and all three boats are working at capacity. COOPESCHI has rebuilt its membership to 28 fishermen and is now thinking about again hiring a manager.

I was invited to visit the boats and see them in operation. After walking out to the dock and taking a small taxi launch, we arrived at the COOPESCHI IV, the steel-hulled boat purchased with the Foundation grant. Now seven years old, the COOPESCHI IV is in remarkably good condition, as are the cooperative's other vessels.

COOPESCHI is now planning to establish a small fish processing operation, including a cold storage facility, which would permit the cooperative to store and freeze part of its catch for later sale. This would increase the income of cooperative members and open the way for a further increase in membership by creating new employment opportunities.

IAF's Support for Health Activities

The Inter-American Foundation recently invited Sandra Huffman, an assistant professor of international health at Johns Hopkins University, to review its grants in support of health activities. Since the Foundation does not allocate its funds by sector, Dr. Huffman's first task was simply to compile a list of those Foundation grants directed toward health improvement efforts. The review is preliminary in that it was based on information from grant files and interviews with Foundation staff, and its findings still need to be verified by field studies. A summary of Dr. Huffman's report is presented below.

During the past ten years some ten per cent of the Foundation's grants have supported organizations concerned with the health problems of poor communities in Latin America and the Caribbean. Grants have financed activities to reduce malnutrition, improve basic sanitary conditions, and extend health care services. Brazil was the location of the largest number of health projects; about twenty per cent of all grants in that country included a component for health.

The Foundation's grants for health can be classified into four areas: community health services, health education, child care, and water and sanitation. In addition, the Foundation has supported projects for crop diversification and the introduction of vegetable gardening, which may be contributing to improved diets and health.

Expanding and improving community health services were the objectives of nearly 30 projects. The most innovative and significant of these were 15 grants for the training of local health workers to serve in their own communities. These health workers are introducing a range of preventive health measures and have the ability to handle most of the community's curative needs. The projects are designed to provide low-cost health

services and encourage community participation in health improvement efforts. Some are combining traditional and modern practices in imaginative ways. The projects are expected to become financially self-sufficient since it has been shown time after time that poor people seek out and are prepared to pay for health services.

One grant in rural Maranhão, Brazil supported the training of some 200 community workers, at a cost of about \$160 each, in preventive health, sanitation, first aid, and the treatment of common medical problems. The communities themselves selected the persons for training and were also responsible for establishing committees that would manage sanitation, health equipment, and a rotating fund to purchase medicine. Another grant provided for the training of 20 health workers in a community in the Sierra Nevada mountains of Colombia. Similar efforts have been supported in Mexico, Bolivia, and Nicaragua.

Medical professionals provided services in clinics in 12 health care projects. Besides serving as a location for medical care, the clinics were established as settings for other community activities. In most of these projects, government financing was expected to become a continuing source of support.

One such project in a poor neighborhood on the outskirts of Chihuahua, Mexico resulted in substantial health improvements. A clinic run by a nurse offered health services to children under five. These services, which cost about seven dollars each year per child, focused on preventive measures including periodic check-ups, vaccinations, and nutrition education. The project's success in reducing mortality led the state government to introduce the program in public clinics throughout the city.

Nearly 50 projects supported health education, usually as one component in a larger community education effort. It is difficult to generalize about the great

variety of health education projects that were assisted, but the Foundation may have overestimated the contribution that education alone can make to health. Experience elsewhere suggests that education is ineffective in altering health-related behavior unless it is provided with other health and medical services.

Some 15 projects were directed to the provision of child-care services. Besides allowing mothers to take jobs outside the home, the projects sought to improve the health of the children by providing them with supervision, medical care, and meals. These projects appear to have generated considerable cooperation among mothers in many of the communities.

Several of the child care projects were supported in São Paulo, Brazil in response to the concerns expressed by mothers employed in local factories about the care of their children.

8 Six projects for improving water supply or sanitation facilities were funded by the Foundation in Central America and Mexico. Water and sanitation projects were expected to contribute importantly to health improvement by reducing diarrhea—a major cause of child death. The communities themselves requested the projects, participated in their design and development, and so far have kept them in good working order.

With the possible exception of its support for health education, the Foundation's grants—particularly those that have helped to train community health workers—have been demonstrating new and less costly ways of providing health care in poor communities. They offer curative and preventive services, have achieved strong community backing, and are moving toward self-sufficiency. There are reasons to expect that the projects are leading to substantial improvements in the health conditions and lives of the people they were designed to serve.

These preliminary conclusions still need to be verified by field visits, but

Peruvian child wearing typical *altiplano* hat.

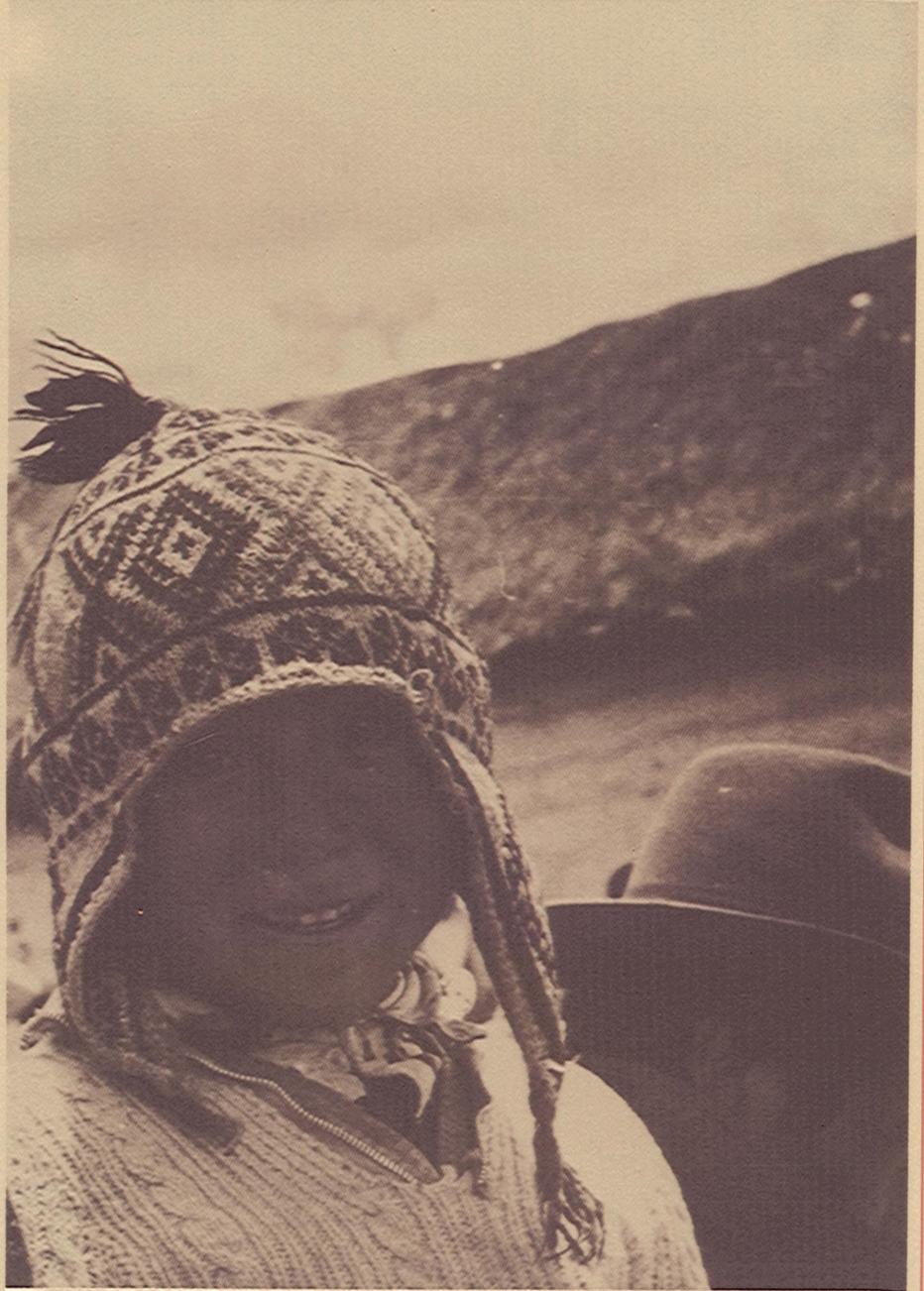


Photo courtesy of the Centro de Estudios y Desarrollo Rural.

they should help to dispel the notions that health projects must be designed and managed by nurses and doctors,

that traditional and modern practices are incompatible, and that health services cannot be made self-sufficient.

Bypassing the Patrón

Patrick Breslin

"El patrón?" Narciso Severo repeated. He rolled the word on his tongue curiously, as if trying to identify some half-forgotten taste. "We don't use that word around here very much now," he finally said. Around him, seven other Paraguayan campesinos nodded. They were seated on light wooden chairs outside their cooperative general store in the rural community of Ciervo Cua Aribada, discussing the changes in their lives since they had formed their agricultural committee four years before. They agreed that one of the most important was the change in their relationship with the owner of the store down the road—the man they once called "mi patrón." And as the word has faded gradually from the daily conversation of these campesinos, so too has a social institution that long held them, and still holds millions like them throughout Latin America, in grinding peonage.

The agricultural committee in Ciervo Cua Aribada is one of some 50 in the rural areas of Caazapá and Guairá near the city of Villarica, some 175 kilometers southeast of Asunción. Many of the committees benefit from a grant provided by the Inter-American Foundation to the Centro Paraguayo de Cooperativistas (CPC), a small, private and non-profit organization which seeks to promote the spread of cooperatives among Paraguay's poorest peasants. The Foundation's support, totalling \$795,000 since 1976, is helping the CPC in its work for change in the Paraguayan countryside.

The goal of the CPC's program was to free peasants from their dependency on the patrón, the commercial middleman in the countryside. The peasant was bound to the patrón, typically the owner of a store selling basic commodities, by a process seemingly as natural and implacable as the progression of the seasons. In the spring, the peasant would buy seed and fertilizer from the patrón on credit. During the summer, he and

his family would live on the goods purchased from the patrón's store, also on credit. By harvest season, the peasant was deeply in debt, and obligated to sell his crop through the patrón.

At each step of the process, the patrón set the prices and the peasant acquiesced. He had no choice.

"The only solution," Miguel Angel Verdecchia, director and one of the founding members of CPC, explained, "was for the campesino to have some control both when he buys the goods he needs to live and work, and when he sells his produce."

The solution CPC proposed was to cut into the circular relationship by giving the campesinos access to a fund from which they could draw the credit they needed to plant their crops and feed and clothe their families while they awaited the harvest. If the campesinos could get through that period without borrowing from the local patrón, the CPC staff reasoned, they would not be obligated to sell their crops to the patrón, but instead would be able to look for the best prices available.

The CPC approach was one that had evolved over several years. The four field workers who make up the core of CPC had been active in various development efforts in Paraguay since 1963. Out of their experience grew the conviction that participation by the peasant was the key to any successful development effort. "The problems we're talking about are the peasants' problems, not ours," said Verdecchia. "It's no good for us to drop in like parachutists to try to solve some problem. We don't live there. It is the people who have to be involved in solving their own problems."

"A key part of our work," Verdecchia explained, "is to help people develop an organization which they can manage, an organization that grows out of their capacities and experiences, rather than one imposed on them. We can help transmit resources to them, such as



credit, as well as help them take advantage of existing public or private services, like extension and health. We can also offer education through our training center.”

Because CPC owned land and buildings suitable for a training center near Villarica, and because CPC personnel had experience and contacts in that area, they decided to begin working there.

It is an area typical of much of rural eastern Paraguay. Most of the peasants live in precarious conditions, barely subsisting from one year to the next. Most are illiterate. Guaraní, rather than Spanish, is the principal language. The vast majority of the peasants do not have title to the land they work and are constantly vulnerable to the threat of eviction. The

incomes they receive from their crops of cotton, soybeans, and corn are generally not enough to support their families. Most of the men leave their own plots two or more days a week to work as hired laborers, or *changar* in rural Paraguayan idiom.

These two rural institutions—the *patrón* and the need to *changar*—are related, and they weigh heavily on the *campesinos*. The eternal debt which the *patrón* relationship creates guarantees that a mass of impoverished *campesinos* is available as a cheap rural work force.

The area around Villarica, like much of rural Paraguay, is an area experiencing new and unprecedented pressures, particularly pressure on the land.

Paraguay was always a land-rich coun-

try in comparison with its population. As recently as ten years ago, only two per cent of the country was under cultivation. Unlike peasants in many other countries, whose roots to their tiny plots reach back into precolonial times, the peasants of Paraguay have been mobile. In the years after Independence, much of Paraguayan land was held by the state and allocated for the peasants’ use. After the disastrous War of the Triple Alliance (1865-1870), when Paraguay was overwhelmed by the combined armies of Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay, the debt-ridden government began selling off huge tracts of land to foreign companies interested in exploiting the country’s forest and agricultural resources, particularly *yerba mate*. Often, small farmers could settle on this land,

clear it by slash-and-burn techniques, and begin to grow their subsistence crops. In many cases, the companies tolerated such squatters because they provided a convenient labor pool.

Thus, while only a small minority of peasants held title to their land, most were not overly concerned about their precarious legal status. There was always more land to clear somewhere with axe and fire, and perhaps there would be three years of good crops before the soil thinned. Like the forest Indians who were the original inhabitants of what is now Paraguay, the seminomadic *campesino* tended to view land as a natural element, like air or water, used by all but owned permanently by no one.

Paraguay's current participation with Brazil and Argentina in the construction of two massive hydroelectric dams has attracted large investments and introduced deep changes in the economy. The land frontier in Paraguay has closed, or very nearly so. With an earlier decline in the market for *yerba*, and later for wood, the families and companies that had bought huge tracts of state land in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries began selling their holdings. From the mid-1960s on, they sold either to medium-sized farmers or to transnational agribusinesses from the United States, Japan, and Europe. These firms have introduced mechanized agriculture for the production of export crops on a large scale.

Meanwhile, so many land-hungry Brazilian settlers have been moving across the eastern border that they are a major cause of Paraguay's population growth. Large landowners, who have permitted squatters in the past, now evict them in order to sell land to the Brazilians.

Additional competition for the available land comes from Paraguayans who had settled in Argentina or gone there for seasonal work. Frustrated by declining employment opportunities in that

country and its roaring inflation rate, they are returning to Paraguay and seeking land.

The result has been a rapid increase in the price of rural land in Paraguay. Cropland that cost as little as \$10 to \$15 a hectare only two decades ago now costs from \$150 to \$350.

Given these growing pressures on the Paraguayan *campesino*, the CPC workers found fertile ground for their proposal to form agricultural committees to use the credit available through the Foundation grant. The appeal of the committees, moreover, was related not only to the current problems, but to cooperative traditions like the *minga*, the pattern of communal work which traces back to the Indian cultures of Paraguay.

That tradition began to weaken about 15 years ago when cash crops like soybeans and cotton started to replace subsistence agriculture. The suggestion of renewed cooperative work by the CPC promoters, however, struck responsive chords. In addition, many of the rural communities around Villarica had participated in church-guided movements in the previous decade which had stressed communal work experiences.

Thus, rather than introduce an unfamiliar new structure, CPC was building on the experiences and traditions of the peasants themselves. To generate funds for the committees, CPC staff proposed a communal plot where all members would donate some work days with profits going to the committee. Peasants who had participated in *mingas*, helping their neighbors at planting and harvesting time, easily understood the concept of the communal plot.

When the CPC began to publicize its plan for forming agricultural committees, partly by word of mouth and partly by radio announcements, there was a quick response. The initial meetings were well attended, in some cases by *campesinos* from beyond the region in which the CPC promoters had originally envisioned

working.

The agricultural committee helped establish small general stores in each community with the help of loans from the Foundation grant. A typical store is the one in Arroyo Moretí, a small community of 30 or 40 houses strung out beside a long L-shaped clearing in the forest near Paso Yobai east of Villarica. It carries an assortment of basic necessities—flour and sugar, matches, canned food, cloth, tobacco, *yerba mate*, batteries for flashlights or radios, aspirin, and perhaps a few other medicines. Each week two committee members take turns tending for three hours a day.

Committee members receive an average of 15,000 *guaranies*, roughly \$110, in production loans, spread out over five or six installments rather than a lump sum. The money covers the basic needs of the members and their families during the growing season. When their crops come in, they must pay back the loan out of their profits. Since the credit originally goes to the committee, rather than directly to the member, the committee has to repay if an individual cannot. This brings social pressure on a member who becomes careless about managing his money or his crops.

By not dealing with a *patrón*, peasants found they paid substantially less for supplies and received substantially more for the crops. "Before we didn't know what things cost," said several members of the Arroyo Moretí committee. "With the store, we see that the old *patrón* always marked up prices at least 20 per cent, sometimes as much as 30 per cent. Also, we never received the market price for our crops. We would usually just get half that price."

"We only knew the *precio ruta*—the price on the side of the road," said Narciso Severo in Ciervo Cua Aribada. "We didn't know what the prices were in Asunción. Or we would get the Holy Week price. The *patrones* all knew that for Holy Week the *campesinos* wanted

to have a little money to celebrate with. Each year, just at Holy Week, the price of cotton would drop but the *campesino* would sell anyway, because he wanted to have a *fiesta*."

"Before, in the house of my *patrón*, I bought dear and sold cheap. He helped us when we were in need, and in return we had to buy and sell with him. Now it is not like that. We buy what we need in our own store, where we know the measures are true. And when we sell, we know what the real prices are. We don't have to accept what the merchant says they are."

Severo's words were echoed in interviews with some two score *campesinos* throughout the region. When asked what changes the organization of the committees had made in their lives, the *campesinos* also invariably mentioned their increased awareness of the need to plan work.

"Before the committee," said Amado Anzuategui, "we worked without direction, without a plan." Anzuategui and his friends live in the small community of Tuna where they grow tobacco which they ship to merchants in Paso Yubai. "The merchants encouraged us to grow tobacco," Anzuategui recalled. "It was too much work and not enough income, but we didn't understand what we were investing in the work. When we formed the committee, we analyzed how much work we put in, and what we received for it at the end of the year. And we saw that we shouldn't continue growing tobacco as the merchants wanted us to do. We saw that we would do better planting cotton. An agronomist from the CPC showed us the correct techniques for planting it, and how to use insecticides," Anzuategui reported. "That was important," he said. "Before, one of the farmers here had tried to grow cotton without insecticides, and there were so many worms that he was afraid to go into his field."

Victor Martínez, another member of

the Tuna committee, pointed out two other improvements: first, the passing of the need to *changar* and, second, greater ability of members to handle their own affairs.

"Before, we always had to go out to look for work," he said. "But it wasn't that easy to find. I remember once walking for three days, and no one along the road would give us anything to eat. I finally had to come home, with my feet swollen and my stomach shrunken. If you did find work, you would be paid, at most, 120 *guaranies* (less than \$1) a day and sometimes you would have to give part of that to a contractor. And when we did make a little money, we didn't know how to handle it. We didn't think of the future, of investing it in a calf or two, for example. Instead, we would try to drink dry every cantina we could find.

"Now, with the committee, I have learned how much I lost in those years. I'm careful with my money now, and even though I've got children to support, I'm able to save up and buy animals which I could never seem to do when I was single."

With the need to *changar* diminished, committee members report they have more time to work on their own crops, and to spend with their families and friends. Besides helping strengthen the family unit, the appearance of the committees has also helped break down rural isolation among members. "Before, we didn't have anywhere to go to get help," said Tomás Olmedo, a member of a small but ambitious committee in Ciervo Cua Guasú, south of Villarica. "We lived very individualistically. Now, if a member gets sick, there's someone to extend a hand."

More material changes were cited as well. The availability of credit has permitted many of the committee members to invest in machinery, and in some cases, to begin new profit-making activities. "Before, we ground manioc by hand," said a member in Tuna. "We beat

corn with a stick. Now we have proper machinery. We've overcome a lot."

Just a couple of hundred yards from the center of Tuna stands a sawmill. The sheds housing it are ramshackle and makeshift, but the machinery inside is oiled and well cared for.

"We wanted to make some use of all that wood wasted when we cleared the forest for planting," explained one member. So the members contributed, and with credit from the CPC, we bought the motor for the sawmill. We're selling the wood now to pay back the loan. Once it's paid, we plan to use the wood for our own houses."

Tomás Olmedo in Ciervo Cua Guasú remembered that before the committee, "We didn't even have an axe. Now we have a power saw which we can all use." His committee is planning to buy equipment for a small sugar mill, an investment of perhaps as much as half a million *guaranies* (almost \$3,700). "We plan to grow a lot of sugar cane," Olmedo explained. "And the other *campesinos* around here would use the mill as well. We're better off if we can process our crops ourselves. There's a market for sugar cane syrup, and the stalks that remain can be used for fuel and also for animal feed."

Most of the members interviewed noticed changes in themselves as well as in the conditions of their lives. They see themselves as different from many of their neighbors who have not joined the committees. "We have a sense of responsibility," said one member in Arroyo Moretí. "We enjoy being together like brothers. Many of the others are more individualistic. They don't have confidence in other people. Sometimes not even in themselves."

Much of that confidence has come through courses in organization and management taught at the CPC training center east of Villarica. The center, four concrete buildings on high ground with a sweeping view of Paraguayan forest

CPC members weighing grain.

Photo courtesy of CPC.



and farmland, offers courses tailored to the needs of the committees. Within each committee, production, supply, marketing, and financing teams were set up. Then courses were designed to train the members of each team in their respective functions. Since team assignments can rotate, many committee members eventually learn the whole array of skills.

Although these and other benefits of the CPC program are cited frequently, the *campesinos* invariably come back to what is for them the most significant change—their success in cutting the ties with their old *patrón*. “No longer do we have to go and beg the *patrón* for food on credit, for a bit of clothing,” said one *campesino* in Arroyo Moretí. “Before,” said another in Ciervo Cua Guasú, “the

patrón bought cotton from us at half the official price. Now he comes and asks for our business. He wants us to ship our cotton to market in his truck.”

Down the road in Ciervo Cua Aribada, Narciso Severo said, “Now it’s not what the old *patrón* wants. If his shipping rates are too high, we look for someone else. Now he has to lower his prices to compete.”

Verdecchia agrees that the change in the *patrón* relationship, for those *campesinos* organized in committees, is a fundamental one, but he points out that it is as yet only a limited change, and that even higher hurdles loom ahead. One is land. Over 90 per cent of committee members do not have clear title to the land they work. Government land reform efforts have been plagued by confusion. Small farmers will not significantly expand cultivation unless the land tenure situation is cleared up.

In one instance, however, a committee successfully negotiated with the company owning the land they worked and reached agreement on a schedule of payments to buy it. The company originally wanted to push them off. "Without the committee," one member said, "it would have been resolved by force. We would have been kicked off. Having the organization, we could send a delegation to Asunción to present our case, and we finally reached agreement."

There is also a potential political problem arising from the increasing membership of the committees. So far, the relatively small size of the movement has certain advantages. Partly because only about five per cent of the *campesinos* in the region served by CPC are organized in the committees, they have thus far not been affected by political pressures or restrictions.

Efforts are now being made to strengthen the committees, including attempts to involve other family members, particularly women. In several cases, men have left the committees because of pressure within the home from wives who do not understand the need for hours spent at meetings or in the store, or days devoted to work in the communal plot or clearing roads through the forest. In one case, a farmer discovered his wife was surreptitiously selling their cotton crop because she did not understand he was holding it off the market until the price rose. Thus, the involve-

ment and education of rural women has become a priority.

Other steps have been taken to combine the efforts and experiences of the various committees, first at a zonal, then at a regional level, in order to provide greater leverage when crops are sold. The initial steps were taken during the first year when committees in adjacent areas combined their produce to guarantee a large enough volume to make truck rentals economical. After the second year of operation, a zonal coordination committee was set up, and the CPC turned over to it responsibility for evaluating projects and credit applications from the individual committees. Final decisions, however, stayed with the CPC.

A year later, a regional coordination committee took shape, with two members from each of the seven zones that had been established. At that time, CPC transferred responsibility for decisions on credit allocation to the committee.

The regional structure now in place can effectively negotiate with large-scale processors of agricultural products. It can benefit in some cases from the extra commissions that processors pay to agents who coordinate large-scale deliveries. And it can buy in bulk at big savings such basic supplies as fertilizer, insecticides, and seeds for distribution to the local committees. The regional organization and zonal and local organizations, however, are still informal bodies, with no legal standing. The CPC still must act as the legally responsible party in such matters as contracts.

Thus, the next step is to formally constitute the agricultural committees as cooperatives. In the project's early stages, the CPC promoters decided to encourage informal organizing rather than legal cooperatives. They believed a sophisticated structure with complex record keeping and detailed legal statutes might be too cumbersome for the fledgling committees. The cooperative structure, they believed, should

grow from the experiences and increasing capabilities of the committees. Both the promoters and the members interviewed think the moment has now arrived to form cooperatives.

"In about a year, the changeover to cooperatives will have taken place," Verdecchia said last November. "The committees are at the point now where they want to become cooperatives, and in fact need to. Legal status will give them more protection against possible political pressure, as well as certain tax benefits and protection in legal disputes over contracts."

In six years, some 1,000 of the poorest peasants in Paraguay have moved gradually from utter dependence on *patrones* to organization in legal cooperatives which will increase their control over their economic and social conditions. The experience suggests that there were certain ingredients in the CPC approach which contributed to success in a field where failures are more common. One characteristic of the CPC approach is enormous patience and attention to detail. It seems that nothing was rushed. From the beginning, the emphasis was placed on participation by the peasants themselves, and as a result, ideas and organizations developed at the pace and scale with which the peasants felt comfortable, based on traditions familiar to them.

Whether the successes achieved to date will eventually translate into a solution for the most basic problem facing the peasants—control of the land—remains to be seen.

Patrick Breslin, a free-lance writer from Washington, D.C., frequently writes about Latin America, where he has lived and worked.

A Haitian Peasant's Dilemma

Roland Lamy

The Inter-American Foundation has made several grants in Haiti to community organizations that are using non-formal adult education techniques of animation rurale and consciousness-raising to assist peasants to improve their social and economic conditions. This fictionalized account of a day in the life of a Haitian peasant named Zo examines the firmly entrenched and intimidating system of exploitative human relationships that work as a serious constraint to grassroots, community development initiatives.

This account describes cultural, social, and economic values that are quite different from those most Americans know. It tries to make us see what hundreds of thousands of "Zo's" in rural Haitian society face each day. Roland Lamy is a priest who has been actively involved for many years with development and change initiatives in Haiti.

Zo woke that morning before daylight. This was a little unusual for him because he usually rose when the daylight seeped through the cracks in the mud walls of his house. When he rose before daylight, he had to light the lamp, and the *gaz rouge* (diesel gas) cost money, of which he had none to waste.

But today, he would have a lot to do, and he needed more time than the daylight would permit him.

When his feet touched the hard packed earth floor, Zo thought of the bottle that was buried there for the *loas* (gods) and thanked them for the restful night and for the protection he had received from all sorts of ills. He pulled on his old work pants—all full of holes, but they hung together—and put on his red and black shirt to give him strength and courage from the *loas*. Then he made the sign of the cross to ask God's blessing for the hard day ahead. He picked up the clay jar with water in it to

wash out his mouth. He dropped a bit on the ground for the dead who needed assurance that he thought of them. He put on his hat, picked up his *macouti* (pouch) and his machete. Slipping out of the door without making noise so as not to wake the children, he went out back to see if his wife had something hot for him to drink. When he got to the kitchen, coffee was ready. He drank a small cup well sugared, picked up a piece of cassava, and munched on it. Not much was said.

He began to walk to his garden, one hour away. He wanted to see the corn he had planted there. He also wanted to check whether any had been stolen; if so, he would have to harvest as soon as possible. Also he had to see if his neighbor François had let his animals run free; if so, they had probably eaten some of the corn. If it happened, he would see to it that he would get his due. After all, this wasn't an easy life, and he needed some money badly because he was going to a meeting tonight where he wanted to show his interest in community affairs by depositing one *gourde* (20 cents) into a communal savings account. It wouldn't do to let all the others deposit, while he just sat there and looked on. Tomorrow was market day, and his wife would feel cheated if he did not come up with another *gourde* for her to buy some things. They had about all they needed to eat, but they could not grow oil, salt, or cloth. He did have two *gourdes* hidden away, but he wanted to use this money to bet on the cock fights on Sunday. Aristomene was to put his rooster in the ring. He was sure that he would win because he had a dream last night in which his grandfather had told him so. Too bad he did not have more money so he could make even more.

When he got to the crossroads, he stumbled. "Oh, oh. Now what is happening?" That was really a bad sign. Someone must be out to get him. There were a lot of people who seemed to be

your friends but who were always envious of the little that you had, even if it was nothing at all! But if they attacked you through the bocor (voodoo priest), there was nothing for you to do. But just who was trying to get at him? And what for? If he noticed anything else today, he would also go to see Ti-Cousin; he could tell him what it was all about as he was a bocor who was very powerful around here.

This was really a hard life, and an honest man was really in difficulty all the time. Not enough money, not enough land. Why had he been born this way? Really, there was no justice in this life. All was destined before you even arrived, and that was your lot. He was as intelligent as the other fellow. He should be able to get as much as the other man. But no, his lot was not to have much. You had to accept this, but it was very hard to accept.

He was half way to his garden by this time, and the sun was beginning to shine. It would be a nice day, that was something good.

"Bonjour, compère (godfather). Et la nuit, et la famille?"

"Bien compère Jean, grace a Die." There was his *compère* who had just come out of a side path and was also on his way to his garden a short way down the path. "What's new with you?"

"Not that much really, everything is always the same as yesterday. Going to the meeting tonight?"

"Oh yes, I wouldn't miss it for anything. Since we have started the small group, to help ourselves and the community, I don't know but I find that we are kind of waking up to a new light. What do you think?"

"To tell you the truth, I think the same thing. I seem to see that maybe things will change a little around here and that we can at least do something to help ourselves and our families and the people around us. You know it isn't easy. But as they were saying at the meeting

last time, we have to realize that we are men and that we should decide what we should do with our lives."

"Yes, that is true. But do you remember that the *animateur* (community social activist) told us the other day that whether we wanted to change things was a question that we should decide for ourselves. If we do, we have to take responsibility for our lives and lead them accordingly. We have to make the decisions and not have them made for us by events or people who are only interested in their own welfare."

"That is very true. But I just don't see how we can do it."

"Well, you know I think things will not go that far. After all, you and I know that some things will come whether we want them or not. I think it is a question of waiting to see."

"Maybe you can do that, but I hate to have the *animateur* let us think that we can do certain things and then find out that this is just another trap. It has happened so often that I am very wary of these people who talk nicely. I just don't like being led down a path."

"Yes, but these people who are always telling us what we should do, what we should think, are they really different from us? We know certain things. We have been able to survive in this kind of world because we found out the hard way how to get things done. Why could we not come to a point where we take decisions concerning our own lives ourselves?"

"Yes, I guess we should be able to help ourselves a little more. But how are we going to do it?"

"To tell you the truth, right now I cannot tell you. I am quite sure that in time we will come to find solutions that we can use to improve our lives. Right now we are in such a helpless situation that we have to accept everything that is imposed on us. Why shouldn't we be able to get out of this?"

"I admit it, and that is why I am going

along with these community meetings, but I sure hope that we do something to help my doubting mind."

"O.K., so this is where I turn off, Zo. I'll see you tonight at the meeting."

"O.K. Jean, I'll see you tonight."

So Zo continued on to his garden which was not too far away now. When he got there, he stood in the path enjoying the look of the garden. They were having just enough rain this year. He could smell the garden, and he could almost feel the corn growing. He took off the vine that was binding the gate and entered the garden. It wasn't that big. He was only renting a small parcel from Monsieur Thadee who lives in town. M. Thadee had asked Zo if he would like to buy it. Zo had said that he did not have the money for that now, but that he would think about it and let him know later. That had been two years ago. But if he kept M. Thadee thinking that he would buy the land—he had been renting it for 15 years—maybe he could rent it for many more years. This piece of land did not really interest him enough for him to buy it; it was too far from his home.

When he got to the end of the garden, he heard a noise. And all of a sudden he saw François's donkey chomping away, eating his corn. The donkey was so fat that it must have been there all night eating as if it owned the corn. Zo stood dumbfounded for a second, then he let out a yell and pulled out his machete. He was going to kill that donkey. At that moment François appeared. The donkey froze, and Zo was able to catch it by the rope that hung around its neck.

"So this is how much respect you have for your neighbors, François. I suspected that you let your animal roam around in my garden. This morning I came earlier and was able to find the animal here. So now you will have to pay me for the damage. Not even the *chef de section* (an appointed local official) will be able to save you, even if he is

your *compère*.”

“I did not put that animal in your garden. It must have broken its rope during the night. It wasn't my fault.”

“Broken the rope during the night! Do I look like someone who has no eyes? Where do you see a broken rope here? And how come it got through your corn field to get to mine without eating any of your corn? And who knocked down my good fence? No animal could do that. So now you will have to pay.”

“Zo, you are making a lot of noise for nothing. The donkey did not even eat a handful of corn. You know that. So what are you crying about? If you want I can give you 50 *centimes* (ten cents) for the damage, and we will talk no more about it.”

“Fifty *centimes*! Are you blind? You know very well that the corn it has eaten would have given me at least ten *marmites* that I could have sold for 25 *gourdes*, and that makes 25 *gourdes* I am losing. No wonder you can get rich by cheating us poor people! What makes you think you can get away with it?”

“Well, for one thing, this is my neighborhood. You are a stranger here!”

“Stranger! I have been here for 15 years!”

“Yes, but you do not own anything here, so you are an intruder. And I am planning to go to see Monsieur Thadee to buy that piece of land this week.”

“Oh, so that is how things are? Now I can see everything very clearly. I have worked this land and shown that it can produce something worthwhile, and now you would like to profit from my work. If you think that I'm going to let you get it, you are really crazy, François.”

“If the land was that good, you would have bought it a long time ago. But you have nothing to say about this. It is a thing to be settled between Monsieur Thadee and myself. Little boys should not concern themselves about men's problems.”

“You cannot talk to me like that! Just

Hat vendor in Croix, Fer, Haiti.

Photo by Robert Maguire.



Marketplace in Le Borgne, Haiti.

Photo by Robert Maguire.



because you own land here does not mean that you can dominate me. I am as much a man as you are. I will talk about this at the meeting this evening, and we will see what we will see."

"Oh, yes, that is right. You belong to the community group, and you think that with all those meetings you will change things around here. Who do you people think you are? The president of the country?"

Zo took off with the donkey, not listening to François's protests and menacing words. It was not too far to the *chef de section's* house, and he was soon there. After showing the donkey and explaining how everything had happened, he said he had lost at least ten *marmites* of corn and he would take nothing less than 15 *gourdes* for the damages. The *chef de section* said that he really believed everything Zo had told him, but he could not judge the case without hearing François's side of the story.

"I'm quite sure that everything you say is true, Zo, but who is to give you the money? Not myself, that is for sure. So I will send my aide to get François."

"But I will have to pay two *gourdes* for that!"

"I know, but it is the rule, so we cannot change that."

"Rule, rule. It is always the poor who pay. There is no justice around here, though you try to do your best, *chef*. I am not complaining for that, you know."

"Well, what are we going to do? If I keep the donkey here, you will have to pay for my feeding him also, you know. You decide."

"O.K., I'll go and get the money. Prepare the summons."

So Zo took off. He used all the short cuts he knew to get home quickly. But word of the fight between Zo and François had gotten around. Everybody he met asked him how things were going, and he had to explain his story to everyone he saw. That took some time. Most of the people agreed that he was within

his rights. But since François was involved, they didn't give Zo much of a chance of coming out on top.

Arriving at the house, he went to his secret place and got the two *gourdes* that were there. His wife had just returned from the river where she had gone to wash the clothes with her two youngest daughters. She also questioned him and asked him to back down because, in the end, he would be the loser, and they would all have to suffer. You never knew what a man like François could do to you. He was very powerful around here. Even if Zo did win now, in the long run he would be the loser, and his family would have to suffer for it. Better to lose a little thing now than to be sorry for the rest of their lives.

But Zo would have nothing to do with this. He was going to win.

What Zo did not know was that as soon as he left, François appeared from behind the *chef de section's* house. He had taken a short cut and arrived before Zo, so he heard everything that was being said. When he appeared, the *chef de section* offered him a chair and asked him how the problem could be solved. "Well," said François, "you heard the story he told you, but he is just imagining things. The donkey had certainly not been in his garden that long. It was in my yard when I got up this morning, and I had just gotten to my garden when I heard all this commotion. I went to see what it was all about and was very surprised to see my donkey there. I really did not believe that it was mine until I saw the markings on it. And I have been really asking myself if it is not Zo who took the donkey from my yard and brought it there to get me into trouble. You know how these people are. They do not want to work, so they have to do something to get money. But I am wise to them. I offered him 50 *centimes* to repay the damage. It is really not more than that even if he says that it is very much more. I am really ready to go

before the judge in the city if he expects me to pay more than what I saw. After all, there were no other witnesses. We were the only ones there. So I know that I can leave everything in your hands, and I'm sure that whatever you say will be all right."

François left. The *chef de section* was in a quandry. He could not go against François's wishes, but again he had also to give Zo some satisfaction. He knew quite well that Zo was telling the truth, but François could make him lose his job. So he had to watch out for his interests as well as François's and Zo's. With all these community groups being formed, he also had to contend with them. They thought that everyone should receive the same treatment, that the law was the same for everyone. These groups took themselves very seriously, and you could never know what they would do. When Zo reappeared, the judge still had no solution to the problem.

"Well, Zo, what have you decided?"

"Well, I have heard so much advice since I left here that I do not know quite what to do. But I still think that we should send the summons. We cannot let everyone step on us because we are poor. Here are the two *gourdes*. Now, I'm a reasonable man, and I know that I shouldn't expect too much. So I am ready to bargain about the damages."

"O.K., glad to see you in a more reasonable state of mind. I will send the summons, but I do not know if François will appear today. I am quite sure that he will not be around when the aide brings the summons. Could we not just ask for a meeting here tomorrow morning, and I could send him the animal so that you do not have to pay for its keep?"

"Well, I guess we could do it that way if you think it is best, but I am counting on you to help me tomorrow when we meet."

"O.K., we will do that."

Zo hadn't left the *chef de section's*

house for more than ten minutes before he learned everything that went on when he had gone to get the money. Now he knew that he had spent much of his day about nothing, and he was just hoping to get back his expenses. He had to get busy to get some food for supper. He had not had anything to eat all day except for a few mangoes he had picked up along the way. He was getting a little hungry, but he had to hurry if he was going to get to the meeting that night. He looked to the group to help him by discussing this problem of his.

When he returned to the house, his wife had a bit of rice and beans on the fire. While she prepared supper she was asking Zo to be prudent and not to stick his neck out so that she and the children would not have to suffer. They were not that well off. The children had to go around with worn-out clothing, and with not eating enough, they were only skin and bones. Now what would they do if François decided to send them sickness? And you didn't even know if he would stop at sickness; he might even make them die! She pleaded with Zo to be very careful about what had happened.

Zo listened to his wife but did not discuss the problem with her. You did not discuss with your wife. You decided what to do, and she had to live with it. Of course, he loved his children and would never for the world wish to be blamed for whatever happened to them. He was maybe brutal with them at times, but that wasn't his fault. It only happened when he was very tired and bothered by some pressing problems. Tonight could be one of these nights, but the children felt this and were very quiet, staying close to their mother.

He then sat in front of his house smoking his pipe while waiting for the supper. He was quite perplexed. He had already started to back down from his original demands. So what should he do now? Many of his friends he usually met during the day, he had not seen. Did

that mean that he was being ostracized for making trouble in the neighborhood? What would the others in the group think about this tonight? He felt that tonight would really be the time when he would get an answer to all of his questions. That is why they were getting together: to be able to stand together in times of need. Some things you just could not solve alone.

Moodily, he ate his supper and left for the meeting. When he arrived, everyone stopped talking.

He said *bonsoir* and shook hands with everyone. Many eyes were averted, and the usual joviality present was not there. It was as if he had been a total stranger.

The president of the group called the meeting to order and had the secretary call the roll. All 15 members were present. The treasurer collected the dues. When this was completed, they discussed very briefly the work that had been done on the paths that they were trying to widen in different parts of the community. There was not much enthusiasm. When the president asked if there were any other problems to discuss, there was prolonged silence. Finally, one of the members, Henri, asked if these meetings were to continue because they could cause some trouble in the community. Some said that they should continue because it could help them get things they did not have. Others mentioned that it was probably a good thing, but that since they were just starting, they should not go out and look for problems. This was an indirect way of blaming Zo, and he knew it. Someone asserted that they had to stick together if they wanted to get things done. Everyone agreed to this. Another one affirmed that everyone was a man with the same rights. Everybody agreed. Another participant mentioned that the weather was good to them and that the corn harvest would be good.

Uneasiness was setting in. Everyone

was waiting for Zo to speak up and talk about his problem. At last, Zo asked them what should be done about his quarrel with François. Everyone agreed that something should be done to help him, but no one had any good ideas about how to do this. Then Zo asked, "Do you think it would be better to accept what François is offering me?" Everyone started to talk at the same time, telling him he was a smart man, really intelligent, everyone counted on him to know the right thing to do, they had always known he would know the right solution . . . Zo had his friends back and everything was back to normal. They all had a drink of *clairin* (locally made rum), and then he went home to bed.

Visiting a Remote Indian Communit- y

Last year, the leader of an indigenous community in the Amazon jungle learned about the Inter-American Foundation from a private social development agency in his country's capital city. He sent a grant proposal to the Foundation, describing his group's problems and how they hoped to develop their community. A Foundation representative then visited the group to analyze their request and wrote the following report, in which the names of places and individuals have been changed to respect the privacy of the persons involved.

Seated on a sack of flour in what I feared to be a badly overloaded single engine Cessna, I was flying 100 miles into the jungle from Pozoblanco, a lowland outpost city which links one Andean country with its Amazon region. The trip was to review IAF's first proposal from an indigenous jungle tribe in that country. The experience, however, was anything but routine. On this flight to the jungle savannah, only the pilot rated a seat. My four travel companions had to find, as I did, accommodations atop an assortment of goods being transported to the jungle. My religious upbringing came to the fore as I prayed, hard, that we would successfully complete our mostly blind flight over 6,000 foot mountains. The grass landing strip was a welcome sight as it came into view from my vantage point, which under normal circumstances would have been the co-pilot's perch.

The landing strip on which we touched down belonged to Ignacio Martin, a second generation European colonist who has forged a landholding empire in the midst of the jungle. His holdings were conveniently isolated from modern society, except for the occasional flights which Martin himself controlled. A major shareholder in the fleet of six light planes that tied the jungle to Pozoblanco, Martin dictated who got in and out of the

impenetrable green expanses which surrounded his domain.

When I arrived, instinct told me that I would have to have some sort of assurance from Martin about when I would leave. I found him after a short walk from the landing strip, tending the store he had set up to sell essential items to the natives. He was an imposing figure who, despite his South American birth and nationality, spoke Spanish with a thick foreign accent. I asked about a return flight to Pozoblanco. He would only say that perhaps there would be a flight the next day. I should show up at eight in the morning, just in case a plane would be taking off. Observing him, I began to understand why the Indians of the Atalhuallpa community lived in fear of this strangely out-of-place white colonist. Only a few teeth remained in Martin's mouth. But his presence was powerful, forcefully projected by a muscular frame and penetrating blue eyes. His clothes were still splattered with blood from the cattle he had slaughtered to be taken to Pozoblanco on the return flight. He had not bothered to change.

Martin was obviously aware of the purpose of my visit. I was told that word of "the project" had reached him, but that he was contemptuously skeptical that this project would be any more successful than any of the others which had been proposed. So many unfulfilled promises had been made to the natives that rumblings of projects to help them become self-sufficient and independent were not to be taken seriously. To Martin, I was probably just one more in that long procession of Indian lovers who only managed to raise false expectations among the 900-member Indian community he used as cheap labor and captive consumers. I was, he probably thought, a nuisance but nothing to be concerned about. Nevertheless, I felt uneasy as I watched Martin's commanding figure.

Angel Muñoz, chief of the Atalhuallpa tribe, met me at the airstrip and escorted

me ten kilometers to the site of the community's planned village. Our walk took us over a large part of Martin's land, endlessly populated with apparently neglected Zebu and Brahman cattle. Muñoz told me that his father and grandfather had helped clear the land for Martin's father. He said that the land had once belonged to his people, but that Martin now had title to it.

The Atalhuallpa community's 8,700 hectares adjoin Martin's land. Although the community's lands were formally adjudicated to it several years ago, the Indians were struggling constantly to keep other colonists off and to halt the spread of Martin's empire. Shortly before I arrived, the Indians had been forced to unleash their arrows at a group of persistent colonists determined to encroach on their land. A few colonists were wounded in the legs and buttocks. That did the trick for the moment and drove the colonists off. But the Indians knew that the only sure way to assert their ownership would be to expand their own agricultural production.

Agricultural expansion was the core of the community's project proposal. While we walked, Muñoz mapped out the tribe's plan to achieve greater self-sufficiency. The tribe wanted to build a village where a majority of the community members could live. The village would require a different style from the traditional way the community was now living, with each family isolated in a separate part of the rain forest. The village would not only give better protection to tribal members, but would also enable the community to provide itself with a potable water system, better school and health care, recreation, and fellowship. Perhaps a village might attract an airplane to the community's own neatly preserved airstrip. To date, only four planes had landed on it. Three of them were from a long defunct North American-sponsored linguistics program.

Increased agricultural production, a

village, and the landing strip were to be the tribe's building blocks to independence. With more agriculture, Muñoz reasoned, the tribe would have more goods to offer. If village activities were concentrated in one place and produce was brought to a central point, a direct flight could be attracted to the community. With a direct flight, tribal members could market their own products in Pozoblanco and purchase supplies there for their own long-hoped-for communal store. The Indians would then be freed of Martin who, because of his air fleet, they now needed as a middleman. With his transport monopoly, Martin forced the Indians to sell at pretty much whatever price he wanted to pay. "Look," Muñoz imitated Martin, "I don't need this little cow. But if you want to sell it, well, then this is all I can pay you. If you don't want that, take the cow home with you." Similarly, community members must buy their basic items at whatever price Martin wants to charge.

Perspiration was dripping down my face from the fast-paced walk and the burning noon sun as Muñoz related his tale of the community's hopes and frustrations. I was relieved when the chief said that we would soon arrive at our destination. We walked along a riverbank and then had to climb slightly to the flat, elevated expanse where the community awaited us. Suddenly, we were in view of the entire community. The adults were standing in an open meeting hall about 150 yards away. All of the children had lined up in a double file, forming a path for us to the hall. As I walked in the passageway between the smiling children, the entire community began clapping in unison. Everyone clapped until I reached the meeting hall. There, all the adults lined up to greet me.

I still have difficulty sorting out my feelings as I walked through that human pathway. I felt like some extraterrestrial creature who had descended upon some

forgotten planet. I kept on reminding myself that I was a functionary, a bureaucrat representing a small, experimental funding agency, who had arrived to evaluate a proposal the community had initiated. I could not help but feel, however, that I was an intruder who, by some twist of fate, had been sent to respond to the desperate cries of a group of people who were about to strike the word "hope" from their vocabulary.

We lunched in the meeting hall, at the only table I saw in the entire community. An assortment of fruits, fish, and corn was carried in by a procession of people. After lunch, we talked about the project.

One by one, men and women stood to plead their community's case, some in Spanish, others in their own Indian tongue. Most eloquent of all was an old widower, referred to as *el abuelo* (the grandfather). Nobody wanted charity. All they asked for was an opportunity to become independent and self-sufficient. "We have abundant land, we are united, we want to work for our own people and not hire ourselves out as day laborers to Martin and other colonists," the community members said. "We need help to break out of this cycle of exploitation and misery."

To the community, "the project" symbolized their last hope. So convinced were they that the project must become a reality that two months before I arrived, they slashed and burned a large area to clear the site for the village. Already, dozens of families had built little temporary shelters in the clearing. Community members proudly pointed out to me the layout of the village. "This is a future street, here," they said. "Over there will be a park. A new school will be built there. The communal store will be here."

The families had also started to plant yucca amidst the burned and fallen trees. "We have plenty of good wood to build our village, but we cannot make use of it

Construction in lowland jungle.

Photo by Steve Vetter.



with just our machetes," said one. "We need better equipment. We hope to start preparing the wood and building our village in October, when the winter rains start and agricultural activity ends," said another.

When I asked who would manage all the projects they had in mind, I was introduced to young men who had already been sent to other parts of the

country for training. One of the young men pulled an envelope wrapped in plastic out of his shoulder bag. It contained a certificate verifying that he had attended a two-week accounting course. Another tribesman had received training in animal husbandry and had been put in charge of the "the community enterprise."

I was then taken to visit the incipient enterprise's operations, which consisted

of some 50 hectares of cleared land planted with *kudzu*, a forage grass. The land is to be the site of the community's cattle operation. The beginnings of the community's herd totalled some 50 head. Across the river were the agricultural lands intended to increase local food production and create the surpluses to be marketed in Pozoblanco. Areas had been designated for raising swine and

poultry. Plans were drawn up to reactivate an abandoned health center. That night, the floor of that center served as my bed.

Before I turned in, however, the community celebrated my arrival by dancing and singing late into the night. Fermented yucca cider enlivened the festivities. I was told that the mournful wailing chants of the women as they snake-danced to the mostly monotone sounds of flutes were improvised supplications for deliverance from the many hardships which are part of their daily lives.

The next day, after several hours of anxious waiting, I was told there was a return flight and that I would be on it. The return flight to Pozoblanco proved no less harrowing than my arriving flight the day before. The only difference was that this time my seat was made up of portions of Martin's slaughtered cows. The eyes of one of the unfortunate beasts gazed expressionlessly at me the whole trip.

Epilogue

Despite the obvious need and impressive initiative of this community, the Foundation decided not to approve the requested funding after consulting with various persons acquainted with indigenous Amazonian communities.

The community described is one of 30 belonging to a single tribal group. A large grant for this community might have undermined the work of a representative congress which seeks to unite all communities of the tribal group. Despite its decision to reject this proposal, the Foundation has expressed its willingness to consider a proposal from the tribal congress for a project which could benefit all 30 communities.

Five Grants

In testimony before Congress this spring on the Inter-American Foundation's budget for 1982, IAF President Peter Bell described five grants made by the Foundation. The grants support projects in a variety of rural and urban settings in Haiti, Mexico, Colombia, Jamaica, and Peru. Each has its own special characteristics, reflecting the range of problems with which poor people are struggling. In Haiti, peasant farmers had to borrow money at interest rates of more than 100 per cent, and their incomes were dependent on the fluctuating prices of one crop. In Mexico, farmers near Mexico City lacked sufficient water. Rural migrants to cities in Colombia lived in crowded, ramshackle, temporary housing. In Jamaica, women street cleaners felt trapped in low-paying, unstable jobs created by the government. And in Peru, Quechua Indians living on an island in Lake Titicaca found that the deteriorating national economy was leading to a decline in their incomes.

What is common to these projects, like many others funded by the Foundation, is that poor people are taking steps to improve their own lives. Through their initiative, dedication, and sacrifice, they have organized themselves and are devising innovative solutions to the problems they face. In each case, the group involved has mobilized its own resources—which have been combined with the Foundation's grant—to tackle a set of social and economic problems. The stories are told below.

Pilate

In Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, per capita income is about \$250 a year, and in the rural areas, it is less than \$100. In the northern part of the country, peasants, who have no formal education, grow coffee. The export of coffee beans is an important source of foreign exchange for Haiti. The benefits, however, go not to the

MODECOP member sorting coffee beans.

Photo by Robert Maguire.



peasants, but to people in the capital, who buy the beans from the peasants. Through village-based speculators, these merchants also lend the farmers money, charging interest rates of at least 100 per cent a year. Peasants who need money before the harvest season have no other source of credit.

In 1971, several villagers in Pilate, a coffee-growing center in the mountains, formed the Community Development Movement of Pilate (MODECOP) to find ways of solving the persistent problems of peasants in the area—dependence on one crop, illiteracy, miniscule

cash incomes, and lack of access to credit on reasonable terms. In 1976, the Foundation made a grant of \$186,000 to MODECOP which helped it create a credit fund to purchase coffee from its members and export it directly to processors overseas.

The Foundation grant also helped the group establish a credit union. Members now save money there and borrow against their savings at an interest rate of 12 per cent. Producers take out loans to buy supplies that will lead to higher yields on their land, and are able to repay the loans rather than remain in

debt. As a result of these activities, the incomes of the farmers have more than doubled. Membership in MODECOP has also increased. When the Foundation's grant was approved in 1976, there were 1,800 members; now there are more than 2,700.

A recent progress report from the president of MODECOP stated:

Before MODECOP, the peasant had never thought about the question of income. We ate essentially what we produced in our gardens, and our purchases were limited to our basic needs. Our

harvest was sold in advance for a ridiculously low price—one-fourth of what we should have received . . .

Now the peasant can look ahead. It is certain that we can take care of our needs with the revenue from our harvest. We can borrow against the harvest to buy land, a cow, a pig, a goat. We can entrust a sum of money to our wives . . . to help them start up small enterprises of their own. We can decide that next year we will build a house, thanks to the sales we make to MODECOP.

As peasant coffee producers in Pilate gain greater control over their situations, they look for ways to lessen their dependency on a single crop. With Foundation funds last year, they invited a Creole-speaking farmer from Dominica, who earns approximately \$500 a month on his one-acre vegetable farm, to spend several weeks in Pilate demonstrating his methods of organic farming and crop diversification. His visit caught the imagination of the Haitians, who are now establishing gardens to introduce his ideas and increase food production.

MODECOP demonstrates that poor Haitian peasants, working through their own private organizations, can change their economic status through improved management of the production and marketing of their crops.

Xochicalli

The Foundation made a grant of \$335,000 in 1980 to Xochicalli, a private organization in Mexico that is developing and testing new and simple technologies for small farmers. Soapy water remaining from washing, for example, passes through a grease trap, where the scum is extracted and used to make new soap. Water from the septic tank is treated with microbes, flows through several ditches, and irrigates the land depositing rich nutrients. Cow manure is converted into biogas, which is used

for heating. By providing low-cost fertilizer, purified drinking water, and inexpensive energy, these processes attack several problems confronting small farmers in Mexico.

Xochicalli is devising the solutions at an experimental farm in Ozuma, 40 miles outside Mexico City. The Foundation made its grant so that Xochicalli could share its knowledge with poor farmers in three neighboring communities and more broadly in Mexico. Xochicalli had previously received support for its experimental work from the Mexican Government and the Organization of American States.

Over the past year, Xochicalli has helped dozens of families adopt many of its inexpensive, recycling techniques. On land that had previously been dry and unused, they now have water, and they are growing vegetables that inexpensively improve their diets. In addition, a rural community of 10,000 people has built a sewage treatment system that incorporates Xochicalli's ideas. Xochicalli has published several practical manuals on its methods to reach a wider audience, and it has been in contact with people from other countries in Latin America trying to solve similar problems.

SISTREN

In Jamaica, the Foundation has made two grants to a group of 13 women who are street cleaners. They work in a government job program for the hard core unemployed. But to these women, the makework jobs, paying \$14 a week, were not enough. They decided to form a theater group, called SISTREN, to dramatize what it is like to be poor, uneducated, and female. They give performances to other ghetto women, trying to use drama to motivate the women to learn to read and write, to encourage

them to look for meaningful work, and to build their self-confidence.

The Foundation's first grant of \$8,500 to SISTREN was to rent theaters and cover printing, transportation, and other expenses. SISTREN's plays now attract steady audience support and receive critical acclaim. The women earn about \$8 per week from their performances to supplement their regular incomes.

The experience with theater has given SISTREN members an opportunity to learn how to work together in an organization. They are now transforming their cultural group into a productive enterprise. The Foundation's second grant of \$24,000 paid the start-up costs of a silk-screen workshop. The workshop will allow the women to leave their jobs as street cleaners and transfer their energy into self-employment activities. They have already found a market for their initial production, and they feel confident that they can exceed their current total earnings of \$22 per week and still have funds to expand their theatrical performances.

One of our staff members recently was in Jamaica and wrote about his visit with the women:

At the end of the meeting, we all crammed in the car, and I drove them home. I knew they lived in the rougher parts of town, but I had no idea that they came from the roughest, most violent sections. I paled when we pulled up to a dark alley to let out the first rider. We dropped off the next woman at Rema, now an infamous battle area where 50 people were burned and shot two years ago. Dropping the women off in the dark where only lit cigarettes or silhouettes of men could be seen literally gripped me. And the very distance they have to walk every day to SISTREN rehearsals is staggering. When I commented on it with an obvious sense of disbelief and surprise, one of the women laughed in equal surprise and volleyed back with a 'See! He still doesn't understand how important SISTREN is to us.'

a quien
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dirige
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CECA



EL "CECA" SE DIRIGE, PRINCIPALMENTE, A LAS
COMUNIDADES DE BAJOS RECURSOS ECONOMICOS
QUE NO POSEAN VIVIENDA PROPIA Y QUIENES
DESEEN Y SE COMPROMETAN A PARTICIPAR
ACTIVAMENTE EN TODO EL PROCESO DE
PLANEACION, CONSTRUCCION Y ASENTAMIENTO.

The project demonstrates how a cultural activity can be a valuable step toward helping poor people develop socially, educationally, and economically.

CECA

In Colombia, hundreds of thousands of people have migrated from rural areas to squalid urban slums, where they live in cardboard and tarpaper shacks in shantytowns without sewage facilities or clean water.

In 1977, the Foundation made a grant to the Center for Applied Community Studies (CECA), a nonprofit organiza-

tion founded by three socially conscious architects who had recently graduated from a Colombian university and wanted to apply their skills to one of the country's most acute problems—inadequate housing. CECA collaborates with community groups in Pereira and other cities to determine their needs for housing and public facilities, and then lays out the architectural and infrastructural plans. Poor people participate in the design and construction of housing they can afford.

During the past four years, CECA has worked with 625 families. The families were motivated to save money to

buy land, and they then contributed their own labor to construct houses that cost an average of \$3,000. CECA's services have filled a void in Colombia because official government programs were unable to offer low-cost housing to people whose incomes were below five dollars a day. And CECA's success has attracted the attention of the Colombian Government and the private sector. Within the past two years, two public agencies—the Territorial Credit Institute and the Central Mortgage Bank—and a large, private savings and loan institution have committed more than \$1.2 million in loans for the construction of approximately 600 more homes.

This Foundation grant helped CECA establish itself, develop its reputation, and gain access to local sources of capital that had previously been unavailable to the poor.

Taquile

Inter-American Foundation grants often have multiple objectives. Two years ago, a small grant was made to a group of Quechua Indians in Peru who are trying to increase their incomes and preserve their cultural heritage.

In southern Peru about 1,000 Indians live on a small island in Lake Titicaca. For centuries, the basis of the island's subsistence economy has been hillside agriculture, with fishing as a supplemental activity. Since 1969, however, Taquile's exquisite weavings began reaching Peru's tourist markets, increasing incomes on the island. In 1977, the island's economy received additional help when a tourist handbook referred to Taquile as a remote mountainous island paradise. Tourists began arriving in motor boats, owned and operated by entrepreneurs in the Peruvian port city of Puno, 20 miles from the island. Tourists were visiting Taquile, but outsiders controlled a large share of the tourist industry.

The Indians responded by taking advantage of their experience from building reed and wooden sailboats. They began working collectively to build boats to transport tourists. The Foundation financed the purchase of five outboard motors. Families take turns operating the boats and the income generated is distributed widely.

When a tourist arrives in Taquile, he or she is met by a resident and assigned to a family that hosts the visitor for about 60 cents a night. One of our staff members went to Taquile last year and reported that there were more than 100 families taking in guests. This alternative to hotels insures that many people benefit directly from the increased economic activity.

The traditional Quechua community on Taquile wanted to control the tourism on their island not only to make money, which they have succeeded in doing, but also to preserve their culture. They weave bags, belts, shirts, and hats, which have brought them to the attention of collectors in Peru, North America, and Europe. They sell these weavings in the island's four community-owned stores. Rather than sell ancestral textile treasures, they are building a modest museum to preserve and display the finest weavings still on the island. A Foundation grant purchased building materials for the museum, which the Indians are constructing, and set up a fund for the museum to purchase weavings from individual artisans.

Throughout the world, commercial interests are trying to make money by taking tourists to indigenous cultures. The Foundation grants in Taquile, totaling about \$30,000, are supporting the efforts of a private, indigenous organization that is exerting control over the tourist industry, so that economic benefits remain on the island and cultural values are respected and reinforced.

When a Tractor Makes Sense

Jan Van Orman

In December 1980, the Foundation approved a grant of \$31,000 to help a small group of farmers in Belize purchase a tractor for an experimental community farm. The Foundation made this grant so that the St. Vincent Block Group could compete in the commercial rice market and fulfill the potential of their community project. The scarcity of draft animals in the region and the limitations of manual methods—the difficulty of controlling weeds and removing stumps by hand—are the reasons for this move to a moderate level of mechanization.

If the Block Group manages mechanization well, it should be able to achieve its financial goals and qualify for loans from the Belize Development Finance Corporation. The Group would then be able to enlarge further its operations and bring many more families into the farming community. The Foundation believes the St. Vincent Block Group can make good use of the tractor. One member of the group, who has been a tractor operator for years, knows how to maintain the machinery, and can train others to use it.

Background

The setting for this project is the most sparsely populated and isolated township in Belize, Punta Gorda, the seat of the Toledo District, located on the southern border with Guatemala. The population of about 500 families is primarily of Garifuna origin. The Garifuna, or "Black Caribs," came to Belize at the close of the 17th century after losing a protracted battle for their homeland, the island of St. Vincent. They are independent people who have preserved their traditions and dignity.

Today Toledo is a poor district. It was once known, however, as the bread-

basket of the country. The district was most productive around the turn of the century when it produced one million pounds of rice annually. At that time, a group of successful Garifuna farmers purchased 1,000 acres of jungle land near the town of Punta Gorda. As the first generation of emancipated blacks to achieve economic independence, they wanted to leave an inheritance of land to their descendants. They called their group St. Vincent in honor of their earlier homeland.

Agriculture declined in the following decades, and the descendants of the St. Vincent group left the land they had inherited. Because of depressed farming conditions and the impoverishment of the rural area, the Garifuna migrated to Punta Gorda and other small Belizean towns. The St. Vincent land was left abandoned for some 30 years.

In the early 1970s, the government threatened to expropriate the St. Vincent land for nonpayment of taxes. Talk of losing the land caused alarm, but no one knew just what to do about it. After much talk, some of the men in the community formulated a plan to safeguard the inheritance. They would organize a cooperative farming community based on some of the agricultural traditions of their ancestors.

In 1975, seven of the men formed the St. Vincent Block Group. They were humble members of the community—carpenters, handy men, and town employees. Bringing them together were the vision of a better future and the courage to take the risks to build toward it.

The St. Vincent Block Group envisioned a self-sufficient, cooperative farming community which would be governed and worked by all of its members. Each participating family would receive a five-acre plot for its own family farm. Although families would not own the farms, they would have full rights to them as long as they maintained them

and participated in the community. In this way, it was projected that more than 100 families could eventually benefit from the inheritance.

A central commercial farm would produce cash crops and livestock for sale as well as for use by community members. With the proceeds from this farm, the community would develop the land, build roads, establish water and power supplies, acquire equipment, and establish a loan fund to help its members develop their family farms.

The St. Vincent Block Group presented its plan to the trustee, who represented the heirs. He approved the project on an experimental basis.

History of the St. Vincent Block Group

The St. Vincent Block Group began by applying to banks and the Belize Development Finance Corporation for a loan to retire tax debts and to start its project. The legal conditions of the St. Vincent trust prevented securing any loan with the land as collateral. Consequently, no lending institution was willing to give financial help to the Group.

With their project threatened, the seven men arranged personal loans, secured by their homes. Collectively, they borrowed \$9,000, an amount that represented a substantial risk for these poor families.

The Block Group members began work by "borrowing" time from their regular jobs. They started clearing land in the traditional *milpa* manner—slash-and-burn by hand. Late in 1975, they rented a government-owned bulldozer and cleared 50 acres of jungle to start the central farm. In 1976, they continued working part-time, and again were for-

tunate to obtain government machinery to clear another 50 acres. The crop was good.

On the 100-acre community farm, the Group decided to grow rice. Besides being a market commodity well-suited to the Toledo District, it is a crop which the government supports by providing production equipment and a guaranteed price. The group plans eventually to grow corn and beans in the off-season and to alternate the use of the land between grain production and cattle grazing to replenish the soil.

In 1977 the Group bought seed and petitioned the government for a tractor to assist with plowing, harrowing, and planting. The tractor arrived in June, too late to use that season. In 1978, the tractor again came very late. The Group planted the 100 acres without harrowing and too close to the rainy season for proper germination. They harvested scarcely enough rice to recover their expenses. In 1979, the Group petitioned early and persistently for government equipment. It did not come, and they were forced to work by hand. Manually, they cultivated about 50 acres, half their land, and since they were unable to deep plow and harrow, they achieved only about 50 per cent of the potential yield.

By this time, six of the seven members of the Group were working full-time with the project. The proceeds from their production, while small, were enough to pay the land taxes and the installments due on their loans, and to meet the basic needs of the participating families.

By 1979, the Block Group farmers had become increasingly knowledgeable about rice production. They had tested the advice of agricultural extension agents and consulted with the successful Mennonite farmers in Belize. Seeing so much of their scarce resources used to purchase the expensive commercial seed that the government recommended, they began to experiment by saving seeds from their own crop. Although

this practice was discouraged by agricultural specialists, they learned to select seed that yielded as much as the commercial varieties. They learned how best to use fertilizers and how to fight the army worm and other diseases by using pesticides economically.

When the Inter-American Foundation received the Group's request in 1980, the families had planted, by hand, 50 acres of rice from which they expected a 50,000 pound harvest. They also had some garden crops growing on their family farms, each of which is about two hand-cleared acres. Families are beginning to live on what they produce, with enough basic food to feed them and a little left over to sell in the local market.

The Group expected a return of approximately \$5,000 from the year's rice crop. This amount was sufficient to meet taxes and debt payments, cover expenses, including small payments to the members based on the amount of time each worked, and still leave about \$2,000 to reinvest in the following year's production.

The Block Group had repaid \$4,000 of their \$9,000 loan, and the men were current with their financial obligations. They showed that their cooperative farming plan could work, but knew it would work better if the cooperative had the equipment it needed.

Because the central government reaps and purchases all commercial rice, the major challenge the Group members encountered was in preparing the land. The broadleaf jungle weeds impede harvesting the crop, unless members can clear the fields by deep plowing before planting. Also, stumps must be removed and the land leveled for the reaper to harvest. Group members saw that to operate at a profitable commercial scale, they must mechanize.

The Group argued that it could double the yield of its crop with the help of equipment and concluded that it could not go into full-scale commercial pro-

duction without a tractor.

The Block Group studied its alternatives. It tried to rent tractors, but none were available. It applied for a loan to purchase a tractor, but this was denied for lack of collateral. Block members made various trips to the capital city, Belmopan, to lobby the Agricultural Department for the use of government equipment, but it seemed that a tractor was never available. They even tried to schedule the government equipment for use during the off-season, but they were told the machinery had to be removed from service for repairs.

The Foundation's Grant

The St. Vincent Block Group plans to expand and mechanize its cooperative farming community to include 12 new families who have expressed an interest in joining the project. Each new member of the community will be allocated the standard five-acre plot for a family farm. Members will also work as partners in sustaining the 100-acre communal farm for the production of cash crops. All members will participate equally in governing the community and sharing its benefits.

The St. Vincent Block Group will purchase a farm tractor and its principal attachments with the Inter-American Foundation grant. One experienced member of the Group will then train the others to use and maintain the equipment. If the tractor is not needed full-time by the Group during the first year, it can be rented to neighboring small farmers.

With profits from production on the central farm, a small operating fund will be established to purchase fuel and to maintain the tractor and equipment.

This project will allow the Group to plant rice on all of the 100 acres of its

central farm. Using mechanized techniques, Group members expect to double their yield to approximately 2,000 pounds per acre.

The consequences of helping the St. Vincent group mechanize its agriculture will not be known for at least another year or two. The Foundation approved the grant because the families who comprise the St. Vincent Block Group have demonstrated unusual initiative, determination, and creativity. They have learned to work together and to produce and sell cash crops. Over the past years, they have solved a series of challenges; now they are committed to expanding their effort, incorporating more families. These are all characteristics pointing to a successful development project.

Jan Van Orman is a representative for the Caribbean and Brazil. He has been a member of the Foundation's staff since 1974.

Notes

From left: IAF Board Chairman Peter Jones, Representative Robert McClory, IAF President Peter Bell, and Representative Clement Zablocki.



Anniversary Celebration

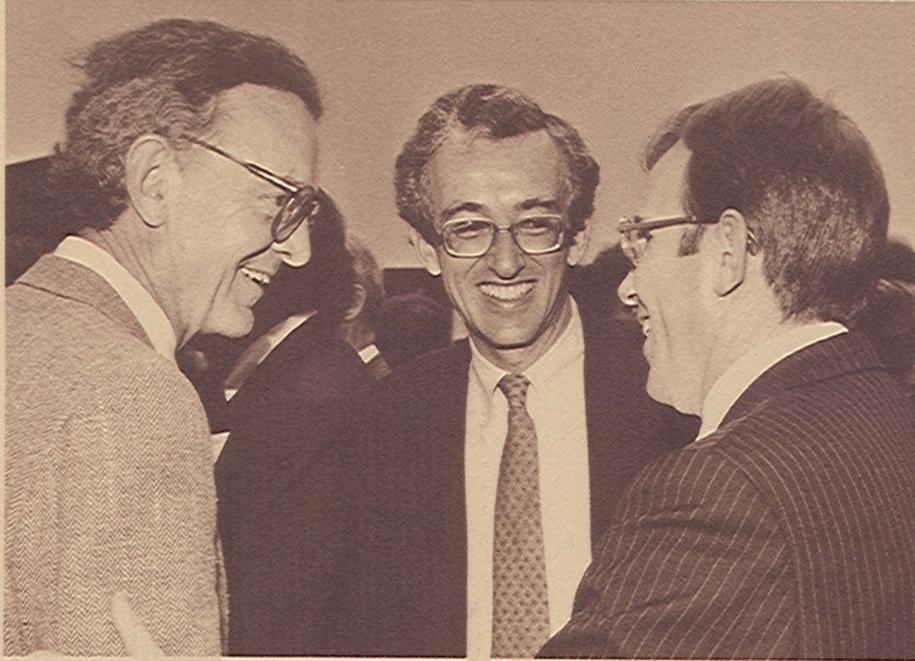
This spring, the Inter-American Foundation celebrated the tenth anniversary of its activities in Latin America and the Caribbean. Congress approved the legislation creating the Foundation in 1969. Some months later, in March 1971, the board of directors announced the selection of Bill Dyal as the Foundation's first president. And in November 1971, the Foundation made its first grant—for \$68,000 in support of a fishing cooperative in Peru. The Foundation has since approved more than 1,000 grants totaling over \$100 million.

To mark the occasion of the Foundation's tenth anniversary, 15 Members of Congress joined the IAF's board of directors to sponsor a reception on Capitol Hill. Some 500 friends and supporters attended the reception on May 6 in the Rayburn House Office Building. Repre-

sentative Dante Fascell of Florida, the principal sponsor in Congress of the legislation creating the Foundation, made the opening speech of the evening. Other speakers included Representative Clement Zablocki of Wisconsin, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Representative Michael Barnes of Maryland, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Senator Charles Percy of Illinois, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, sent a message of greetings and best wishes. Brief remarks were also made by Peter Jones, the current chairman of the IAF board of directors, Augustin Hart, the first chairman of the board, and Peter Bell and Bill Dyal, current and former presidents of the Foundation.

In a day-long session prior to the reception, members of the board of

From left: IAF Advisory Committee Member Harry McPherson, IAF President Peter Bell, and Representative Michael Barnes.



directors and the advisory council to the board met with senior staff of the Foundation. In discussions ranging over a variety of topics, the board and advisory council reviewed major issues of grassroots development in Latin America and the Caribbean and examined past and current Foundation activities. Considerable attention was given to the lessons that the Foundation had derived from its ten years of grant-making experience. Of special interest was a presentation by Robert Mashek, director of the Foundation's activities for the Caribbean and Brazil, on his recently completed study of the early history of the Foundation. The study, entitled "The Inter-American Foundation in the Making," recounts the events and decisions leading to the Foundation's establishment by Congress and its subsequent launching as an operating institution by the board of directors. A copy of the study can be obtained by writing to the Foundation.

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Representative Dante Fascell.

New Director for the Southern Cone Region

David Valenzuela has been named director of the Inter-American Foundation's office for the Southern Cone. In his new assignment, Mr. Valenzuela has responsibility for managing the Foundation's activities for Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay. He joined the Foundation in 1979 as representative for Peru. Previously, Mr. Valenzuela served as Andean Regional Director for Church World Services in Lima, Peru. He has been a country director for the Peace Corps and the coordinator of Latin American activities for the International Secretariat for Volunteer Services in Geneva.

Also joining the staff of the Southern Cone office is Ramón Daubón, who will be one of the Foundation's representatives for Chile. Mr. Daubón has a doctorate in economics from the University of Pittsburgh and most recently worked for the Batelle Memorial Institute where he specialized in demographic issues in Latin America. He has lived for two years in Peru where he served as a visiting professor of economics at the Catholic University.

1981 Fellowship Awards

Foundation fellowships for field research in Latin America and the Caribbean have been awarded this year to 18 doctoral candidates, 19 masters students, and one postdoctoral scholar. These fellowships are the Foundation's principal contribution to developing knowledge and understanding about Latin America in the U.S. and to building in this country professional and intellectual competence related to development problems in the region. Fellowship recipients for the 1980-1981 academic year were drawn from 21 U.S. universities located in 16 different states. Their research will be carried out in 17 countries of the region, with the largest numbers of fellows planning to study in Mexico, Peru, and Brazil. The 38 fellowship recipients were selected in a national competition from a total of more than 200 applicants.

The postdoctoral award went to Faith Mitchell of the University of California at San Francisco for research on "The Role of the Pharmacy in Medical Care in Jamaica."

Doctoral award winners and their projects are:

Jaime BIDERMAN, University of California at Berkeley, "The Development of Capitalism in Nicaragua: Economic Growth, Class Relations and Uneven Development"

Teresita MARTINEZ, University of Texas, "Changing Patterns of Social and Economic Relations in the Late Nineteenth Century: The Puerto Rican Rural Population, 1873-1898"

María de los Angeles CRUMMETT, New School for Social Research, "Agrarian Structure, Subsistence Production and Migration in Aguascalientes, Mexico 1960-1980"

Ann FAIRCHILD, Cornell University, "Long Distance Trade (Arrieraje) and the Regional Mixed Economy of the Department of Ayachucho, Peru"

John FRENCH, Yale University, "Industrial Workers and Populist Politics in São Paulo, Brazil, 1945-1964"

Walter HOOPS, Michigan State University, "Kinship, Land and Dominance: A Study of Continuity and Change in the Structure of Land Ownership and Family Organization of Estancia-Owning Families of Northwest Argentina"

Marie-Dominique IRVINE, Stanford University, "Environmental Limits to Economic Development: Changing Quechua Adaptations to Lowland Humid Tropical Forests"

Jane KURTZMAN, University of California at Los Angeles, "The Female Labor Force in Mexico City, 1960-1980: Factors Governing its Growth and Composition"

A. Douglas KINCAID, Johns Hopkins University, "Agrarian Development, Migration and Mobilization in Central America"

Maria LAGOS, Columbia University, "Intermediation and Production: A Socio-Economic Study of *Transportistas* in Cochabamba, Bolivia"

Eva PAUS, University of Pittsburgh, "The Impact of Export-Promoting Development on Employment and Welfare of the Labor Force: The Case of Colombia"

John PULIS, New School for Social Research, "Religious Movements and Social Change: The Rastafarian Brethren of Jamaica"

Thomas REARDON, University of California at Berkeley, "Terms of Trade Policy for Peruvian Agriculture: Multisectoral Growth and Income Effects"

Richard REED, Harvard University, "Economic Integration and Small-Scale Societies: Agricultural Development and the Paraguayan Indians"

Rene RIOS, University of Wisconsin, "The Role of Women in the Process of Peasant Differentiation: Mapuche Women and the Division of Indian Land in Southern Chile"

R. Livingston ROBINSON, University of Chicago, "Public Educational Investments in Jamaica: The Economic Costs and Returns of Academic and Technical Secondary Education"

Thomas SHERIDAN, University of Arizona, "The Cucurpe Community: Social Stratification in Economic Development and Peasant Control of Scarce Resources"

James VREELAND, University of Texas, "Rural Artisan Weavers: A Case Study in Appropriate Technology and Social Change in Arid Coastal Peru"

Masters degree candidates receiving awards are:

Nancy ANDES, Cornell University, "Mortality in Peru"

Martha ARDILA, University of Texas, "Undocumented Colombian Migration to Venezuela: Study of Peripheral Migration and Its Impact on the Informal Sector"

John BUTLER, University of Florida, "Public and Private Colonization in Amazonia: A Comparative Study of Colonist Selection"

Laura GRAHAM, University of Texas, "Political Oratory Among the Shavante of Brazil"

Philip HERR, Columbia University, "The Use of Appropriate Technology in a Rural Development Project in Yoro, Honduras"

Lynn MEISCH, San Francisco State University, "The Effect of Tourism on Traditional Textiles in Tarabuco, Bolivia"

Barbara MORLEY, Iowa State University, "The Role of Traditional Birth Attendants in a Highland Mayan Community in Chiapas, Mexico"

Patricia O'CONNOR, Tulane University, "Traditional Medical Practices in Ecuador"

Richard PACE, University of Florida, "Urban Adaption and Socio-Economic Networks in Religion"

Craig PERKINS, University of California at Los Angeles, "National Agrarian Policy and Local Response in Peru"

Daniel SANDWEISS, Cornell University, "Man and Mangrove on the North Coast of Honduras"

Ben SCHNEIDER, University of California at Berkeley, "Worker Self-Managed Enterprises in Chile"

Ellen SCHNEPEL, Columbia University, "Social Implications of Diglossa in the Town of Ste. Rose, Guadeloupe, French West Indies"

Laurence SZOTT, Duke University, "An Analysis of Plantation Forestry in Tropical America"

Karen TICE, Columbia University, "A Handicraft Cooperative: Cuna Women in the San Blas Islands of Panama Take Active Leadership"

Colombian girl helping her mother.

Photo by Steve Vetter.



Cynthia TRUELOVE, Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, "Participation of Women in Social, Economic and Political Organizations in the Cauca Valley"

Thomas TURINO, University of Texas, "Change in the Indigenous Folk Music Tradition in Cuzco, Peru"

Nancy WESTRATE, Duke University, "Transhumant Nomads in the Southern Andes"

Sandra WITT, University of Florida, "The Pharmacy, Health Services and Frontier Expansion in the Ecuadorian Amazon"

Members of the fellowship selection committee this year were:

William Glade, University of Texas
Kevin Healy, Inter-American Foundation
Larissa Lomnitz, National University of Mexico

Benjamin Orlove, University of California at Davis

Alejandro Portes, Johns Hopkins University

LeRoy Richardson, Inter-American Foundation

Peter Smith, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Carl Stone, University of the West Indies
William Thiesenhusen, University of Wisconsin

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