

# SIT Occasional Papers Series

*Addressing Intercultural Education, Training & Service*

(Available in Print and Electronic Formats)

## *NGOs in Development*

Issue Number 2

**WORLD LEARNING  
SCHOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAINING  
THE EXPERIMENT IN INTERNATIONAL LIVING  
PROJECTS IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING**

*Spring 2001*

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# ABOUT THIS SERIES

The *SIT Occasional Papers Series* is dedicated to advancing knowledge, skills, and awareness of theory and practice in the fields of intercultural communication, language education, development, training, and service. The Series presents items of interest to educators, trainers, practitioners, researchers, and students. These include essays, articles, reports of current research and evaluations, as well as information about World Learning, SIT, Projects in International Development and Training, The Experiment in International Living, and the international federation to which it belongs. This publication is available in print and in an electronic format accessible through the School for International Training Website at [www.sit.edu/publications](http://www.sit.edu/publications).



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## SCHOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAINING

Kipling Road, Brattleboro, Vermont 05302-0676 USA

Telephone (802) 257-7751

Fax (802) 258-3316

Email [sitops@sit.edu](mailto:sitops@sit.edu)

**[www.sit.edu](http://www.sit.edu)**

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PROJECTS IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING



Issue 2

Spring 2001

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Kipling Road, P.O. Box 676, Brattleboro, Vermont 05302-0676 USA

Telephone (802) 257-7751

Fax (802) 258-3316

Email [sitops@sit.edu](mailto:sitops@sit.edu)

**[www.sit.edu](http://www.sit.edu)**

# PREFACE

The inaugural issue of the *SIT Occasional Papers Series*, published in Spring 2000 and titled “About Our Institution,” was dedicated to telling the story of World Learning by providing a comprehensive view of this fascinating organization. For many, World Learning is a difficult organization to grasp, given its various divisions and its continually changing nature. In fact, a defining characteristic of the institution has always been its ability to adapt readily in response to changing conditions and needs throughout the world.

World Learning is truly a one-of-a-kind institution. This becomes clear as one learns more about its activities and the principles on which they are based. World Learning will continue to innovate and provide transformational experiences as long as it is responsive to the world’s ever-changing needs in its own creative, dynamic, and interculturally sensitive way, while keeping true to its mission.

This second issue focuses on one aspect of World Learning – its Projects in International Development and Training. This unit, operating out of offices in Washington, D.C., has provided educational and service programs and projects around the globe for more than a quarter century – in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Russia, Latin America and the Caribbean region, and in other parts of the world – furthering its mission while supporting others.

This collection of articles describes this work. In the last section (Other Items of Interest), a list of PIDT’s International Projects provides further information about the range and variety of projects. Finally, an “Institutional Analysis Instrument,” “A Glossary of Development Terms,” and “Selected Publications on Development,” are also included to familiarize newcomers to this field with some of the tools and terms, and its basic works. Our hope is that this publication will help the reader learn about the concepts and models World Learning brings to the field of development and training and its own unique approaches to their implementation.

Alvino E. Fantini,  
Series Editor

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The preparation of any publication invariably depends on the good will, help, and support of many individuals. Such is the case in producing this issue of the *SIT Occasional Papers Series*.

First of all, I would like to acknowledge the good will, help, and support of **Dr. James A. Cramer**, President of World Learning, the School for International Training, and The Experiment in International Living. Without his interest and encouragement, this Series would never have gotten off the ground.

In addition, it is important to recognize several other individuals who played a key role in bringing this issue to life: **Jerrold Keilson**, Associate Editor, for his willingness to be part of this effort (not realizing in advance, I am sure, the amount of time and work involved), and who, as such, was responsible for compiling the articles; **Marla Solomon**, SIT Faculty member, for her assistance in the review process; **Shirley Capron** and **Pamela Contakos**, Research Librarians, for their help in researching a variety of often challenging reference questions; **Heather Garvie**, Associate Program Manager, PIDT, for her help in compiling a selected list of works on development; **Debra Blake**, Language Coordinator, Language and Culture Center at SIT, for her talents and efforts in the tedious task of copyediting; **Martha Raines** and **Gregg Orifici**, Co-directors Creative Services, for their comments and guidance; **Patricia Williams**, Creative Services, for her talents in layout and formatting; and **Kirsten O'Malley-Keyes**, a graduate student in the Master of Arts in Teaching Program at SIT, for her assistance in various tasks that helped in the preparation of this issue.

Finally, it is fitting to recognize the support and guidance of all of the Editorial Board members, our colleagues in Communications and Creative Services, the writers and contributors in the Projects in International Development and Training unit in Washington, D.C., and their department heads and colleagues who assisted them in helping to tell the story of our work in the field of development.

¡Gracias!

The Editor

# ABOUT THIS ISSUE: AN OVERVIEW

Development practitioners are continually confronted with administrative, logistical, and programmatic challenges that absorb their time and energy. Yet, these challenges are the essence of development work, the daily events that absorb the energy of development professionals. The more technical and analytical aspects of development, such as conducting evaluations, extracting lessons, and establishing best practices, too often take a back seat to the immediate needs of project implementation and administration. Yet, these elements are critical to understanding the effectiveness and impact of development interventions and to improving future performance.

World Learning is both an educational institution and an international nongovernmental organization (NGO). It is unique in that it brings together the theory and practice of development. Through its Projects in International Development and Training (PIDT) division in Washington, D.C., World Learning implements development projects in six areas of competence: democracy and governance, education, training and exchange, institutional capacity building, societies in transition, and women's leadership. This portfolio is compatible with offerings at World Learning's School for International Training (SIT), in Brattleboro, Vermont, offering Masters degree programs in non-profit management, development, international exchange, and second and foreign language teaching. This relationship between PIDT and SIT provides the impetus for the examination and analysis of selected PIDT projects contained in this issue — highlighting various aspects of World Learning's program and project offerings, garnering lessons learned, and developing best practices for practitioners and students alike

World Learning first entered the field of international development as a nongovernmental organization in the early 1960s. To provide an overview of its efforts since that time, Joshua Muskin leads with an article titled: "NGOs in Development: The Case of World Learning." Since 1982, World Learning has also been an active partner in the design, implementation, and evolution of USAID-funded training programs. This involvement is described in the second article by Jerrold Keilson titled "Building Human Capacity through Training." In this piece, he provides both a retrospective of where training has been and he speculates about the future.

In the mid-1990s, in response to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) established the Democracy Network Program to promote democracy throughout Central Europe. In the third article, "Building Capacity for Public Participation: A Democracy Network Program in Romania," Mark Parkison describes how this program used training, technical assistance, and grants to strengthen the capacity of Romanian NGOs



to work together to advocate on behalf of issues of importance to them, and to use those skills as an entrée to develop a nascent civil society.

In “Building Social Capital for School Governance in Southern Ethiopia,” Dunham Rowley examines how the Community Schools Activities Program (CSAP) in Ethiopia empowered local citizens to develop effective community-based organizations that support education efforts for their children. Through creation of what are essentially parent-teacher associations, nearly 700 communities now take a pro-active role in school governance issues.

World Learning has also worked with NGOs around the world to develop their capacity to manage themselves, to design programs that address the needs of their constituencies, to advocate on behalf of their issues and interests, and to develop fund-raising strategies that will help them achieve financial and programmatic sustainability. The article, “Enhancing NGOs’ Policy Advocacy Skills: Lessons Learned,” by William Douglas and David Payton uses a case study approach to articulate lessons they learned from advocacy strengthening programs in El Salvador and Malawi.

And finally, David Payton’s article, “Transforming an International Development Project into a Local NGO,” describes World Learning’s efforts to support the development of the nongovernmental community in Malawi, despite a difficult political environment marked by political repression and a culture of suspicion and distrust. The author describes and analyzes that experience and draws lessons that can be applied to other organizations dealing with North-South partnerships and the creation or facilitation of sustainable indigenous NGOs.

These articles were chosen to represent the wide array of development projects and activities in which World Learning has engaged for over 40 years. For development practitioners and students, we hope that this issue will provide useful insights and approaches that can be applied in their own work. It is in the spirit of learning from what we do and sharing what we learn to improve the impact of our work on those with whom we collaborate, that we offer this special focus issue.

Robert C. Chase,  
Director, PIDT and  
Vice President, World Learning

# ARTICLES

# NGOs IN DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF WORLD LEARNING

Joshua Muskin  
Senior Advisor for Education  
Projects in International Development and Training

## ABSTRACT

World Learning actively entered the field of international development as a non-governmental organization (NGO) in the early 1960s as a natural evolution of its originally stated purposes based on a vision of world harmony. International development covers a vast terrain of areas and approaches, ranging from macro economic national and international policy to sector specific, technical micro interventions. Ever since its entry in this field, World Learning focused its efforts on strengthening the capacity of local populations to participate with clearly articulated purpose and meaningful, durable impact in the development of their families, their communities, and their nations. To achieve these aims, World Learning engages in four areas: 1) building new local institutions and strengthening existing ones; 2) strengthening the structural and institutional framework through which local institutions and populations participate in civil society; 3) capacity-building and basic education; and 4) training and exchange.



World Learning purposefully straddles the worlds of theory and praxis, educating future practitioners in development while actively participating in the challenges of development. In this pursuit, World Learning places experience at the center of the learning and development process. It strives to create within individuals and institutions a dynamic tension through which they can test their approaches to development. This article reflects on four decades of World Learning experience in the area of development and presents what the organization has learned about engaging in this work overseas.

## WORLD LEARNING IN THE WORLD OF DEVELOPMENT

World Learning first ventured into the field of development in the early 1960s. At that time, Sargent Shriver, then founding Director of the U.S. Peace Corps (and a former “Experimenter”), asked The Experiment in International Living (EIL), the parent organization of World Learning, to conduct pre-assignment language training and

orientation for new volunteers. By the time the Peace Corps moved its training and orientation operations overseas several years later, EIL had formalized its training expertise and established the School for International Training. The organization's language training and cultural orientation programs were further expanded in 1980 when, in partnership with Save the Children/U.S. and World Education, it received funding from the U.S. Department of State to implement a major training program in Thailand and Indonesia to prepare Laotian, Cambodian, and Vietnamese refugees for relocation to the United States.

The Southeast Asia activities enabled The Experiment to expand the scope and nature of its international development efforts. In 1982, The Experiment was invited to become a member of a consortium that handled all U.S.-based participant training for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). It was awarded additional USAID-funded projects to support the development of NGOs in Africa and Latin America. In 1990, as its mission expanded, the organization relocated its Projects and Grants unit to Washington, D.C. and renamed it Projects in International Development and Training (PIDT).

By this time, World Learning had established itself as a leading international organization in strengthening the capacity of local nongovernmental institutions in developing countries. Working in the arena of NGO development caused World Learning to focus attention on three additional supporting areas: democracy and governance, basic education, and training and exchange. Taken together, these programs foster development at the community level, often excluded from the implementation and the benefits of development.

#### STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF NGOS AND OTHER CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERS

World Learning adheres to a few basic assumptions in its NGO capacity-building work. First, an NGO must possess a clear vision or purpose. Even if it begins with little more than an aim to *help* a certain group or community, an NGO's ability to muster commitment, resources, and results depends largely on its defining what it wishes to accomplish, and for which beneficiaries. The organization's aims will undoubtedly evolve over time, yet they must be tied directly to the priority needs held by the particular beneficiaries of that NGO. Second, long-term efficacy of an NGO requires an effective management structure staffed with capable persons. The roles, responsibilities, and relationships of all staff must be well-articulated and understood for internal operations and interactions with beneficiary groups, officials, and other partners. Third, an NGO's influence is measured by its achievements, requiring capacity in planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, along with the resources to accomplish them. Finally, an effective NGO is judged on the openness and reliability of its relations with strategic partners (government, NGOs, and private sector) as collaborators, advocates, or allies.

Attention to these issues has traditionally focused on strengthening the internal structure and operations of target NGOs. Increasingly, the work of developing NGOs focuses on ensuring that the policies, practices, and other structural features of the broader framework in which NGOs operate are conducive to effective NGO initiatives. This approach has

resulted in modifications to other existing approaches. For one, greater attention is paid to NGOs as a distinct community of partners. Two, as the NGO sector continues to gain influence in development circles, it is important that its members communicate and coordinate in a formal, coherent manner. Third, an important intended outcome of heightening the collective capacity of NGOs is to ensure their impact on national and international policy and on the implementation of development strategies.

World Learning has worked in many countries in an effort to strengthen individual NGOs and the national NGO sector, bolstering NGO and broader civil society capacities in advocacy as well as in service delivery. In Romania, for example, (see the article by Parkison), World Learning emphasized rooting NGOs within the emerging civil society to promote a new understanding of their role among the public, private, and media sectors. Since democracy in Romania is a new phenomenon, NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs) required support for their own development as institutions and also for the acquisition of the skills and awareness needed to become effective advocates on issues important to their constituencies. World Learning addressed organizational strengthening and the development of policy advocacy skills through a package of training, technical assistance, and grants for Romanian NGOs and CSOs.

Similarly, World Learning has contributed to Malawian civil society through a range of capacity-building and institutional development interventions along with service delivery grants. These grants, complemented by training in financial and project management, offered a comprehensive package of tools and resources to strengthen NGOs. In the face of Malawi's devastating poverty and legacy of political oppression, World Learning's high standards and tailored interventions helped to foster a culture of third sector accountability. Project activities culminated in the creation of an independent national NGO — the Development Centre, as it is called. This Centre balances local knowledge with sophisticated training and technical assistance services, and in the World Learning tradition, facilitates access and exchange among communities, NGOs, and international donors. The Centre continues to strengthen the capacity, vision, and voice of Malawi's still emerging NGO sector. A later article in this collection describes the transition of the Development Centre into an independent, sustainable NGO.

In the Russian Federation, World Learning's NGO Sector Support (NGOSS) Program, in collaboration with the Russia's Center for NGO Support, provides regional NGO Resource Centers with organizational, legislative, and financial management skills to withstand difficult economic and political conditions. And in Guatemala, World Learning has provided training and direct technical assistance to the national Girls' Education Association and to individual NGOs to strengthen their understanding of the issues and their abilities to advocate and work strategically to increase girls' primary school completion.

In all cases, raising the credibility and influence of NGOs involves a comprehensive approach that addresses the internal capacity of the individual institutions and their ability to interact effectively with partners, and provides assurance of a broader policy framework that allows these groups to function by enlisting them as active development partners.

## SUPPORTING DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION AND GOVERNANCE

The end of the Cold War brought with it considerable hopes for the rapid liberalization of economies and political systems within former Soviet and Western bloc countries, with both groups now freed from their status as exemplars of communism and democratic capitalism. However, the exciting prospects for helping countries and their populations to attain greater degrees of self-determination and prosperity soon gave way in many countries and regions to an urgency to protect these aspirations from competing national and ethnic interests. Under these circumstances, the challenge of democracy and governance initiatives extends beyond the strengthening or creation of institutions and policies for permitting open, participatory, transparent governance to the promotion of widespread attitudes and a context of peace in which such participation and rule might prosper.

Working toward the achievement of full participation of civil society ideally involves individuals and groups from a wide gamut of organizations, including NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs), the media, private associations, governments, and other interest-based and advocacy entities. The successful intervention of civil society and its members demands capacity and accommodation on all sides. Open and effective civic institutions must exist and interact within a supportive, transparent policy environment. The staff of these institutions must possess the skills and knowledge to fulfill their roles capably and both they and the general public must have access to reliable information and opportunities to assess social situations, to voice opinions, and to act on behalf of their preferences without threat.

Efforts to help countries and groups create a vibrant democratic environment and active civic participation require similar support. Both institutional capacity and the broader policy environment must be strengthened to facilitate free and effective access to information and dialog across interest groups. A process must exist for these steps to lead to decisions that all members of civil society accept, even if the decisions do not reflect a particular individual's preferences or priorities.

As the range of projects implies, then, World Learning initiatives occur as "democracy and governance" activities and as interventions within the sectors of NGOs and basic education. World Learning efforts include the establishment of NGOs and NGO networks as key partners with government and as representatives of local populations and groups in the pursuit of social and economic development. They also involve strategies in basic education and training, helping to strengthen the fundamental skills of and attitudes about civic participation. Other World Learning efforts to tackle the challenges of broad, effective participation in civil society fall predominantly within areas such as media, advocacy, civic education, decentralization, and labor, always emphasizing local-level interventions.

In Mali, for example, a World Learning team produced a curriculum guide for instructors from Malian NGOs to use in preparing courses for their members on democracy. This document placed special emphasis on Mali's process of "devolution," a style of decentralization, by which decision- and policy-making authority is progressively transferred

from central to local government. While in El Salvador, a PIDT team assisted a coalition of NGOs to monitor how fair and responsible the nation's print and electronic media were in their coverage of El Salvador's presidential election campaign. The NGOs devised and applied a Fairness Measurement Instrument and issued reports on media fairness that were publicized in the local press and on television. The coalition also created its own web page that included the reports. One of the following articles addresses the outcomes and lessons learned from projects in Malawi and El Salvador.

In Ethiopia, the Community School Activities Project reflects World Learning's focus on strengthening the role of local citizens in democratic society by working with schools, education officials, and regional and local government. The Project's aim is to consolidate the capacity and authority of parents and the community to affect and act directly on behalf of their children's schooling. The provision of progressively greater financial incentives to school committees under this project puts muscle behind the idea of decentralization to local authorities. It accomplishes this in that local committees define the use of these funds and employ them effectively for their intended purposes.

#### IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF BASIC EDUCATION SYSTEMS AND DELIVERY

Education has always been viewed as a pillar of development. This is reflected by the fact that education has, in many countries, the largest (or second largest, after the military) budget and number of employees. Education is critical to the achievement of social gain and therefore it is often cast as a basic human right on its own. Yet the goal of universal primary education has generally remained elusive.

Regarding universal primary education, early quantitative advances in many countries are now reversing, a situation often exacerbated by low educational quality. The experience of and prospects for progress are undermined by a combination of external factors, such as continued high population growth rates, economic pressures, and logistical complexity and obstacles in providing appropriate instruction to all who need it. This is compounded by many internal constraints. One such constraint is the multitude of ways education decision-making and administration is apportioned across administrative units in different countries. Oversight and technical responsibility for education is divided along diverse levels of schooling (primary, secondary, tertiary), types of schooling (formal and nonformal), status of the learners (schooled children, out-of-school unemployed or employed youth, adults, women, and others), topics (literacy, vocational, environmental, agricultural, social/civic, religious, and others), and administration (public, private, secular, NGO). Despite its obvious importance to broader national progress — economic, political, social — the education sector also poses a great development challenge due to the many technical dimensions that comprise it.

Basic education is typically highly intricate, affected by a multitude of disparate and sometimes competing factors. The move toward decentralization in many countries usually means that the education system must convert from highly centralized mechanism with a

dearth of qualified managers. Other challenges include decisions about the language of instruction, curriculum design, children in the workplace or streets, parental support, school relations with parents and the broader community, and the opportunities (real and perceived) available to school leavers.

Perhaps most daunting, though, is the fact that many education problems are impervious to purely educational solutions. From a delivery perspective, enormous fiscal deficits constrain governments from providing adequate schools and space, training and placing qualified teachers, and making available suitable texts and other materials in terms of quality and quantity. Parents similarly face many obstacles to keeping their children in school or getting them there in the first place; these include poverty, cultural norms, and, frequently, a context of social violence. The need for creative and capable technical assistance to this sector is tremendous.

World Learning's involvement in U.S.-government funded activities in the education arena is relatively recent, though it can be traced back to a very large, 16-year project (1980 to 1996) that trained about 300,000 Indochinese refugees for expatriation to the United States. World Learning's current areas of concentration in basic education emerged largely from the experience and expertise that the entire organization has had in its teacher training and NGO and community participation work. This experience translated into projects to support developing countries in teacher training and curriculum design and dissemination, especially where language and culture are concerned. It also propelled World Learning into the role of an innovative partner in support of community participation in primary education.

The USAID-supported Access to Bilingual and Intercultural Education Project in Guatemala operates in support of that country's recent (1997) Peace Accords by working with administrators, education trainers, curriculum developers and other technicians, teachers, and communities to provide greater educational opportunities to rural Mayans. The resulting advances in the quality of education should permit greater access to the resources and benefits of the broader, Spanish-speaking dominated society. Fundamental improvements are founded upon instruction in the local Mayan languages in the early school years with an incremental addition of Spanish over the primary school cycle. Also, in Guatemala, a combined focus on policy, local participation, and teacher engagement provides critical additional dimensions to the Girls' and Women's Education Activity, helping to address classroom and non-education elements equally essential to increasing educational opportunities for both boys and girls.

In Ethiopia, the Community School Activities Project (CSAP) proposed to train and support a group of national NGOs to strengthen the capacity of local school committees to analyze and improve primary school quality. The project has bloomed with World Learning developing its own staff to support school committees to prepare, finance (in a matching arrangement), implement, and monitor a variety of school quality improvement initiatives. The article by Rowley describes this project and how it establishes interconnections between education and civil society. In Cambodia, World Learning piloted a similar initiative for the World Bank, helping clusters of schools and the government set up, plan, implement, and



monitor a system of small block grants for school groups, comprised of teachers and community members, to improve primary school quality.

In Uganda, a private foundation backed World Learning's efforts to help strengthen the commitment and capacity of the local NGO community to support formal and nonformal basic education. Recently, a foundation-funded pilot effort in Ethiopia offered the opportunity to develop an innovative method for combining community participation with World Learning's pedagogical approaches. This effort utilizes a strategy for enlisting and supporting community experts and teachers who design and deliver lessons presenting local knowledge, skills, and techniques in primary classrooms. This model is intended to help make practical connections between the knowledge children learn in school and the skills they will need to participate in the community's social and professional life. At the same time, it strives to engage parents even more deeply in the academic life of their children and of the school.

## ENHANCING HUMAN CAPACITY THROUGH TRAINING AND EXCHANGE

The development of knowledge, skills, positive attitudes, and awareness are key elements that contribute to progress in institutions and nations alike. In many countries, efforts to reform educational systems aspire to improve future opportunities by providing the next generation with at least basic literacy and numeracy skills and by creating a foundation from which the leaders of the future will emerge. However, education interventions cannot be focused only on children in the classroom. Training interventions must also contribute to improving the current capacity of individuals and institutions to meet existing development priorities and ever changing challenges.

Since 1982, World Learning has been an important provider of training services funded by the U.S. government. Through its Global Training for Development (GTD) project (begun in 1996), and GTD's predecessor, Partners for International Education and Training (1982-1997), World Learning has provided U.S., third-country, and in-country training to more than 45,000 working professionals worldwide in a variety of sectors. The organization's comprehensive approach to participant training places the need to foster specific competencies within a broader developmental context. This model has two important features: First, it encourages trainees to master new skills and knowledge while working to adapt and apply them directly to their home context. Second, it promotes the capacity of in-country institutions to develop and offer similar and other relevant training. For instance, through the TRANSIT activities (Technical Training for Societies in Transition) funded by GTD, World Learning has assisted Central European institutions and universities in developing programs for two-thirds of the nearly 3,000 persons trained through its projects this past year. The following article by Keilson provides more information about World Learning's history with USAID-supported participant training.

In another manifestation of the organization's training expertise, one that can be traced back to its roots, World Learning provides pre-and in-service training to new and current Peace Corps volunteers in Guatemala and El Salvador. Language, technical, and intercultural

training are provided in an experiential modality with the goal of helping trainees attain the competencies needed to begin work immediately upon arriving at their volunteer sites.

## WORLD LEARNING'S APPROACH

World Learning's approach to project implementation is characterized by several elements: 1) emphasis on experience-based learning, 2) participation and empowerment, and 3) attention to the cultural dimensions of development initiatives. These are all features that best distinguish World Learning from other development agencies, in addition to its long history as an experience-based training and educational institution and the unique blend of academics (represented by SIT) and practice (represented in the work of PIDT).

### AN EXPERIENTIAL MODEL

Models of experiential education and training build upon the assumption that the competencies a person acquires by "doing" is mastered more fully, retained better and, therefore, can be used more effectively than when gained by hearing or seeing alone. Experiential education and training are successfully employed as a process for building knowledge and capacity among a select group of people or organizations. In practice, an experiential model builds upon accumulated capacities through a process of participation, discovery, synthesis, and application.

In its teacher training program in Guatemala, for example, World Learning combines the introduction of new bilingual, intercultural education concepts, techniques, and materials, with discussions to analyze and codify the teachers' instructional experiences, and ultimately applications to their own contexts. Under GTD/TRANSIT, participants and supervisors participate directly in the design of the participants' training plans. This influences both the objectives of the participants during the training activity and their eventual application in the workplace after training ends. The process of launching the Development Centre, a new NGO in Malawi, and a similar new NGO in Russia, involved several years of engaging local staff as World Learning employees, and of building their capacity via hands-on experience before progressing to independent operation. On-going support by World Learning continues, helping these colleague institutions to translate their experiences into new systems and capacity.

### PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

In emphasizing the role of local organizations and local knowledge, an experiential approach contributes directly to fostering the aims of participation and empowerment, and to the ability of certain populations and organizations to influence policy and programs that affect them, and to define and undertake their own initiatives. A major focus of all projects is to enhance a group's ability to attract and manage resources and to maintain relations with

various partners in a manner that furthers its own priority needs and interests. The domain of partners involved in such relations covers the gamut of civil society members.

Intervening in this dimension of development requires considerable capacity building for those seeking greater empowerment. This is equally true of established NGOs and other organizations from civil society, as it is for new ones. In Ethiopia, though school committees already possessed a legal mandate to function, unawareness of their authority left them unable to act. World Learning motivated these groups first by alerting them of their right to function, then by enhancing their technical capacities to function effectively.

Equally important in empowering local community groups is working with those in authority — in government, private industry, the media, or donors — to create space where community group concerns can be expressed, heard, and honored. World Learning's work in Ethiopia and Cambodia resulted in the strengthening and effective operation of local school committees because local administrative and education authorities created an institutional framework within which committee decisions and actions were influential. The empowerment of groups to participate effectively in civil society on behalf of populations they represent requires changes in how they relate to other local organizations and to their respective constituents. In Ethiopia, World Learning requires school committees to hold regular community wide meetings to inform local citizens about major issues, decisions, actions, and results, and to seek broad consensus around future actions. In El Salvador, an election Website and press releases similarly guaranteed a broader constituency of citizens in the political process, helping to make elected officials more accountable and assuring confidence in voters about their participation. In Mali, the challenge of empowerment and participation entailed combining within a civic education training program contemporary systems of democratic processes, hierarchical decision-making, and the sharing of power with traditional systems of consensus-building, authority, and communication.

## CULTURE

The challenge of operating within contemporary governance structures while favoring and benefiting from the strengths of traditional decision-making systems brings to the fore cultural dimensions of development. Development planners must be attentive to the nature and effects of culture that operate across society's institutions, traditional and contemporary. The cultures of local communities demand equal consideration and reactions by development planners of political administration, the private sector, the local NGO community, disenfranchised youth, and many others. Finally, outside experts must also be aware of their own culture, and of how they relate to and are perceived by natives of the cultures in which they are working.

Culture is critical to consider when defining the parameters of possible strategies for addressing a situation and, frequently, in order to describe and explain the context of a particular situation. Low school enrollment and completion rates for girls in Ethiopia, a preference for primary schooling in Spanish as opposed to Mayan in Guatemala, limited

access to credit for women in Kosovo, or hesitancy to participate in community development activities that question government decisions in Malawi can all be attributed to cultural, though not necessarily traditional, reasons. In turn, technical assistance interventions will be more or less effective as they take into account the perspectives, approaches, and priorities of the partner populations' cultures.

Sensitivity to cultural dimensions is part and parcel of strategies concerned with experiential models and local empowerment and participation. The approach pertains equally to specific populations (defined, for example, by heritage, place, or language) and to institutions. It also pertains to self-reflection by a cultural group and to how groups from different cultures, or sub-cultures, relate to one another.

## SUMMARY

As a mission-driven organization, World Learning faces a special challenge. It must work in a way that promotes its priorities and approaches within the client-driven environment of donor-funded priorities. In doing this, it is helped by its unique dual nature — as an institution of higher education and as an international development NGO. While embracing this duality, World Learning does not just promote “best practices,” but seeks to push ahead the frontiers of theory and praxis through innovation and experimentation.

At the core of World Learning's approach are several key tenets — of experiential education and training, empowerment through local participation, and the centrality of culture — intrinsic to all projects it designs and implements. In addition, World Learning adheres to precepts of local self-reliance and sustainability. Together, these principles constitute the distinctive features that characterize its work with local NGOs and other community-based organizations, requiring the integration of systems and the strengthening of capacities at all levels. This is an expansive model of civil society; one that establishes and enforces contextual parameters — political, economic, and knowledge-based — to facilitate local and national action to support shared local and national priorities. Finally, World Learning aspires to contribute to the development of countries, regions, or localities by helping to establish human and structural capacities by which to define, act upon, and monitor self-articulated goals and objectives. Working across the domains of NGO capacity-building, democracy and governance, basic education, and training, World Learning addresses a comprehensive coverage of human systems that have a major responsibility for development.

Development, indeed, is a matter of constant re-invention. To the extent that systems, and the individuals that intervene and interact to operate them, are equipped to operate thoughtfully and reflect judiciously on the experience of development, the prospects for nearing the ultimate aims a society defines for itself are heightened. As World Learning contributes to this process through experiential approaches to community empowerment, it moves further toward the accomplishment of its ultimate mission: to enable participants to

develop the competencies they need, to control and contribute effectively to the quality of their own lives and, in the end, to international understanding and global development.

## ENDNOTE

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# BUILDING HUMAN CAPACITY THROUGH TRAINING

Jerrold Keilson  
Director, Program Development  
Projects in International Development and Training

## ABSTRACT

This article reviews the evolution of approaches used by U.S. government-supported training programs as a way of building human capacity in the developing world. Over the years, training approaches have evolved to accommodate changes in both our understanding of development as well as changes in geo-political concerns about revolution in Central America and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Technological advances, increased understanding of effective adult learning methods, and administrative requirements within the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have also influenced the way training is currently implemented. As an active partner of USAID for more than 20 years, World Learning has made significant contributions to the field's understanding of training design and implementation, and to their outcomes.



After the fall of the Iron Curtain and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, American foreign policymakers were well aware that there was no guarantee that the newly independent states and former Warsaw Pact countries would adopt policies to support vibrant democracies or free-market economic systems. It was quite possible that some of these transitioning nations might adopt right-wing, authoritarian, or militaristic forms of government or even retain or re-impose remnants of a socialist command economy. U.S. government officials understood that these nations would determine their course of transition within the first few years, when old political, social, and economic systems were still in shambles and successors not yet firmly established. Among the U.S. responses to averting potential crises, as codified in the Support for East European Democracies (SEED) and Freedom Support Act (FSA) legislation, was a commitment to train current and future leaders of transitioning nations. Administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), training programs were designed to support efforts in economic restructuring, democracy building, and enhancing citizens' quality of life.

As a result, training efforts, in concert with other interventions such as government funded technical assistance programs, private sector investment, and the introduction of new communications and manufacturing technologies, have contributed to positive change in the region. For instance, training programs introduced entrepreneurs to new approaches to business, resulting in increases in productivity, profitability, and employment. In addition, contacts developed between the United States and Eastern European partners, as a result of training programs, have resulted in increased trade. Moreover, training, technical assistance, and capacity-building projects fostered the strong indigenous non-governmental organizations (NGOs), helping many to become authentic voices of the people. The training of government officials contributed to streamlined government regulations at local and national levels, and greater transparency and an increased willingness on the part of officials to listen to the opinions of constituents. On the individual and institutional levels, formal studies and anecdotal success stories provide compelling evidence that U.S. government-funded training programs have helped to foster positive change.<sup>1</sup> For those cognizant of the role training plays in USAID's development toolkit, its effectiveness comes as no surprise.

## THE EARLY DAYS OF USAID TRAINING

For decades, the U.S. government has financed international development programs that offer both long- and short-term training for potential leaders in a wide range of professional and technical fields. There was never a single government agency responsible for all international training; however, USAID shouldered primary responsibility for training in developing nations.<sup>2</sup> Some training programs were linked to specific development projects in technical areas such as health or agriculture. Other programs focused on increasing the number of university-trained people in the beneficiary country and awarded degrees to participants.

Based on the belief that sustainable development depends ultimately on people, USAID hoped to train future generations of leaders through scholarship programs in areas such as business, government, science, and the humanities. Some programs funded scholarships to train competent leaders at all levels of society, intending to help the beneficiary country reach a point where its economic, social, and political systems could, as development theory in the 1960s hypothesized, “take off” and be sustained.

From its creation in 1961, USAID administered what it called “participant training” programs in developing countries. It seemed clear from the very beginning that participant training was an effective way to promote new knowledge, skills, and attitudes to potential leaders in the developing world that would enable them to carry on their business in a more effective manner than before. For example, Botswana's economic, political, and social development reaped significant benefits from USAID-funded training. Whereas Botswana was once ranked as one of the least developed countries in Africa in the early 1970s with a per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of \$130, today, after over nearly two decades of USAID-funded training, its GDP is almost 20 times that figure. Steady economic growth of

nearly seven percent annually has been achieved and, in a region where government stability was uncommon, Botswana has benefited from a stable, democratically elected government. While multiple factors contributed to its success — including mineral wealth and large-scale private investment that built infrastructure and created the means for exploiting that resource — U.S.-supported training was clearly one of them. Since 1982, USAID has supported U.S.-based academic training in Botswana for more than 800 mid- and senior-level government employees, business managers, and educators, as well as training for an additional 4,000 people (*American Foreign Assistance* 1999, pp.3-5). The Botswana experience suggests that for such training to be effective, a minimum threshold of professionals must be involved to create a critical mass of leaders and managers who share an understanding of both the challenges their country faces and potential new approaches for responding to those challenges.

USAID-sponsored training has evolved from its original focus in order to keep pace with changes in global politics and economics, development issues, approaches to adult learning, technology, and organizational structures within USAID itself. Yet, training remains an important and effective tool of foreign assistance, although the outcomes now sought by training have changed. In the 1970s, USAID-sponsored training was valued for its ability to bring less developed countries to a point where poverty could be seriously addressed. In the 1980s, training was seen as an important element in the fight against communist expansion. Today, training is perceived as a critical tool in helping countries transition from totalitarianism and socialism to democracy and market capitalism. As the nature of training changed, programs were modified from country specific training linked to particular sectoral needs (such as agriculture) to global training contracts that provide a range of interventions throughout the world.

## PARTICIPANT TRAINING EVOLVES

From the first training programs under the Marshall Plan at the end of World War II through the early 1980s, U.S. government-sponsored training was usually organized in one of two ways: One approach, still used today, incorporated training into sectoral programs. For instance, an agri-business development project might include a U.S.-based training component as part of its efforts to strengthen the food processing industry, in addition to grants, loans, and technical assistance to food processing firms. This approach has the benefit of tying training closely to other program elements to introduce new knowledge, skills, and attitudes in ways that reinforce one another. A significant drawback, however, is that this approach is not flexible enough to respond to changing needs and circumstances, or to take advantage of training opportunities that might arise on the spur of the moment in other sectors.

A second approach implements a general training program for a particular country, rather than a particular sector in that country. This approach allows training to be developed and implemented in response to needs that may not necessarily fit within a sector-specific



technical assistance project. Many USAID missions understand the benefits of being able to send a small number of key people to the United States or other countries for training on an *ad hoc* basis. A significant drawback to this approach is the expense of managing a contract with a training provider for this type of on-off, *ad hoc* training that may not link directly to an existing program. Without an appropriate contracting mechanism, USAID missions were limited in their ability to implement this type of training.

## THE PIET CONTRACT

In response to the needs of USAID missions for an easy mechanism that would allow both types of training, USAID awarded contracts in the 1970s to organizations that provided academic placement, technical placement, and monitoring services on a global basis. In 1981, global contractors for this work were handling placement services for an estimated 3,500 of a total 7,844 persons in training that year. A report by the Office of the Inspector General that same year recommended that USAID's Office of International Training (OIT) consolidate several major global contracts under one umbrella contract for administrative efficiency and price reduction. USAID/OIT acted on that recommendation and, in 1982, requested bids on a contract for a global training administrator. The contract was awarded to a consortium of four not-for-profit exchange and educational organizations, known collectively as Partners for International Education and Training (PIET). The lead agency and administrative partner of PIET was the African-American Institute; other members were The Experiment in International Living (EIL, now World Learning), The Asia Foundation, and America-Mideast Educational and Training Services, Inc. Three of these four partners espoused corporate missions with a clearly defined regional focus. EIL was the sole partner with a global mandate and a global scope of operations.

PIET quickly became the workhorse of USAID's participant training programming. The training contract was competitively bid four times and PIET was successful on all four occasions. In its first nine years, PIET placed more than 22,000 participants from more than 100 countries who came to the United States for training. During its final six years, from 1991 until the contract ended in 1996, PIET placed an additional 20,000 students.

The PIET training program permitted a variety of training modalities such as academic training, short-term technical training, and study tours. Academic training involved students enrolled in undergraduate, masters, and doctoral programs, generally in management or scientific areas. Short-term programs were of various lengths and characteristics. In general, they were less than three months long and were mostly designed for individuals or small groups. Typically, they included a two- to three-week tailored course at a university or training institution, combined with visits to relevant nearby businesses or government offices to observe in operation what they learned in the classroom. Some short-term programs included observational study tours during which participants visited several cities, talked with experts, and gained different perspectives on the topic under discussion. Occasionally, groups as large as 40 or more people participated together in a training program.

During the first nine years of the PIET contract, about 84 percent of the 22,000 participants received short-term technical training, and 16 percent enrolled in long-term academic training. Forty-eight percent of the participants were from Central and South America, 21 percent from Africa, 20 percent from the Middle and Near East, and the remaining 11 percent from the Asia/Pacific region.

PIET provided an array of administrative and processing services, including language testing, compiling application dossiers, managing application processes, helping students receiving academic training to select a university and program to attend, monitoring student progress, and dealing with the myriad financial aspects of their programs. In its early years, PIET handled about 15 percent of the total number of USAID-sponsored trainees.<sup>3</sup> In its latter years, PIET administered an average of 25 to 33 percent of the total number of USAID-sponsored students. The balance of participant trainees in the United States was selected and processed by USAID mission personnel and managed in the United States by other U.S. non-profit and for-profit contractors. In addition — as the numbers cited above in the Botswana case highlight — a significant portion of the overall number of participants in training programs participated only in short-term training programs held in their own country.

Professional trainers know that successful training includes some application or follow-up component, an opportunity for trainees to put into practice what they have learned. PIET contracts permitted limited opportunity to help participants implement in their home country the knowledge and skills developed in the United States, or to help students re-integrate into their own societies after several years away from home. Typical USAID/Mission-administered training projects have contract staff both in-country and in the United States and provide significant additional technical assistance and support as permitted in their contracts. However, because PIET project staff was mostly located in the United States, PIET and USAID tended to rely primarily on Foreign Service national staff to provide follow-up support.

## RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES IN THE AMERICAS

In its early years, the PIET contract paid limited attention to political or foreign policy dimensions of training programs, or to the desire to better integrate foreign students into American life to help them develop an understanding and appreciation of American culture and values. This changed as USAID developed new approaches in its development portfolio to meet the perceived political threat of communism spreading in Central and South America. As a result, in 1984, a commission headed by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger recommended new efforts in Central and South America to confront concerns over Soviet propaganda efforts and armed insurgencies in those countries. Among other things, the Kissinger Commission called for developing specialized programs to combat what it characterized as Soviet propaganda in Central America. Its plan called for the creation of training programs targeted at less well-off citizens in the region. In 1985, USAID responded

by creating the Caribbean and Latin American Scholarship Program (CLASP). By 1987, CLASP was expanded to include the Andean countries. Within the CLASP umbrella were a number of specialized programs that responded to particular needs. These included the Central American Peace Scholarship Program, the Presidential Training Initiative for the Island Caribbean, the Andean Peace Scholarship Program, the Central American Scholarship Program administered by Georgetown University, and the Cooperative Association of States for Scholarship. CLASP programs continued through 1998, administered by various U.S.-based contractors, including PIET, other NGOs, for-profit consulting firms, and universities.

Many CLASP projects established offices in both the beneficiary countries and in the United States. CLASP was designed to offer various types of training to socio-economically disadvantaged populations (70 percent of all trainees) and women (40 percent). Instead of academic training, most trainees came to the United States for short-term training, tailored study tours, and internships. As most trainees had not traveled previously, detailed orientation sessions and English language training were provided. A major new component was “Experience America,” in which trainees were exposed to Americans through short homestays and participation in cultural activities. Finally, CLASP programs recognized the importance of staying in touch with former trainees and programmed resources to support in-country follow-on training (*CLASP: Ninth Annual Report 1995*, preface). Nearly 22,000 people from 14 countries benefited directly from the panoply of CLASP programs (*CLASP: Ninth Annual Report 1995*, preface).

## THE PAKISTAN PARTICIPANT TRAINING PROJECT

In 1984, the U.S. government established one of the largest single-country training programs — the Pakistan Participant Training Project (PPTP). Over its ten-year lifespan, this program provided U.S., in-country, and third-country training for more than 2,000 Pakistani participants. Given the size of the country and the program, as well as contractual reasons specific to USAID, the agency felt it would be effective to have a program dedicated to the requirements of the country, so this program was administered outside of PIET. While the majority of participants came to the United States as short-term trainees, there also were about 500 Pakistanis who enrolled in universities to receive academic degrees, and another nearly 400 who attended training in third countries.

PPTP was established to improve the performance of government operations. In addition to providing targeted training for government officials, the program also attempted to strengthen Pakistani public service training institutions in order to develop a local training capacity. By working with the National Institutes of Public Administration in larger cities like Lahore, Islamabad, and Peshawar, PPTP produced a cadre of highly-trained municipal leaders and government administrators who knew each other, were committed to improved public service and public administration, and trained and mentored others. The program also contributed to increasing the status and visibility of women in government and public affairs by involving large numbers of women in training, many of whom ultimately moved into

leadership positions in their organizations. Other beneficial results may well have been unintentional. For instance, the project administered seminars called “How to Start a Project,” designed to help local government and NGO officials establish community development projects. Many of those who attended eventually applied what they learned in private efforts to start new businesses. The initial program was wildly popular and oversubscribed and, as a result, it was offered on multiple occasions at different locations in the country.

Two major factors influenced the U.S. government’s decision to support this large program in Pakistan. First, Pakistan was an active supporter of U.S. policy vis-à-vis China and an important bulwark against potential Chinese expansion or influence in that part of the world. Second, the U.S. government also provided significant financial support to India, also as a means of countering Chinese influence. Given the long-standing enmity between India and Pakistan, a large aid package to Pakistan was seen, perhaps, as a way of balancing the scales.

## TRAINING IN CENTRAL EUROPE AND THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

In 1992, PIET demonstrated its flexibility as a contracting mechanism when USAID began working in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in response to the dramatic changes occurring there. Policymakers viewed training as a quick and effective way to make an immediate difference; that is, training could provide new ideas and positive examples to reduce the danger of these countries slipping back toward communism. USAID responded with two programs tailored to meet the needs of trainees from Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The Participant Training Program for Europe (PTPE) and the Newly Independent States (NIS) Exchanges and Training (NET) Project were designed to bring large numbers of people to the United States for short-term training programs to develop new competencies and to learn firsthand how change could be undertaken and achieved. The PTPE program was administered through the PIET contract; and the NET program, although originally administered as part of the PTPE contract, was later contracted out separately. The scope of this endeavor was significant; the NET Project brought more than 6,000 people from the former Soviet Union to the United States within a two-year period. The PTPE Project brought more than 1,000 people from Central Europe to the United States in a comparable time frame.

## FROM PIET TO GTD

In 1996, USAID ended nearly 15 years of administering the PIET contract and created a successor contract, Global Training for Development (GTD). GTD was not simply a change in contracting arrangements; rather, it brought to USAID-funded training important lessons learned. Perhaps most importantly, it aligned training with USAID’s new approach to development that focused on ensuring that all development activities contributed to the

mission's strategic objectives in that country and that all interventions had clearly articulated outcomes. To improve the likelihood of achieving results, the new GTD contract incorporated opportunities for increased in-country training and for such training to occur after completion of a major U.S.-based training. It recognized the need to provide support for trainees after their return home and it endeavored to streamline the administration of training by making it less bureaucratic and more flexible.

The interest in results led USAID to look more closely at corporate-based training where results, or "the return on training investment," constitute critical indicators by which corporations justify their investments in training. USAID training officials reached out to professional organizations such as the American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) and suggested that its contractors become familiar with the techniques and approaches in use in corporate training.

The introduction of GTD coincided with a dramatic reduction in USAID's budget. From the early 1990s to 2000, the USAID budget shrink from about \$18 to \$12 billion. Not surprisingly, the number of trainees also decreased dramatically. In dollar terms, USAID estimates that it devoted \$485 million for all training in 1990, including U.S.-based, in-country, and third-country training. This figure rose to \$649 million in 1995, reflecting large numbers of trainees from Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. By 1999, the figure dropped to \$398 million.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the number of USAID trainees, which had fluctuated in the intervening two decades from 6,000 in 1978 to a high of 17,693 in 1995, dropped precipitously to 6,595 in 1997. At the same time, there has been an increase in interest in tracking the numbers of people being trained in their home countries or in third countries, and USAID and its contractors are increasingly involved in identifying and building the capacity of local institutions to provide training on an on-going basis.

USAID and its contractors have also begun to incorporate distance-learning technologies into their training activities. Some trainees now engage in online discussions and chats with mentors in the United States as part of their follow-up training. Others are able to access written resources available on CD-ROMs. Still others now use email and listservs to share lessons learned with colleagues at home and in the United States. Web-based video cameras and live conferences are still difficult to arrange due to limitations of bandwidth and access, but these new technologies are gradually becoming more widespread and common.

In sum, USAID-funded participant training has evolved in important ways over the past 53 years. It has kept current with changes in training methodologies, with the needs of international participants, and with new technologies as it balances the dual needs of both development and U.S. foreign policy objectives. Training has proven itself an effective and flexible tool for achieving many diverse objectives.

## WORLD LEARNING'S ROLE

As a partner in the PIET joint venture in the early 1980s, World Learning began its long association with USAID. By that time, World Learning already had decades of experience around the world in many facets of training for adults. For example, beginning in the early 1960s World Learning had already trained thousands of young Americans preparing to become Peace Corps volunteers. And in 1978, World Learning was contracted by the U.S. Department of State to administer a large-scale language, intercultural, and job skills training program for Southeast Asian refugees in refugee camps. Furthermore, in addition to extensive experience with large-scale training programs, World Learning also brought experience as an academic institution as well as an understanding of and commitment to innovative and experientially based approaches to learning. As USAID-supported training changed over time, so also did World Learning's role evolve as an active USAID partner.

Experience with the Peace Corps, refugee training, PIET, and graduate school education all left World Learning perfectly positioned to respond when USAID introduced the CLASP family of programs. In 1991, World Learning was awarded a two-year contract to develop and implement follow-on training for approximately 2,000 Guatemalan Central American Peace Scholarship (CAPS) participants who had first received short-term technical training in the United States. CAPS was USAID's first ever in-country follow-on training project. As a result, World Learning developed nine reinforcement courses in the technical training areas initiated by the U.S.-based training — community development, bilingual and monolingual teaching, rural health, cooperatives administration, training of trainers, natural resources conservation, agriculture, and small enterprise development, along with focused English language training. All of these courses were conducted at least four times in various sites throughout Guatemala, and a total of 73 courses were delivered during the two-year period.

In addition to follow-on training programs, World Learning also created a mechanism to help trainees apply what they learned to concrete situations in their own communities in an effort to effect change. Trainees were encouraged to apply their training to create community-based projects aided by small amounts of funding support to implement these projects. As a result, close to 1,500 community-based development projects were implemented in Guatemala that grew out of follow-on training, benefiting more than 40,000 people. Both follow-on training and grants constituted important innovations.

In 1989, World Learning was awarded the Andean Peace Scholarship Program for Ecuador and, in 1991 it was awarded the follow-on Ecuador Development Scholarship Program (EDSP). This program provided academic training for master degree candidates in a variety of technical areas as well as short-term technical training and a follow-on component. In addition to administering short-term follow-on training, World Learning developed and distributed the publication, *Cuadernos*, now a series, to appropriate audiences in Ecuador. In this publication, returned trainees wrote of their experiences implementing what they had learned, problems they had faced, and solutions they had found.

In 1993, World Learning, along with two other organizations, was awarded the Human and Educational Resources Network Support (HERNS) Project. This was an important USAID activity because it provided technical resources to USAID missions in the process of reexamining their approaches to training in order to align them more closely to mission strategic objectives and results. HERNS also move efforts beyond the historic focus on individuals toward improving the capacity and performance of institutions. World Learning's role within HERNS was multifold and included assessing training needs; drafting country training plans in conjunction with mission strategic objective teams; advising missions on cost-effective, impact-oriented alternatives to traditional U.S. academic and technical training programs including such cutting-edge options as distance learning programs; training mission staff in program implementation; providing organizational development and staff training services to mission training offices; designing training components of larger sectoral projects; drafting project papers for training procurements; and assisting with the development of training services such as pre-departure orientation, re-entry, and follow-on training.

When USAID prepared to respond to opportunities presented by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Iron Curtain through PTPE, USAID determined that countries in Central and Eastern Europe did not need programs that would bring leaders to the United States for academic training. In fact, most of the affected countries had a strong education system and many government officials and managers had advanced degrees and were as well educated as peers in Western Europe. Instead, the challenge was to introduce new ideas and innovative ways of doing things in-country in order to promote economic, political, and social change.

USAID asked PIET to respond to this need, and within the PIET consortium, the task fell to World Learning. In the first year of the project, World Learning opened offices in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania. Each office was staffed with an American Training Director and a local staff of various sizes. By the end of the second year, additional offices were opened in Latvia, Lithuania, and Croatia; additional participants from Estonia, Bosnia, Slovenia, and Macedonia were also being processed though no offices existed in those countries at this time. Project staff were often extremely resourceful under extraordinarily difficult conditions. On more than one occasion, for instance, groups of Bosnians selected for training left Sarajevo via tunnels under the airport to meet transportation that took them to Zagreb for processing and flights to the United States.

The PTPE approach departed from the PIET model of participant training on a number of key points. First, it was the first time that PIET established large numbers of in-country offices (at approximately the same time PIET had been asked to establish a project office in Panama). This was necessary because USAID offices in Central Europe did not have enough staff to permit them to establish training offices. In essence, PTPE project offices doubled as mission training offices. Second, PTPE staff were significantly involved in the front-end work of training, including identification, selection, and orientation of participants — again, a

departure from the standard PIET model in which those responsibilities had historically been left to USAID. Third, PTPE programs were almost exclusively short-term technical training whereas, in the past, PIET participants included both short-term and long-term trainees. Ultimately, PTPE and its successor, TRANSIT, evolved to the point at which most training took place in-country rather than in the United States. Fourth, since PTPE was conceived of and implemented concurrently with USAID's movement toward linking training to its strategic results, PTPE training was designed to meet institutional needs to improve their performance rather than the needs of individuals to be university-educated.

As stated earlier, the PIET contract ended in 1996 and was succeeded by Global Training for Development (GTD). The PTPE program also moved to the new contract and was renamed TRANSIT. USAID continues to administer two TRANSIT programs — one focusing on Central Europe, the other on much of the former Soviet Union with the exception of Russia. In the past three years, TRANSIT/Europe has moved in exciting new directions, which foreshadow directions that USAID training may take in the future.

Of greatest significance, perhaps, is that USAID has been “graduating” countries and closing missions in the region. Since its inception, the PTPE/TRANSIT project has seen country programs close in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Latvia, and Lithuania. At the same time, new offices have opened in Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Serbia, in response to changing political conditions in the Balkans. As offices in northern tier countries continue to close, both USAID and World Learning seek ways to make training sustainable by building training capabilities in-country and by establishing long-distance relationships.

## LOCAL TRAINING AND SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is facilitated by a greater reliance on in-country and third-country training along with activities that develop the capacity of local training institutions. In-country training is training in the participant's home country. For example, a typical in-country training program might involve a group of local government officials participating in a two-day workshop on ways to improve their internal management, customer service, and billing and collections procedures. In most countries that participate in the TRANSIT program, the number of in-country trainees is many times greater than the number of U.S.-based trainees.

In-country training offers several benefits: It tends to be cost-effective since it incurs less expense for travel and lodging. It is flexible since it is easier to arrange one- and two-day courses than to arrange two- to three-week courses in the United States. It also permits greater responsiveness insofar as day long courses can be developed quickly and in reaction to narrowly defined needs. In-country training can also be used to reinforce lessons learned from U.S. training, to build teamwork among managers from a single institution, or to promote cooperation among managers from different organizations.



Third-country training is similar to in-country training except that it occurs in a country that is not the United States and is not the participants' home country such as a group of Romanians training in Bulgaria. Research and evaluations of programs indicate that people are often more accepting of new ideas and approaches when introduced to them in neighboring countries rather than in the United States. Trainees often assume that a nearby country has had experiences similar to their own and are therefore more inclined to try new approaches already implemented in a neighboring country. In-country and third-country training offer another benefit — that of developing the training capacity of institutions in those countries. As USAID continues to graduate countries in East Europe, it is crucial to develop the indigenous training capability in a variety of fields. This ensures that training will continue on a sustainable basis beyond the life of any USAID-supported activities.

A new innovation for TRANSIT in Romania, Albania, and Macedonia is the creation of a small grants program for returned trainees. First implemented by World Learning in its Guatemala CAPS II program, grants permit former trainees the opportunity to apply for funding to implement some aspect of what they have learned or to increase their institutional capacity to apply new approaches and lessons learned. As seen elsewhere, these grants help overcome the most serious obstacle to obtaining results after training — the lack of financial resources needed to implement new ideas.

## RESULTS-BASED TRAINING

The private sector and the U.S. government both accept as a given the importance of training to improve performance and efficiency in the work force. Measuring the effectiveness of training, however, has always challenged those in the profession. Whereas the private sector has a clearly defined measure to assess the value of training — its impact on profits — the government and, particularly USAID, have often been less successful in evaluating the impact and effectiveness of training. The reasons are understandable. USAID training attempts to develop the capacity of people to do their jobs better, to change how their organizations operate, and to make a difference in literally hundreds of fields. Many variables make it difficult to measure the results. The ability of USAID participants to effect changes in their organizations hinges on many factors that go beyond training. These include organization-specific factors such as the disposition of senior management to change or the receptivity of co-workers. They also include other factors involving broader cultural, political, or socio-economic conditions. Furthermore, simple events such as trainees leaving their organizations for personal advancement while benefiting the trainee, does not also benefit the institution.

Under TRANSIT, all participants draft Action Plans that describe what they will do upon their return to implement the lessons learned. Such Action Plans serve several functions: First, they force trainees to think about what they will do with what they have learned early on in their training. Second, they serve as indicators that may eventually be used to measure results. Third, they identify areas for follow-on in-country training. Finally, they act as a

feedback mechanism for the original training design to ensure that any proposed U.S. training will help achieve the results described in the Action Plan.

The combined focus on in-country training, results, and Action Plans has resulted in more accurately tracking what participants do with their training upon return home. In turn, this has permitted World Learning to work closely with USAID to prepare and disseminate success stories that capture the results of USAID-funded training. Success stories are collected by local staff who are in contact with past trainees. The stories are gathered and sent to USAID and other interested parties as evidence of the effectiveness of training.

## INCREASED USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Increased use of technology is another way to create post-project, long-term linkages between institutions in the United States and other countries. World Learning uses basic distance learning technology to facilitate both learning and long-term connections. In Romania, for instance, several social work and child welfare organizations that have received training have put some of their training materials online and have begun sharing information via CD-ROMs, email, and listservs. Returned participants frequently find that World Learning has built into their learning experience electronic bulletin boards that allow trainees to link with each other as well as to a U.S.-based subject matter expert. The expert responds to questions from former trainees and information is shared among all former participants, furthering their learning and establishing active dialog among them. In the near future, World Learning will hold its first videoconference between Macedonian textile manufacturers and their American counterparts. As other technological innovations become available as well as cost-effective and reliable, they will also be incorporated to further training needs.

Technology is increasingly serving training administration as well. USAID has devoted significant resources to developing two databases to manage their training activities. One, TraiNet, is a database of demographic information on training participants by which USAID can track the number of people trained, their countries of origin, and training areas. USAID and training contractors use a second system, Training Events On Line (TEOL), to plan new training programs.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Several developments have combined to affect training and training results. First, recent research has contributed important insights about how adults learn. This is important to the design and implementation of training. Second, much has been learned about how individuals and organizations change and grow, as well as about impediments to change and growth and ways to overcome them. Third, a focus on training outcomes is now integral to all USAID-funded participant training. In fact, under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1994, USAID must provide evidence that its programs produce

demonstrable results, measured in the short term. This is a significant change from the past when it was enough to infer successful outcomes by merely citing outputs such as the number of trainees participating in programs. USAID must now show that its investment in training dollars affects the performance of an institution, thereby advancing a broad development goal.

As technology becomes more widespread in developing nations, it will also have an impact on training. The use of distributed learning technologies, whether email, Web-based, or simply video-camera conferencing, will permit information to be disseminated to more people and at a lower cost per person than ever before. In particular, opportunities for maintaining long-term professional relationships beyond the duration of government-funded programs will become an important dimension of training.

Assuming that U.S. foreign aid funds will not increase dramatically in the next few years, one might predict an increasing reliance on building the capacity of local training institutions. Whether university-based, NGOs, or for-profit training businesses, investments in improving the skills of these institutions will, in the long run, leave a legacy of local training capacity that will endure far beyond the graduation date of the country from USAID assistance.

An emphasis on building local capacity and distance learning does, however, have some drawbacks. One significant drawback worth considering is the lost opportunity of visitors to see firsthand how things work in the United States or elsewhere. Direct experience and personal contact are often key factors in affecting the trainees' capacities to process new information, believe in it, and adapt it their own context. De-emphasizing the direct exchange aspect of training may ultimately lessen the overall effectiveness of training programs.

USAID-supported training will undoubtedly continue into the foreseeable future. Over the past several decades it has provided flexible and effective approaches that aid the capacity of individuals and institutions to effect change, to improve performance, and to make a difference in their lives. Training has evolved and will most probably continue to do so. But no matter how training is conducted, it will probably always continue to be about building human capacities — helping people to take control and to make a difference in their lives and in the lives of those around them.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 For details on successes of training, see *Building New Leadership in Central Europe*, World Learning, 1995, and *USAID-Lithuania Training Program Review*, USAID/Lithuania, 2000.
- 2 According to the *Inter Agency Working Group on U.S. Government Sponsored International Exchanges and Training 1998 Annual Report*, in 1998, 41 U.S. government agencies engaged in some type of international training and exchange program.

- 3 Information on the genesis and early years of PIET was obtained through a telephone interview with Ronald Springwater, former executive director of PIET, October 2000.
- 4 Budget figures compiled by the International Education and Training Coalition, August 1998.

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# BUILDING CAPACITY FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: A DEMOCRACY NETWORK PROGRAM IN ROMANIA

Mark Parkison  
Country Director  
Morocco, AMIDEAST

## ABSTRACT

World Learning's Democracy Network Program in Romania (1995-1999) had a significant and positive impact on the internal factors that lead civil society organizations (CSOs) to assume their political roles and responsibilities. Designed specifically to advance advocacy, organizational development, and collaboration, the three-phase program comprised training, technical assistance, grants, support resources for CSOs, and community facilitation and development. World Learning's activities included conducting the only extensive field study to date of Romanian associative life. Though Romania's economic climate was weak and local CSOs faced daunting internal and external challenges, the Democracy Network Program in Romania yielded numerous outcomes and lessons learned which are discussed in this paper.



*“Among the laws that rule human societies, there is one which seems to be more precise and clearer than all others. If men are to remain civilized or to become so, the art of associating together must grow and improve...”*

Alexis de Tocqueville

This dictum concisely frames the philosophical underpinnings of a range of activities delivered to Romanian civil society by World Learning under the Democracy Network (DemNet) Program. Designed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to provide support for the growing nongovernmental, nonprofit sector in the free-market democracies appearing in Europe since 1989, DemNet in Romania responded to changing needs and emerging opportunities to promote and develop the *art of association*.

In May 1995, USAID awarded the Romania Democracy Network Program to World Learning. In exercising its mandate to achieve DemNet aims, World Learning successfully introduced concepts of civic engagement to a society where they had been exceedingly rare. A *cultural template* was created for future policy engagement and collective problem solving. DemNet Romania was defined and led by local individuals who organized themselves according to their own priorities and who took action to address these priorities, thereby demonstrating the essence of a democratic society. These Romanian models were developed with both formal and informal civil society organizations in diverse environments throughout the country and within a framework that promoted organizational sustainability, for the *art of association* is lost without the *science* of organizational development.

Though several *external* factors hindered an engaged civil society in Romania, including poor access to political and economic decision makers, and a moribund economy, World Learning and its partners negotiated these challenges by focusing primarily on strengthening *internal* factors that enable NGOs to work effectively on behalf of their constituents. By providing a coherent program of training, technical assistance, and grants, World Learning facilitated the engagement of Romanian civil society in political and economic decision making and enhanced the capacities of participating NGOs to achieve financial, operational, and programmatic sustainability despite daunting external challenges.

## OVERVIEW

Under DemNet, World Learning implemented a partnership that included Support Centers of America (SCA), a U.S.-based nonprofit organization that provides training on organizational issues, and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization that promotes democracy worldwide. Through its project office in Bucharest, World Learning managed all components of the project, guided the activities of its partners, and provided the overall vision, direction, and approach to DemNet in Romania. A team planning meeting, held in June 1995, helped clarify how World Learning’s vision, as described in its project proposal, could best be implemented in Romania. An outcome of this team meeting was the development of a project framework that clarified the project’s goal, purpose, target, and activities (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Romania Strategy

GOAL	PURPOSE
The NGO community will serve as a primary vehicle for citizen participation in forming, implementing, and monitoring public policy	NGOs will move towards sustainability through adoption and application of effective managerial, organizational, and advocacy practices
TARGET	ACTIVITIES
Registered NGOs with public policy concerns	Training, technical assistance, and grants

With this framework in mind, an operational plan was laid out for delivering training, technical assistance, and grants to formally established Romanian NGOs with policy concerns. The first challenge, however, was to locate such groups and to better define their needs.

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND BASELINE SURVEY

With 12,500 nongovernmental organizations registered under the Romanian Law on Foundations and Associations by July 1995, the challenge of reaching the targeted audience seemed daunting at first. It became clear, however, that active, legitimate NGOs were a minority among those officially registered. USAID's four priority sectors for the region (environment, social safety nets, economic restructuring, and democracy/human rights) further limited the scope of prospective DemNet participants. Also, organizations such as gardening clubs, sports associations, and cultural foundations fell outside the project mandate and greatly reduced the potential pool of recipients of DemNet services and support. To find the pool, World Learning and its team conducted the first — and, as of 1999 — the only extensive field study of Romanian associative life.

Romanian intake assessment surveys were based on an abridged form of World Learning's Institutional Analysis Instrument (IAI). This tool (which was also used later by DemNet in its complete form with organizations that received grants) measures the organizational development of an NGO in six aspects of organizational life: Governance, Operations and Management Systems, Human Resources, Financial Resources, Service Delivery, and External Relations.<sup>1</sup> The dual purpose of these surveys was to identify Romanian NGOs with the potential to influence public policy as well as to make a preliminary assessment of their training and technical assessment needs (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Survey Findings

- Technical (social delivery) skills are stronger than management skills
- Collaboration both among organizations and especially with public authorities is rarely undertaken
- There is little understanding of advocacy and how to approach it
- The experience of the communist period discouraged working together, violated interpersonal trust, and corrupted concepts of volunteerism
- The weak economic climate and the absence of macro economic reforms make financial sustainability difficult

Between late July 1995 and early February 1996, the DemNet team interviewed more than 350 Romanian NGOs, representing by and large the extent of active, legitimate organizations in the USAID priority sectors. Additionally, approximately 50 local government entities were surveyed in order to obtain a better understanding of the relationship between NGOs and public authority and to obtain leads on active organizations. The surveys also provided an opportunity to look at the environment in which NGOs operate and the degree to which there were opportunities and a willingness for NGOs to collaborate with one another.

By June 30, 1999, 359 organizations were identified as eligible for formal DemNet support. The teams returned to Bucharest with lists of qualified NGOs as well as findings that directly informed the implementation of the project.

## DELIVERING DEMNET SERVICES

World Learning delivered DemNet services in three phases. These phases evolved as a result of improved understanding of the needs of the Romanian NGO community, changes in the implementation approach sought by USAID, and an opportunity to expand the reach of the activity beyond formally established NGOs and into areas of Romania with limited experience with civil society.

### PHASE I

Phase I consisted of a broad approach to providing training, technical assistance, and grants to eligible organizations as specified in the initial proposal and project work plan. Training consisted of SCA modules in project planning, proposal writing, and project management adapted to the Romanian context and delivered to less sophisticated, less developed organizations. Technical assistance during this phase consisted of extensive consultations in proposal writing and project planning with organizations that were submitting concept papers and proposals to the DemNet grants program. Additional technical assistance helped interested groups meet the eligibility criteria for DemNet assistance, which also contributed to organizational development. During this phase, the grants program began with World Learning's development of grant guidelines. Approval of the guidelines came in February 1996, at which time the grants program was announced and World Learning began to receive concept papers and proposals from NGOs.

During Phase I, an average of 42 organizations responded to invitations to attend training modules delivered in each of the project's four regions. Eighty-three NGOs attended the jointly developed introductory advocacy training, also delivered regionally. Fifty-five NGOs submitted concept papers, seven of which were developed into project proposals strong enough to submit for review by USAID and the Democracy Commission (a group composed of staff from the U.S. Embassy and the United States Information Service) in May 1996. In September 1996, these seven proposals were approved and the projects launched.



## OUTCOMES: PHASE I

- Produced the first substantial analysis of Romania's NGO sector
- Introduced 83 organizations to the concept of policy advocacy
- Brought the term "advocacy" into the Romanian language
- Awarded seven grants to Romanians NGOs working to:
  - Improve organizational management capacities
  - Prevent constitutional abuses
  - Expand information on entrepreneurship
  - Improve relations with local authorities
  - Enhance external relations

## LESSONS LEARNED — PHASE I

1. Conducting an extensive field study was crucial to understanding the needs of Romanian civil society organizations and their prospects for successful participation in the policy arena.
2. NGOs that lacked clearly defined missions had difficulty defining their policy issue, and had more difficulty acting on them.
3. It cannot be assumed that NGOs are naturally concerned with policy matters. Romanian NGOs did not seem to be interested in policy, saw it to be too much work, had too little experience in public policy, or had high expectations of failure in this new arena.
4. At first, most Romanian NGOs did not understand advocacy well enough to be able to express a link between the projects they proposed for DemNet grants and their organizational ability to engage in the policy arena.

## PHASE II

Responding to the finding that Romanian organizations lacked defined policy concerns, during Phase II, World Learning helped the selected organizations achieve a thorough understanding of advocacy. The first goal of this phase was to create examples of public participation by Romanian civil society organizations in order to establish models for replication by other NGOs. The second Phase II goal was to promote organizational development, especially in external relations, since that is an aspect of institutional life that is especially relevant to success in the policy arena.

Phase II reached 89 Romanian NGOs through their participation in a workshop that covered policy advocacy project design and proposal development. Fifty-five of these organizations fleshed out policy advocacy campaigns to address their policy concerns (36 as

proposals, 19 as concept papers). Although USAID ultimately suspended the grants process in order to review its approach to civil society support (in light of the continuing external challenges facing Romanian civil society), 14 of these projects were reviewed and nominated to USAID for funding and the Democracy Commission approved six of the projects before the USAID halted the process. These projects represented the first instances of a planned, organized approach to policy advocacy ever attempted by Romanian civil society.

#### OUTCOMES: PHASE II

- Fifty-five organizations outlined the first comprehensive policy advocacy campaigns in Romanian history
- Awarded six grants and provided technical assistance, that resulted in:
  - Improved organizational management capacities, especially in external relations
  - Higher profile organizational marketing activity
  - Novel fundraising efforts
  - Heightened public awareness of organizational priority issues
  - A cadre of Romanian NGO professionals experienced in the management of policy advocacy programs
  - Expanded relationships with public authorities and recognition of organizational credibility and legitimacy
  - A reformed national secondary school curriculum
  - Draft legislation for energy reform
  - Heightened water quality standards
  - Stronger environmental regulations

#### LESSONS LEARNED — PHASE II

1. Engaging in advocacy and public participation helps NGOs appreciate the value and impact of those activities.
2. Directed and linked training, technical assistance, and grants energize policy-oriented groups to actively undertake their policy agendas.
3. A targeted approach to civil society support can create synergies and crosscutting results that benefit USAID, local NGOs, and the NGO climate.

#### PHASE III

With the suspension of the grants program and USAID's internal review of its support to civil society during the spring and summer of 1997, World Learning proposed an approach that would forego the grants component while continuing DemNet's focus on developing

the internal elements critical to pluralistic participation. Training and technical assistance in organizational development issues continued to emphasize the definition and expression of priority policy issues and the sustainable participation of NGOs in public life. Grants were limited to NGO activities identified by USAID.

World Learning sought to pilot a community facilitation program and proposed to train and place six community organizers who, in turn, would identify and train local community leaders. These community leaders, with technical assistance from World Learning, would collaborate with public authorities to identify and prioritize local needs. The community, NGOs, and public authorities together would then design a project to address those needs and submit a proposal to the Romanian Social Development Fund (RSDF) for funding.

World Learning designed and implemented a training series that addressed critical sustainability competencies: strategic management, financial management, organizational communications, and fundraising. This series was delivered to more than 100 organizations in four regions of the country; 22 of those organizations were NGO resource centers that had been established with grants from the Foundation for the Development of Civil Society, a local NGO set up by a European Community Program established in 1989 known as EC/PHARE (European Community/Poland and Hungary: Action for the Restructuring of the Economy) and subsequently extended to include EC programs throughout Central and Eastern Europe. By training resource center staff, World Learning expanded NGO access to information that will continue to help sustain Romanian civil society.

With the support of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), World Learning also trained Romania's first community facilitators. Eighteen people were trained originally, six of whom went on to work with 15 communities in the development of 13 pilot project examples for the RSDF.

### OUTCOMES: PHASE III

- Profession of Community Organizer created and established in Romania
- Fifteen new civil society organizations created in regions and communities where none previously existed
- Collaborative approaches to community problem solving introduced
- New approaches to fundraising adopted by 25 organizations as a result of training and technical assistance
- Four grants awarded to Romanian NGOs contributing directly to:
  - Enhanced organizational management capacities
  - Expanded public information on lead pollution
  - Greater public awareness of ways to prevent lead poisoning in children
  - Enhanced NGO relations with local authorities and businesses
  - Improved prospects for the sustainability of a critical information source for civil society

## LESSONS LEARNED — PHASE III

1. Fostering community leadership is critical to the development of viable, collaborative projects that address priority community needs.
2. The facilitation process is useful in creating collaborative solutions to community problems in both rural and urban areas.
3. A new community dynamic is established when, after learning to work together to address community priorities, organizations collaborate to address other community issues. This is a collateral benefit of the collective experience.
4. The community facilitation process creates an opening for the establishment of civil society organizations where none existed previously.

## DEMNET SERVICE SUMMARIES

### TRAINING

DemNet training benefited NGOs receiving grant support from the project as well as a broader audience of potential civil society actors. Over the life of the project, World Learning delivered approximately 3,200 days of training through 12 training programs and three seminars. Two of the training sessions (policy advocacy project design and proposal development) included planned technical assistance interventions. A total of 300 NGOs from all regions of Romania participated in some or all of these training programs. Sixty of these groups attended seven or more of the training programs. One-third of the NGOs that received training are based in Bucharest; the remaining NGOs are located in 35 cities throughout Romania, with nine cities bearing the highest concentration.

The type of training offered and the number of NGOs attending were a direct result of critical needs identified in the NGO community during the initial countrywide assessment. For example, World Learning trained over 40 NGOs in project planning and proposal writing. Also, World Learning focused significant attention on helping NGOs understand advocacy and its role in their overall activities. Approximately 100 NGOs participated in one or both of the advocacy programs offered.

Because of Romania's weak economy, World Learning placed special emphasis on developing financial management skills — from how to effectively manage and report the use of financial resources to how to develop and implement more effective fundraising programs within a floundering economy.

### TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

World Learning delivered both formal and informal technical assistance through

DemNet. Formal technical assistance (TA) to NGOs included advising in six key categories as defined by the IAI (listed above), as well as in specific subcategories such as advocacy, lobbying, and fundraising. Under DemNet, more than 60 Romanian NGOs benefited from an in-depth analysis using the IAI, and World Learning and its partners conducted approximately 270 TA interventions for more than 125 organizations, totaling 1,500 hours of TA in the six key management areas.

Additionally, informal TA was delivered through assistance provided by telephone. During the Phase II emphasis on proposal writing, for example, DemNet staff responded to 20 to 30 calls per week. In addition, throughout the project approximately ten calls per week requested assistance on reporting procedures and financial management. Eight subject areas were the source of over 75 percent of the TA interventions; financial management and project management received the most attention.

## GRANTS

Over the life of the project, World Learning awarded 17 grants with a total value of over \$370,000. Nearly half of the grants (seven) were for activities in the environmental sector; the others were split among the sectors of economic restructuring, democracy/human rights, and social service sectors.

DemNet grants served not only the stated purpose of the project but also contributed to organizational development indicators. World Learning consultants, trained in the use of the IAI, conducted day-long assessments with grantees to develop a set of institutional development recommendations in the six facets of organizational life. These recommendations were then included in the grant framework as grantee objectives.

## SUPPORT RESOURCES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

To augment its direct services, World Learning made available a number of resources to Romanian NGOs for use beyond the term of the DemNet Program. World Learning worked with 22 local NGO resource centers, providing them with trained staff to respond to the needs of the nonprofit community in the regions each serves. In addition, World Learning's IAI was translated into Romanian and provided to 30 NGO professionals drawn from the breadth of Romania's NGO community. World Learning also worked with a cadre of six Romanian process trainers who joined DemNet staff to refine their abilities to provide training services in each of the DemNet training modules mentioned above.

Further, a series of eight manuals on aspects of organizational management, advocacy, and community facilitation provided indirect technical assistance to 800 recipients. All the manuals are specific to the Romanian context and were published in Romanian and English. They are posted on the DemNet Web site (<http://www.worldlearning.org/pidt/romdem.html>). This Web site, together with information on community facilitation and links to further

sources in English, constitutes the largest resource on these issues available in the Romanian language, freely available to an increasing number of “wired” Romanian NGOs.

Finally, DemNet provided critical support in fostering the availability of financial resources to the Romanian nonprofit community in the future. A working group at CENTRAS (a leading Romanian NGO dedicated to the support and development of Romania’s third sector of NGOs), with support from the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, drafted The Non-Profit Sponsorship Law, which provides tax incentives for a transfer of financial resources from individuals and business. Technical assistance from World Learning helped CENTRAS to form a coalition from the broad range of Romanian NGOs in an effort to move the legislation forward. With administrative support from World Learning and technical guidance from DemNet’s American Volunteers in International Development partners, the coalition successfully moved the legislation into force. At such time when the Romanian economy becomes unfettered from undue state control and surplus financial resources are generated, the Romanian community of nonprofit organizations is well positioned to benefit.

## COMMUNITY FACILITATION AND DEVELOPMENT

As mentioned above, USAID and DemNet collaborated with the RSDF effort in developing a pilot program to train individuals to be community development facilitators and to work in several communities to test the facilitation process. The final objective of this effort was to test the validity of the community facilitation concept and to leave the pilot communities with project ideas and proposals that could be submitted to the RSDF once it became operational. Three counties (Alba, Botosani, and Tulcea) were selected for the pilot program. Eighteen people, about half of whom were women, were selected to participate in the community facilitation training developed by World Learning. DemNet had resources to select and place six facilitators from this group. In their initial eight- to twelve-month efforts, facilitators assisted 13 communities within the three counties in developing local improvement projects. Eleven of the projects involved the rehabilitation of a local unpaved road; one project consisted of the rehabilitation of a small-scale piped water system; and the final project was a community-based social service project.

USAID, the World Bank, and the communities judged the pilot effort a success. As a model, its impact has already been felt. Two additional groups of facilitators have been trained by the RSDF using the World Learning community development facilitation training framework. In addition, one of the NGOs already active in the DemNet, Albamont, invited World Learning facilitators to conduct training in community development facilitation. Albamont had received support from the EC/PHARE program to conduct a community development activity in six to twelve communities from Alba County. As of April 1999, two of the trained facilitators were working in their villages to help organize activities. The importance and novelty of World Learning’s efforts is reflected in the national exposure received in December 1998 in a brief segment during the Romanian evening news.

The impact of World Learning's community facilitation efforts is demonstrated by the fact that, even without external funding, citizens continue to organize to achieve positive change in their communities. In several places, villagers have made infrastructure improvements, frequently with the collaboration of local authorities. For example, in June 1998, 19 villagers in Vale Larga (Alba County) initiated a rehabilitation activity for a portion of a local road. Participants cleaned a drainage ditch and covered holes in the road with ballast. In Visterna (Tulcea County), villagers formed a committee to solve their problem with garbage that had been carelessly thrown about, infesting the water and air, and leaving an unsightly mess throughout the village. The problem was quickly resolved and the same committee has continued to ensure that the newly achieved cleanliness in the village is maintained. Also in this village, young people renovated a community center after obtaining the approval of the local authorities for the renovation and use of the center.

Local authorities have also shown support for community improvement efforts. In Alba, the county council (Consiliul Countyean Alba) provided significant financial support to RSDf projects developed by two communities, Ponor (US \$41,700) and Salciua (US \$25,000). Based on several discussions between concerned citizens and local authorities in Burliest, a small village in the county of Botosani, several improvements were initiated. A small ten-passenger bus began to make three trips per day to Botosani Town. Wiring was installed for a new telephone system in the village. The school library was made operational. In fostering collaborative approaches to problem solving at the community level, World Learning was able to expand the reach of Romanian civil society, which is expressing and acting on its policy concerns and is engaged in political and economic decision making.

The art and science of association were the essential characteristics of World Learning's DemNet activities in Romania throughout the evolution of the project. The art was addressed through the promotion of collective action and the promulgation of techniques for civic engagement toward the achievement of policy-oriented objectives. Science was addressed by promoting an awareness of the importance of organizational development and by building capacity for civic engagement over the long term.

In light of the continued difficulties facing Romanian NGOs — both internal and external — DemNet's impact has been considerable. In the area of Advocacy, World Learning

- introduced the concept of advocacy to Romania
- developed local expertise in advocacy
- presented the first training programs on advocacy in Romania
- initiated an *advocacy vocabulary* adopted by other agencies in Romania
- funded the first advocacy campaigns for a number of organizations with the result that advocacy is now practiced by a relatively large number of Romanian NGOs.

In the area of Organizational Development, World Learning

- was the first to discuss programmatic sustainability in correlation with financial and operational sustainability (past discussions related only to financial considerations)
- introduced the concept of external relations — not simply public relations — emphasizing relationships with the media, government, and beneficiaries
- funded the first external relations positions in a number of organizations
- strengthened NGOs' understanding of organizational development through use of the IAI
- strengthened NGOs' knowledge base and practices relating to all aspects of financial management
- developed the first comprehensive manuals in Romania (and in Romanian) on critical organizational development topics.

Finally, in the area of Collaboration, World Learning

- was a leader in forming a coherent and practical approach to community development through collaborative engagement
- trained and placed the first community facilitators in Romania
- introduced a collaborative approach to assessing, prioritizing, and implementing projects to address community concerns.

General economic and social hardships within the country were clearly a significant factor throughout the life of the project. Under the continuing weak economic climate, it is unlikely that many NGOs will receive support from local businesses and the general population in the foreseeable future. However, DemNet yielded enough success stories to prove that the concepts and ideas are valid even in a country as troubled as Romania.

World Learning's DemNet Program in Romania continues to have a significant and positive impact on the internal factors that lead civil society organizations to assume their public political roles and responsibilities. Over 300 Romanian NGOs have directly benefited from DemNet services. Through training in organizational management and institutional development, Romanian NGOs are now better able to guide and monitor their own development needs. Through training in advocacy, they are better able to define their relationship to policy and political life. Through technical assistance in designing and implementing a policy-oriented advocacy campaign, they are now able to act on their defined priorities on behalf of their constituents. Because Romanian NGO staffs have developed skills in organizational development and in advocacy, they have the resources to inform their own growth in political participation. Through technical assistance in community-based collaborative problem solving, NGOs are able to move their agendas forward. With financial support, they can develop successful programs and models for others in the future.

Advocacy, as a method of fostering needed change, is now both understood and practiced in Romania. NGOs are better able to communicate with the public and to demonstrate the



value of their activities in their communities. Even within a weak economic environment, several NGOs have conducted successful fundraising campaigns through special events and other means of raising locally generated funds. Moreover, there is a cadre of trained individuals within the NGO community capable of providing technical assistance and training to current and new NGOs that wish to become more effective elements of civil society.

The successful adoption and utilization of new concepts introduced through DemNet was greater in NGOs that had an initial base capacity and a willingness to try something new. As is known — but too often forgotten — sustainable results are not attained quickly, although a few quick successes may keep the momentum going. New concepts and capacity building require time to be understood and adopted. A consistent, often intense level of support, helps to consolidate and maintain progress.

## ENDNOTE

1 For more information about the IAI, see: “Institutional Analysis Instrument: An NGO Development Tool” under the section titled “Other Items of Interest,” later in this volume.

# BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL FOR SCHOOL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA

Dunham Rowley  
Chief of Party  
Community Schools Activities Program, Ethiopia

## ABSTRACT

This paper delineates the differences between financial, human, and social capital, and suggests that social capital be invested and spent as an essential asset in creating conditions for sustainable social changes. The work of Michael Woolcock, who applied concepts of social capital to international development settings, is the model used for World Learning's current education project in southern Ethiopia. This model considers government characteristics in terms of *synergy*, the degree to which policies match the needs of the people; and *integrity*, the degree to which government is administratively competent to carry out its policies as a *top down* form of social capital. At village and school levels, the ideas of *integration* and *autonomy* are defined as *bottom up* forms of social capital. These are developed to demonstrate the degree to which those at the community level support each other in reaching beyond the village to meet the needs of the local school. Whether top down or bottom up, social capital is a measure of mutual trust and of the ability of new social networks to interact. These networks should result in mutual benefits to schools and to the government. Poised between both entities are the NGOs, positioned to create the conditions needed for networks to become established and sustainable.



In developing nations, schools typically have been supported entirely by national governments. Forty years of post-colonial experience in many countries has shown that, as the number of new entrants dramatically increases, governments alone cannot give schools the support they need to maintain minimal educational standards. As a result, schools increasingly turn to their local communities for support and guidance. As community participation in schools becomes a larger public policy issue in state-provided education, policymakers must look at prevailing social and government conditions in order to assess the chances that local school governance can succeed.

One way to assess the environment and prepare the foundation for the effective local governance of schools is to borrow concepts from social capital theory. In his work on this topic, Woolcock (1998) developed a method for making social capital theory useful to development practitioners. Woolcock recognized the necessity of technical and resource capital and acknowledged the role of human capital as a factor in promoting economic and social development. But in order for these resources to work effectively, he argued, there is an additional need for social capital. Social capital refers to the information, trust, and norms of reciprocity inherent in one's social networks. Coleman (1990, p. 302) wrote that "... social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence." Similarly, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 119) defined social capital as "... the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized opportunities of mutual acquaintance and recognition." In short, all transactions leading to social progress — or decay — are embedded in institutional, organizational, and interpersonal networks and relationships.

For the purpose of simplicity in this paper, Woolcock's social capital model is examined at two levels, government and local. As will be seen in the following pages, the government, or *top down* level, has two major characteristics that define social capital: *synergy* and *integrity*. Similarly, the local, or *bottom up* level, has two components of social capital: *integration* and *autonomy*. It is the relationship between both levels that determines how social capital is accumulated (Woolcock 1998, p. 168).

This paper develops the idea that building social capital is a prerequisite to developing human capital in improving basic education. Through a Cooperative Agreement with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia, World Learning is implementing a primary school improvement project, the Community Schools Activities Program (CSAP) in southern Ethiopia. After four years of implementation, patterns are emerging from CSAP that make it possible to identify sources of social capital and to test social capital theory *in situ*.

In CSAP, for example, social capital is used to build new relationships and networks between local and national levels to effect social change. It is used to design appropriate responses for institutions to work and act with responsibility and vision in society. Of course, financial and human capital are also leveraged; all three types of capital work together in CSAP, making the primary education system more relevant and integral to the total development of Ethiopia's cultural, social, and economic destiny.

Accordingly, the first section of this paper introduces the basic outlines of the CSAP project, its mechanisms, and its intent to improve quality and equity of basic education through the School Committee. Subsequent sections detail one model of social capital, define its distinguishing characteristics, and then describe the model's application in Ethiopia through CSAP. The conclusion suggests that investments of social capital can extend and enhance school governance and produce educational improvements by identifying key sources of support.

## INCENTIVES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Basic Education System Overhaul (BESO) is a first generation of education improvement projects in Ethiopia, implemented after the military regime of 1974 to 1991. This portfolio of projects is funded by USAID in collaboration with the Ethiopian Ministry of Education and target regional governments. The BESO program concentrates its technical and resource provision in two regions: 1) Tigray and 2) Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Regions. The largest component of BESO comprises a variety of technical inputs designed to overhaul the policy framework of primary education in the country and to build competencies in the key areas of planning, finance, curriculum, school leadership, and teacher training. There is also significant input to the Central Ministry regarding research and policy. These activities are provided for under a separate contract, in close coordination with World Learning's community-based activities.

Technical assistance is supplemented with community-to-school grants programs that provide School Committees — or School Boards, as they are known in the United States — with resources to hire and train community organizers. The organizers, known as *School Development Agents*, operate on the theory that if communities can mobilize to support local schools, and if School Committees can compete for and obtain funding for their own development, then school quality will improve and more girls and boys will succeed in school. Similarly, if technical improvements are made at the regional level, increasing the capacity of zones and *woredas* (counties or districts) to successfully plan and finance educational improvements within the regions, and if more teachers are better trained to use the new curriculum, the school system will improve. In short, these broader system improvements will enable regional systems to better serve local schools, which, in turn, will have better local planning and citizen-mobilizing capabilities.

The two community-to-school grants programs were designed as pilot projects. As USAID conceived them, they were intended to be experimental and not necessarily sustainable. However, the two projects became an important demonstration that community involvement and popular participation can have a much larger impact than perhaps originally imagined.

In structure, vision, and purpose, the school grants programs differ only slightly between regions. The Community School Grants Program (CSGP), in the region of Tigray, is run by the Tigray Development Association, a local, nongovernmental organization. The Community Schools Activities Program (CSAP) in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region is implemented and managed by World Learning. While each program has its own management and implementation culture, both programs share the same basic structure and relationship with their client schools. Both also engage their client schools by offering incentives to School Committees to improve their local school (Rowley 1998, p. 2).

Individual schools in Ethiopia are served by woreda administrations, which are served by zone administrations, which, in turn, are served by their regional counterparts. Administrative units at each level are governed by a Council that makes decisions regarding

the affairs within its jurisdiction. Officials from the Administrative Councils and Education Offices, along with individual school officials and other key members from the School Committees, attend School Orientation Workshops to learn about the incentive program. These workshops are important opportunities for various stakeholders to discuss education, the intensity of demand for education by local populations, and expected improvements in educational quality that should result from participation in the program.

The School Orientation Workshops also inspire participants to envision what education could be in their local schools. After government policies are described and the overall nature of BESO projects such as CSAP is explained, participants hear from those who are presently engaged in the project — typically government officials and School Committee members from individual schools — who share what it has meant to participate in the incentive program.

The Woreda Educational Office selects the schools that will participate. The schools chosen then enter a three-step process: First, the school must organize itself and contact the School Committee to assess and prioritize school problems. Next, with the guidance of the School Development Agent (SDA), it produces a strategic plan and raises money and other materials to begin its project. Finally, CSAP offers the School Committee 3,000 Ethiopian Birr (U.S. \$400.00) once it has started an improvement project and has raised money or other resources from the community to complement what CSAP contributes.

At each phase of the process, CSAP asks the school to sponsor an open house to inform the larger community about its improvement efforts. The school shows the community what is to be done and often solicits advice and support from the community in doing this work. At the completion of the improvement project the school again holds an open house to show community members its accomplishments. These events build pride in the local school and generate increased interest in school activities, which result in more families sending their children to school. In this way, not only are the benefits of broader Ethiopian development felt at the local level, but the school as a local institution also gains status and integrity in the community.

As School Committees work through the three phases, the incentive award conditions become more demanding. The first stage usually focuses on improvements to the physical plant of the school, emphasizing repairs of walls and furniture, fencing, doors and windows, and the like. The second and third phases increasingly force schools to address teaching and learning issues, in-service teacher training, and provision of teaching materials. These stages also lead School Committees to improve skills in school leadership and management. In this progression, School Committee members gradually begin to think less about how a school should look and more about what schools teach, the way they teach, the learning outcomes of the children, and overall school management. Over time, the citizens of communities served by the school become more aware of the purpose of schooling and the role of education in the socio-economic development of the area and the nation.

Although not all School Committees receive the third phase of incentive funding (approximately U.S. \$2,600), a more important project goal is to train and challenge School Committees to become autonomous in their efforts to continue the school improvement program. Therefore, sustainability will be measured by how well a School Committee works over time with the School Head and the community to follow patterns developed from their own first project and to use their analysis and organizational skills to build on past successes.

## SOCIAL CAPITAL IN CSAP

CSAP was designed to work with and increase the number of stakeholders in primary education from the national to the community level. As such, it is positioned to reveal social capital dynamics within and between the community and the government. Over the last eight years, as the Ethiopian bureaucracy has been organizing to devolve the tasks and responsibilities of governing to regional, zone, and woreda levels, it has become critically important to identify sources of social capital for their ability to enhance sustainability and beneficent development.

Now let us turn to an example of a simplified version of Woolcock’s model and see how managers and practitioners in the CSAP project identified social capital in schools and their governance structures (see Figure 1). First, we will look at the government, or “top down” level of social capital, characterized by *synergy* and *integrity*. Next we will look at the local, or “bottom up” level, characterized by *integration* and *autonomy*.

Figure 1: Social Capital in CSAP

SYNERGY	INTEGRITY	INTEGRATION	AUTONOMY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High policy congruence</li> <li>• Ideational and developmental competence</li> <li>• Project advocacy by public officials</li> <li>• Site visits</li> <li>• Demonstrated congruence with desires of people</li> <li>• Bureaucratic synergy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government commitment</li> <li>• Authorizing competence</li> <li>• Leadership competence</li> <li>• Sensible bureaucratic rules</li> <li>• Administrative competence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment of material resources</li> <li>• Organizational commitment</li> <li>• Local support network commitment</li> <li>• Commitment to support success of members</li> <li>• Local school network support</li> <li>• Commitment to develop local resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment to reach beyond the local community</li> <li>• Commitment to develop extra-community networks</li> <li>• Commitment to locate appropriate technical inputs</li> </ul>

## SYNERGY

*Synergy* refers to the degree of compliance between what people want and need and what their government does to meet those needs. Synergy exists when there is a high degree of congruence between the stated policies of a ministry or government program and its implementation; that is, when the people perceive the government to be on their side. Low social capital results when this is not the case and the government is feared or resented for its intrusion into the private lives of its citizens. In the CSAP project, we have documented the following:

### HIGH POLICY CONGRUENCE

The 1994 Education and Training Policies issued by the Ministry of Education were unknown in the schools and in the communities until recently. CSAP personnel invited government officials to explain the policies directly to new schools entering the CSAP program and soon discovered that community members, school officials, and local government officials had plenty to say during these presentations. School Committee members consequently used the new policies as guiding principles in forming their own committees and actions at the local level. Later, schools consulted with and followed government manuals that further guided final decisions on formal “terms of reference” and provided guidelines that make school governance work. The policies helped to build social capital because they permitted and inspired local committees to enact policies the government had been promoting in the first place.

### IDEATIONAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL COMPETENCE

The government shows a high degree of awareness about how CSAP operates, its incentives, and its reliance on public officials. Measures of this awareness include public meeting reports given to other groups reporting CSAP activities, such as Technical Working Groups, the Regional Council, and others; authorization of annual implementation plans; concerns about issues raised in quarterly reports on quality, equity, and relevance; and written commitments supporting the principle of local participation in school improvement at annual meetings.

### PROJECT ADVOCACY BY PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Public officials regularly attend and offer testimonials in workshops for new project entrants. These testimonials are usually descriptive and inspirational. Woreda Education Officers have been especially supportive of the program and are often willing to explain the impact of the program in their administrative area.

## SITE VISITS

Public officials sometimes pay surprise visits to schools to verify the truthfulness and veracity of CSAP activities. When they verify positive results, they communicate these to the Regional Council and to other responsible government offices. Local people feel proud that a regional representative might visit their school. A past history of indifference toward local people reaffirms that the present regional government may be taking increased interest in all development activities.

## DEMONSTRATED CONGRUENCE WITH DESIRES OF PEOPLE

Sometimes schools need new land or new leadership in order to perform their services for the public. When government provides for these needs, it reaffirms faith that government works and has the people's interests in mind. Assigning land and reappointing local officials, (a head teacher at a school, for example) are dramatic events that send clear messages of government support at the community level.

## BUREAUCRATIC SYNERGY

Sometimes local governments appoint officials from other sectors, such as Agriculture, to serve on local School Committees. This Agricultural Agent, then, has an opportunity to meet with the school and the School Development Agent. Agents are available to provide instruction or leadership to students in their own agricultural activities.

Either knowingly or unknowingly, the government is investing in social capital when there is high congruence between people's needs and the policy environment of the education sector. Educational policies in Ethiopia state clearly that schools shall be governed with community participation and that all girls should go to school, for example. They further state that support to implement these measures will be established both in the communities and in the government. Social capital invested in the relationships between communities and the government reinforces and legitimates the efforts of local schools to exercise their own forms and models of school governance. Communities feel safe to do so because their actions are backed by official policy. Synergy captures the essence of enacted social policy.

## INTEGRITY

The other characteristic of top-down or government social capital is *organizational integrity*. This is the ability of government to actually deliver the services it promises. In both decentralized and hierarchical systems, citizens judge their government according to that which is closest and most visible to them. Therefore, high social capital is demonstrated



institutional coherence, competence, and capacity, usually in local governments. In CSAP, we observed the following:

#### GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT

Local governments often provide goods and construction materials to participating schools. CSAP has documented many cases in which Woreda Education Offices provided transportation to its assigned School Development Agent working in the woreda, or provided bags of cement or sheets of corrugated iron roofing to specific CSAP served schools.

#### AUTHORIZING COMPETENCE

There is a high degree of cooperation and commitment from the Regional Education Bureau to help CSAP develop its plans and provide authority to other groups for project support and legitimacy. Initially, this commitment was weak but World Learning quickly discovered effective ways to work with regional authorities. It learned how to include the Regional Education Bureau in CSAP's major events and called upon the Bureau's experts to provide key inputs into the program. World Learning learned how to report to the regional authorities and be responsive to their needs for accountability to the Regional Council.

#### LEADERSHIP COMPETENCE

At the woreda level, education officers are beginning to raise awareness about the school governance approach at other area schools not served by CSAP. Woreda Education Officers conduct meetings on school innovations, problem solving, coordination, planning, and resource allocation of woreda-level education resources. For many people in these local systems, the meetings are a new phenomenon and one that is well received by the schools in the woreda.

#### SENSIBLE BUREAUCRATIC RULES

There is evidence that the government tempered a policy that would have taxed all school revenues at 25 percent. This policy would have discouraged schools from raising money. The regional government, however, decided to limit this tax to only those revenues raised for the school's routine expenses; for special projects earmarking funds for school improvement, the tax provision would not apply. There are also efforts being made by the Regional Education Bureau to establish norms for conducting activities at the community level to improve local schools.

## ADMINISTRATIVE COMPETENCE

Local government courts, administration, and council are involved in resolving legal and jurisdictional problems with schools and their internal leadership. When schools have to relocate, or when there are leadership problems within a School Committee, the local administration allocates land or steps in to appoint new representative leadership. Recently, World Learning and CSAP sponsored gender workshops in Sidama zone to address the issue of the abduction of girls, which used to be a culturally accepted way to avoid paying a bride price among couples that wanted to marry. Fear of abduction is high among unmarried girls because it can take place so easily on their way to school. The judicial, administrative, constabulary, and educational sectors of local government came together and agreed to specific procedures to follow when abduction takes place. The result of the workshop was a dramatic sign to the local population that abduction will not be tolerated and that severe punishment will be handed down to those who commit it.

The top-down sources of social capital described above perhaps seem overly optimistic and laudatory of government. While the experiences mentioned above are true, naturally they do not apply equally in all corners of local government. Certainly, Ethiopia's regional and central governments have their faults and contradictions. For example, while approval by the regional government for CSAP activities is usually granted, it takes time and effort, causing delays. In addition, at local and regional levels, leadership sometimes changes abruptly and newly elected officials may resist the goals of the project and cause other delays. However, when new officials come into their positions, they are carefully informed of positive impacts of the project. Most new officials become supporters once they have understood the principles and practices of the project.

In only rare cases do officials at the local level resist and pose obstacles to the project. School Development Agents and CSAP field staff are professional and competent in dealing with such cases, but they are not always successful at solving problems. In some areas, teachers have not been paid for months and the school revenue tax policy, even at 25 percent of school revenues, means that schools have no incentive to raise money on their own. These problems lessen government integrity. On balance, however, the government has shown high integrity regarding the CSAP project and it continues to grow when public events and administrative actions confirm their support.

It is also the case that the Ethiopian school system is a steep hierarchy and is bound by many operational rules. Approvals and permissions are required for movements or initiatives that extend beyond its own level in the hierarchy. While government structures are sometimes rigid and procedure-bound, social relations in this hierarchy can be flexible and serviceable to its clientele. Because everyone in the system can claim some credit for making the program available in their jurisdiction, all levels of the system look good to the one just below. The Regional Government and Regional Education Bureau can claim that more than 600 schools (at the time of writing) have been renovated, while zone and woreda officials can claim that the work of educational improvements are proceeding well in their areas. The distribution of benefits is, thus, a way of assuring that social capital works from the top down.

It proves to those below that government is capable of organizational integrity and committed to synergy supporting the improvements needed for school performance. Thus, while politics are never absent from any system, there are strong incentives for the regional system to desire school improvements.

## INTEGRATION

There are also two dominating characteristics of social capital at the village or community level: integration and autonomy. *Integration* refers to the internal coherence of a community and its ability to serve and support its people. Strong, integrated communities display a general trust among its members, and they possess the support networks that help to assure the survival and well being of all members. Integration is observable in CSAP in the following ways:

### COMMITMENT OF MATERIAL RESOURCES

Community members are able and willing to raise significant resources, in addition to their usual taxes and other contributions, for national programs and for the improvement of their local primary school.

### ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Community citizens are willing to organize and participate in School Committees to improve their local school. They meet frequently and discuss substantive issues of education at these meetings. Schools participating in CSAP activities also take it upon themselves to develop the internal capacity to earn revenue from the land, labor, and productive assets found on the school compound. Many plant tree seedlings, grow and sell coffee beans, permit grazing on land, and grow and sell other cash crops to earn extra revenue.

### LOCAL SUPPORT NETWORK COMMITMENT

Other traditional institutions, such as the local *idir* (traditional religious groups) and councils of elders within the communities, have established ways to support their local school. This includes contributing money and asserting moral prerogatives to encourage girls to come to school and to support the school's improvement agenda within the community as a whole.

### COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT SUCCESS OF MEMBERS

A majority of schools participating in CSAP programs have established a Girls Advisory Committee within the school to ensure that girls attend school and to resolve individual problems if a girl is at risk of dropping out. Some of these committees have sheltered girls from abduction and represented them before the School Committee, as well as promoted the idea of rewarding girls who excel in academic performance. Girls Advisory Committees have become a driving force among participating schools in the program. They work at the community level to support their school's girl population to stay and succeed in CSAP supported schools.

## LOCAL SCHOOL NETWORK SUPPORT

In some cases in which CSAP schools benefit from outside resources such as in-service teacher training, they share the training with teachers from non-participating schools.

## COMMITMENT TO DEVELOP LOCAL RESOURCES

School Development Agents (SDAs) come from the communities in which they work and assist schools in their planning and management functions. This is important because they know the traditional leadership and institutions that have been present in the communities for a long time. The SDAs know how to bring these traditional influences together with the school to develop a common vision for improvement. The local SDA is the facilitator between the traditional and modernizing forces in a locality. He or she is able to do this in a way that does not violate local prerogatives and sensitivities about development activities.

With CSAP to assist them, schools have begun to serve their children better and to work for conditions that improve academic success. By making internal changes as well as by changing their role within communities, schools are beginning to serve as a focal point for reinforcing norms of educational quality and gender equity. They are beginning to view their communities and their School Committees as real assets. Building internal networks and enhancing a generalized trust within their communities helps schools to fulfill their educational and social agendas. The School Committees truly represent the interests and collective aspirations of the community in the local school.

## AUTONOMY

*Autonomy* is the other bottom-up characteristic of social capital. It indicates a community's willingness to reach beyond its boundaries to foster economic ties or to apply for assistance without compromising its identity. Autonomy is the expression and willingness of a community to establish networks and interdependent relations of trust outside the community. Until encouraged to act, or confronted by some catastrophic emergency, many communities are isolated and unskilled in seeking outside assistance. These communities are

likely to develop weak networks and remain poor. Others are less concerned about maintaining their identity as a village and are willing to accept any form of modernizing development regardless of the consequences. Autonomy is a characteristic of social capital that indicates a village's capacity and willingness to come together and decide upon its goals and social agenda. It then begins taking action to meet its problems. CSAP has observed the following indicators of autonomy in the communities where it serves schools:

#### COMMITMENT TO REACH BEYOND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

In some zones, Gurage zone in particular, School Committee members appeal to business leaders returning home for visits and traditional holidays from their work outside the zone. Their requests for money often result in significant contributions to the local school. Because schools have shown that they are able to demonstrate impressive improvements, these entrepreneurs are willing to invest money in their former schools with confidence and pride.

#### COMMITMENT TO DEVELOP EXTRA-COMMUNITY NETWORKS

People in the schools are willing to appeal to the government for more resources for the improvement of their schools. When a school makes an appeal to a Woreda Council for additional funds for its development, the requests are taken seriously, discussed, and often times awarded. Many schools are now competent and confident in asking for money from local governments.

School members and School Committees also become capable of appealing to and gaining resources from local NGOs for their school improvement activities. To do this, citizens on the School Committee have had to develop skills and abilities to represent the school's vision and plans as formal proposals to these outside groups. Many schools have been successful in securing extra funds during and after their involvement with CSAP. One school, in particular, did not qualify to receive the Third Phase Incentive award. Undeterred, it prepared a proposal, submitted it directly to the Ethiopian Social Rehabilitation Fund, and was awarded 50,000 Birr (U.S. \$6,047) to complete its project.

#### COMMITMENT TO LOCATE APPROPRIATE TECHNICAL INPUTS

Schools seek and pay for their own in-service teacher training from woreda or other trainers. Schools and School Committees recognize the need for outside expertise and resources.

CSAP provides opportunities for schools to develop and use their abilities to reach beyond the community for additional resources or information. They discover that previous low levels of trust can be strengthened when government and donor groups share their plans.

Social capital increases when School Committees and their respective communities are able to present their needs to government and local NGOs and succeed in securing resources from both.

The four dimensions of social capital — social integration and linkage at the micro level and organizational integrity and synergy at the macro level — can be viewed as different types of social relationships or networks. Bottom-up investments of social capital require integration and coherence at the community level and a willingness to accept and internalize assistance from the government or other outside groups. Such investment may also mean that local groups are capable of resisting influences they feel might destroy their culture and fabric of life. Top-down investments in social capital require a deep commitment on the part of the government or other broad social institutions to collaborate and provide the services needed for development at the community and other levels of society.

Managing and investing social capital, where it is needed and in the right proportions, is not always easy or obvious. At both government and village levels, the idea of trust and networks inherent in social relations is essential and assumes distinct social and political forms in a given society. Bottom participants and top policy makers must cooperate for mutual advantage.

As in any model, care must be given to the weight and meaning of variables within the social capital model. When is too much of a good thing ultimately destructive to the processes we are seeking to improve, and at what points does the model break down? Integration at the community level is good if it is not overly insular and protective of its own identity. Upward linkage is a good thing until it dominates so completely as to change forever the nature of the society at the local level. Likewise, synergy is only as good as the efforts governments make to bridge the public-private divide. Organizational integrity of government is only as good as the durability and continuity of its role as a protector, not a predator, of the common good.

Mediating upward linkages on the one hand, and downward synergy on the other, is the role of civil society. Civil society and indigenous or international NGOs, by virtue of being positioned in the middle, may build social capital between local communities and all levels of government. NGOs and civil society act as catalysts between the top and bottom in assuring that benefits flow to each sector in the most appropriate way.

## CONCLUSION

As this example of educational development in Ethiopia demonstrates, social capital can be constructed, accumulated, and leveraged in several ways. Social capital is constructed when communities discover and act on their own integration of networks and fulfill a clear social purpose. Additionally, social capital is constructed when governments have a supportive policy framework that is perceived to be in synchrony with the people's social and educational agendas. Social capital is leveraged when communities and their institutions are

able to reach out and contract extra resources that will not violate the integrity of the community. Social capital is advanced when local and regional governments are committed and capable of providing legal, authorizing, and administrative services that permit and encourage schools or other projects to function as respected institutions in their communities.

The superstructure in which social capital operates depends on a government that maintains its policy ideals and operates responsibly in local settings. Citizens look up to their government when it seems to be behind them. However, policy errors in other areas, such as secondary education or even international matters, can weaken social capital in the area of primary education. If people perceive that there is no chance for even a minority of students passing from primary education to enter and succeed in secondary education, for example, what happens to social capital that had been building in the primary education sector? Synergy may diminish and confidence in the government to provide additional education after the primary years may be compromised. These and other threats to the policy domain may reduce social capital in the primary education field.

When local government officials are removed and new officials appointed, government integrity may be compromised. World Learning/CSAP works hard to rebuild social capital in this area, but it is not without costs and it takes time. New officials are oriented and new demands are placed on them for authorization and for participation in the program. Other on-going political processes in the country can also dampen the willingness of local and regional government officials to play their roles effectively.

Social capital in most communities is latent, and an outside player who works sensitively with local communities can help to build both trust and awareness about their needs. Most communities have deeply entrenched and urgent needs, and it takes time for communities to identify precisely where they must strengthen their capacities to meet new challenges. The NGO agent can reveal policy opportunities and help community members to pursue them with the previously untapped potential and resources that exist at the local level.

Government, even at the local level, is politically motivated to spread its scarce resources among all its constituents; in addition, it is responsible for policy, regulation, administration, and monitoring functions. It defers, therefore, to civil society to begin the process of mediating between the policy framework of the government and the emerging needs of the community. Fortunately for World Learning and CSAP, the Ethiopian government's position continues to be harmonious with the people's needs on primary education. Fortunate also is the fact that within the communities, and for underserved families, the demand for education in Ethiopia could not be higher than at present. Everyone wants education and most people feel that it is the key to success to both the expanding internal economy and the new global economy.

In any case, both top-down types of social capital (integrity and synergy) force government to provide services to its citizens. Development activities in the form of projects like CSAP help government increase its exposure to its citizens. Even the improvement of a

local school (though a government facility) reinforces the idea that government is on the side of the citizen. This is an important investment since government in many cases has the tendency to override interests of the common citizen in favor of its own interests and position in the larger political and financial system.

When do the investments of social capital pay off? When is intervention no longer needed by civil society institutions to activate the social relationships and networks between top and bottom? Woolcock asserts that if social capital is invested in all four areas, changes in the nature of relationships between the two levels will take place over time and new interdependencies will emerge. Both levels will have to pay attention because the new networks change the way resources are requested and allocated from the top down to the local school. Questions of sustainability therefore become unpredictable because no one knows how these relationships will evolve and what conditions may intervene to either positively or negatively affect the pattern established in the initial common experiences. If it is expected that government should play a more central role in supporting its schools from above, and the community supporting its school from below, then the school itself will have to develop the competencies and skills to mediate the nature and tenor of relations between the bottom and the top. Civil society has a facilitative role to play in the beginning and may have a role to play in providing additional *ad hoc* resources in the future.

World Learning's Community School Activities Program started activities and processes that have importance and relevance to both the way government sees itself delivering its services and the way people in villages participate in the broad development process of Ethiopia. Financial capital is leveraged for its ability to fund programs that take advantage of an appropriate policy fit between the government and the needs of the people. Human capital builds intellectual resources to solve problems and apply analytical skills and knowledge to social and other technical problems in society. Social capital is used to build new relationships and networks between top and bottom levels to leverage social change. It is used to design appropriate responses for institutions to work and act with responsibility and vision in society. All three types of capital combine to make primary education more relevant and integral to the total development of Ethiopia's cultural, social, and economic destiny.

This program highlights an area of inquiry that needs to be explored more deeply. While CSAP has shown that community participation is a process that engages all categories of social capital to the benefit of the whole country, more research is certainly needed. Additional data need to be collected and analyzed to establish the viability of the variables that make up the concept of social capital as defined and discussed in this paper.

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# ENHANCING NGOs' POLICY ADVOCACY SKILLS: LESSONS LEARNED

William A. Douglas

Adjunct Professor, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies,

and David Payton

Program Manager, PIDT

## ABSTRACT

In projects conducted during the last decade in various cultures on four continents, World Learning amassed a wealth of experience in helping NGOs build their capacity to influence public policy through effective advocacy. To illustrate the lessons learned, two projects are examined in this article: the first provided advocacy training to Salvadoran NGOs and the second helped NGOs in Malawi to use advocacy techniques in support of their efforts at democratization.

Among the key lessons learned from these and other World Learning advocacy projects are: 1) that the effectiveness of formal training sessions on advocacy techniques depends on the amount of time and effort (and therefore money) put into preparing NGOs before the training, and following up with them afterwards; 2) that patient nurturing of the coalition-building process is required since joining in coalitions with groups pursuing common goals does not come naturally to many people in developing countries; 3) that the triad of training, technical assistance, and small-grant support is effective in building advocacy capacity; 4) that training sessions can themselves be used to advocate, by bringing in the *targets* of the advocacy campaign as instructors; and 5) that decisions about which advocacy activities are appropriate for support by foreign assistance groups must be done with prudence to avoid inappropriate interference in the recipient nation's internal affairs.



Democracy consists of far more than periodic free elections. A full democratic system also requires other elements such as the rule of law, respect for civil liberties, and civilian control of the military. Another necessary component of democracy is "civil society": the array of interest groups, service-delivery charities, and policy advocacy groups, often called the "infrastructure of democracy," that serve as intermediary institutions, mediating relations

between the individual and the state. When civil society organizations possess honed advocacy skills, they can offer citizens channels through which their interests can be represented and advanced in the periods between elections.

Over the past decade, World Learning has amassed a wealth of experience in helping NGOs in developing nations and emerging democracies to strengthen their capacities in general and to develop their public policy advocacy skills in particular. NGOs have been helped to build policy advocacy capacities in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, the Arab Middle East, and the former Soviet Union. As a result, World Learning has gained experience in a variety of cultures and socio-political settings. In the societies of developing countries, nongovernmental organizations have always existed, even if their voices were silenced when dictators ruled. In contrast, in formerly Communist countries, which spent the past half-century or more under totalitarian regimes, no independent civil society organizations were allowed. As a result, populations in these nations have virtually no prior experience in public policy advocacy. Therefore, major differences in both the topics and the methods of policy advocacy emerge when comparing Angola with El Salvador, for instance, or Egypt with Malawi.

Both World Learning's academic arm, the School for International Training (SIT), located in Brattleboro, Vermont, and its technical-assistance delivery organization, Projects in International Development and Training (PIDT), based in Washington, D.C., are actively engaged in advocacy work (see Figure 1). This article examines two of the many PIDT advocacy capacity-building projects overseas that contributed to its store of lessons learned, one in Latin America (El Salvador), and one in Africa (Malawi). A list of major lessons learned follows a discussion of these projects.

Figure 1: Advocacy Activities Conducted by World Learning

<p>International Policy Advocacy (IPA) 1995 – present</p>	<p>An annual, four-week intensive held in Washington, D.C., New York City, and at SIT in Vermont. By Fall 2000, the course trained 74 key staff and leaders of NGOs from Angola, Bangladesh, Bosnia, Bulgaria, China, Croatia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Macedonia, Malawi, Mozambique, Romania, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.</p>
<p>Global Partnership's "Building Global Capacity for NGO Policy Advocacy Training" Initiative 1997 – present</p>	<p>Administered by SIT's Center for Social Policy and Institutional Development, this initiative provides support to organizations working for policy changes from grassroots to global levels. In September 1997, the initiative created an Internet resource that enables organizations that provide training in policy advocacy skills to share information and materials and mutually consider means by which to develop the capacity of global civil society to influence public policies. Electronic links, accessible and centralized information sources, and a discussion forum have been the key vehicles for communication.</p>

<p>Egypt: NGO Advocacy Workshops (June, September, and November – December 1997)</p>	<p>These multi-day workshops assembled representatives from a diverse group of leading Egyptian NGOs that employ advocacy techniques to improve the communities in which they work. A team of Egyptians and Americans with expertise in advocacy, training, and development conducted the sessions with assistance from the staff of USAID/Egypt. Each workshop's format consisted of plenary session presentations and small group discussions to maximize NGO participation. Topics included: defining advocacy, designing frameworks for advocacy strategies and techniques, planning, influencing policy, gaining public support and building the NGO's constituency, evaluating advocacy efforts, and building necessary organizational competencies.</p>
<p>Democracy Network Program in Romania: Workshops to Develop Proposals for Advocacy Projects, 1996 – 1999</p>	<p>Under the USAID-funded Democracy Network Program, World Learning held a series of advocacy training workshops for Romanian NGOs engaged in generating an active civil society. Each five-day workshop engaged participants from local, national, and regional NGOs. The workshops covered six key topics pertaining to the development of advocacy skills. Participants prepared mission statements prior to the workshops that were submitted for discussion and critique and then returned to them to be refined by the end of each workshop. Participating NGOs also received tailored technical assistance following the workshops.</p>
<p>PVO Initiatives for Newly Independent States (PVO/NIS) Project, 1992 – 1997</p>	<p>This USAID-funded endeavor strengthened the capacity of emerging local NGOs through support for initiatives that enhanced voluntarism and included training activities in organizational development, public education, and policy advocacy. A series of workshops on Public Education through the Media and the External Environment were held in 1995, and a special workshop on Public Education through the Media was held in 1996. These training programs addressed specific techniques of using the media to educate the public about a volunteer ethic and about NGO accomplishments. Topics included: cultivating media relations, writing and using press releases and public service announcements to communicate clear messages, and learning how to present an NGO's activities to gain maximum attention.</p>

# ENHANCING NGOs' ADVOCACY CAPACITIES IN TWO CONTRASTING CULTURES: EL SALVADOR AND MALAWI

## WORLD LEARNING AND ADVOCACY IN EL SALVADOR

During the civil war in El Salvador in the 1980s, when the infamous “death squads” operated with impunity, publicly advocating a policy that the rightists construed as congruent with the program of leftist guerrillas, was often fatal. Thus, it is not surprising that immediately following the 1992 Peace Accords, Salvadoran NGOs were out of practice in the area of public policy advocacy. The ability of civil society groups to advocate for the public policies they desire is an essential component for the nascent Salvadoran democracy and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has sought to assist Salvadoran NGOs in polishing their policy advocacy skills.

In 1998, the USAID mission in El Salvador called upon World Learning to provide training in policy advocacy techniques to Salvadoran civil society groups. The first step in the project, officially known as “Citizen Participation: Enhancing Civil Society Organizations’ Skills in Policy Advocacy,” was to select the Salvadoran NGOs that would receive training. To maximize the number of groups assisted, USAID preferred that the project work with coalitions of several NGOs concerned with a given policy area, rather than work with individual NGOs. USAID originally envisioned that a “quick assessment” of the initial level of advocacy skills that NGOs possessed, would be made as well as an assessment of the most pressing needs to be addressed by training. Together with USAID, World Learning would then select five coalitions to receive advocacy training tailored to their particular policy area. The selection process turned out to be easier said than done.

The “quick assessment” did indeed show that there were several Salvadoran NGOs active in each of several key policy areas, such as environmental policy, women’s rights, and agriculture. However, for the most part, the NGOs were not working in coalitions; they were working on the same issues, but separately — the ubiquitous “Lone Ranger syndrome.” In El Salvador, as is often the case in North America as well, each group wanted to do good, but each wanted to be the only one to do it! To encourage teamwork, admission to the program became contingent upon an NGO’s commitment to use training to form issues-based coalitions and produce a shared advocacy goal for joint pursuit by coalition members working in close coordination. Eventually, in consultation with USAID, six NGOs groups were selected, each to be honed into a coalition working in one of six policy areas:

1. Reforming El Salvador’s legislation concerning NGOs in order to facilitate greater citizen participation in the policymaking process.
2. Transforming Salvadoran government agricultural policies to be more supportive of the small-farm sector.
3. Preventing contamination of the water supply in the lower Lempa River valley caused by aerial spraying of pesticides on large, nearby sugarcane plantations.

4. Raising the awareness of the local Justices of the Peace of the provisions of a new Salvadoran law on family violence and of their legal obligation to implement it.
5. Obtaining more equitable allocation (between wealthy farmers and poor peasants) of permits to farmland in the Chalatenango area exposed during the dry season as water levels drop in rivers and irrigation reservoirs.
6. Extending the reach of municipal government services to outlying rural areas around Morazán.

With the participating groups and policy areas chosen, the project staff prepared the syllabi, teaching methods, lesson plans, and readings for the courses. An abundance of training materials is available from many organizations that have been teaching policy advocacy techniques around the world; this includes SIT, which conducts a month-long international course on advocacy each spring. Thus, there is no need for advocacy trainers to develop course outlines and class materials from scratch in each case. Time can be better spent reviewing the existing materials and selecting those relevant to the group being trained. World Learning also maintains an Internet-based *Policy Advocacy Documents Directory* that contains course syllabi, training manuals, case studies, articles on teaching advocacy, and materials on advocacy methodology.

Drawing from materials available on this Internet site and from other sources, the project team developed a generalized training curriculum that incorporated key elements of a model of advocacy training prepared by the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA). This curriculum moved the trainees through specific steps in the advocacy process, beginning with the identification and analysis of the problem to be addressed, and ending with practical activities such as preparing a timeline and a budget for an advocacy campaign. A five-day pilot workshop was then held for the NGOs working on the reform of El Salvador's NGO legislation. The curriculum called for the group to identify and analyze the issue for its advocacy campaign, and to arrive at a general agreement regarding the priorities assigned to the various campaign steps.

One difficulty that the pilot program brought to the fore is that groups in some political environments have little understanding of "advocacy." What may be second nature to North Americans, raised in a tradition of forming "associations" to solve problems, may be quite unnatural to persons raised in societies in which patron-client networks, or tribal structures, are the traditional channels for addressing one's needs. In El Salvador, as in many other Latin American societies, no word exists to convey all the connotations of the English word "advocacy." The World Learning team and the participants eventually gave up trying to find a one-word equivalent, and instead worked out a two-paragraph description of the advocacy process. To refer to this process, the group agreed to use the term *incidencia*, from the verb *incidir*, to influence or have an impact upon something. This process of achieving consensus on an advocacy goal was finally concluded only by the end of the third day, forcing the trainers to truncate the classes on specific advocacy skills.

In November 1998, project activities were interrupted by the hurricane “Mitch” that devastated major areas of the country. Most Salvadoran NGOs turned their efforts to relief work. The four advocacy workshops were eventually postponed until April and May 1999. The long lead-time caused by the interruption of the hurricane provided opportunities for preparatory contacts with the NGOs, helping them to define more precisely the eventual goals for their advocacy projects. Often an NGO will initially set out a grandiose goal, hoping to produce a complex series of changes on an issue. Before formal training began, it was necessary for the NGOs to scale back their projects to fit the time, resources, and skills available, limiting their efforts to one or two aspects of a larger social problem. The lead-time before the workshops also strengthened the selection process by giving the NGOs lengthy advance notice of the workshop schedule, allowing them to arrange the schedules of their most appropriate staff and lead volunteers so they could participate.

The curriculum World Learning used in the workshops took participants through various steps of the advocacy process:

- Deciding on the problem to be addressed and narrowing the advocacy objective to fit the NGOs’ available time and resources. (This step finalized for each NGO coalition the “narrowing” process begun during the essential pre-course contacts with the various individual NGOs.)
- Identifying alternative approaches to the advocacy effort on the specific problem chosen and choosing the approach that appeared most promising. (The best approach in one culture may not be as effective in another. Foreign instructors conducting workshops must be careful not to press participants toward choosing a particular approach just because “it worked well for Saul Alinsky in Chicago.”)
- Developing a “power map” of the key decision makers in the area being addressed, the groups that can exert influence on them, and the advocacy coalition’s potential allies and opponents.
- Compiling an inventory of the coalition’s resources, including personnel, money, contacts, and skills, and devising ways to fill crucial resource gaps.
- Drawing up an action plan with responsibilities assigned, timeframes and sequences established, and setting up channels for on-going communication.

Throughout the workshop, participatory methods were used, emphasizing discussion among participants rather than lectures by trainers. This brought the participants’ intimate knowledge of the local scene (including its dangers) to bear on the development of the coalitions’ advocacy action plans.

The experience in the workshops demonstrated that the training process itself can be a platform for advocacy. For example, during the course for NGOs advocating greater citizen participation in municipal affairs in Morazán province, the participants brought two mayors and other local municipal officials to the workshop. The officials listened attentively to

presentations on the needs of *campesino* women for public services and then agreed to cooperate with the coalition in their efforts to increase citizen participation. Similarly, during the workshop focusing on family violence, a magistrate of the nation's Supreme Court attended one session and then assigned her assistant to work with the group for the last day and a half of the course.

Predictably, groups that had existed for some time and had already done some coalition-style advocacy work, even in a rudimentary form, were most successful in devising practicable action plans. On the other hand, groups that had formed in response to the news that foreign money might be available to support NGO advocacy efforts were less focused on how they could cooperate to achieve their advocacy goals.

After completion of the training workshops, the World Learning project provided follow-on technical assistance to NGO coalitions over a nine-month period. Seven two-day seminars were provided to NGO top-level leaders, and 21 half-day orientation sessions to NGO intermediate leadership. Training for the intermediate-level leaders proved to be useful in getting them actively involved in carrying out the strategies in the NGOs' action plans that had been adopted in the formal workshops. These orientation sessions also became channels for feedback from the NGOs' memberships about the progress of the advocacy campaigns and on their local situations. Follow-on activities are one of the most time-consuming phases of an advocacy training program. Advocacy training projects must therefore allow sufficient time and resources to cover both preparation and follow-on phases, recognizing that formal training sessions are only the first part of effective advocacy training.

A key benefit of the nine months of follow-on technical assistance was a gradual shift in the NGOs' approach, especially at the local level, from confrontation to negotiation. At first, NGOs tended to present an initial demand, and then, when it was ignored or rebuffed, either drop the issue or immediately jump to more extreme confrontational tactics. With time and increasing experience, they began to expand their network of allies, do empirical research and produce technically sound proposals, and negotiate with the targets of their advocacy efforts using "interest-based bargaining" techniques taught during the workshops and in local orientation sessions (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: A Technical Proposal from "Simple *Campesinos*"

*Campesino* (peasant) groups in Chalatenango applied for permission to use 840 *manzanas* of *tierras fluctuantes* (seasonally-available lands along the banks of reservoirs) for farming by 280 *campesino* families in the February-July 2000 season. As part of their proposal, the participating *campesinos* from seven lakeside communities offered to carry out a three- to four-year project to reforest exposed areas, create structures, and apply soil-use practices that minimize soil erosion into the waters of Cerrón Grande.



If authorities were to base their decisions on need and on the capacity for effective natural resource management and, thus grant access to *tierras fluctuantes* to the peasants in the coalition, the peasants could double their family incomes. As the group's proposal sets forth, such action would also result in the following improved local ecological and social conditions:

- Parcel size adequate to generate significant new income
- Minimum tilling practices
- Soil conservation practiced in targeted areas
- Crop diversification and rotation
- Semi-technical cattle management
- Protection of the lake area
- Proper forest management in lakeside areas
- Preventive medical practices
- Restricted use of pesticides
- Local participation in programs to repopulate fish stocks.

As the coalition explained to the Comité del Medio Ambiente de Chalatenango (CACH) in January of 2000, developmental, health, ecological, and other programs of governmental institutions and NGOs will not be effective without the active participation of strong local organizations. The coalition's initiative could serve as a pilot project to inform the Salvadoran government's long-range policies on promoting such participation.

During follow-on activities, World Learning put particular emphasis on how NGOs could use the Salvadoran media in their advocacy efforts. Two major obstacles had to be overcome. First, many intermediate-level NGO leaders had been sympathizers of the leftist movement known as *Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (or FMLN guerrillas) during the Salvadoran civil war of 1980-1991 and they still viewed local media as merely a soapbox for right-wing oligarchs. However, by the late 1990s, with a new generation of U.S.-trained reporters and new economic pressures on media owners to widen their markets, the media had become channels that NGOs could use for advocacy purposes. The challenge was to demonstrate to suspicious local NGO leaders that the current media actually offered opportunities to the NGOs. Second, local NGO leaders did not know how to write effective press releases, organize news conferences, recognize newsworthy stories in their communities, or build and maintain contacts with reporters.

A two-day seminar offered by a World Learning media consultant yielded surprising progress in lessening the local leaders' suspicions of the media. A young reporter from a major newspaper, previously a tool of the oligarchy, was invited to the seminar to explain the positive changes that had taken place since the Salvadoran Peace Accords. She was able to dispel most of the NGO leaders' reluctance to forge productive ties with the media. Substantial progress was also made in honing the participants' skill at using the media to get

free press coverage of their advocacy concerns. Exercises in writing press releases and organizing information in a readable way showed that many of the participants' abilities could be brought up to effective levels with just a bit more training and experience.

In addition to technical assistance provided in the last nine months of the project, World Learning was also able to provide NGO coalitions with small grants to cover some costs of materials and services required for their advocacy campaigns. The availability of small-grant funds greatly assisted the NGOs in launching their advocacy campaigns. However, there is a fine line between activities appropriately funded by foreigners and activities for which outside funding would constitute interference in the nation's internal affairs. It is important that outside donors avoid producing a public relations controversy through ill-considered financing of politically sensitive advocacy activities. The distinction is essentially one of "public interest" advocacy for goals that virtually all elements of the local society would consider laudable (child nutrition, maternal health, proper disposal of toxic wastes, and so on) versus "particular interest" advocacy, in which one group's gain can be viewed as leading to another group's loss (increasing the minimum wage, making tax rates more progressive, or confiscating lands for a land-reform program). Donors must be prudent when deciding what activities to finance and what activities to leave for support by local resources.

Through the training workshops, the short follow-on seminars and orientation sessions, the provision of professional advice over an 18-month period, and financial support with small grants, the World Learning project was able to substantially raise the capacity of participating NGOs to do public-policy advocacy. However, no guarantee could be made that their advocacy efforts would be successful. At the end of the project, the results achieved were a bit sobering.

On some issues, the NGOs involved had clearly made progress. For example, the coalition dealing with family violence forged a close working relationship with members of El Salvador's Supreme Court. The coalition in Morazán now has an ongoing dialog with mayors and municipal council members on the need to bring government services to outlying rural areas. *Campesinos* in Chalatenango are now using the media in their efforts to rent the seasonally available farmland around the lakes. On the other hand, those peasants have not yet succeeded in renting any of that land; nor have the pecan farmers been able to keep toxic chemicals sprayed upstream on large sugarcane plantations from running off onto their lands; nor has the Salvadoran government significantly changed the agricultural policies that affect the country's small farms. Legislation regulating NGOs has not yet been made more "user-friendly."

As we have seen, with foreign assistance, local NGOs may become quite skilled at advocacy. Yet when the poor and the weak face the rich and the powerful in the political arena in developing countries, we should not be surprised to find that social, economic, and political change through public policy advocacy is slow and incremental. In this regard, there is little difference between the developing nations and the G-7 industrialized powers.

World Learning's experience with the El Salvador advocacy project produced some culturally and politically specific lessons and guidelines. To determine which of these can be adapted across cultures, this article continues with an analysis of the methods and results of another project in a very different setting — the African country of Malawi. Under the USAID-financed SHARED (Services for Health, Agriculture, Rural, and Enterprise Development) Project, World Learning has worked with the NGO community in Malawi since 1990. After a long history of supporting a wide range of local NGOs, World Learning can point to many successful examples of its promotion of the role of advocacy in Malawi's evolving civil society. One such example follows.

## WORLD LEARNING AND ADVOCACY IN MALAWI

Figure 2: The Legacy of Repression in Malawi

“What on earth am I doing wrong?” This is what a friend of ours thought a few years ago, in the early days of Malawi's transition to democratic rule, when he made a presentation to a group of NGO leaders in Lilongwe, Malawi.

Having worked individually with most of the participants, our friend, an experienced and animated consultant — and African himself — was puzzled when his audience avoided his eyes and, with seeming indifference, buried their faces in newspapers as he posed a question. Not easily discouraged, our friend confronted a few participants during a break. They told him that in the recent past, speaking out was a dangerous proposition; eye contact led to questions, and questions led to answers, and sometimes to disappearances. Although this may have been his most attentive audience ever, our friend presented the remainder of the workshop to a “group of newspapers.”

Malawi has endured colonialism, autocratic rule, and relentless poverty, and is now consolidating its transition to democracy. Local NGOs have been leaders in Malawi's democratic evolution and continue to represent a rising voice of hope for its future. Advocacy has been an important element of the World Learning-USAID partnership to support NGOs in Malawi. This long and rewarding venture has seen a community of organizations grow in size and sophistication. Our success in strengthening NGO advocacy capacity stems from a combination of three factors: training, technical assistance, and grant support. In Malawi, this triad has helped NGOs to grasp advocacy skills better and apply them to their own social, political, and economic context. This “triangle of assistance” provides something fundamental to successful capacity building in general, and to advocacy in particular — it builds confidence.

For most Malawians, advocacy is new territory. It offers a new way to influence power and authority, and to promote the idea of public responsibility and accountability. Malawians'

assumptions are evolving, especially those that underlie beliefs about the possibilities for change and the means to achieve it. Consequently, World Learning's approach to advocacy in Malawi has been action-oriented, blending theory and application, and blurring the line between training and technical assistance. An experiential and participatory approach has allowed a merger of Malawian and Western (predominantly U.S.) perspectives on advocacy and offered culturally relevant, practical support. Training workshops are grounded in reality by drawing from the knowledge base of a variety of people, including members of the Malawian Parliament, media, government ministries, multilateral organizations, and, of course, NGOs.

Advocacy is often a risky, unpredictable business. In Malawi we found that fledgling organizations may shy away from an advocacy initiative for fear of criticism, or worse. As one Malawian NGO leader said of credibility: It is "hard to acquire and easy to lose." Indeed, challenges to credibility and reputation, spurious or not, can severely hamper an organization's efforts to pursue its mission. Young organizations without a significant track record, resources, or role models are typically vulnerable to these challenges and thus frequently avoid confrontation. This is true even in societies with a democratic tradition; it is particularly salient in Malawi, which still remembers its oppressive past. Things have since improved, but one can imagine the enormous courage it has taken for those seeking change to pursue it publicly. Old habits and fears have been difficult to shed.

In Malawi, as in most places, advocacy tends to be driven by emotion; it is very often successful because of the passion that animates a campaign. This same enthusiasm can also distract from objective planning and decision-making. One very successful campaign waged in Malawi was nearly derailed by an excess of passion over planning in pursuit of the goal.

In response to Malawi's efforts at trade liberalization, the Consumers Association of Malawi (CAMA) was formed to protect the interests of consumers while educating them about their responsibilities. CAMA became keenly aware that Malawians were struggling to cope with high prices and the scarcity of certain basic commodities, especially sugar.

As the scarcity of sugar increased, so did tensions. The government-controlled distribution and pricing of sugar supposedly ended with the transition to democracy. Ironically, however, under the previous autocratic regime, sugar was readily available throughout the country. Democracy brought market liberalization and the sugar market was privatized, but more distributors delivered less sugar. In response, CAMA organized an independent sugar monitoring committee to get a handle on the situation. The committee was comprised of distinguished individuals from government, the NGO community, and the business sector. Monitoring the situation proved more difficult than expected, however. The Committee heard rumors of political involvement but, confronted with incomplete information, it suggested the need for independent research. CAMA understood the importance of this issue to its constituents and began considering a study of the national sugar distribution system.

At that point CAMA approached World Learning's SHARED Project for an informal reaction to the idea. CAMA's mission and the SHARED project's objectives of promoting civil society are complementary and, in fact, SHARED and CAMA had already worked together in recent years to strengthen CAMA's organizational capacity. As with many aspects of democracy development, however, the political nature of supporting advocacy initiatives requires a balance of involvement, neutrality, and objectivity. In this case, World Learning's office was managed and staffed by Malawians and was a channel for U.S. government resources, thus raising potential concerns of local bias and international "meddling."

World Learning takes pride in its staff everywhere, whether local or expatriate. The skill by which the SHARED project navigated these difficult waters is, in part, a testament to the World Learning-USAID investment in building the capacity of the project staff. A less experienced staff could have been swept away by the current of public opinion but, by following the basic guidelines of transparency and objectivity that experience and training provided, SHARED remained a neutral and, consequently, effective player. SHARED ultimately agreed to entertain a proposal to finance research on the sugar industry. CAMA energetically pursued the opportunity and successfully made the case for research funding. The grant allowed CAMA to commission an independent consultant to conduct the study. The research raised a number of controversial issues, including that of the direct involvement of prominent political leaders in the sugar distribution system.

CAMA quickly sought out and met with the government ministry concerned and with the main sugar producers. Early on, there was superficial agreement that the findings were accurate, but negotiations broke down because the report revealed the names of individuals associated with the poor distribution system. Discussions shifted from mutual interest to defense of entrenched positions and CAMA found it difficult "to invent any options for mutual gains." CAMA then made the strategic decision to announce the findings to the public. The ensuing press conference generated significant coverage. The national newspapers printed the controversial list that identified top government officials who appeared to profit from the scarcity of sugar.

Many challenged the merits of the study. One observer described it as "an opinion survey" rather than an objective assessment. Others claimed that CAMA "went public" too soon, that it failed to secure allies which it could have done while pursuing negotiations with the government and the sugar producers. On the other hand, the very fact that the study was vulnerable made it a catalyst for reactions and counter-reactions. Essentially, it raised the issue and focused the debate. Perhaps a more objective study would have been less susceptible to criticism but in the end — from an advocacy standpoint and for CAMA — the campaign succeeded: soon after the press conference, sugar distribution improved and prices fell. That, of course, was the thing most important for Malawians.

Our experience in Malawi has confirmed that a mix of local and external perspectives can be especially valuable to those emerging from a centralized political culture, enabling them to see beyond their particular context, to see what's possible. This vision has a profound impact on assumptions, attitudes and, in the end, change. It is a reminder of the important

lesson that concrete support of an organization's right to promote issues of concern to its community can foster the self-assurance to take on contrary, sometimes powerful forces. Looking at the success of CAMA and other NGOs, it is clear why Malawi can embrace its democratic future with optimism and enthusiasm.

## SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED

World Learning's experience with advocacy-training indicates that technical assistance groups helping NGOs in developing countries to upgrade their policy advocacy skills should keep a number of points in mind for both the initial planning and subsequent implementation phases of their projects. Some points are self-evident and serve as reminders; all should be considered within the cultural and political setting in which the project takes place. These points are as follows:

- Time and diplomacy are required to help NGOs advocating on similar issues to form coalitions and combine their strength. Consider these factor when laying out the project's time-line.
- Advocacy-building efforts must take into account, and overcome, the legacy of fear in societies recently emerged from repressive rule. Engage in one-on-one discussions with local leaders to judge what they view as risky.
- An abundance of good materials are available for teaching advocacy skills. Use them, rather than waste time and money "reinventing the wheel."
- The triad of training, technical assistance, and grant support helps build NGO confidence, allowing its members to apply skills learned in their local institutional and socio-political context. Avoid over-reliance on a single approach.
- The effectiveness of training depends on the time and effort put into preparing NGOs *before* training. Plan and budget accordingly.
- Formal and informal channels through which advocacy takes place vary from culture to culture. (As the salesman says in the opening scene of Meredith Wilson's classic show *The Music Man*: "But ya gotta know the territory!"). Become familiar with local realities.
- NGOs may initially attempt to achieve advocacy goals grander than what their limited resources will allow. Help NGOs to narrow the target.
- Emotion and reformist zeal must be tempered by tactical sagacity. Help NGOs make prudent decisions about the selection and sequence of tactics for use during advocacy campaigns.

- Follow-on assistance and short refresher training programs are as important as the training itself and just as costly and time-consuming. Budget to ensure adequate resources to reinforce the initial instructional phase.
- To ensure that participants retain what they learn in formal training sessions, minimize lectures and maximize participatory teaching techniques such as roleplays, small group work, case studies, and practical activities such as writing a press release).
- Formal training sessions can also be used as advocacy platforms. Invite advocacy *targets* to be teachers or guests.
- Media coverage of advocacy campaigns need not be purchased. NGOs can learn how to show reporters that their work is newsworthy, and thus receive free coverage.
- Use prudence in judging which advocacy activities are suitable for support with foreign funds, especially if they are foreign *government* funds. Consider how one might feel about foreigners funding a similar advocacy in one's own country.
- Foreign donors should not expect that raising local NGOs' advocacy skills will in and of itself change the prevailing basic power structure of the society; this results from revolution, not advocacy.
- A mix of local and external perspectives is productive. Foreign advocacy advisors can combat local fatalism by showing that significant change is possible even within existing power structures, and the experience of local NGO personnel can suggest how best to promote such change.

# TRANSFORMING AN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT INTO A LOCAL NGO

David Payton  
Program Manager, PIDT

## ABSTRACT

Over a ten-year period, World Learning, with funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development, worked to support the development of the non-governmental community in Malawi. In a difficult political environment, marked by political repression and a culture of suspicion and distrust, World Learning was able to accomplish only a limited number of its objectives. However, with the change of government and an opening of the political environment, World Learning and its partners were able to modify the program to take advantage of new circumstances. One important opportunity was to facilitate the creation of an independent, sustainable Malawian NGO from among the native project staff. This paper describes and analyzes that experience and draws lessons that can be applied to other organizations dealing with North-South partnerships and the creation or facilitation of sustainable indigenous NGOs.



## KU-USA

The tree provides a neutral, common space,  
A conducive environment,  
Cool shade away from the sun's harsh rays.  
It is a place where advice is sought and given,  
Where important decisions are made,  
Where friendships are forged.  
Partnerships for the benefit of the community  
Were first formed in Malawi  
Under the shade of a tree.  
This tradition has brought our people good fortune  
And helped them weather troubled times.  
The principles of the Development Centre are part of this long tradition.  
The tradition lives on....  
(Excerpt from a Program Brochure)



A few years ago, while designing a logo for the Development Centre (whose beginnings are described in the following pages), I asked my Malawian colleagues for the Chichewa word that best describes the compassion that motivates us in our work. A lively debate ensued and I was treated to the distinctive and delightful humor for which Malawians are famous. After some word wrangling, they finally found consensus in the word *ku-usa*, which my colleagues translated as “a concern for others.” I happily incorporated the word into a logo and featured it on a brochure I created for an important event. Then, late one night, after printing hundreds of copies of the brochure, my friend held one up, inspected the logo, and said, “You know, *Malume*<sup>1</sup> it’s an interesting word, *ku-usa*. It means so much to us, and often we use it at funerals... it means ‘grieving for the dead.’”

If the following article seems distracted at times by too much talk of the meaning and intricacies of words, I trust the reader will understand.

What follows is a brief chapter in the long history of a country’s democratic evolution. This particular chapter is about the still uncommon process of creating a sustainable, nongovernmental organization (NGO) out of an established international development project. It begins over a decade ago when World Learning and USAID joined forces known as Services in Health, Agriculture, and Rural Enterprise Development (SHARED), an ambitious endeavor to foster nongovernmental responses to poverty and disfranchisement in the small, land-locked country of Malawi<sup>2</sup> in southeastern Africa.

## A SHARED BIOGRAPHY

World Learning launched SHARED, its USAID-financed, NGO capacity-building project, in 1990. Designed in the context of a crippling drought and refugee resettlement problems, this ambitious umbrella project initially sought to promote NGO activity in areas of agriculture, off-farm employment, and health, and to strengthen the capacity of Malawian NGOs to provide services in those sectors. SHARED promised to bring in millions of dollars worth of assistance and grants to meet the lofty goal of fostering Malawi’s fledgling NGO third sector.

Notwithstanding the large sums of money, SHARED began with a modest project office staffed by an expatriate Chief of Party and Finance Officer, and four Malawian Program staff. This group became the Project Management Unit (PMU) that offered Malawian NGOs assistance in a variety of areas, such as in setting up project and financial management systems. A generous grant program complemented technical assistance and provided NGOs with needed resources such as computers, office equipment, and even vehicles, enabling them to pursue mission-driven activities.

The goal, the resources, and the commitment were now in place, but the challenges remained daunting. Only ten to twelve local NGOs existed in Malawi when World Learning arrived; only a few had experience with international organizations and those focused primarily on drought and relief projects. Although the Malawian government at that time felt

pressure from external donors to channel resources through international (and subsequently, local) NGOs, it was very suspicious of such organizations. Indeed, the launching of the SHARED Project came at a time when Malawi was still under the shadow of its President-for-Life, Dr. Kamuzu H. Banda. By then, Banda was well known for leading a regime of centralized, coercive control. Naturally, this political culture fostered a widespread distrust and resentment of authority — attitudes already part of the country's colonial legacy.

Thus, in the early days of SHARED, the local situation was far from conducive to voluntary association, or even to basic NGO capacity building. The Malawian government closely monitored project activities; sub-grants to local NGOs even required Ministry approval. The operating environment was restrictive, hierarchical, and apprehensive. Indeed, when World Learning held its first project workshop on a typically warm day in the Malawian capital, the government added to the heat by sending three police officers to the training. Members of a special police unit thereafter became familiar “participants” in World Learning's group training activities — hardly a setting in which to foster trust, let alone to introduce new concepts of organization and association.

Under these circumstances, it is safe to say that had SHARED focused overtly on promoting the NGO sector's proactive role in society, the PMU would have been viewed as a threat to the government. It made better sense to begin by concentrating on neutral aspects of NGO capacity building such as finance and administration, rather than on the responsibility of people, through voluntary association, to take control of their lives and destiny. Recognizing the potential to be perceived as a threat, SHARED implementers did not openly mention concepts like “freedom of association” or other commonly held assumptions of civil society development. In fact, the first SHARED Project operations manual did not directly describe the role of NGOs in a democratic society at all.

No doubt, such “omissions” indirectly contributed to World Learning's ability to maneuver in the restrictive political climate. SHARED was able to get resources to NGOs and the communities they served without appearing to challenge the government. The positive impact of strengthening NGOs to serve people, of course, provided an ancillary benefit to the government: the NGOs met needs that the government claimed to meet but did not. Looking back, many of Malawi's NGO leaders today acknowledge that SHARED arrived at a scene of no NGO capacity. Most NGO workers, they say, came from the commercial sector or directly from school, and no guidelines — not even the comprehensive SHARED operations manual — could fully prepare them for their new role in society.

These young leaders were not the only ones learning the ropes. Initially, even the Project's local staff had little knowledge about how development projects operated. This dearth of experience on both sides of the Project created a relationship between SHARED and local NGOs that was resource-driven rather than demand-driven. For example, the operations manual fixed the maximum dollar amounts available for each grant category, and PMU discussions with potential grantees tended to focus on the funding ceiling rather than on real need. Local organizations thus submitted proposals based on resources available rather than on what they or their communities needed or were prepared to manage.

## SEEKING RESULTS

Another factor that heavily influenced the relationship between the Project and its NGO partners at this time was, understandably, the looming presence of the donor, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Early on, relations between USAID, the Project, and the NGO grantees appeared to have been fairly rigid and “top-down” in nature<sup>3</sup>. These relationships reinforced and exploited, albeit unintentionally, local assumptions about power and authority. USAID, in fact, reviewed and approved sub-grants in the SHARED Project, which not only confused — and sometimes intimidated — the local Project staff and NGOs, but added to the length of time it took to establish a grant relationship with a local organization. The involved approval process and the complex procurement policies caused delays in getting resources to NGOs.

It is, of course, part of a common domino effect. The U.S. Congress puts pressure on USAID to perform. USAID/Washington demands quick results from its field missions, and the field missions scramble to demonstrate results. Unfortunately, “results” often translate narrowly into demonstrating that projects are spending money. USAID/Malawi apparently felt such pressure and pushed SHARED to produce *measurable results*. The Project had done a commendable job in setting up the grant program, but SHARED management was perhaps overzealous in addressing the donor’s demands and, at one point early on, the Chief of Party declared to the staff, “I don’t care what you do, I want the money to move.” Thus, SHARED’s justifiable emphasis on results led, in part, to a focus on means as ends, rather than on means to an end. Again, this is not uncommon. Bureaucratic demands that flow from the donor often precipitate unintended organizational ends. The pressure to move money put great stress on the PMU to “account for every penny.” Many NGO grantees, however, were actually only two- or three-person organizations that could barely manage to supply the services they existed to provide.

A heavy emphasis on accountability and formal reporting made good sense from a Project point of view, and in certain ways became an appropriate end in itself. However, the Project imperative to ensure grantee accountability began in a context where power and authority had been simultaneously viewed as absolute and corrupt. To question authority was unthinkable, but to trust those in charge was equally untenable. Formal demands based, for example, on procedural compliance became more important than the reasons behind those procedures in the first place. Over time, of course, these project procedures began to develop value *per se*; in effect, this was the institutionalization of SHARED practices, which reflected the attitudes and choices of those who were involved in the Project. Further discussion of this process of institutionalization will continue below.

## HOPE

Understandably, the SHARED Project design could not anticipate all the changes that were to occur during implementation. Malawi was unknown territory where Western

concepts of democratic organization were untried. These were difficult times, yet the Project was making a difference in the lives of Malawians both inside and outside the Project. Within its first two Project years, SHARED had become the single largest source of support to the Malawian NGO community. World Learning and USAID operated on the hopeful and risky premise that, given the chance, people will embrace democratic values, and civil society will become a part of the daily lives of Malawians.

Hope was rewarded. Despite the challenging political and bureaucratic climate, Malawian ingenuity soon began to blossom. NGOs surfaced in many parts of the country, addressing important needs and providing many basic services. Just four years into the project, the number of local NGOs had already grown to nearly 50, and Malawi found itself in the midst of a major political transformation, an inexorable shift toward democracy. In 1994, President Banda was defeated in the country's first multiparty elections. This dramatic change — a positive *force majeure* — caused USAID and SHARED to revisit their objectives. USAID refined its strategy to respond to and support positive initiatives flowing out of the country's democratic transition<sup>4</sup> and, consequently, SHARED shifted its focus toward supporting NGOs that promoted democratic participation through civic education, human rights, and women's economic and political empowerment.

While the great progress seen in these elections represented an extraordinary beginning, it is important to recognize that 30 years of autocratic rule built on the rubble of colonialism leaves a deep impression on a society's view of authority and responsibility. Local initiative, having been long suppressed, remained an uncertain variable in predicting whether democracy would hold. In retrospect, the strategic adjustments made by USAID and SHARED may appear the obvious choice, but at the time they were truly a gamble with the potential to support or undermine the fledgling democracy at a critical time. Strategies changed, but capacity building remained at the center of all SHARED activity.

## THE TRANSFORMATION

Capacity is enhanced in many ways, but it is sustainable only through institutionalization at the individual and organizational levels. Midway through the life of the Project, World Learning and USAID agreed that the Project's contributions to Malawi's fledgling democracy and to NGO capacity building would most likely endure if SHARED's efforts were shifted entirely to Malawian management. Hoping to build from the core PMU, in 1996 World Learning formally decided to establish a local organization, subsequently named the Development Centre (DevCentre), that would carry forward the Project's success in serving the NGO community.

During the first year following this important decision, SHARED held many informal, mostly *ad hoc* discussions on the possible forms of the new organization. Work on the innovative idea, however, often had to compete with other significant Project demands. Indeed, at the time discussions of establishing a local NGO were underway, SHARED was

managing approximately U.S. \$2 million per annum, a third of which was in the form of sub-grants to NGOs. It is not surprising that the first “formal” session of the transformation was a visioning exercise tagged onto the end of an Institutional Analysis workshop. This first session helped clarify and legitimize the transformation concept, and led to the formation of a SHARED staff transformation task force to analyze various organizational forms that might be appropriate for the new entity.

## MOVING FORWARD: A PERSONAL ACCOUNT

I joined World Learning in 1997, shortly after the expatriate Chief of Party (COP) had become the Project’s Technical Advisor and the new Finance Officer had come on board. The COP’s shift in positions was critical in that it made room for a local Project Director, the first Malawian to head SHARED. By default rather than design, this group became the transformation management team.

Because the transformation was for, and largely carried out by, the local staff, the Project Director combined his local wisdom with his technical expertise and became our *de facto* leader. The expatriate Technical Advisor and Finance Officer provided critical guidance in the areas of USAID regulations and financial questions, respectively, and they consistently found ways to creatively contribute to important solutions, in areas such as resource mobilization and strategic planning. My role was coordinator, but as the transformation unfolded I became increasingly involved in developing marketing strategies for the new organization. Of course, we all benefited from the able advice of World Learning’s Director of Programs, and from the motivating guidance of our partners at Global Excellence in Management (GEM), a USAID-funded agency managed by Case Western University.

The transformation team quickly settled into separate yet mutually supportive patterns; in fact, at first we operated as though we had formally agreed on our roles and responsibilities. This was no doubt made possible by a commitment derived from shared professional values. But as the transformation gathered momentum, the complexity of our goal challenged the superficial clarity of our responsibilities. In retrospect, the transformation team might have benefited from a more formal — or at least explicit — arrangement, as well as from regular opportunities to revisit and reaffirm our various roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

Nevertheless, the transformation team and the local PMU took imaginative yet pragmatic steps to create the new entity. We embarked on that indispensable course, the strategic planning process, to begin identifying and molding an appropriate mission, defining goals, objectives, and potential outcomes. Tapping into World Learning’s extensive network, we held the first of four strategic retreats co-facilitated by our partners at GEM. Near the end of 1997 we felt we had made considerable progress towards achieving:

- a pragmatic vision reflecting staff values and stakeholder needs;

- increased confidence, commitment, and capacity of Malawian staff;
- a three-year transition plan, including a basic funding strategy;
- enhanced networking and communications capacity promoting local and international relationships and partnerships, including World Learning’s home and field offices; and
- a replicable model that World Learning could apply elsewhere with other field offices and partners (although this only become apparent later on).

As the organization took form, our momentum also increased; the local staff dubbed the new entity “The Development Centre,” and drafted case<sup>5</sup> and capability statements. As an interim measure towards registration as an NGO under the Trustees Act, the PMU recorded The Development Centre as a Company Limited by Guarantee (a charitable, not-for-profit vehicle under Malawian law).

## LOOKING TO THE PAST TO PREDICT THE FUTURE

At each major juncture of the transformation, we — the DevCentre staff and the transformation team — found ourselves facing the impossible task of looking to the past to predict the future. At nearly every step, we had to decide which elements of SHARED project management and program focus should be carried forward and which should be left behind. Some issues — the transfer of resources to the DevCentre, for example — were complicated insofar as they required knowledge of and adherence to USAID disposition rules and regulations. Ultimately, these issues were time consuming but by no means insurmountable.

Our greater challenge was in determining the extent to which the Project administrative and organizational systems should be adopted by the new organization. Fortunately, the main SHARED activity over the years was NGO capacity building, and the transformation team was in a position to draw on the Project’s experience in developing and applying World Learning’s Institutional Analysis Instrument, designed to provide benchmarks of organizational capacity. This tool gave us a clear organizational framework and we had little trouble choosing the functional areas such as the financial controls, management systems, and service delivery features of the new organization. Many of these areas were in place under the Project organizational structure and we naturally sought to adapt them to the new arrangement.

This easy transfer of standardized routines was gradual, without much disruption in the way things are done on a day-to-day basis. The “benevolent environment” (cf. Hedberg, Nystrom, and Starbuck 1978, p. 116) of stable SHARED funding and resources limited the level of perceived threats to the organization, thus the need to seek alternative approaches or even modify existing systems was at first minimal. The fact that things were working so well by Project standards offset even a certain level of inflexibility in administrative arrangements.

While the transformation team and the DevCentre assumed that certain functional aspects were appropriate for both the Project and the new entity, it is now clear that there was not enough early consideration of which systems the DevCentre ought to adopt. As we were all products of the Project in one way or another, our operating assumptions kept us from truly questioning the administrative aspects we chose to carry forward. Besides, developing a governance structure, staff roles, and external relations often demanded more attention, if not imagination.

In short, the Development Centre inherited an organizational ideology that rewarded conformity to a tradition of standardized routines that fit the SHARED Project better than an independent organization. These standard routines were derived as much from bureaucratic demands as programmatic needs. They were functional and effective, particularly in the early stages of the project, but had the potential to undermine the new entity's ability to respond to change, at least as long as it was under the Project's shadow.

## BALANCE AND LEADERSHIP

This is not to say that all was lost. Although institutions evolve naturally, the organizational patterns on which they are based can, to a certain extent, be fostered. Recognizing that organizations with informal, nonhierarchical communication methods adapt more easily (if not more effectively) to change, the DevCentre did seek to refine some of the formal administrative arrangements inherited from the Project to create a new balance between formal and informal systems. Just as SHARED's formal systems comprised Western and local group norms, so too were the DevCentre's group norms to become a blend of Western and local expectations.

Despite these growing pains, the DevCentre was in a good position. It was starting out with the experience of an international organization and the knowledge of a local counterpart. And its role was simple: Building on World Learning's success, it gave local organizations the tools to do their important work. It helped health-oriented NGOs define their leadership roles, it guided human rights organizations in strategic planning, and it enabled environmental NGOs to manage finances and report effectively. In a practical sense, the DevCentre now offered solutions to Malawi's development challenges.

Gradually the transformation team became aware that its challenge was to turn managers into leaders; that is, to help staff carry forward a technical management capability and to enable them to define an independent institutional direction. This was not immediately apparent; only after the first strategic retreat did it become clear how deeply engrained the "project management mentality" was in each of us. This mindset was a good thing, of course, from the Project standpoint; but, again, from a transformation perspective, the challenge was to modify an institution rather than merely establish an organization.

Leadership is critical to institutionalization, of course, and the transformation team tried to foster it throughout the process. Almost reflexively, we saw leadership as more than status

or decision-making authority. Leadership almost always surfaced as a general, directive force, appearing in many forms. One of the most powerful illustrations of this came at the very first transformation retreat, which included the entire local staff, long before the DevCentre became a reality. At that retreat, we organized into groups to discuss how to characterize the transformation, particularly the World Learning corporate relationship with SHARED project staff. As each group reported its conclusions, we heard accurate yet abstract explanations and, in the face of the Project transformation, people began to get discouraged; the possibility of a new, separate organization appeared to be not tangible, not real. At this low point, an awkward silence filled the room. Then a Project automotive mechanic stood up and, looking out the window, said, “World Learning and the new organization remind me of a parent and child.” The simplicity and clarity of the metaphor had an almost physical impact on the group. This simple observation was a moment of leadership, and it allowed us to see that a separate yet cooperative relationship was possible. It was a step toward institutionalization, and it marked where an infusion of value in the new organization began.

## THE DEVCENTRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

It became clear at this first retreat that we could all benefit from outside guidance. A few months later, the PMU independently identified members to serve on an advisory body, subsequently called the DevCentre Advisory Committee (DAC). These events suggested that ownership was shifting to the local staff and that the transformation was losing its “project activity” feel. However, we had a long way to go before we moved beyond the SHARED shadow.

The transformation team saw DAC as an interim body to guide the transition process and simulate basic board-staff dynamics. All agreed that DAC members were not necessarily to be placed on the final board of trustees but that they should be in a position to be considered. The transformation team expected the DAC in its advisory role to broaden perspectives and enhance vision. That was the theory; in practice, however, the DAC naturally assumed a quasi-governance role and consequently felt constrained by its limited decision-making authority. The bottom line was that the Development Centre was not yet an independent entity, which meant decisions were still SHARED’s responsibilities.

DAC’s frustration was also compounded by the ambiguity that came in part from not having participated in the initial decisions to create the new organization. DAC’s role hovered between advising the transformation process and a perceived responsibility for governing the new organization. Not surprisingly, their expectations at times took the form of normal board demands. In hindsight, it is easy to see that the transformation team and the PMU should have made efforts earlier to engage DAC members in a “co-creation,” rather than foisting upon them a fairly well-defined concept and structure. We were all dealing with the looming “Project presence,” and much of what DAC was to advise was inherited from the Project culture. DAC, for its part, might have been more proactive in sorting out its responsibilities and seeking ways to advise rather than to govern. In future endeavors that



require such advisory support, we will no doubt be very careful to make sure everyone involved understands and accepts the distinction between advisory and governance roles.

By mid-1999, the DevCentre registered under the Trustees Incorporation Act as an official NGO in Malawi and, taking some members from the Advisory Committee and recruiting other respected individuals, the DevCentre established a Board of Trustees. The Board is composed of competent, committed — and busy — individuals, yet it has been a major challenge to fully engage them in the governance of the DevCentre. This reflects some of the ambiguity carried over from the DAC experience. The current Board members function professionally and have met their responsibilities on one level, providing some policy guidance and the like, but they are not yet at a level to step out ahead of the DevCentre management in promoting its vision and mission. This issue also may have been avoided had we engaged a board earlier on than we did, or given greater authority to the advisory committee.

The DevCentre's relevance to the development community in Malawi outweighed these constraints and demand for the new entity's services continued to increase. The DevCentre sought to diversify its strengths and, through training and technical assistance, the transformation team and other partners helped the DevCentre enhance its capacity to deliver to its principal market, the NGO community and international donors resident in Malawi. Of course, the transformation team looked for ways to limit costs that would potentially impact the new organization's ability to operate. We were fortunate to have the funds (and USAID's blessing) to secure property and set up training facilities under SHARED, and then to bequeath those resources to the new organization at the end of the Project. World Learning's agreement with USAID also encouraged fee-for-service and income-generating activities, such as providing printing services to the development community that resulted in considerable program income.<sup>6</sup> The program income funds have become, in essence, the DevCentre's nest egg.

## MARKETING

Of course there came a time to spread the word. This required a mental shift from viewing the PMU as a part of SHARED to recognizing the DevCentre as separate from World Learning and USAID. This was the one of the most troublesome promotion problems, particularly in terms of how the new organization was positioned vis-à-vis its market and the community needs. Throughout the transformation, marketing the DevCentre very often boiled down to a process of overcoming guilt by association: The DevCentre was confronted with the paradox of having to distance itself from SHARED (that is, from World Learning and USAID, its source of experience) to attract its own funding, yet having to reinforce those links in order to demonstrate its competency.

Despite abundant rhetoric about partnership and complementary goals, the DevCentre encountered potential international supporters that would not even consider providing

assistance simply because the DevCentre was a product of a particular donor, in this case USAID. This divisive competition, prevalent among donors, undermines their common objectives and, more importantly, weakens their NGO partners. Unfortunately, we in the NGO/PVO community are no less guilty of negative competition, which is a complex issue beyond the goals of this essay.

It is important to note, however, that while competition may be manageable and may even motivate NGO/PVOs to do better work, the modeling and unintentional promotion of competition by Western PVOs and international donor agencies (IDAs) have provided yet another obstacle to the growth of civil society in Malawi. Indeed, competition means something very different to a society that has endured autocratic rule and colonial oppression.

In the face of these challenges, the transformation team recognized that it was critical to promote the DevCentre's efforts to collaborate with like organizations. Largely on its own initiative, the DevCentre guided the formation of, and provided the financial oversight for, an innovative consortium of civic and human rights NGOs in Malawi. Behind the scenes, the DevCentre was instrumental in positioning itself and this talented group of NGOs to receive a large grant to deliver civic responsibility training for Malawi's presidential elections.

Building on these and other successes, the transformation team enthusiastically encouraged and supported the DevCentre's efforts to market itself as a professional, reliable, and creative organization. The DevCentre took on its marketing challenge with zeal and, in the new organization, made its official debut in a launch ceremony in the Lilongwe at the Capital Hotel in July 1999.

The launch was a resounding success. The DevCentre staff organized an entertaining presentation of the new organization's values, hopes, and capabilities. Local artists used drama, dance, music, and poetry to share the Development Centre's story with an audience of over 100 NGO and community leaders, donors, and members of the commercial sector. A nationally recognized drama troupe performed a series of skits to convey a message of partnership and mutual responsibility for the development of Malawi, and a popular local musician even wrote and performed three songs for the event. Through traditional dance, music, and an inspirational speech by a local chief, the DevCentre delivered a powerful message to the Malawian development community and perhaps beyond.

The launch event set the stage for the DevCentre's efforts to cultivate relationships with the media. In fact, the launch itself was presented on the national news and later developed into a news documentary. The DevCentre has since received regular coverage in the national press, including a profile of the executive director. These marketing efforts, bolstered by practical successes, demonstrated that the Development Centre offered something distinctive, if not unique, among local NGOs in Malawi. Its value to both donors and local organizations was becoming clear: the DevCentre offers local knowledge, high technical competence, and a deep commitment to improving the lives of Malawians. It is a bridge between international donors and local NGOs and the communities they serve.

## INSTITUTIONALIZATION

In seeking to establish and reinforce the capacity of the new organization, World Learning developed and implemented a comprehensive plan of technical assistance and training and, in partnership with USAID, committed sufficient funding over a significant period. Throughout the process, the transformation team continually reassessed and refined roles and commitments. We wanted to ensure that the PMU — and subsequently the DevCentre — engaged all relevant stakeholders and that the necessary resources would be available. We developed a transfer plan, including a partnership Memorandum of Understanding, and ultimately a sub-award that allowed the DevCentre to test the waters by independently managing the final 15 months of the SHARED Project. The sub-award was a confidence building measure for both the DevCentre and World Learning, putting to the test the extent to which SHARED trust, cooperation, and mutual values were being institutionalized in the new arrangement.

Examining some of the terms used in this article will help frame the summary of the DevCentre's evolution and the discussion of lessons learned in the process, that follow.

### CAPACITY BUILDING AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION

Capacity building and institutionalization are often used interchangeably, which, in effect, dilutes their meanings. Because both the theory and the practice of organizational development invite a wide range of perspectives, it is important here to distinguish institutionalization from capacity building. Capacity building is a strengthening of all the facets that make up an organization, from accounting systems to strategic plans to board-staff relations. Institutionalization, on the other hand, is a process that occurs when capacity building is effective. Institutionalization takes place when members of an organization begin to value something — an administrative procedure, for example — beyond its contribution to efficiency, and see it as “the way we do things.” When this occurs, the procedure takes on institutional value and is more likely to be maintained. Hence, it is sustainable.

In this sense, to institutionalize is “to infuse with value beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand” (Selznick 1957, p. 17). This concept, introduced nearly 50 years ago, is particularly useful concerning questions of organizational vision, trust, and commitment, and it complements current theory on social capital. The patterns of trust and positive reciprocity that develop over time create social capital, a resource of confidence and a sense of stability and reliability among individuals and organizations. In an organizational setting, social capital is reinforced by common institutional values.

In short, my view of institutionalization blends Selznick's definition with current theory on social capital. In the context of the SHARED Project and its transformation, the infusion of value created a foundation for trust, reciprocity, and cooperative networks. I believe these theoretical assumptions are borne out in the results of SHARED's training and technical assistance, and they underlie what is of lasting value in World Learning's contribution to civil

society in Malawi. Due to the institutionalization of SHARED and its reinforcement of reciprocity, a foundation was laid that could support a successful transformation of the Project into a local NGO.

Institutionalization, however, is a process. It is something that happens to an organization over time, reflecting the organization's own distinctive history, the people who have been in it, the groups it embodies and the vested interests they have created, and the way it has adapted to its environment (*Ibid*, p.16). Institutional character, of course, is historically conditioned. Moreover, as Putnam (1993, p. 8) points out, "history matters because its 'path is dependent.'... Individuals may 'choose' their institutions, but they do not choose them under circumstances of their own making, and their choices in turn influence the rules within which their successors choose." Ours was probably an exception to the rule, but the very process by which World Learning transformed its local project management unit into an independent organization was premised on the decisions made under SHARED circumstances.

The SHARED project management unit became an institution through a natural, evolutionary process. This differed from its transformation into the DevCentre, a process that was initially somewhat artificial. The Project history suggests that a technical focus dominated SHARED from the beginning. When the local PMU was first established, its social structure mirrored its technical structure, particularly in terms of leadership and values identification. Indeed, this was reinforced by a "shakedown evaluation" in the first two Project years that concentrated exclusively on "how the mechanics and procedures established at the project inception were working in practice" (SHARED Project Shakedown Evaluation 1992, p. 1). In the early days, the Project tended to judge itself and grantees on technical criteria and the years of helping grantees gauge capacity by analyzing functional categories, as necessary as it was, influenced the way we subsequently approached the transformation to a new entity.

Out of this institutional culture, the transformation team worked with the PMU and later the DevCentre in conducting what amounted to an institutional (values) stock-taking, deciding what was needed for institutional continuity and what should be phased out. We were able to establish the technical structures and administrative procedures — the "organization" in the near term — but the process of "institutionalization" was not as clear-cut.

The task then was to help the Development Centre move beyond SHARED to develop a sense of commitment to the new organization and its purpose, to foster social arrangements that met the technical demands and fulfilled the new personal and group needs. In this respect, the transformation team did not dictate structures. Rather, to paraphrase Briggs and Peat (1999, p. 59), we sought ways to enable the DevCentre to meet the challenges it will face by letting the organization develop its own patterns, often — though not always — allowing freedom for random acts to combine constructively into self-organized coherence. The DevCentre has been developing new patterns, and that which was of institutional importance under SHARED will have to pass the test of relevance and operational value to

the new organization. To stay the course, however, it helps to know who you are, and where you are going.

## VISION

With the help of DAC and, subsequently the board and our colleagues at USAID, the transformation team worked with the DevCentre to create an institutional vision that permeated the entire organization and its operations. The vision — seeing essentially, who we are — needed to be expressed in all DevCentre activities, internal and external. Purposefully creating a vision, however, is a difficult endeavor. It takes time to permeate the organizational consciousness.

Perhaps the greatest challenge in developing a vision stemmed from the DevCentre's greatest strength: its operational and technical expertise. Reflecting SHARED history, the DevCentre staff tended to stress methods over mission; indeed methods were often used to define and articulate — and, on rare occasions, even replace — goals. This emphasis on methods or, “what we do,” is a common, often reflexive substitute for an organization seeking to define (or redefine) itself.<sup>7</sup> The difficulty in distinguishing “what we do” from “why we do it” characterized the transformation throughout, particularly in carving out an identity separate from the SHARED Project and World Learning. This had important practical consequences in terms of internal and external identity of the new organization. The Development Centre spent considerable time developing a fundraising strategy, for example, and struggled to distinguish a case statement, the classic fundraising tool, from a generic capability statement — essentially focusing on means rather than ends. Looking back, it is clear that the tendency to focus on means rather than ends is something the transformation inherited from SHARED and perhaps indirectly reflects some of the USAID–World Learning bureaucratic character. Accordingly, one must ask how this emphasis on methods influences sustainability.

## SUSTAINABILITY

A concept as important as sustainability is to the field of international development is bound to kindle a variety of valid connotations. Its definition has been narrowed by those who have adopted it for bureaucratic ends without knowledge — or at least acknowledgement — of the broader concept and its general application. More and more practitioners view sustainability from a “donor” perspective alone. That is, they tend to emphasize as paramount a recipient organization's ability to survive without the support of international donor agencies (IDAs).

This limited understanding has profound implications at the organizational level as well as at the societal level. From the local organization's perspective, sustainability is basically about whether it can survive and continue to pursue its mission, and it is logical that NGOs will seek funding where they can get it. Indeed, in developing countries where economies

and political traditions do not favor philanthropy and governments themselves are struggling to survive, it makes sense that NGOs will and should target donor resources.

Indeed, in Malawi the reality is that IDAs dominate, providing approximately half the country's budget. For a local NGO, resource and funding diversification in this context necessarily means diversification among IDAs. Still, many view NGO financial sustainability as "the ability of an organization to continue its operations without financial assistance" (NGO Empowerment Core Report 2000, p.13). This perspective suggests that until an organization is able to generate sufficient income of its own and to drop donor funding, it is unsustainable. It also suggests, even encourages, a "for-profit" attitude, where the only relevant measure is the dollar value of a grant, rather than the value of services made possible by that grant. This is not just academic; it influences the way we shape our priorities. On a recent visit to Malawi, a high level USAID official turned to a project accountant and said, "You have the most important job on the project; tracking the money is the project priority." This was more than the familiar problem of a bureaucrat who views his job as an end in and of itself. Later on, the official pointed out that USAID was in the business of creating financially accountable organizations that can generate their own income. It was hard to tell whether he was talking about NGOs or commercial enterprises, or whether he understood the difference.<sup>8</sup>

The broader issue of sustainability in Malawi may be viewed in terms of the needs of the society and the willingness of the international donor community to support local organizations that address these needs. Malawi's third sector is beginning to thrive, but it is still largely dependent on donor funding. The change needed for the Malawian NGO sector to be free of foreign donor dependence is generational, at best. And it is vast in scope: The economy needs to expand dramatically; a culture of philanthropy has to evolve; and the government needs to become more efficient, effective, and responsible. Progress at this macro scale proceeds at a glacial pace.

## STRATEGY

World Learning's capacity building approach in Malawi assumes that institutional development is integral to achieving sustainability. Capacity, one might contend, is best made sustainable when institutionalization at the individual and organizational levels augments social capital. World Learning based its decision to create a local organization on a desire to achieve a truly long-term impact. Consequently, its sustainability strategy included plans and activities to meet the DevCentre's needs and its stakeholders' needs, while at the same time securing, maintaining, and improving the human and other resources needed along the way. This necessarily included an emphasis on IDAs. The Development Centre has now positioned itself to attract a wide range of donor resources and private foundation grants to meet the demands of its community.

It is fair to say that World Learning and USAID took a bold step in formally agreeing to transform the SHARED Project into a local, independent NGO. SHARED had

demonstrated broad developmental impact and had clearly made a profound contribution to fostering a “culture of accountability” in the Malawian NGO community. Of course, only through the capability and commitment of individual Malawians would the organization have been able to carry forward this important legacy.

## THE WAY WE DO THINGS

A summary of World Learning’s experience in transforming a long-term project into a local nongovernmental support organization is limited to just that: a summary. To fully capture the rich and dynamic process that led to the Development Centre is beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, this brief chapter in Malawi’s democratic evolution is quite extraordinary.

All those involved with the transformation of the SHARED Project into a local NGO have no doubt learned and confirmed many lessons, but the effort to create a sustainable institution comes down to a basic notion: Organizational survival depends on strategies and activities that meet the current needs of an organization and its stakeholders, and that enhance and protect the human and other resources that will be needed in the future. The partnership between the transformation team and the PMU and, subsequently, the DevCentre, was successful in creating and ensuring the viability of the new organization, in part because of the following:

- A comprehensive plan of technical assistance and training was developed and implemented that focused on institutional structure and staff development and, in partnership with USAID, committed sufficient funding over a significant period.
- Significant time and effort were invested in fostering an institutional vision, some concrete expressions of which are found in the DevCentre’s mission, case and capability statements and, more importantly, in its increasingly effective work to bridge the gaps between international donors and local NGOs.
- Special attention was paid to the culture and politics of the development and NGO community in Malawi, particularly in terms of the new organization’s market position and community needs.
- Specifically, the transformation team worked with the DevCentre to diversify its services and to concentrate on those requested by NGOs and donors. The DevCentre was also encouraged to actively position itself in the market based on its values and true range of services. The DevCentre had to overcome some of the negative associations — true of any large donor-funded project — which had built up over the years. But it has been very successful in directing attention to those areas in the project life and history that reflected its current capacity and direction.
- Collaborative working relationships were promoted with other like organizations. This proved somewhat difficult in the face of Malawian history, but ultimately the

DevCentre was instrumental and enormously successful in guiding the formation of, and providing the financial oversight to, a consortium of NGOs, which led to a large grant to deliver civic training throughout Malawi.

- A phase-over plan was developed, including a Memorandum of Understanding and a sub-award to the DevCentre, which enabled the new organization to test itself and simultaneously test World Learning's ability to let go.
- A disposition plan was also developed to provide sufficient physical resources once the project closed. Ways were found to limit costs that would potentially affect the new organization's ability to operate, such as securing property and setting up training facilities — and then to bequeath those resources to the new organization at the end of the project.
- Lastly, a focus was continually maintained on the positive, acknowledging one another's contributions, and emphasizing the importance of high quality work.

Today, the DevCentre is a reality. Its staff carries between five and ten years of experience working for World Learning and their experience reflects the successful management of over 75 grants totaling \$8 million to more than 50 different nongovernmental organizations. Ten years of capacity building and five years of transforming SHARED has positioned the DevCentre as a leading local NGO service organization, and has challenged World Learning's ability to learn and adapt along the way.

The SHARED Project and its transformation forced World Learning to confront the fundamental “development dynamic” of matching local knowledge and priorities with external assumptions and expertise. This can be a difficult dance, to say the least. World Learning's work in Malawi suggests that as institutionalization advances, a reorientation occurs, giving rise to questions of values and direction. For an organization to be sustainable, it must on some level institutionalize its operations and, one might argue, routinely address that balance of means versus ends. Early on, the question for World Learning was one of both definitions and strategy.

The transformation team sought to tap the ingenuity and potential that thrived in the project context, however, and the defining debate became whether initial capacity building efforts should be approached from a structural perspective or the “natural” values dimension. As we delved into the transformation, we found that the question was not either/or, but rather a choice of emphasis and sequence. Circumstances permitting, both should be given due emphasis. In the early days of SHARED, the environment demanded a certain sequence, one that stressed organizational mechanics over institutional ends. That was the right choice then and, fortunately, in the transformation process we were free to address both simultaneously.

We will have to wait and see what values and what kind of institution truly grow out of the legacy of World Learning's SHARED Project. The enormous weight of the Project precedent made it difficult to create an entirely new institution, but there is optimism that



our collective efforts will infuse the new entity with values and that the development of versatile skills will set in motion the trends necessary for the DevCentre to evolve into an adaptable, relevant contributor to Malawian civil society.

World Learning has worked with and supported the NGO community in Malawi for more than a decade. Its positive impact is felt throughout the country and, after many years of providing training and resources across sectors, many now consider World Learning to be one of the principal architects of the Malawian NGO sector. As the DevCentre develops its identity, we are beginning to see a similar presence. Because DevCentre staff view the organization as reflecting their own purposes and values, they embrace the organization as individuals, not simply as technical managers or employees. Consequently, their methods of doing business are no longer expendable means to an end, but “the way we do things.” The DevCentre is indeed becoming a sustainable institution.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Uncle
- 2 With an estimated annual per capita income of U.S. \$266, Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world. The average life expectancy is 43 and 44 years for men and women, respectively, and the infant mortality rate is 133 per 1,000 live births. Malawi’s rate of HIV infection of 12-14 percent overall (30 percent in urban areas) is among the highest in the world. Only half the country’s population has access to safe drinking water.
- 3 I joined the Project in 1997, so this assessment of the early history of SHARED is based on documentation and interviews.
- 4 USAID’s Strategic Objective 5 under its 1995-2000 plan sought to strengthen and broaden the institutional base for democratic participation.
- 5 H. J. Seymour, one of the great authorities on fund raising, defines the “case” as a statement of “all the reasons why anyone would ever give to the organization” (Cited in Rosso 1991, p. 39).
- 6 Program income in this case is essentially income generated directly from a USAID-supported activity or earned as a result of USAID funding.
- 7 See Selznick (1957, p. 12): “The tendency to emphasize methods rather than goals is an important source of disorientation in all organizations.”
- 8 The myopia of this particular individual in no way represents our USAID colleagues in Malawi. In fact, they have been consistently constructive in their support of the SHARED Project and its transformation into the Development Centre.

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# OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

**Robert C. Chase, B.A., M.A.** — Vice President, World Learning, and Director, Projects in International Development and Training, based in Washington, D.C. Prior to joining World Learning in 1992, Chase served as Assistant Executive Director with the United Nations World Food Program. He also served in several capacities as Mission Director in Morocco and Sri Lanka, Coordinator of the Food for Peace Program, and Deputy Assistant Administrator for Management. Other domestic positions he held included leadership roles in the Community Service Administration, and the U.S. Department of Labor. Chase is adjunct professor at the Johns Hopkins School of International Studies and serves on the board of several international NGOs and professional associations.

**James A. Cramer, Ph.D.** — President and CEO of World Learning and SIT. Cramer has served in administrative, teaching, and research positions at U.C. Berkeley, SUNY University at Albany, the University of Maryland, University College, and Georgetown University. While living in Japan for more than a decade, he lectured throughout Asia. He also taught in the University of Maryland's European Division in Germany, Italy, and Turkey. Cramer is author and editor of numerous books and monographs, scholarly articles, and newspaper and journal commentaries.

**William A. Douglas, Ph.D.** — Adjunct Professor, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Douglas came to World Learning's PIDT office as Program Manager in 1998 after 30 years of experience with the U.S. labor movement's USAID-funded programs to strengthen free and democratic trade unions in Latin America. Douglas was trained in the field of international relations and for the past two decades was a lecturer in the Liberal Studies Program of Georgetown University. Since 1992, he has also taught courses at Johns Hopkins on international ethics, and on labor in developing countries. He has lived and worked in Germany, Korea, and Peru, and is fluent in Spanish. Douglas is author of *Developing Democracy* (1972), co-editor of *Promoting Democracy* (1988), and has published various articles and book chapters on aiding democracy abroad and the effects of political and economic trends on workers in developing countries.

**Alvino E. Fantini, Ph.D.** — Senior Faculty Member, Department of Language Teacher Education, SIT. Internationally recognized for his work in language education and the intercultural field, Fantini is a former president of the prestigious Society for Intercultural Education, Training, and Research (SIETAR International), and recipient of its highest award. He was instrumental in the development of the Sandanona Estate of The U.S. Experiment in International Living into the present School for International Training. Fantini has published important works in language acquisition, bilingualism, foreign languages, and language and culture teaching, and recently served on the National Committee to establish foreign language standards for U.S. public education.

**Jerrold Keilson, B.A., M.A.** — Director, Program Development, PIDT, and a former Foreign Service Officer and historian. Early in his career, Keilson worked for an organization that designed programs for visitors sponsored by the U.S. Information Agency's International Visitor Program. He subsequently directed United States Agency for International Development-funded participant training programs. Keilson later explored the antecedents to and impact of government-funded exchange and training programs and recently led a team of volunteers who conceived and wrote the NCIV-published book, *A Salute to Citizen Diplomacy*, including an introductory essay, "U.S. Citizen Diplomacy and the International Visitor Program," outlining the evolution of USAID-funded training programs.

**Joshua A. Muskin, Ph.D.** — Senior Advisor for Education, Projects in International Development and Training, World Learning. A former assistant professor of urban and regional planning and senior program manager at the Center for International Studies at Florida State University, Muskin has worked internationally as development coordinator with Save the Children/US and ActionAid/UK. He has advised extensively for USAID, the World Bank, and international NGOs on informal employment sector learning, school quality reform, community participation in schooling, and primary classroom practices, and has published extensively on these subjects.

**Mark Parkison, B.A., M.A., M.B.A. (Candidate)** — Country Director, Morocco, AMIDEAST, and formerly served as World Learning's Chief of Party to the Democracy Network (DemNet) Program in Romania from 1995 to 1999. Previously, Parkison managed programs in human resource development and institutional capacity building with the Peace Corps in Morocco, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan, and with World Learning's Projects in International Development and Training in Washington, D.C. Parkison later served as Director of International Programs for Pearl S. Buck International, and was recently appointed Country Director for AMIDEAST/Morocco.

**David Payton, B.A., M.A., M.A.** — Program Manager in World Learning’s Program Implementation Unit. In addition to coordinating the SHARED Project transformation, he supported World Learning’s capacity-building efforts in Russia, Armenia, Namibia, and Haiti. Payton holds dual Masters in International Affairs and Public Policy from the Fletcher School and Department of Urban and Environmental Policy at Tufts University.

**Dunham Rowley, Ed.D.** — Chief of Party of the USAID-funded Community Schools Activities Program (CSAP) in Ethiopia, engaging communities to contribute to quality and gender equity improvements in primary education in more than 600 schools in southern Ethiopia. Rowley earned a Doctorate in Education in Administration, Planning, and Social Policy from the Harvard University Graduate School of Education, a Masters degree in Education, also from Harvard University and a Masters degree in International Administration from the School for International Training. Rowley has managed community development programs in southern Sudan, Burkina Faso, and Togo, and has also worked on education programs in Malawi, Zaire, Guinea, and Namibia.

# ABOUT WORLD LEARNING

## OUR VISION AND MISSION

From the beginning, our vision has been one of world peace. Our mission is to help build it. Guided by our values and animated by our sense of purpose, we attempt to demonstrate that people of good will and commitment to the fundamental dignity of human life can be a powerful light in a world too often darkened by humankind's failure to recognize its own humanity. The people we serve are forward looking, seeing the world not only as it is, but as it could be: they have chosen to be agents of change. And like those who have worked to develop the organization over the past seven decades, their ideas take no account of, nor are they limited by political borders or geographical boundaries. Rather, ours is a world bound only by a common humanity.

World Learning is the only international organization with both academic and project capabilities dedicated to promoting intercultural understanding, social justice, and world peace. Since its founding in 1932 as The Experiment in International Living, World Learning's values have become ever more relevant, while its programs have grown in scope and intensity. Through distinctive methods based on experiential approaches to education and training and the integration of theory and practice, World Learning's diverse programs are designed to provide life-changing experiences that build knowledge, develop leaders, contribute to global development, and effect change.

## SCHOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAINING (SIT)

Brattleboro, Vermont

Established in 1964, SIT provides education and training programs that enable participants to develop the leadership capabilities and cross-cultural competencies required to advance international understanding, work effectively in multicultural environments, and achieve sustainable development at the community level and on a national or global scale. As the accredited college of World Learning, SIT is heir to nearly 70 years of pioneering intercultural educational programs, including providing the early U.S. Peace Corps training. Today, in addition to its premier study abroad program, SIT offers master's degrees in foreign and second language teaching, international education, intercultural relations, sustainable development, organizational management, and international and intercultural

service; extension courses; educational system reform initiatives; and management development and conflict transformation training.

- **SIT EXTENSION**  
Offering continuing education and professional growth opportunities through innovative, high-quality courses taught by SIT faculty, online or on the SIT campus.
- **CENTER FOR TEACHER EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND RESEARCH**  
Redefining teaching and learning in schools, providing reflective professional development, and increasing access to second and foreign language development.
- **CENTER FOR SOCIAL POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**  
Strengthening the management capability of individuals in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), governments, and multilateral organizations.

## PROJECTS IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING (PIDT)

Washington, D.C.

Through its field division, World Learning administers social and economic projects in international development and training worldwide under U.S. government and international contracts and grants. A prominent private voluntary organization (PVO), World Learning specializes in developing the skills and potential of individuals and institutions. World Learning's Projects in International Development and Training are active in every region of the world, with programs in five broad sectors: Education, Training and Exchange, Institutional Capacity Building, Democracy and Governance, and Societies in Transition.

## THE EXPERIMENT IN INTERNATIONAL LIVING (EIL)

Brattleboro, Vermont

The U.S. Experiment continues its nearly 70-year tradition of fostering international understanding through intercultural exchange. During challenging three- to five-week summer programs, motivated high school students immerse themselves in the culture and language of another country by living as a member of one of its families. Guided by experienced group leaders, students engage in language training, community service, peace studies, and ecological projects in one of over 20 countries around the world. In addition, local Vermont high school teachers engage in summer programs in Japan and China under a grant from the Freeman Foundation.



# WORLD LEARNING BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

Chesterfield, New Hampshire

World Learning provides integrated solutions to the enterprise-level language and cultural training needs of global organizations. Clients receive customized competency-based training in many languages at World Learning's sites in Vermont, New Hampshire, and California, or at clients' sites anywhere in the world. Programs are delivered in individual or group classes and through guided self-instruction. World Learning's portfolio includes executive communication coaching and orientation programs to assist those preparing for international negotiations, meetings, or assignments.

## WORLD LEARNING AND SIT TODAY

The School for International Training today has grown into an international center of knowledge with a focus on the integration of theory and practice. Three characteristics are central: First, as the academic center of World Learning, the School has built on an experiential educational tradition that by definition has at its core the learning process. That is, how people learn, the interaction between student and teacher, and the wealth of experience that each learner has, all help create a learning environment where knowledge, along with skills, awareness, and positive attitudes are fostered.

A second characteristic of SIT programs is the importance placed on the integration of language and culture. Whether in the classroom or in the field, with internships and practicums, students have numerous opportunities to practice firsthand what they learn about language and culture. As multicultural and multilingual environments are increasingly common in the U.S. and abroad, the ability to function effectively and appropriately in these settings is even more central to teaching, international education, managing organizations, and participating fully in diverse communities.

A third element of SIT programs is that theory and practice are brought together both in the classroom and in the field. That is, rather than an academic center that offers only theory, and a separate center for practice, SIT is an integral part of World Learning, the only international organization with both academic and project capabilities dedicated to promoting international understanding, social justice, and world peace. For example, one of the projects of World Learning's field division, Projects in International Development and Training, is a bilingual education program for Mayan groups in Guatemala. Issues of curriculum development, models and approaches for teacher training and learning, and implementation strategies are all integral aspects of the project as it is designed, implemented, and assessed in the field. This approach holds as well for SIT's study abroad programs, where rigorous independent studies in the field are integrated with classroom work done by students on-site.

World Learning, then, may best be defined as a center of knowledge where theory and practice intersect. The convergence of theory and practice may be seen in our faculty,

students, academic programs, and international development projects. It is embodied in our student internships and practicum projects, fieldwork, and study abroad projects that serve to weave learning and experience into one fabric.

Overall, we are a mission-driven institution focused on international and intercultural programs and activities that have a significant impact on our students and practitioners, as well as the people and organizations they serve. We believe that the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and awareness that flow from these kinds of intercultural experiences are critical to developing intercultural competence — a necessary ingredient for the twenty-first century, leading to achieving the mission of World Learning and SIT: namely, the development of leaders in their chosen field who can promote intercultural understanding, as well as foster world peace, social justice, and sustainable communities.

# OUR WORLDWIDE CONNECTION: THE FEDERATION OF THE EXPERIMENT IN INTERNATIONAL LIVING

## ORIGINS AND HISTORY

World Learning forms one of more than twenty autonomous national organizations that participate in the Federation EIL. Collectively, they form the worldwide network of The Experiment in International Living.

The Experiment in International Living, founded in 1932, was one of the first organizations of its kind to engage individuals in intercultural living and learning. Originating in the United States, The Experiment introduced the homestay concept to the world by carefully preparing and placing Experimenters in the homes of host families to learn other languages and cultures firsthand. Over the years, the organization has expanded into many countries around the globe. In 1954, Experiment national offices worldwide joined forces to establish the Federation EIL (FEIL), a Swiss-registered association, to coordinate their network of educational exchange programs. World Learning is one of more than 20 autonomous national organizations that comprise the Federation of The Experiment in International Living (FEIL). Collectively, they form the worldwide network of The Experiment in International Living.

By coming together as Federation EIL, these organizations have developed — and continue to maintain — high standards of quality in the programs they conduct, and have achieved many benefits, such as greater recognition, access to partners, and the power of pooled resources for information, training, and development.

## FEIL'S MISSION

The Federation EIL mission statement reads as follows:

Whereas members aim to bring together people of different cultures, ages, and backgrounds for distinctive intercultural educational opportunities that encourage a more diverse participation; and whereas members seek to reduce the likelihood of intercultural conflicts; and whereas members commit to maintain and assure the

highest principles and standards in all their activities; and whereas members seek to respond to a constantly changing world...

The mission of Federation EIL is to facilitate its member organizations in the lifelong involvement of individuals in intercultural learning experiences. This process helps develop understanding of and respect for people throughout the world.

## THE FEDERATION LOGO

The Federation EIL and many of its members have long utilized the following logo (the FEIL added the words around the symbol):



The Experiment logo is described as a figure of interlaced loops. It is thought to be one of the oldest symbols in the world, decorating monuments at least 5,000 years old in India, Iraq, and Iran. It appeared in Egypt in the first decade of the Christian era, and from the fourth to the tenth centuries in Ireland, France, Scandinavia, and northern Italy. By the fourteenth century, it was found carved in marble by the Turks.

In different ages, this logo is believed to have symbolized the unbroken flow of the elements, life, family, generations, and cultures. The Experiment in International Living adopted it as its logo in 1951 to represent the unity of humankind — moving, meeting, passing, and returning again to the central intersections where people and cultures share deep human values interlaced through a common humanity and are continually confronted by the need to understand one another. The double nature of the logo reflects a spirit of cooperation.

## AFFILIATIONS

Governed by a General Assembly that convenes annually, Federation EIL and all of its member organizations are nonprofit, nonpolitical, and nondenominational. Each member has met the standards for acceptance into the Federation and operates with autonomy. Federation EIL holds consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social

Council (ECOSOC) as a Category II nongovernmental organization, and also with The Council of Europe. FEIL is recognized by the United Nations Secretary General as a Peace Messenger organization. FEIL was also in partnership with UNESCO on the International Year for the Culture of Peace 2000. Federation EIL and its member organizations collaborate with a broad range of partners including schools, universities, government agencies, corporations, and fellow nongovernmental organizations — on a diverse array of projects.

World Learning's participation as a member of the Federation EIL provides it not only with worldwide outreach, but it also reflects a basic tenet — that intercultural learning is a collaborative experience. It requires working together across cultures. It allows all participants to explore their differences and build on their commonalities. Most importantly, it ensures that when going abroad, participants enter into the local culture in the Greek way, or the Mexican way, or the Kenyan way, rather than doing “the American thing” in someone else's backyard.

A list of member organizations making up the worldwide network of The Experiment in International Living is available by contacting [federation@experiment.org](mailto:federation@experiment.org). Updates are also posted on the Federation EIL Website <http://www.experiment.org>.

# WORLD LEARNING'S INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

Over the years, World Learning has implemented a wide array of programs addressing its technical areas throughout the world. The following are descriptions of current and recently completed projects administered by its Projects in International Development and Training unit:

## WORLDWIDE

### GLOBAL TRAINING FOR DEVELOPMENT — INDEFINITE QUALITY CONTRACT (WORLDWIDE, 1996–2001)

World Learning provides specialized U.S., third-country, and in-country training services to participants in USAID-funded programs around the world. Professionals who participate in the program are selected for their potential to achieve results in their businesses and organizations. World Learning conducts pre-training needs assessments for institutions and individuals, develops annual training plans, places participants in short- and long-term training programs, monitors the programs, develops and administers follow-on training, and conducts impact evaluations and compiles success stories. Since 1996, World Learning and its partners have administered participant training activities on behalf of USAID missions in Burundi, Ecuador, Eritrea, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Honduras, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Oman, Panama, Senegal, Yemen, and Zimbabwe, as well as throughout Central Europe and in the TRANSIT program.

### DEMOCRACY FELLOWS PROGRAM (1995–2001)

This USAID-funded activity creates experts in the field of political development and assists in the advancement of democratic practices in emerging transitional democracies. World Learning identifies and places U.S. fellows in renewable one-year assignments in USAID's Washington bureaus and field missions, oversees each fellowship throughout its term, and provides overall management and direction to the program. Currently, up to twenty Democracy Fellowships are awarded per year, with each fellowship individually designed to promote the career development of the particular fellow and to contribute to democratic development, governance, and USAID democracy programs in transitional and emerging democracies.

## AFRICA

### CIVIL SOCIETY STRENGTHENING PROGRAM (ANGOLA, 1998–2003)

Building on its short-term activities to help build civil society in Angola, World Learning was awarded a cooperative agreement to focus on human rights promotion and targeted training for the media. Through a combination of training, grants, and technical assistance, the program helped to build the capacity of Angolan civil society groups to better inform and monitor human rights issues. The activities encouraged trust and collaborative efforts among NGOs, media professionals, and government officials and, in particular, focused on the human rights of children and women. Most recently, the program has begun to encourage advocacy training for Angolan civil society organizations working in several key sectors.

### FEMALE LITERACY CENTER (ANGOLA, 1999–2003)

This program is designed to reduce illiteracy among disadvantaged Angolan girls, including abandoned children and under-age sex workers. The Female Literacy Center was established in an effort to provide literacy, life skills, and primary education to assist at-risk-girls' transitions into mainstream society. Also known as the Education for Democracy and Development Initiative (EDDI), this center continues with the support of the U.S. government, the public and private sectors in Angola, and other international donors.

### BASIC EDUCATION SYSTEM OVERHAUL TECHNICAL SUPPORT PROJECT: COMMUNITY-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES PROGRAM (ETHIOPIA, 1996–2001)

Under this project, jointly funded by USAID and the Government of Ethiopia, World Learning is responsible for stimulating parental and community involvement in primary school improvements in up to 800 communities. It is also responsible for providing resources directly to schools and communities to develop and implement strategies to improve the quality and equity of schools. World Learning works with local partner NGOs and Ethiopia's decentralized Ministry of Education officials to build their capacity to manage the participatory school-level strategic planning process and monitor its impact on student learning.

### POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION (ETHIOPIA, 2000–2001)

This pilot project in Ethiopia is designed to demonstrate the viability of actively engaging local community experts in the design and delivery of local knowledge and techniques within the formal primary-school setting. By seeking to engage parents in the classroom, the project aims to heighten both the perceived and real relevance of a formal education, leading to

greater student performance, attendance, and completion of primary school. This one-year project is funded by a private foundation grant.

#### SHARED PROJECT (MALAWI, 1990-2000)

This just-concluded USAID funded project was a ten-year program aimed at strengthening the capacity of NGOs to better plan, manage, and evaluate projects and programs in support of their constituencies. The project evolved from its support of NGOs working in health, agriculture, and rural enterprise development to a focus on democratic reform, good governance, and the empowerment of women. From this project the Development Centre was established as an independent NGO, which will carry on many of the project's successful activities. Additionally, the project awarded approximately \$10 million in sub-grants.

#### COMMUNITY ACTION TO SUPPORT EDUCATION PROJECT (UGANDA, 1998–2001)

This project, funded by a private foundation grant, uses an integrated package of training, technical assistance, and grants to enable emerging education NGOs to design and implement innovative education programs. Working with ten carefully selected Ugandan NGO partners, the project helps create a skilled community of indigenous NGOs that addresses educational concerns.

## ASIA

#### LAOS ECONOMIC ACCELERATION PROGRAM FOR THE SILK SECTOR (LAO PDR, 1999–2002)

The program is implemented by The Consortium, a joint venture of World Learning and World Education, and is designed to help existing Laotian enterprises engaged in the production, processing, and marketing of silk. The agricultural aspects of silk production have been a mainstay of the local economic sector, but during the Indochinese Wars (1945–1954 and 1960–1975) many of the traditions and skills related to mulberry cultivation, silkworm rearing, and weaving were lost among many locals. Today, as silk production promises to supplant opium production as a local cash crop, the Laotian government is interested in revitalizing the silk industry to provide economic opportunities to ethnic minorities and women. World Learning has placed a special emphasis on fully incorporating women into all aspects of silk production — particularly the agricultural and mechanical skills related to rearing the silk worms and producing the raw silk, skills once reserved for male workers.



## EASTERN EUROPE AND RUSSIA

### TRANSIT-EUROPE (CENTRAL EUROPE, 1997-2001)

Beginning in 1992 under another contract, and continuing under Global Training for Development, World Learning manages a large training program in Central Europe, called TRANSIT-Europe. This program annually brings more than 1,000 civic leaders and businesspersons from ten Central European countries to the U.S. for customized training. In addition, World Learning designs and administers in-country and regional training for approximately 3,500 persons per year. Web-based courses, CD-ROMs, on-line conference boards and other distance learning approaches are increasingly used for additional training. World Learning currently maintains project-related field offices in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, and Slovakia. These offices assist USAID Missions in Central and Eastern Europe with planning, recruitment, selection, medical and English language testing, pre-departure arrangements (Visas, IAP66a and Conditions of Training forms), and follow-on activities relating to participant training.

### WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIAL CHANGE (THE YUGOSLAV SUCCESSOR STATES, 1999-2002)

Begun in 1999 as a successor to earlier activities carried out under the STAR Network prior to its affiliation with World Learning, the initiative has delivered public and private resources in support of women's political leadership and economic empowerment in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Kosovo, and Serbia. The STAR Network program places particular emphasis on regional strategies and solutions for advancing women's roles and opportunities in society as effective policy advocates, decision makers, and public officials. The overarching goal is to help create a foundation for peaceful collaboration across political and ethnic borders in the Yugoslav Successor States.

### NGO STRENGTHENING PROGRAM (ARMENIA, 2000-2004)

This \$9 million program includes five major components: providing support to NGOs outside of Yerevan; providing support to advanced NGOs throughout Armenia, mostly in the form of advocacy training and coalition support; improving the general legal and regulatory framework for NGO operations; developing mechanisms for increased NGO networking and cooperation with government, the media and the private sector; and facilitating grants to support nascent NGOs, advocacy, and special initiatives.

### NGO PARTNERSHIPS UMBRELLA GRANT PROGRAM (ROMANIA, 2000-2002)

This \$2 million USAID-funded project is designed to support a strengthened and vibrant civil society by fostering partnerships between U.S. and Romanian NGOs with shared

interests in health, child welfare, environment, local government, energy efficiency, democracy, and private sector development. By the end of the program, grants to as many as 15 U.S.-Romanian partnerships will have contributed substantially to progress in the seven USAID strategic areas mentioned earlier. Moreover, the partners will have developed mutual trust and a strategy for ongoing collaboration, and will be well positioned to continue their joint efforts far beyond the graduation of Romania from USAID programming.

#### NGO SECTOR SUPPORT PROGRAM IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION (RUSSIA, 1998–2000)

This USAID-funded, NGO capacity-building program was designed to provide Russian NGOs with the organizational and financial management skills needed to withstand difficult economic conditions. The program promoted collaboration between government officials and NGO activists while enabling NGOs to advance the adoption of pro-NGO legislation and other legal mechanisms at the regional and local levels (when and where favorable conditions existed). NGO Sector Support was intended to build upon the progress achieved by the various activities comprising USAID's support for Russian NGOs, especially the flagship PVO Initiatives for the NIS (Newly Independent States) Project and the Civic Initiatives Program.

### LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN

#### PEACE CORPS PRE- AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING (GUATEMALA, 1995–2001)

Under this contract, World Learning implements an integrated, competency-based, experiential training program to prepare Peace Corps Trainees for their two-year Volunteer assignments in Guatemala. World Learning develops training curricula and materials, delivers technical and language training, arranges homestays, plans and implements field visits, and assesses trainee progress for the Peace Corps Pre- and In-Service Training Program. World Learning also provides Volunteers with in-service training sessions during their service. From 1995 to 2000, World Learning also implemented as part of the same contract Peace Corps pre- and in-service training for trainees and volunteers serving in El Salvador.

#### ACCESS TO INTERCULTURAL BILINGUAL EDUCATION (GUATEMALA, 1999–2003)

This USAID-funded project is designed to strengthen the quality of and access to intercultural bilingual education in El Quiché, one of the poorest regions of Guatemala and home to a large Mayan population. To ensure success, World Learning works closely with the Ministry of Education and its specialized agencies at the national and regional levels, as well as with indigenous NGOs, to improve teacher preparedness, develop bilingual educational resources, and broaden the participation of parents and communities in the educational process. Although the project always had incorporated issues relating to girls' education and

the participation of women in the implementation of all activities, in late 2000, the project was expanded to include a women's leadership component. This component works with women's organizations in El Quiché to provide literacy and leadership training, affording women the skills needed to assume more active roles on primary school committees.

#### GIRLS' AND WOMEN'S EDUCATION ACTIVITY (GUATEMALA, 1996–2001)

This is a global USAID-funded project, managed by the American Institutes for Research, under which World Learning works with the government of Guatemala and indigenous NGOs to formulate, institutionalize, and implement country initiatives for girls' and women's education. The project serves as a catalyst for action by local individuals, organizations, and donors through the provision of technical knowledge, skills, and training for overcoming the obstacles that impede the retention of girls in primary education. Strategies have been developed in the classroom and the community to improve girls' schooling, gain community support for girls' education reforms, and inform the public and government policy makers about the social and economic benefits of educating girls.

# INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS INSTRUMENT: AN NGO DEVELOPMENT TOOL

## DEVELOPED FROM FIELD EXPERIENCE

The Institutional Analysis Instrument (IAI) grew out of World Learning's extensive work with NGOs worldwide. The Division of Projects in International Development and Training (based in Washington, D.C.) developed this tool after recognizing that much of its NGO work goes beyond a specific technical sector and that it works most intensively with NGOs on their institutional development needs. After reviewing experiences in several projects, a more refined framework for providing support in this area was developed. The IAI is currently used throughout all World Learning's NGO development projects.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK/PRACTICAL TOOL

The IAI is both a practical tool and a theoretical framework for use with and by NGOs. Six major components are the focus of analysis and are used to categorize the state of development of the NGO. The process by which the IAI activity is carried out can be customized according to the purpose for doing the analysis; and simple tools for data collection, analysis, and results communication are also included.

## A WIDE VARIETY OF USES

The IAI was designed for use in a variety of situations when it is important to be able to describe the level of development or functioning of an NGO. It is a tool that helps to produce information, promote insights, and finally, allow decisions to be made and action to be taken. The principle intended users are: a) NGO support project staffs; and b) NGOs, including both staff and board members. NGO support projects will, for the most part, be interested in using a common instrument when making decisions regarding their client NGOs.

The IAI is already used by World Learning projects that need to:

- 1) decide which NGOs to fund;
- 2) develop technical support programs; and
- 3) determine the scope of support to be offered to NGOs in a given region or locality.

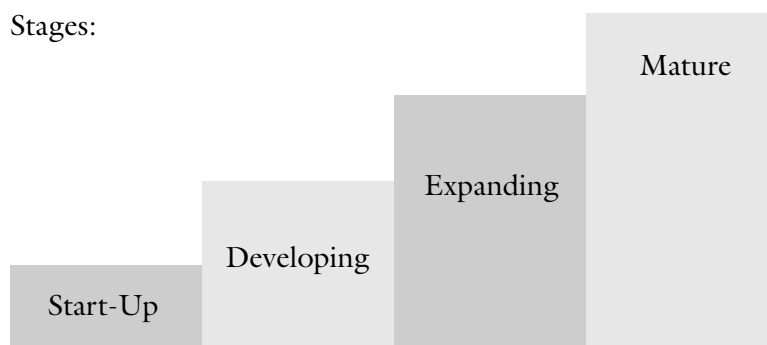
NGOs themselves will also find the IAI useful for the following purposes, among others:

- 1) to identify improvements for current activities or to prepare for new activities;
- 2) to develop an organizational monitoring and evaluation plan;
- 3) to justify actions or prepare periodic reports for funders or authorities;
- 4) to develop systems, procedures, and functional manuals;
- 5) to develop employee development plans or design staff training curriculum;
- 6) to promote deeper staff understanding of, and commitment to, the NGO.

When used to support these purposes, the IAI works as a powerful diagnostic tool. It helps in indicating clearly what gaps there are and can serve as a guide to what should be in place. Using the IAI framework over time, users first establish baseline measures for later monitoring and evaluation, essential to showing progress or trends over time.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: WHAT DO WE LOOK AT?

A strong, effective, efficient, and ultimately sustainable NGO has certain desired components (governance, operations and management, human resources, financial resources, service delivery, and external relations). These components and their preferred state or level of functioning can be described in the form of guidelines. These guidelines can then serve as criteria or indicators of organizational capacity or NGO performance, and can also provide a framework for sets of benchmarks or standards against which any NGO can be assessed. The IAI uses the following illustrative “stages” of development of an NGO, for each of the six components:



Although a “model” NGO is presented in the IAI, it is not intended to be portrayed as the ideal or the only description or form of an NGO. NGOs take many different shapes and forms depending on their purpose, their founders and numbers, and the political, legal, economic, and cultural environment in which they are situated. They are also constantly trying to balance professionalism and bureaucratization. The model is intended, rather, to suggest the form and components that an NGO could take, given the intentions of the founders and members, and the situation of the NGO. It does use language and concepts that Western donors and NGO managers will find familiar, but it has been devised as a result

of sharing the learning and expertise of people of different nationalities and backgrounds, who work with NGOs of many types and sizes in every part of the world.

## PRACTICAL TOOLS: READY TO USE OR ADAPT

The IAI package contains, in addition to the conceptual framework: a Facilitator's Guide, data collection, analysis and action planning worksheets, and background guidance for analysis team members. The Facilitator's Guide presents a process by which a team can plan and carry out an NGO analysis activity. It contains exercises, questions/worksheets to facilitate discussion and analysis, checklists, and sample meeting agendas and report outlines.

Because the IAI can be used for so many different purposes, the Guide places special emphasis on first building a common team understanding of purpose and issues affecting the activity.

1. Select an analysis team
- 2a. Clarify "who wants to know what for what purposes?"
- 2b. Assess the context and resources
- 2c. Inventory principle considerations and make design decisions
3. Design the overall activity
4. Collect the data
5. Analyze the results
6. Report the results

The Guide is suitable for use not only by NGO support projects, but also by NGOs themselves who undertake the IAI activity for internal purposes. In such cases, the IAI becomes a valuable self-instructional tool.

## THE INFORMATION IAI PROVIDES

If a comprehensive analysis is undertaken, the holistic picture that IAI furnishes of an NGO takes a bit of time and effort to compile, and the data can be weighty. The matrices and worksheets provided allow team members to: a) look for the right data, b) compare the NGO to the "stages" of development for each component and its sub-categories, c) note it in a common format, and d) discuss and make judgments about the data.

When the team has reached consensus in the describing the NGO by component, the summary portrays the results to be analyzed by the team members as well as NGO representatives. Scenarios for these analysis and planning sessions are provided in the Facilitator's Guide.

The same summary can be used to record progress as the NGO undergoes a program of technical assistance, or provides staff training, or other inputs. Again, the nature of the analysis and recommendations depends upon the purpose of the activity. If progress on only one or two components is of concern, then subsequent analyses may be more limited.

Finally, while IAI data can be stored and manipulated electronically, the IAI does not require computer support to be effective. If well organized, using the tools provided in the Guide, non-computerized teams can adequately compile and manipulate the data, analyze comprehensively, and communicate highly usable results for their intended purposes.

## WORLDWIDE EXPERIENCE WITH THE IAI

The IAI grew out of, and continues to be used by, World Learning in NGO support projects throughout the world: Malawi, Haiti, Romania, Uganda, Armenia, and the former Soviet Union, and it has been used to structure other NGO technical assistance in Egypt and Latvia.

# A GLOSSARY OF DEVELOPMENT TERMS

ASTD	American Society of Training and Development
BESO	Basic Education System Overhaul
CACH	Comité del Medio Ambiente de Chalatenango
CAMA	Consumers Association of Malawi
CAPS	Central American Peace Scholarship
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CENTRAS	Centrul de Asistentă (Romanian NGO)
CLASP	Caribbean and Latin American Scholarship Program
COP	Chief of Party
CSAP	Community Schools Activities Program
CSGP	Community School Grants Program
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Centre Advisory Committee
EC	European Community
EC/PHARE	EC/Poland and Hungary: Action for the Restructuring of the Economy
EDSP	Ecuador Development Scholarship Program
EIL	The Experiment in International Living
FMLN	Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional
FSA	Freedom Support Act
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Global Excellence in Management
GPRA	Government Performance and Results Act



GTD	Global Training for Development
HERNS	Human and Educational Resources Network Support
IAI	Institutional Analysis Instrument
IDA	International Donor Agency
IPA	International Policy Advocacy
NDI	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
NET	New Independent States Exchanges and Training
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NGOSS	NGO Sector Support
NIS	Newly Independent States
OIT	Office of International Training
PIDT	Projects in International Development and Training
PIET	Partners for International Education and Training
PMU	Project Management Unit
PPTP	Pakistan Participant Training Project
PTPE	Participant Training Program for Europe
PVO	Private Voluntary Organization
RSDF	Romanian Social Development Fund
SCA	Support Centers of America
SDA	School Development Agent
SEED	Support for East European Democracies
SHARED	Services for Health, Agriculture, Rural, and Enterprise Development
SIT	School for International Training
TA	Technical Assistance
TEOL	Training Events On-Line
TRANSIT	Technical Training for Societies in Transition
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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## RELEVANT WEBSITE INFORMATION

The following Websites provide information about World Learning — the institution, its programs, and its activities — and about other areas relevant to its mission.

About the Federation EIL:

[www.experiment.org](http://www.experiment.org)

Hague Appeal for Peace, as it relates to youth:

[www.haguepeace.org](http://www.haguepeace.org)

Network of Educators on the Americas (NECA):

[www.teachingforchange.org](http://www.teachingforchange.org)

NGO Directory, and other resources for NGOs:

[www.un.org/MoreInfo/ngolink/welcome.htm](http://www.un.org/MoreInfo/ngolink/welcome.htm)

NGO Empowerment Core Report:

<http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/npi/core rept/npi-ngo.htm>

Organizational Members of the Federation EIL:

[www.experiment.org/contacting.htm](http://www.experiment.org/contacting.htm)

Projects in International Development and Training

[www.worldlearning.org/pidt](http://www.worldlearning.org/pidt)

SIT Occasional Papers Series:

[www.sit.edu/publications](http://www.sit.edu/publications)

SIT Study Abroad:

[www.sit.edu/study abroad/](http://www.sit.edu/study abroad/)

United Nations “International Year for the Culture of Peace” in 2000:

[www.unesco.org/manifesto2000](http://www.unesco.org/manifesto2000)

World Learning:

[www.worldlearning.org](http://www.worldlearning.org)

*“You must be the change that you wish to see in the world.”*

Mahatma Gandhi