

International Essay Competition 2006

Report and Winning Essays



education | HIV / AIDS | conflict | employment

Youth Contribute to Solving Community Problems Youth Influence Decision-Making



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PART I

Description of the International Essay Competition

1. About the International Essay Competition

Young people are not only the future, they are the **now**. More than one fifth of the world's population is between the ages of 12 and 24, with 1.3 billion young people living in developing countries.

Over the last two years, consultations with youth and research work have demonstrated that youth can make a difference in fighting poverty through **their actions and advocacy activities in youth organizations**. Youth are key agents of change, but too often the nature and impact of their projects is not recognized or documented sufficiently, and youth face difficulties being heard and engaging more directly in civic life.

In order to learn from youth how they can make a difference in reducing poverty, the World Bank launched the **International Essay Competition**.

The Essay Competition is a yearly worldwide competition for youth aged 18-24 initiated for the first time in 2004, and managed by the World Bank Office in Paris.

The competition is designed and implemented in partnership with Country Offices of the World Bank and Public Information Centers (PIC) in 84 countries, as well as partners representing universities, NGOs and youth organizations all over the world.

"The best gift for a young and curious mind is an opportunity to explore and learn more. Winning the essay competition opened up a world of such opportunities for me. Apart from the fascinating experience of going to Amsterdam with eight other brilliant finalists to present my essay to a very accomplished international jury, many things like getting a chance to meet the President of the World Bank Mr. Paul D. Wolfowitz, attending the South Asia Youth Meeting in New Delhi, my present task with the World Bank and getting admitted in Columbia University followed my first position in the World Bank 2005 Essay Competition. At times immense talent and ability to perform lie in a young individual but his/her society is unable to recognize that talent, and an unfortunate gap emerges between the society's demand for modification and its youth's ability to contribute. This gap saps youth's precious enthusiasm to discover, question and flourish which in turn slows down the society's the overall social and economic development.

The World Bank Essay Competition makes a

commendable attempt to bridge this gap by encouraging young voices to speak out and be heard. I request people and organizations around the world to take inspiration from this admirable effort and find more innovative ways of reaching out to youth and motivate them to think constructively and take part in positive activities."

Asnia Asim, 1st Prize Winner of the Essay Competition 2005



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2. Facts and Figures

The Essay Competition 2006 was launched on February 1, 2006. It invited young people from all over the world to reflect on how they make a difference in poverty reduction by addressing the following topics and questions:

Education – HIV/AIDS – Conflict - Employment

(1) How do you contribute to solving community problems?

(2) How do you influence decision-making?

As result of a massive communication campaign in 104 countries (50,000 leaflets and posters distributed), **more than 1,950 young people from 136 countries submitted their essays.**

95% of the essays came from developing countries.

The highest number of submissions came from: Nigeria (213), Philippines (102), Mexico (73), Cameroon (72), India (54) and Indonesia (53).

Essays were submitted in French, Spanish and English.

3. Essay Competition Partners

The Essay Competition 2006 is organized in partnership with 11 prominent academic and civil society institutions:

The World Bank		Africa Leadership Forum	
University of Texas San Antonio USA		AIESEC International	
Cairo University Egypt		European Students' Forum (AEGEE)	
Jadavpur University India		The Glocal Forum	
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México Mexico		Junior Achievement Worldwide	
Researchers Alliance for Development (RAD)		Conciencia Association Argentina	

4. Review Process

In April 2006, essays were blind-reviewed by the Essay Competition partners (reviewers), in a 3-round reviewing process. Authors of the nine best essays were invited to present their work to the jury during the ABCDE Conference in Tokyo on May 29.

Finalists were selected based on the following criteria: i) impact of the projects described in the essay, ii) replicability and scalability of the proposed actions.

The final jury took place on Monday 29 May, 2006 in Tokyo. Each of the nine finalists had 10 minutes to present his/her paper, followed by question answer

session with the jury and other finalists. After the presentations, the jury discussed the presentations and announced the winners.

The travel of the nine finalists to the Final Jury in Tokyo was sponsored by the Institute of Developing Economies (IDE-JETRO).



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Finalists present their essays to the Jury May 29, 2006, Tokyo, Japan

ESSAY COMPETITION CALENDAR

February 1	Launch of the Essay Competition 2006
April 2	Deadline for the submission of essays
April 15	First round of review completed (best 150)
April 25	Second round of review completed (best 20)
April 30	Final round of review completed (best 9)
May 3	Finalists announced
May 29, 10 am – 2 pm	Finalist present to Jury in Tokyo, Japan
May 29, 3 pm – 4 pm	Jury meet to discuss presentations
May 29, 4 pm	Winners announced
May 29, 6.30 pm	Winners receive awards



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5. Award Ceremony of the Essay Competition 2006

The winners received their awards during the Award Ceremony on Monday, May 29, from World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz and President of the Institute of Developing Economies (IDE-JETRO), Professor Masahisa Fujita.

Finalists:

Winner of the 1st Prize:	Cauam Ferreira Cardoso (Brazil)
Winner of the 2nd Prize (ex aequo):	Sarita Bahety (Nepal)
Winner of the 2nd Prize (ex aequo):	Jefferson Agbai (Ghana)
Winner of the 3rd Prize:	Nicola Limodio (Italy)

Runners-up:

Mansour Hamza (Niger)
Flor de Maria Callalli Pimentel (Peru)
Geoffrey See (Singapore)
Ankai Xu (China)
Jose Alejandro Arceo Contreras (Mexico)

Awards:

1 prize:	5,000 US dollars
2 prize:	1,000 US dollars for each winner
3 prize:	1,000 US dollars

We still need new ideas to experiment and I think it is entirely appropriate that young people who are fresh and who don't know how it has always been done may come up with some ideas"

Paul Wolfowitz, President, The World Bank Group, at the Essay Competition Award Ceremony.

Website of the Essay Competition:

<http://www.essaycompetition.org>



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Finalists with President of the World Bank Group, Paul Wolfowitz, Vice President for External Affairs, Communications and United Nations Affairs, Ian Goldin, and President of IDE-JETRO Masahisa Fujita May 29, 2006, Tokyo, Japan



“Good evening. Firstly, I would like to thank the World Bank and the organizers of the conference for their support. The project described in my essay was the establishment of a partnership between the public sector, the under-privileged communities and the university to find a viable solutions for the socio-environmental problems that are commonly present in developing countries. In a sense, the project shows that it’s possible to promote real transformations working cooperatively and in partnership. Thank you.”

Cauam Cardoso, winner of the Essay Competition 2006, in his address during the Award Ceremony

“I would like to thank World Bank for giving us this platform to raise the voice of Nepalese women who routinely suffer gender discrimination. Via my essay I’ve proposed ideas to implement which can help eradicate gender issues in Nepal, which has been

suffering from Maoist based insurgency and the way to go on the path of development. Thank you very much.”

Sarita Bahety, second prize winner of the Essay Competition, in her address during the Award Ceremony

“Thank you very much. In my essay, I discussed the impacts of a community based financial literacy program that are initiated in Ghana to demonstrate that even low income earners can mobilize some little savings for their future security. What I think is needed is appropriate capacity building through education programs and scaling them up for all communities in developing countries. Thank you.”

Jefferson Agbai, second prize winner of the Essay Competition, in his address during the Award Ceremony.



Finalists and Jury pose for a souvenir picture May 29, 2006, Tokyo, Japan

PART II

**Analysis of the essays submitted
for the Essay Competition 2006**

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2005 and 2006

1. Issues discussed by youth in their essays

The essays submitted for the International Essay Competition 2006 reflect a set of topics and problems that help determine the context and characteristics of the societies in which millions of young people live. These problems can be grouped into several main categories:

- Poverty
- Youth unemployment
- Education
- HIV/AIDS
- International migration
- Displaced persons and refugees
- Drug use
- Corruption
- Sexual exploitation and violence towards children and youth
- Environment
- Conflict
- Human rights

Although not explicitly mentioned, **poverty** (understood not simply as the lack of financial resources for acquiring basic assets, but also as the lack of skills and capacities that will permit individuals' development) is a theme that runs through most of the texts.

515 million youths throughout the world live on less than two dollars a day. Southern Asia has the largest youth population living in conditions of poverty (206.1 million), followed by sub-Saharan Africa (102.1 million), Eastern Asia and the Pacific (150.5 million), Latin America and the Caribbean (27.2 million) the Middle East and North Africa (12.1 million), and Europe and Central Asia (18.2 million).⁽¹⁾

Another problem dealt with in the essays is **unemployment**. The contestants see unemployment as particularly affecting youth; in this respect, there is an implicit link with poverty, understood as the lack of financial resources for satisfying basic needs.

According to data from the World Labor Organization, youth represent 25% of the working age population (from 15 to 64) although by the year 2003, they accounted for 47% of the world's 186 million unemployed. A glance at the world's youth unemployment rates shows that countries in the Middle East and North Africa contain the largest percentage (25.6%), followed by Sub-Saharan Africa (21%), Latin America and the Caribbean (16.6%), South East Asia (16.4), South Asia (13.9%), the industrialized economies (13.4%) and East Asia (7%).⁽²⁾

Education is another issue present in many young people's essays, as a problem frequently related to a lack of possibilities for acquiring the capacities and skills required for their own development.

In 2005, four out of five young people were attending secondary school, while approximately 100 million youth have access to university education. At the same time, however, 113 million children do not go to school and 130 million youth are illiterate.⁽³⁾

Many essays focus on the **HIV/AIDS** pandemic - the main problem repeated in the essays on this topic is lack of access to information.

In 2002⁽⁴⁾, HIV/AIDS was the leading cause of death worldwide, and several essays in the competition deal with this issue. According to data from UNAIDS and WHO, in late 2001, it was estimated that 11.8 million youth ages 15 to 24 lived with HIV/AIDS, accounting for a third of the total amount of people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide.

By region, Sub-Saharan Africa has the largest number of infected youth (8.6 million) followed by South Asia (1.1 million), East Asia and the Pacific (740,000), Latin America and the Caribbean (560,000), Central Asia and Eastern Europe (430,000), North Africa and the Middle East (60,000) and industrialized countries (240,000).⁽⁵⁾



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(1) R. Curtain, *Youth in Extreme Poverty: Dimensions and Policy Implications with Particular Focus on South East Asia* (Melbourne, 2004). * Since figures have been rounded up, this total does not exactly reflect the total of the regions.

(2) WLO. "Tendencias del empleo mundial para los jóvenes 2004."

(3) Informe sobre la Juventud 2005 ONU. "la Juventud y las Naciones Unidas." Web page: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/spanish/wpayeducation.htm#WYR2005>

(4) World Report on the Prevention of Traumatism Caused by Traffic. Geneva WHI, 2004. Web site: http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2004/en/pr24_2004_table_es.gif

(5) UNFPA *Estado de la población mundial 2003: El VIH/ SIDA y los adolescentes* <http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2003/espanol/ch3/index.htm>



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International migration is usually dealt with in the essays in conjunction with other problems: discrimination, family disintegration and violence. This topic is discussed in the essays not

only in relation to how it effects youth, but how it impacts society as a whole. It is seen as mainly due to the lack of employment which forces people to abandon their place of origin, and regional conflicts linked to religious and inter-ethnic issues.

This phenomenon has enormous economic importance in relation to unemployment, particularly among young people. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that in the year 2000, international migration involved 175 million inhabitants. The highest migration rates (80%) occurred in the poorest countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The world's least developed regions⁽⁶⁾ receive 79.9% of the total remittances sent by migrants, a figure totaling \$62,239 million dollars in the year 2000. Asia received 38.9% of this amount, Latin America and the Caribbean 27.5%, Europe 19.0% and Africa a mere 14.1%.⁽⁷⁾

The essays contain two other issues linked to the problem of migration: **displaced persons and refugees**. Inter-ethnic and religious conflicts are regarded as a fundamental cause of the population's displacement and search for refuge.

According to official figures, currently there are 23 million refugees in the world. Nearly 7,300,000 are located in Asia, 6,200,000 in Africa, approximately 7,400,000 in Europe, 1,200,000 in North America, 90,000 in Latin America and the Caribbean and 70,000 in Oceania. Another 20 million are displaced within their own countries and not recognized as refugees. Approximately half of this population comprises youth.⁽⁸⁾

Drug use is an ever-present topic, which, similarly to HIV/AIDS, is perceived in terms of lack of access to adequate information. 5% of the world population aged between 15 and 64 - approximately 200 million people-consumed illicit drugs at least once during the

previous year. Within the same age group, 160 million (4% of the world's population) has consumed cannabis (marijuana), 26 million have used amphetamines, 8 million have taken ecstasy while the number of cocaine addicts totals 14 million.⁽⁹⁾

Essays also reflect a deep concern with the issue of **corruption**, particularly in the government spheres of developing countries. Corruption is seen as a problem that slows development. Transparency International holds that corruption is one of the main causes of poverty. The world's poorest countries have the highest indices of perception of corruption. According to the 2004 Index of Perception of Corruption, countries where the highest levels of corruption are perceived include Haiti and Bangladesh (1.5), Nigeria (1.6); Chad and Burma (1.7); Azerbaijan and Paraguay (1.9) followed by Angola, Congo, the Ivory Coast, Georgia, Indonesia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan (2).⁽¹⁰⁾

Sexual exploitation and violence towards children and youth is a constant concern among the competition's participants. In the essays, this topic is usually explored by young people belonging to civil society organizations.

Recent calculations indicate that up to 2 million children and youth are victims of sexual exploitation every year.⁽¹¹⁾ A UNICEF report submitted at the 2nd World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation, held in late December in Japan, states that nearly 3000 children a day are forced to join the world's sex market. There are 35,000 child sex workers in West Africa, 25,000 in the Dominican Republic and between 400,000 and 500,000 girl prostitutes in India. In Lithuania, between 20 and 50% of prostitute are minors while in Mexico, 16,000 children are estimated to be sexually exploited.⁽¹²⁾

The environment is also an issue of concern for much of the world's youth. At the root of the problem, young people see the weakening or non-existence of civic values around the need to protect and preserve nature, as well as weak civic participation in monitoring firms that pollute.

(6) Incluye Africa, Asia (excepto Japón). América Latina y el Caribe, y la región de Melanesia, Micronesia y Polinesia.

(7) International Migration Report 2002, United Nations, New York, 2002.

(8) Mario D. Camarillo Cortés "Más de 50 millones de desplazados, al amparo de grupos humanitarios" in *La Crónica*, 2004-06-20 <http://www.cronica.com.mx/nota>

(9) United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), (2005, June) Annual Report.

(10) www.contactomagazine.com/corruptcion2005.htm

(11) UNICEF Hoja de datos: explotación sexual. En www.unicef.org/spanish/protection/files/explotacionsexual.pdf

(12) La prostitución in La prostitución, en www.sinsida.com/montador.php?tipo=prostitucion



A survey carried out in Mexico showed that young people are more willing to take part in a march or demonstration to protect the environment than one for a political party.⁽¹³⁾ In this respect, it is important to recall that between 1975 and 2000 the urban population rose from 1.5 to 2.8 billion. Nearly half of the world's population now lives in a city. This growth has often occurred at the expense of the environment; each year, the world's forest area shrinks by approximately 13 million hectares as a result of deforestation, while the net annual loss of forest area between 2000 and 2005 was 7.3 million hectares.⁽¹⁴⁾ Partly as a result of the above, in 2005, natural and meteorological disasters caused the death of 350,000 people over the past 12 months.⁽¹⁵⁾

2. Selection of key findings and proposals put forward by youth

Young people feel that they should have more access to education. The essays regard education as a fundamental tool for development of societies and for young people in particular.

The essays depict education as a fundamental tool that, among other things, will permit: a) necessary information to be provided on issues such as HIV-AIDS and drug addiction; b) skills acquisition, such as training that permits access to employment; c) the construction of civic values to fight corruption and promote the emergence of young citizens interested in public affairs.

The essays point to a link between youth and the construction of solutions to the problems that affect them. The essays show that young people are demanding greater spheres of participation in the decisions that affect them. In this aspect in particular, young people show a keen interest in being linked to government decisions, mainly by reinforcing their own forms of organization.

Coupled with this interest in participating in the solution of their problems, is a demand for greater participation of the state and governments in solving to their problems. However, not many authors of the essays are critical of the governments in which they wish to participate.

Education. The essays quoted from regarded education from two perspectives: 1) as a fundamental

tool for information on youth sexuality and 2) as a sphere that, particularly university education, builds bridges between disadvantaged groups and local government actions.

“...young people should... utilize the efficiency of sexuality education. This education should not just be studied but applied as this will help solve the health problems affecting young people as the world could have healthy youths to lead it.

Parents should treat their children equally not withstanding the sex of the child. They should create time to interact with their children, take their children as friends because this will help build trust, confidence and good communication in the family.

“Governments should make and implement youth friendly policies so as to forestall the rate of crime, gangsterism, violence and death of young people due to ignorance, HIV/AIDS and other STIs. Governments should also protect and preserve the future of young people knowing that they are the desired leaders of tomorrow.”

Education: sexuality for young ones, by Imeobong Paulinus Ebong, Nigeria

“Collective action allowed the strengthening of a network of actions, as well as the legitimation of an active and effective Residents' Association, from which an independent and heterogeneous structure was created, able to continue to make improvements, even after the project comes to an end.

“The circumstances that mark the residents' lives bring many difficulties for the implementation of collective actions, mainly for the incorporation of new environmental practices. In this sense, the creation of conspicuous products for the community, like the improvement of the waste collecting system, was fundamental for demonstrating that, through solidarity among residents and between them and the their surroundings, it's possible to transform the space where you live in a better place. The socio-environmental diagnostic of the community represented, on the other hand, a huge advance towards the formalization of an updated and sensible analysis of the residents' reality, facilitating and making possible the implementation of other measures.”

(13) Instituto Mexicano de la Juventud 2000. *Encuesta Nacional de Juventud*

(14) El Estado de la Población Mundial, in <http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2001/espanol/ch05.html>

(15) “El Estado de la Población Mundial, op. cit.



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Community-based environmental self-management: the university as a mediator in the relationship between the public sector and the underprivileged communities around it, by

Cauam Cardoso, Brazil

Conflict Management. The essays dealing with this issue distinguish clearly between national and international conflicts.

“...we tried to develop the Project on the Personal Upbringing approach, creating initiatives based on a “face to face” confrontation, such as small group workshops, integrated by large session conferences; rather than focusing on the sole conference holding that might not have provoked the same subjective perception of personal involvement... during the debating sessions, long time was spent even on those topics often disregarded by the media or considered to be too sensitive or even politically-incorrect, in so doing participants felt the approach to be less institutional and more personal; this allowed a broad and high level of participation, attention and exchange, that gave an original and innovative added value to our Project... this Project was constructed on a bottom-up strategy, starting from who can make the difference: people; aiming at a broad involvement of public institutions and private subjects, as the inspiring results of the Project continue their stable growth. Not only did it start from people, but it embraced the most sensitive, receptive and hopeful part of the society: young people. In so doing we have started ‘to plant the seed of a peaceful, tolerant and respectful world generation of tomorrow’.

Putting Young People Together”, an Italo-Slovene Interregional Project and the Involvement of Young Generations in Solving Community Conflicts, by Nicola Limodio, Italy

AIDS Prevention. Most of the essays coincided in citing lack of information as a fundamental cause of the spread of this disease: these essays assume that information is an indispensable condition for free decision-making among young people. A small group of essays hold that abstinence is the best way of stopping the spread of the disease.

“The tendency to hide one’s status among HIV/AIDS patients has made the disease to be socially ‘invisible’ which in turn encourages the silent spread of the epidemic or contributes to the hidden nature of the epidemic”.

A beguiling encounter, by Tsedal Asghedom, Eritrea

“My fellow youths, lets us embrace abstinence ... Friends, remaining sexually abstinent until marriage is realistic.”

The Practical Experiences of Abstinence in the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS among Youth in Uganda, by Alex Mutabazi Willy, Uganda

Promoting Employment for Youth. The problem of youth unemployment is dealt with in several documents on the basis of some of the following assumptions: 1) the necessary promotion of employment is the basis of the recognition of the human capital wasted by leaving young people outside the productive sphere and 2) the recognition of the potential there can be in young people when they combine their capacities with the opportunity to develop productive financing projects for small firms.

“In pursuing our goal to help youths become professional artists, the ArtIntern committee functioned as social entrepreneurs and focused on our core competency in innovation. Focusing on our core and sourcing for capabilities elsewhere helped us create a more flexible net entity, as any new changes can be readily met by assembling a fresh set of capabilities. Equally important is how our capability sourcing strategy allowed us to bridge the arbitrary divide between private and nonprofit sectors by bringing their best capabilities together to serve a social goal. Although the unique process was a valuable learning experience, the long-term impact of ArtIntern still remained to be seen.

“I... believe that this social entrepreneurial approach should be adopted by youths in tackling the development issues that excite them as it perfectly matches their strengths and weaknesses. The core competencies of social entrepreneurs are likely to be found in youths. The spark that leads youths to tackle development issues often arise from their exposure to the impact of such issues on their community, such as how ArtIntern was initiated by our interaction with the affected arts community... youths often possess localized knowledge leading to their first innovation in defining the social need. Access to this information will also allow them to innovate in creating new solutions.

The third innovation is also highly relevant to youths as a capability sourcing strategy greatly compensates for their inherent weaknesses. While the energy and enthusiasm that youths bring to handling

development challenges are admirable, it is no substitute for the technical skills built on experience and institutional memory... this should not be a barrier to their desire to make positive change as they can adopt the sourcing approach to combine the core capabilities of both private and nonprofit sectors.”

The Missing Link: Social Entrepreneurs as the Private / Nonprofit Bridge, by Geoffrey See, Singapore

“From my experience in running this program, I will suggest three (3) tripod fundamental pillars any club should possess to have its bases covered:

- Mission/Vision oriented: To run an investment club, one has to begin with the end in mind. Leaders have to ensure that each potential member understands and shares the vision before joining the group and also that the vision/mission is re-cast regularly during meetings.

- Principle-Centered: Principles are timeless truths and fundamental laws governing the existence of everything in this world. Though I have shared a lot of personal experience regarding how I steered the affairs of my club, it is important to assert that principles are not practices. What is important is learning the underlying principle in each situation and adapting it for one’s own context. A principle we adopted from NAIC was to invest regularly as well as for the long term.

- Knowledge-Based: Because money is quite an emotional subject, it is important investment decisions in the group be based on studies and research conducted by members. That way one can prevent the venture from becoming like gambling. This makes the monthly education program for your club a MUST.”

Empowering the Ghanaian Youth towards financial Independence, by Jefferson Agbai, Ghana

Migration. In these essays, one of the constants is the need of millions of people to abandon their places of origin in search of employment.

“We introduced two main innovations into La Victoria...to convince and organize Central American workers...I conducted research on Central American immigrants in Sinaloa at the same time as I convinced them to improve the situation of the community so that they could improve their own.

...I identified the basic interests of the workers in Las Esmeralda, which can be summarized in two words: individual progress...

...We had to determine the point of conflict, the one that prevented them from achieving individual progress, which the harvesters virtually unanimously declared was the policy of their countries, which had achieved peace at the beginning of the previous decade in exchange for the implementation of an exclusive economic system that concentrated wealth in the hands of a few. “My parents emigrated to avoid being killed by the guerrillas or the paramilitary forces and then I emigrated so the government would not make me die of hunger,” a young Salvadoran I interviewed laconically declared.

...the most complicated bit was to convince the Central Americans that what they seek and defend facilitates the social realization of the highest, most fundamental values...their desire for individual progress was a response to the irrational governments of their countries.

...I used my ingenuity to sell the idea that individual improvement would be achieved by setting up a company without bosses, where everything they earned would be for them.”

Victory at the heart of a tomato, by Jose Alejandro Arceo Contreras, Mexico

Human Rights.—These essays assume that the recognition and appropriation of human rights by citizens is a difficult process, but that once this appropriation had been achieved, it would become an everyday tool for individual and collective development.

“Through a continuous, intense dialog, we managed to get them to listen to some of our talks on self-esteem, family planning and crimes against sexual freedom. Our project advanced slowly but surely. Thanks to the dissuasive communication we established with the leaders of the main gangs, we managed to establish a sort of beach head among these underground groups...one of the leaders of the now defunct “north band”...disbanded over a year ago...has left the streets and now works with us as a volunteer in the most dangerous areas of Pamplona.”

Lights for human development for Pamplona's youth community, by Flor de Maria Callalli Pimentel, Peru

Gender Discrimination and Intra-familial Violence. Most of the studies dealing with this topic highlight the close link between low



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levels of education and discriminatory behavior against women.

“A velvet graduation in women’s present status can only be achieved if everyone acknowledges that women are

capable enough to take on responsibilities in the outer world. The need is to create conducive environment which promotes equal participation of women along with men in the household and also in economic activities. This will go a long way in uprooting gender disparity in the rural communities.

Mainstreaming of gender issues and gender sensitization is necessary because its implementation depends primarily on human attitudes. Since gender bias is so ingrained in social attitudes, it is necessary to sensitize people to various visible and invisible indicators of it. It is clear that no education or communication will be successful without a large-scale change in women’s societal position. The support of international intermediaries to eradicate gender-biased policies and to make amendment in existing discriminatory laws with will be an important step towards achieving a gender balance.”

Both girls and boys, Are like your precious twin eyes!, Sarita Bahety, Nepal

“Educated, promised to a successful career, how do young Shanghai women envision making use of their growing economic and individual freedom? This seminar encouraged women students to share their views on what choices to make in a relationship, on marriage and family planning, on the female body and female sexuality, etc.

The seminar took the form of a workshop: discussion and debate be conducted in a relatively intimate atmosphere, with a group of around 20 students freely addressing issues that affect them directly.”

Challenge the Prejudice, by Ankai Xu, China

Civic Participation:- The studies dealing with this topic have at least one of the following assumptions in common: 1) the need to include the population into decision-making and 2) the role youth can play by participating in decision-making.

“Our rural areas are being emptied and are increasingly losing their place in the economics as well as socio-cultural life of our countries. The project here aims to provoke an internal response from my village. If it succeeds, we could extend it to

neighboring villages. It is based on an efficient in any region whatsoever. The partners are the youths and the inhabitants who join forces to implement private initiatives likely to profit a whole village, leading to a development in the means of productions and trade. My role consists above all, in encouraging these groupings, to provide them with the management skills resulting from my training, and also to provide an example by being a partner.

In emphasizing private initiatives through groupings, the objective is not only the sharing of cots to provide the inhabitants with greater productions capacity, but also to promote the rigor and creativity that private enterprise brings with it. It is no way a case of imposing an activity financed from the outside which would stop as soon as the funds dry up. Far from it, The structures put in place will on the contrary develop progressively and become more profitable to the extent that participants become aware of the opportunities that they open up for them”.

Let’s revive our Rural Regions, by Mansour Hamza, Niger

“Four Practical Steps to Solving the Problem of Lack of Youth Influence on Decision Making:

1. Developing and Cultivating Compassion
2. Emphasizing Organization
3. Execution
4. Evaluation of Progression

These steps are necessary in order for youths to impact decision making. Each step is as important as the next. Each step is a part of a larger whole. Without any one of these steps, the process completely fails.”

Practical and Implement Capable Strategies for Increasing Youth Influence on Decision Making, by Joshua McCarty, United States

3. Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from the essays:

- a) The main issues/problems in the essays are: poverty, unemployment, lack of opportunities for gaining access to education, HIV-AIDS, drug addiction, migration, sexual exploitation, corruption, environment, displaced persons and refugees.
- b) Young people are not faced with a single problem: in their everyday lives they have to cope with a complex set of situations affecting them.

c) Given the broad range of topics presented by the contestants, one should stress the cross-sectional nature of most of the essays. For example, there are proposals to deal with unemployment among young people infected with AIDS or proposals to improve the quality of education, based on the promotion of human rights.

d) The most common issues by region were as follows: In the African continent, problems linked to sexually transmitted diseases, gender, environment and education; in Europe, North America and Asia: migration, education and community work (including actions that propose specific actions within a community, on the basis of various topics) and in Latin America, community work, employment and training.

e) The essays do not focus exclusively on problems linked to youth; young people are also discussing problems that concern their societies as a whole.

f) Together with this varied range of themes, the essays also reflect youth's capacity to question and the desire to establish links with their community for problem-solving and offering creative proposals.

g) Most of the essays dealing with the topic of civic participation reflect youth's desire to take part in government decisions that affect them.

The assessment and review of these results will undoubtedly yield new ideas that will permit the reinforcement of this important initiative by World Bank to encourage youth's participation in the search for a better, fairer world.

The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this document are entirely those of the author(s) and are not necessarily those of the World Bank, or its affiliated organizations, or members of its Board of Executive Directors, or the countries they represent. The World Bank does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this publication and accepts no responsibility whatsoever for any consequence of their use. The boundaries, colors, denominations, other information shown on any map in this volume do not imply on the part of the World Bank Group any judgment on the legal status of any territory or the endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries.



The World Bank



PART III

Winning Essays

Winners:

1st prize winner: Cauam Ferreira Cardoso (Brazil), “Community-based environmental self-management: the university as a mediator in the relationship between the public sector and the underprivileged communities around it”.

2nd prize winner: Sarita Bahety (Nepal), “Both girls and boys are like your precious twin eyes!”

2nd prize winner: Jefferson Agbai (Ghana), “Empowering The Ghanaian Youth Towards Financial Independence”.

3rd prize winner: Nicola Limodio (Italy), “Putting Young People Together, an Italo-Slovene Interregional Project and the involvement of young generations in solving community conflicts”.

Finalists:

Mansour Hamza (Niger), “Faisons revivre nos campagnes” (Let’s revive our villages).

Flor de Maria Callalli Pimentel (Peru), “Luces para el desarrollo humano de los jovenes de la comunidad de Pamplona” (“Lights for human development for Pamplona's youth community”).

Geoffrey See (Singapore), “The Missing Link: Social Entrepreneurs as the Private-Nonprofit Bridge”.

Ankai Xu (China), “Challenge the Prejudice”.

Jose Alejandro Arceo Contreras (Mexico), “Una vistoria con corazon de tomate” (“Victory at the Heart of a Tomato”).

Disclaimer: The essays appear in this document in unedited form, as they were submitted by the authors.

First Prize

Community-based environmental self-management: the university as a mediator in the relationship between the public sector and the underprivileged communities around it.

Cauam Ferreira Cardoso



First prize winner Cauam Cardoso collects his award from President of the World Bank Group, Paul Wolfowitz, and President of IDE-JETRO Masahisa Fujita

May 29, 2006, Tokyo, Japan

ABSTRACT

In my contacts with the poor and violent life in the slums, I always felt uncomfortable with the vision of those open-air sewage ditches that made children sick and the rivers with that horrible aspect and foul odor. On entering the university I decided to contribute to the transformation of this reality through actions focused on the environment and other community-based alternatives. As a student I developed a project, together with a professor and a friend, that turned our disquietude into concrete action. In this project we developed a set of socio-environmental actions that, based on the articulation between the community, the university and government agencies, sought to set up an infra-structure capable of transforming the relationship that the residents hold with their environment. The project was initiated in 2003, in a slum with more than 3.500 dwellers, located on a hill close to the university campus. The inhabited part of the hill is mostly composed of houses in precarious conditions and serious problems related to a lack of basic sanitation. The methodology was based, initially, on the construction of a participatory socio-environmental diagnostic was performed, for the main needs of the region to be identified. Afterward, actions were directed at removing the accumulated waste, and a work group was set up with members of the project and municipality officials, that devised an alternative route for transporting the garbage. After the infrastructural improvements were in place, an educational process was initiated to consolidate the progress obtained. With this purpose, environmental education workshops were developed for the community's school children. In the second year, the project had a staff with 20 people from different courses of the university that planned and gave regular courses throughout the year. Such was the project's repercussion that funds from the university and the municipality were granted to the project in 2005, allowing the training of school teachers to be expanded, a book on the project to be written and a number of lectures to be given to university students. Today we have 30 people working in two schools of different communities close to the university. In this manner, the project's activities promote social inclusion, opening the institution to the residents so that they can utilize a space that also belongs to them. Thus preventive and innovative alternatives can be implemented, that can serve as an example to similar actions in other communities.

1. INTRODUCTION

“The important thing is that, no matter which points of support the agronomist-educator can have, it's good to know that these are mere auxiliaries that are only valid in a libertarian know how. A know how that, mastered by him, makes a fundamental requirement to him: that he asks himself if he really believes the people, the simple men, the peasants. If he is really able to commune with them and with them to pronounce the world. If he is not able to believe the peasants, commune with them, he will be, in his work, at best a cold expert. Probably a technician; or even a good reformist. But never an educator of and to real transformations”⁽¹⁶⁾

PAULO FREIRE

In my contacts with the poor and violent life at the slums, I always felt uncomfortable with the vision of those open-air sewage ditches that made children sick and the rivers with that horrible aspect and foul odor. Since the beginning I used to think about how I could change that inhumane reality, and I found out that I needed studying for understanding better the overall context I was part of and which tools I could use to change it.

Once in the university, I decided to contribute to the transformation of this situation through sanitary and environmental measures, but I soon realized that the academic universe could not provide all the practical apprenticeship that I needed. In the curricula of most universities one observes the absence of a vision that goes beyond assistentialism, focused on practical and integrated actions able to stimulate a proactive attitude among the population of underprivileged communities.

This situation reflects the distance that exists between governmental as well as university elites toward society's least favored populations and the absence of a social complicity that should pervade the actions of any citizen and, mainly, future professionals bound to interfere strongly with people's everyday lives.

(16) FREIRE, P. Extensão ou comunicação? Rio de Janeiro, Paz e Terra, 1977

2. METHODOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT

“The efforts directed at stimulating community participation (...) require time and dedication for breaking up the cultural paradigm manifested, simultaneously and in an interrelated way, in conventional practices and in the way the population understands its role in the solution of collective problems. (...) This part of society – and I’m not referring, only, to the poorest population – is not conscious of the need to participate directly in the solution of its own problems. Accustomed to paternalism, the society doesn’t realize that the State is the organic expression of that which the population is, believes, thinks and proposes and not a “Superior Entity” that provides for every need and that knows everything”.⁽²⁾

LUIZ LOBO

As I couldn’t get all the knowledge I needed in the classes, I tried, on my own, to establish other links with the university that enabled me to address alternative, community-based actions. As a student I developed a project, together with a professor and a friend, that turned our disquietude into concrete action.

The city where the proposal is to be applied is an urban center characterized by deepening social, economic and environmental problems. With job opportunities and access to education and health above the national average, the city has one of the highest growth rates in the country. This local progress, however, brought about a mass migration to the city, whereby people from everywhere settled rapidly and disorderly in unoccupied tracts. As a result of this process of illegal land parceling and low income housing, many big such communities came off the ground, wherein most of its population lives under precarious conditions of inhabitability, without any assistance from public authorities.

The extremely bad survival conditions of those populations brought about the same problems that big urban centers already confronted. Growing violence, pollution, unemployment, overburdening of public hospitals, all characterize the critical condition the city is in. The existence of different social classes, compelled to share the same social space didn’t stir solidarity or cooperative action among those groups, on the contrary, more segregation occurred, evidencing the unsustainability of the current model of development.

In addition to that, environmental degradation stands out as the main consequence of the slummization process. The enormous devastation set off by the settlement of migrants and the excessive land parceling and impermeabilization of the soil promote the constant destruction of the region’s biodiversity and ever more intense floods. The environmental problems are also connected to the lack of basic sanitation, since in most of these communities, sanitary sewage systems; regular garbage collection and water supply are non-existent. Because of that, disease proliferates, the rivers are polluted and the quality of life deteriorates.

The general purpose of the project is to develop a set of socio-environmental actions, with the staff promoting the articulation between society, the university and the government, aiming at the construction and improvement of an infrastructure designed to transform the relationship between the residents and the environment. The proposal consists in encouraging and instrumentalizing each individual to fulfill his creative potential and stimulating and facilitating cooperative action. On recognizing that in order to achieve and maintain a balanced environment it takes not only competence and dreaming but also practical actions, one is ripe to set up a self-management process that harmonizes development with nature.

The project’s main guideline was to develop measures that could be applied in the real scale, capable of introducing sensible transformations in the quality of life of the residents. The initial restrictions were scarcity of resources and a staff with only three persons. The first objective was to find a place where to begin, where we could develop new concepts and achieve with the residents a more sustainable occupation.

The group’s activities were initiated in 2003, in a community with more than 3.500 dwellers, located on a hill close to the university campus. The inhabited part of the hill is mostly composed of houses in precarious conditions. Most of the streets are unpaved, and public illumination is inadequate in many points. The residents utilize the Universitarian Hospital, but the supply of medical services doesn’t match demand, with resulting

(17) LOBO, L. Saneamento Básico: em busca da universalização. Luiz Lobo sp. Brasília: Ed. Do Autor, 2003.

inefficient health services. There are no recreation areas or a police station. There is a school for children up to 11 years old and a nursery. The Residents' Association develops several socio-cultural and sportive projects through a network of partnerships, but those efforts are diffuse and limited in reach due to a lack of support from public authorities.

In order to initiate the activities, partnerships were needed with people of like interests, taking advantage of structures and organizations already in place, working together to improve and expand them gradually but consistently to be able to confront ever increasing challenges.

Since the outset the project's methodology was conceived to avoid rigid, preestablished actions. Drawing on their experience in their own habitat, the residents themselves put forth their needs that the group, respecting its limitations, systematized into strategies aimed at the satisfaction of those needs.

After the community was selected, a field data gathering process was initiated, that served also for the group to get a close knowledge of the community's daily life. In addition to that, data was searched for in public offices at the municipality, state and federal levels, but it came out that there are no documents with a detailed description of the community.

In this manner, the gap that exists between the public sector and the underprivileged communities becomes apparent. It's impossible to transform the reality of a population if its mere existence is not acknowledged, let alone their needs and demands. This represents a huge obstacle when it comes to fomenting institutional programs, building lasting improvements in local infrastructure, or even making available official data to support the actions of universities or the civil society.

The need for correct information's triggered the development of the local socio-environmental diagnostic. However, instead of relying only on the researcher's way of looking as a "truth", given his limited experience, the project tries to rely also on the residents' way of looking. In this way, the few technical resources available were used, together with the technical knowledge of the group, but mainly with a humane and participative way of looking that finally revealed, in a different way, the characteristics of the community.

For the diagnostic to be made some studies conducted in the area in previous years were consulted, as well as aerial photographs and informal maps made by health agents. At the same time, a survey was conducted in a sample of 92 houses, sufficient for describing the relevant characteristics of the community.

At the end of the first stage of the work with the residents and the data collection effort, it was ascertained that the main problem was the solid residues situation in the community. The presence of open-air garbage dumps in inadequate areas, together with an inefficient waste collection brought about landslides and disease transmission foci that represent a risk for the well-being of the local population.

The strategy for action consisted in the implementation of a viable alternative for the immediate elimination of the main focus: an open-air garbage dump with at least 100 m² near a stream that flows through the city. The process of disposal and accumulation of garbage in the dump resulted from the absence of a collecting system that covered the whole city, in addition to a lack of education and information of the residents.

In the scope of the partnership set up with the municipal company in charge of waste disposal, a work group was formed with members of the group and company personnel that defined the actions to be carried out. Those consisted in the removal of the accumulated waste and also in increasing the area of collection through the implementation of an alternative collection route. The truck routing was extended, and where it could not go, small company tractors would be used, for their better mobility in rough terrains. In the extreme cases of too small alleys, garbage men would take over the job which, according with the local residents' association, extended the collection to 80% of the residents, including the existing system with 3 garbage collectors.

After the infrastructure improvements were in place, an educational process would have to be initiated to consolidate the progress obtained. Together with community agents and the residents' association, the project group announced the collection schedule and the importance of an adequate packaging of the garbage.

From this point on, it became clear that the real transformations that were needed and our main contribution to the community were related no so much with correcting that precarious situation, but rather to forming conscious citizens, able to transform, by themselves, their own habitat. Now that after this first experience the population

became aware of their potential for collective action – for the results were evident and the residents themselves recognized it – it was feasible to invest, with a long run outlook, in an educational process focused on the environment and citizenship.

As a consequence of this change, a proposal for environmental education of community school children was developed, aimed at promoting an awareness of their space and their socio-environmental problems that would bring about a transforming attitude to those future citizens and, consequently, their families.

Those actions directed to school children were the embryo of a farther reaching proposal. Initially, workshops were conducted in two classes of the community's school. The contents related to the waste disposal problem were organized in a simple, easy to understand language. On the other hand, information from the survey related to everyday life familiarized the students with those concepts. Showing that the person that produces the waste is also responsible for its disposal, promotes a sense of accountability.

Following the good results obtained, from the second year on the work group was expanded, receiving 18 more participants from other groups of university students with a common interest in environmental education initiatives. This new expanded group went on to develop a true educational program, drawing on what they learnt the year before, their experience in the community school and data from the socio-environmental diagnostic. The objective, this time, was to develop a continuous work that would serve as a more efficient and coherent instrument for the sensibilization of the school community.

The activities started with a four month planning period and five months of weekly classes, given by members of the group to two classes with students between 9 and 11 years old. The methodology for developing the activities was based on the priorities identified in the diagnostic: the solid waste problem, water supply and the relationship between the environment and citizenship. After the themes were chosen, smaller groups took over the research and development of specific parts of the demands. The meetings took place once a week, with the voluntary collaboration of people with experience in the subject. The planned activities were complemented with group discussions, with the aid of research materials like books, the internet and papers on the subject. After the planning was completed, activities with the children were initiated and two larger groups were formed: monitors and a support team, in charge of preparing in advance the necessary materials, as most of the meetings consisted of practical classes. As resources were scarce, recycled materials, obtained through donations, were creatively used.

After the activities started, the meetings begun to take place every other week. In these meetings the initial planning was reviewed and changes were made if necessary, in order to adjust them to the reality of the school, considering the time available and children's personalities.

The main demand that turned up was the need to deal with the waste problem, even after the significant advances achieved by the project. As up to 2003 the community found itself in a critical situation as regards solid residues, it was necessary to emphasize this point with the children so that this situation wouldn't keep repeating itself. The classes dealt with the way the garbage impacts the environment, it's identification in the community and the recycling of paper.

Water, the next subject that emerged, brought the need to inform the children about the problems related to basic sanitation, health and environmental protection. The existence in the region of open-air sewers, epidemic linked to bad water quality and polluted streams, rendered those themes urgent. In this manner, classes were given on the water cycle and the erosive processes, including practical experiments like observing water samples in a microscope, ceded by the university.

The third theme that was handled was the relationship between environmental preservation and citizenship. Normally treated separately, the classes on this subject intended to show the environmental implications of human activities, as well as the fact that environmental degradation has a direct bearing on people's well-being. With this in mind, the classes approached themes like food chain and disorganized urban growth as well as outdoor activities like planting seedlings in the schoolyard.

The basis of the work was to establish a relationship with the people with whom one interacts. Constant contacts with professors and other employees increases the affection links and creates a relationship based on trust, mainstay of the whole work. Even though the plans are submitted to the professors, that are free to propose any changes they want, their help is needed when it comes to preparing the classes and participating in the meetings.

The project continued throughout 2005, this time with some financial support from the university and the Municipal Educational Department, that, on recognizing the results obtained agreed to collaborate with the project.

The highlight, that year, was the expansion of the project's activities, since, counting with a more experienced staff, it was possible to extend the training to the professors of the institution. Through fortnightly meetings, in class methods of working with the environment were discussed, so as to include the theme in the contents of regular courses.

Professors play a fundamental role in this learning structure. With them, the continuation of the work will be possible, because external groups won't be there forever. The object of this kind of practice is not assistentialism; if the necessary elements are provided, local residents will be able to walk on their own. Professors, as fundamental actors for the activities to take place, are able to become knowledge multipliers, as well as their students, working on the sustainable development of educational relations.

The continuing good results obtained in 2006 brought about, once again, an expansion in the project's scope. Because of the demand of a growing number of students eager to participate in the project, a new group was created, keeping in contact and discussing with the original group the application of a new environmental education program in another community near the university.

3. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

“The multiple experiences, of several ranges, must bring the conscience that the individual is a constituent part of a collective reality where his rights and obligations are dimensions of a same process of citizenship building. This requires that any programs or educational actions be structured in such a way that a conscience gradually arises that transcends the boundaries of superficial individual interests and reaches questions in the collective, political sphere. That doesn't mean that the individual should not be understood as a being that is unique, on the contrary, he has singularities that must be respected. This individual, together with other individuals, make up society. Therefore, the environmental education must deal with two basic dimensions: one, stimulate the individual abilities and, other, provide the individual with the social abilities that lead to collective actions in the quest for environmental citizenship”⁽¹⁸⁾

MARIA INÊS HIGUCHI

Collective action allowed the strengthening of a network of actions, as well as the legitimation of an active and effective Residents' Association, from which an independent and heterogeneous structure was created, able to continue to make improvements, even after the project comes to an end.

At the end of the first year, the residents, main object of the actions, could feel, in practice, the transformations that occurred in their space. The articulations undertaken with the garbage Company and the municipality's Health Department made possible the improvement of the waste disposal system, through the expansion of the collecting routes that came to serve most of the houses, and the removal of the irregular accumulation point. After the removal of the dump, the educational campaign directed to the residents worked well, and the garbage didn't return to the dump.

The circumstances that mark the residents' lives bring many difficulties for the implementation of collective actions, mainly for the incorporation of new environmental practices. In this sense, the creation of conspicuous products for the community, like the improvement of the waste collecting system, was fundamental for demonstrating that, through solidarity among residents and between them and their surroundings, it's possible to transform the space where you live in a better place. The socio-environmental diagnostic of the community represented, on the other hand, a huge advance towards the formalization of an updated and sensible analysis of the residents' reality, facilitating and making possible the implementation of other measures.

(18) HIGUCHI, M. I. G.; AZEVEDO, G C. Educação como processo na construção da cidadania ambiental. Available in http://www.ufmt.br/remtea/Download/mostra%20REVBEA_textos.pdf Accessed in March 26, 2006

The workshops about the garbage prepared for the community's school children, that took place in 2003, achieved the desired success, since a change of behavior of some students was observed in subsequent meetings. The year 2004 brought significant advances to the area of education. The joint project obtained success in the planning and implementation of the foreseen activities, now with more than 20 persons, either students or professors.

The continuation of the activities in 2005 provided a deepening of the knowledge of the group, which tried to improve the teaching techniques, while new students could start to take part in the preparation and realization of the classes. As a complementary material, a primer was elaborated with children's texts, presenting all the environmental contents studied during the year. The experience with the professors was extremely rich, increasing the understanding that new sensibilization alternatives were needed for 2006.

The experience accumulated so far was transformed in a book called "DO AND LEARN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION"⁽¹⁹⁾ that represents an important tool for sharing this experience with other people that may take an interest in developing similar activities. Even if the program is too specific to be applied in other regions, the number of links that can be made from its contents is as big as anyone's imagination.

The book presents the methodology adopted in the elaboration of the project. Each activity is explained with a critical view, step by step, including suggestions and a bibliography, so as to make the classes even more productive. Accounts from students, monitors and professors are included at the end of the book, reporting on their experience as agents in the quest for a better quality of life for everyone.

A 1st University Seminar for Environmental Action was promoted by the project with the objective of sensibilizing the academic universe for citizenly practices, using as a tool the extension projects. Reaching the Universitarian public through the divulging and multiplication of the practices proposed here, can change the mindset of future professionals bound to hold decisional positions in the society.

The project that started with only three persons and no support whatsoever begins its fourth year of existence with a staff of 30 persons, institutional support from the university and the Municipal Mayorship and, moreover, with one more school being incorporated. The most recent and important progress that was accomplished was the program of lectures and courses that was given to public school teachers. From this point on, the good results and the apprenticeship provided to the model-community become not only a benefit to its residents, but an example of environmental actions that can be reproduced throughout the city, or even to other cities and states.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This work is considered innovative because it compensates the time lag that exists between the speed of change in society and the intervention of the public authorities. The Universitarian action has the advantage of counting with a preexistent infrastructure and students motivated to executing, in their practical lives, the knowledge they acquired, legitimating and meeting the demands of the poorest part of the population and establishing an exchange relationship between the community and the institution.

The university cannot substitute itself for the government in its responsibility for promoting the well-being of the population, although, in the present circumstances, it may serve as a facilitating agent for implementing public policies in a partnership with the citizens. The reduction of inequalities is thus made viable through the initiative of the community that, supported by a network of partnerships is capable of understanding its problems, devising systematic strategies for addressing them and mobilizing itself to demand improvements from the many spheres of public power.

After its implementation, the project collaborates in bringing sustainability to the occupations and facilitating the introduction of innovative, preventive alternatives that serve as an example to similar initiatives in other localities. In this project, the barrier of prejudice of both parts was broken. Today we can walk everywhere in the community, be welcomed and recognized as transforming agents and see more environmentally aware children. More than just teaching, we are there to learn, share this apprenticeship with the residents, students and everyone from everywhere. Those are, undoubtedly, the fundamental factors in the proposal. However, the most essential and indispensable factors in the project are the zeal, the affection, the solidarity and spirit of cooperation that make possible the real transformation toward a better world.

(19) This book was written by five members of the group, the author of this project being responsible for part of the text and for coordinating the production. The book remains unpublished, for lack of support from a house.

Second Prize

Both girls and boys are like your precious twin eyes!

Sarita Bahety



*Second prize winner Sarita Bahety addresses the audience at the ABCDE Conference
May 29, 2006, Tokyo, Japan*

A. Understanding the status quo:

Women in Nepal routinely suffer from lack of access to education, money and technology. Barely 25% of Nepali women are literate. They face systematic discrimination due to institutionalized chauvinism and a pronounced cultural preference for sons in Nepali society.⁽²⁰⁾

From birth onwards, gender discrimination is evident – “If a boy is born, everybody is happy and they celebrate, but when a girl is born the parents become sad and worried. ... They think that girls are really others’ property and it’s of no use to educate them.”⁽²¹⁾

The Nepalese society follows patriarchic hierarchy in which all major decisions related to running a household are made by men. When families choose which children will or will not be educated, or which will have better educational opportunity, sons are preferred. Educating a son is investing in his ability to look after his ageing parents while educating a daughter is considered a no-return investment. When she marries, she becomes another family’s asset.⁽²²⁾ Girls are married off before they have the opportunity to stand on their own feet.⁽²³⁾

The cultural practices prevalent in Nepal demean women, especially among Hindus.⁽²⁴⁾ Most of the marriages in Nepal are performed following Hindu customs- many of which are blatantly discriminatory against women. For example there is a ritual called ‘*Kanya Daan*’⁽²⁵⁾ (an important part of marriage in all Hindu marriages) which literally means **giving away your daughter in alms** to the groom and his family.

Case-let 1: Low social preference

“Because I am a girl from a poor family, I have to quit school. I will have to do domestic chores to help my parents so that we can save money”. I still remember these words of a young Nepalese girl who used to come at my place every morning and evening to deliver fresh milk. She was barely into her early teens and had a strong desire to continue schooling. But because of her family’s poor financial status she had no option but to give up studies and start working to help her parents. At an age, when she should be going to school, carrying books in her hands, instead she would be engaged in collecting fodder for cattle and delivering milk door to door.

I probed her as to why it was only she who was asked to help at home, and not her elder brother who went to school every morning riding a bicycle. “Because I am a girl and a girl is a liability on her parents until she is married”, she whispered. “My parents think that it’s better if I learn household chores so that later I can become a dutiful wife and a mother. While I am still in my teens they will marry me off to someone of their choice. Traditionally when a girl gets married, her parents have to give a *daijo*⁽²⁶⁾ to the groom. If *daijo* is deemed too small, adjusting to married life becomes a difficult affair. And we are five sisters and one brother. My poverty stricken family is trying to save whatever possible that can be given away as a *daijo* for five of us. So why will they spend money on my education?”

She sighed for a while and continued after a brief pause. “My brother will be the ultimate bread winner of the house, so my parents are spending all their savings on his education. They are even borrowing money from village lenders at exorbitant interest rates just to keep him in school and pay for his tuition. The higher his education is, the better my family is equipped to demand a heftier dowry for his marriage.” I was speechless when she narrated a vicious circle of marriage and dowry which had compelled her to pull out from school. Where the family lives on hand to mouth existence basis, will education ever become a priority?

(20) Directly cited from <http://www.etc-nepal.org/icd.php>. Last accessed March 9, 2006

(21) Directly quoting Ms. Inkumari from <http://www.mountainvoices.org/Summary.asp?id=266>. Last accessed March 24, 2006

(22) Pennells, Linda, **Girls and Women’s education Policies and Implementation Mechanisms**. Entire section is directly cited from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001146/114669eo.pdf>. Last accessed March 28, 2006

(23) Directly cited from <http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?&nid=68490> quoting Ms. Lily Thapa, Director of Women for Human Rights (WHR) and associate professor at Padma Kanya Campus. Last accessed April 1, 2006

(24) Hinduism is one of the highest practiced religions of Nepal. A follower of Hinduism is Hindu.

(25) Kanya means virgin girl (namely the bride). ‘Daan’ means giving away.

There are so many Daans or Dhanas advocated by the Hindu scriptures and of these Kanya Daan is stated to be the supreme daan. Hindu Dharma says one who is bestowed with the act of Kanya Daan or One who has the opportunity of making a Kanya Daan in his life is the beloved child of the Lord and he will never have rebirth. This explanation has been directly cited from <http://mailerindia.com/hindu/veda/index.php?hindumarriage>. Last accessed March 30, 2006.

(26) *Daijo* in Nepali means Dowry that the bride’s family gives in form of money or assets given to groom’s family during or before marriage.

This was roughly a decade back from today. I too was a teenager then, and was deeply moved by her plight. I questioned myself, “How can I be of some help to her? Could I lend her my books? Could I speak to her parents and tell them that a girl and a boy are just like your twin eyes- both equally important and precious. But how could I get this message across? Even if they would listen to what I was saying, where is the guarantee that they will understand that education is important for both a girl and a boy? How to convince them? Will they indeed keep her in school? Who would fund her studies? What about her female siblings who were facing same dilemma?” Many questions popped up at that time and I had answers to none.

My experience - Studying under the clouds of Maoist⁽²⁷⁾ threat:

Although my family readily sent me to school, I had a hard time convincing them when I wanted to enroll in University. Law and order situation in the Kathmandu valley had become terrible during the last eight plus years of Maoist guerrilla-based insurgency. Every other day there would be an announcement of Nepal *Bandh*⁽²⁸⁾, called by one or the other terrorism spreading factions. On the days of Bandhs, they don't allow any vehicle to ply on the road. ‘*Chakka Jam*’ or blocking of tires is a regular feature on *bandhs* when the Maoist affiliated goons pelt stones and torch handful of vehicles which dared to defy the *bandh* and come out on the road.

On *bandhs*, academic institutions and businesses virtually come to a stand still in absence of transportation facilities. Those who can afford, stock up provisions in advance and stay indoors. But what about those manual laborers who worked on daily wage basis to eke out a living? Will education become a priority when there isn't enough to sustain life?

Hurdles to education as I saw:

I am an Indian national living in Nepal since my birth. I have studied in Nepal and completed my graduation from there. The University where I studied and eventually worked as a Teaching Assistant was located away from the capital Kathmandu in a far flung area. That region was plagued with Maoist insurgency – thefts, murders, bomb blasts were an everyday affair in the vicinity and led to an air of insecurity.

Going to the University meant a travel of 60 Kilometers a day in difficult mountainous terrain. On the way there were several checkpoints erected by the national army. They would require us to get down from the bus each time we reached there. Army personnel on duty would do body- frisking for each one of us to ensure that we were not carrying arms and ammunitions. I would be always looked upon with suspicion, as I was a foreign national and therefore, subject to more intense scrutiny. A distance which could be easily covered in an hour and a half would take sometimes more than 3 hours – for the travel alone.

I recall a day when I had my final University exam and the day was declared a bandh overnight. Early morning as I boarded into a bus to go to the University, I was shocked to see a group of hooligans who surrounded the bus with hockey sticks in their hands and shouted slogans condemning the government. In a few minutes they burnt several tires on the road. As I struggled to breathe in the smoke filled air, I could not help but ask myself whether an exam was worth risking my life? In such a scenario who would send their children for education when their life was looming with question of life and death. It made it tougher to convince parents to send their girl child to school.

Case-let 2: Economic dependency due to lack of education

During my studies at University, a Nepalese woman guest lecturer was invited to give a talk on women and entrepreneurship. She told us that like other women in her community, she too was married very early when she had barely learnt how to write her name at school. Within a few years of her marriage, her alcoholic husband abandoned her for another woman. That was a biggest tragedy for her life- since in conservative communities of Nepal; divorces are still a taboo and have a social stigma attached to it.

(27) Maoists is the name given to faction who engage in anti government activities and disrupt law and order in the country. Maoist guerrilla insurgency or "People's War" that was launched in February of 1996 by the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-Maoist). The Maoist People's War has become a direct threat and a death-knell to the government of Nepal. This explanation is directly cited from Dr. Tiwari, C.K, Maoist insurgency in Nepal: Internal dimensions <http://www.saag.org/papers2/paper187.htm>. Last accessed April 2, 2006

(28) *Bandh* means closure. During Nepal *Bandhs* entire nation comes to a halt as vehicles are forced to keep away from road.

Unfortunately she was not educated; all she knew was how to sign her name in Nepali. She was not in a financial position to knock the doors of the court and endure lengthy legal procedures to get alimony. Helpless that she was, with young kids to feed and no societal and financial support, she began to wash dishes for a meager amount in the affluent households. Later, she went abroad as a contract laborer and eventually ended up as a housemaid. She worked diligently and saved discreetly. Because she was not educated, she got cheated by many middle men who abused her mentally and physically. But she persisted, since it was a question of a square meal and future of her children.

After a few years with her small savings, she returned back home and enrolled in a vocational course. Eventually she setup a small workshop to make buttons from natural materials. As she addressed us and unfolded her painful past, she proudly stated that, “If an uneducated woman like me can earn a living and give employment to another hundred needy women, you graduate students should definitely be able to work for the development of the country.” She said that had she been educated enough to take up a decent job, she wouldn’t have had to undergo mental and physical agony.

Education makes a world of difference:

I firmly believe that if you educate a man, you educate one individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate an entire family. As a child, I distinctly remember my mother helping me to learn the English alphabets and basic math numbers. As I progressed in school, her role got limited because however much she wanted to help me in my studies, she was not able to because of her limited schooling. Even before she could graduate, like other women of her age in the society, she was required to tie nuptials with a man chosen by her family.

Continuing education after marriage for women is unheard in my community. Women’s role is formally limited to taking care of the household and raising kids. If such a situation existed in my family, which had resources to shoulder education at least till secondary level, it made me think what happens to those girls in poor families who do not have an access to primary education?

Case-let 3: No independent identity

“Changes are needed in the legal system of the Nepalese society, where women have been indirectly treated as second grade citizen. For example, women have been legally denied rights and have problems in areas such as: a person can not get his/her citizenship based on the citizenship of his/her mother.” ⁽²⁹⁾

While I was still a final year student, I decided to work at the University to promote higher education especially for women. I come from a community where education for women is not a priority. Even before I was done with my University education, I had my parents and relatives pressurizing me to get married. However, my goals were different. I didn’t mind to stick out as sore thumb while I wished to pursue my dream of getting studying further and to work in the field of education.

After my graduation, I started to work at the University on a contract basis. I was the only Indian national working there. When I applied for Teaching Assistantship, I was told that even though after induction I might get promotion, however, I will not be given a permanent employee status because I was not a Nepalese citizen. This was a rule across all government and public sector organization in Nepal.

I was born and brought up in Nepal, but was denied a Nepalese citizenship because I was born to an Indian father though my mother was a Nepalese. The citizenship rules in Nepal clearly indicate gender bias. I would have been eligible to be a Nepalese if my father was a Nepalese, irrespective of nationality of my mother. After living in Nepal since birth and getting educated here, I feel like a Nepalese at heart but officially I am considered as a foreign national. ⁽³⁰⁾

(29) A supporting statement directly cited from Chapter 7, Nepal Population Report 2002, publication Ministry of Population and Environment <http://www.mope.gov.np/population/chapter7.php>. Last accessed March 10, 2006

(30) Although the article 11 of 2047 of Nepal’s constitution has set equal legal provisions for both men and women, citizenship law has been found discriminatory which has deprived women of citizenship rights which allows her to acquire and transfer it on the basis of her hereditary and marital status. Directly cited from <http://www.gorkhapatra.org.np/pageloader.php?file=2006/03/01/topstories/main4>. Last accessed March 19, 2006

However, this did not deter me from working in the University where I studied. I rendered my services as a teaching assistant for a period of two years amid a lot of pressure from my family to quit this job which neither had a great promising career ahead nor a sense of security. Despite that I continued to serve there in my capacity before I went for higher studies.

B. A snapshot of rural Nepalese women's life:

Everyday while commuting to University, I would see rural Nepalese women manually toiling in paddy fields near their thatched huts. Standing knee deep in the marshy lands and their infant babies tied on their backs, these young women would till the field everyday from early dawn to late in the afternoon under the scorching sun. Later in the day they cooked food, walked several kilometers to fetch water potable water from a distant well or a hand pump and carried the pots on their heads as they walked back home. What would education mean to them, when at the end of the day they would be physically exhausted doing their best to make the ends meet?

They relied on their husbands and the elder men of the house for subsistence even though they were the ones who tilled the land. The men would get drunk at night and beat their wives often for no reasons. These helpless women had no choice but to live with what they had in hand. For a girl is taught that once she gets married it is her onus to keep her in laws happy. So she should keep quiet and tolerate to maintain peace at home. If she raises her voice against them, she is told that it would bring shame to her parents and family.

I wondered how I could help improve their lives- would they understand what education was and how it could elevate their status in the society? This thought process motivated me to help local women understand the importance of education and to build a confidence in them that they were also at par with men.

C. How to improve the status quo?

In the following section I have presented my ideas which I would like to implement along with my peers to address gender equality and lack of accessibility to education for women.

1. My ideas: Build their capacity to direct their own destiny

Initiating the project, beginning from the grass-root: With my peers I would like to develop the following community based programs on the theme of '**Help them to help themselves**' to enhance local participation and responsiveness. We ⁽³¹⁾ will emphasize on solving the community problems with locally available resources. Also, we will convince the women from lower economic strata that they themselves are the sources of their empowerment.

1.1 Change is met by resistance: How to get their buy-in?

Getting their buy-in would be very critical: these women want food for the family first, before getting literacy training. Following the Maslow's hierarchy of needs ⁽³²⁾ concept, it is necessary to first fulfill their primary needs before explaining them importance of education and gender development. We will adopt a multi pronged approach wherein education and additional income generation will be simultaneously taken care of.

1.2 Walk the talk:

A mother is a child's first teacher, and she has an important and influential role to play in his/her formative years- in this light, education for woman becomes even more significant as she is not only a parent but also a mentor to her child. Sensitizing women about gender equilibrium is necessary because unless women understand that both a son and daughter are equally capable and thus should be given equal opportunities, the social status of girl child and consequently that of a woman can never be elevated in the society. We will facilitate mothers of young girls appreciate this fact by presenting ourselves as real life examples.

(30) We refers to me and my peers working together

(31) Reference <http://www.netmba.com/mgmt/ob/motivation/maslow/>. Last accessed April 2, 2006

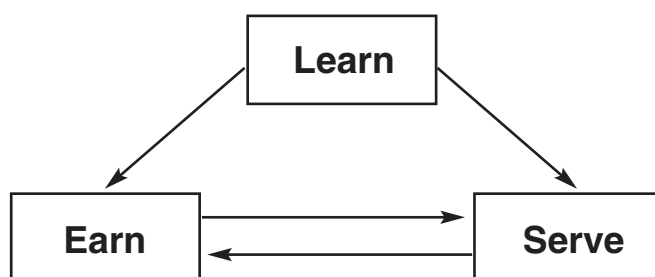
1.3 Show them a big picture:

We will form local community cooperation teams with participation of rural women to give them a voice. Women feel comfortable interacting with women and more often than not get easily influenced by them. Therefore, if we can persuade urban Nepalese women to share their experiences with them as a part of charity program, it will make rural women see where education can take them. This will make them envision that how their own lives will change if they get educated.

2. ‘Learn, Earn and Serve’:⁽³³⁾

In a society where females are generally given more duties and less freedom and opportunities than their male peers, increasing the availability of education and literacy for women and girls of all ages is a vital step forward⁽³⁴⁾.

This project will be aimed at starting education at an early age for young girls, making them capable to earn their own living and then encouraging them to volunteer to serve the community.



‘Learn, Earn, and Serve’

2.1 Let woman be woman’s best friend: Partnering for progress

In the initial phase of the project, we will ‘adopt’ a girl child each (with the consent of their parents) from our localities and give her basic education. This way they will not feel out of place when they go to school (because of lack of guidance from parents and inability to cope up with studies in the beginning years, many girls tend to drop out of the school).

This model can be gradually extended by inviting the educated women volunteers to teach an underprivileged girl in their spare time (for example during weekends). Many deprived women work as day house maids in affluent households and stay in the slum areas. The first step of education can begin from there- the owners of these households can be tapped to educate the young daughters of their maids who often accompany their mothers at work. These homeowners will be responsible for the learning progress of their ‘wards’.

2.2 Why will educated women do it?

Many educated women have a desire to reach out to needy and help them, but most of them do not know how they can do so. By coming forward to teach, they will get an avenue to utilize their skills by imparting knowledge to younger generation. This will indeed give these ‘teachers’ a sense of accomplishment as they contribute to a noble cause. Community service also provides psychic income and a greater sense of fulfillment.⁽³⁵⁾ Due recognition can be accorded to such volunteers on social occasions as an appreciation for their efforts.

(33) The concept of this model has been derived from Social Enterprise series No 1 Business Leaders and Non Profits by James A. Austin from <http://www.hbs.edu/socialenterprise/pdf/SE1BusinessLeadersandNonprofits.pdf> . Last accessed March 19, 2006

(34) Directly cited from http://www.etc-nepal.org/womens_literacy.php. Last accessed March 9, 2006

(35) Cited from Social Enterprise series No 2 Making Business Sense of Community Service by James A. Austin, from <http://www.hbs.edu/socialenterprise/pdf/SE2MakingBusinessSense.pdf>. Last accessed March 19, 2006

2.3 Marketing for a cause:

Once the child shows a satisfactory level of performance, she can be sent to nearby local school and that's when the requirement of funds comes. We will participate in fund raising programs targeted at relatively rich local entrepreneurs. By presenting facts and figures about the dismal state of women's education and women's role in development, we will make an appeal to them to support education for the girls from low income families.

By engaging into 'social marketing'⁽³⁶⁾ we will articulate and make public the voice of these disadvantaged women in the international arena to advocate for equality in women's right.

2.4 Role reversal- Mothers learn from daughters:

Just like, these days, I teach my mother how to use a computer, eventually these young scholars can also teach their mothers as they learn. Mothers will be comfortable learning from their daughters and this will reinforce in their minds that daughters' can be a source of learning too. This will give young women a sense of accomplishment, validation, and increases their self-confidence as they help their mothers learn. Once these young girls get educated, we will encourage them to serve by educating other women. At the same time they can utilize their education to create employment opportunities. This explains the proposed 'learn, earn and serve' model.

3. Promoting entrepreneurship among women:

We will seek help of enterprising women to foster a culture of entrepreneurship among the rural women. By inviting skilled women volunteers to conduct workshop to teach rural women vocational skills like making handicrafts from locally available materials (like bamboo), we can provide them with an opportunity to generate sources of earnings. If women can learn how to get extra income by using the readily available resources, it will not only boost their morale but also reduce their dependence on the men folk for daily subsistence.

Also rural women can use their cooking skills to prepare snacks at home and sell it in the local market. As an additional economic activity this will reduce their dependability on agriculture alone.

4. Communication matters -Using technology to bridge gender gap

Technology can also be used to bring attitudinal changes about gender. For example, most of the rural people listen to radio because they can listen and understand the local language. Programs about role of women in society, like why should one give equal opportunity to son and daughter can be aired in local language (Nepali) via radio channels. Women who have made a mark for themselves in the community development can be roped in to lend credibility to these programs. Such radio shows can be designed in a conversation style involving both men and women. These broadcasts will aid in bringing about a change in mindset of the people and sensitize them about gender issues.

4.1 Showing them the direction - One step at a time:

Information Communication Technology (ICT) can help empower women by being a source of earnings for them. ICT can provide a platform to sell their indigenous skills to a wider audience and customers. One way that could be leveraged at the local level is ICT paired to micro lending. In Nepal, community development programs still haven't fully taken advantage of the opportunity to provide both money to foster activities and the channels, via ICT, to market goods and services produced from those activities. Crafts and tourism, especially the growing area of eco-tourism, are two types of activities that can benefit.⁽³⁷⁾ By working in partnership with the private sector we will aim to extend the reach and usage of ICT.

ICT can be also be used to disseminate information about women's rights. Having access to knowledge of how a country's social system operates, for example, women would know what their rights are. If a woman is abandoned by her husband, she might be eligible for alimony payments. But without knowing how the system works she cannot access her rights. Technology-enabled Non Government Organizations can play a role here by acting as efficient providers of that information and a link between the system and the citizen.⁽³⁸⁾

(36) This term has been cited from How Marketing Can Reduce Worldwide Poverty by Martha Lagace, Senior Editor, HBS Working Knowledge from <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/item.jhtml?id=2702&t=marketing>. Last accessed March 18, 2006

(37) Based on insights from Information technology and poverty alleviation By Gabriel Accascina cited from <http://www.fao.org/sd/CDdirect/CDre0055h.htm>. Last accessed March 18, 2006

(38) Ibid

D. Conclusion:

A velvet graduation in women's present status can only be achieved if everyone acknowledges that women are capable enough to take on responsibilities in the outer world. The need is to create conducive environment which promotes equal participation of women along with men in the household and also in economic activities. This will go a long way in uprooting gender disparity in the rural communities.

Mainstreaming of gender issues and gender sensitization is necessary because its implementation depends primarily on human attitudes. Since gender bias is so ingrained in social attitudes, it is necessary to sensitize people to various visible and invisible indicators of it.⁽³⁹⁾ It is clear that no education or communication will be successful without a large- scale change in women's societal position.⁽⁴⁰⁾ The support of international intermediaries to eradicate gender-biased policies and to make amendment in existing discriminatory laws with will be an important step towards achieving a gender balance.

(39) Directly cited from http://www.adb.org/Documents/Books/Country_Briefing_Papers/Women_in_Nepal/chap_08.pdf . Last accessed March 19, 2006

(40) Directly cited from http://www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user_upload/esd/documents/situational_analysis.pdf. Last accessed March 26, 2006

Second Prize

Empowering the Ghanaian Youth Towards Financial Independence.

Jefferson Agbai



*Second prize winner Jefferson Agbai addresses the audience at the ABCDE Conference
May 29, 2006, Tokyo, Japan*

As a passionate individual, I have been involved in several community empowerment initiatives spanning leadership enhancement, entrepreneurship and youth empowerment. However, one experience that I find worth reporting here is my work with the Executive Investment Club (EIC)-a grassroots community-based economic and financial literacy program, which was initiated by me about four years ago.

It is a known fact that one of the major obstacles confronting communities in developing economies is low investment stemming in part from low savings. For instance, the 2005 ECA report show that, only 11 out of the 50 countries saw their savings rate outpacing the already mediocre average savings rate of 21.1% of GDP within the Africa region during 2000-02. Today, the future security of many local communities in Africa and elsewhere in the developing world is threatened by a lack of social security as a result of low or no savings plans. In my home country Ghana, there are serious failures in the nation's pension scheme. Currently, the number of active contributors to the state pension scheme is estimated at just 880,000(out of a population of 20 million) with less than 5% of these coming from the informal sector (Frimpong, 2005). Though many will argue that such low savings is due to low incomes I tend to agree with Hernando de Soto, who argues that *"Most of the poor already have the assets they need...The value of savings among the poor is, in fact, immense: forty times all the foreign aid received throughout the world since 1945"*.

The above disturbing observations were somehow dispelled in the form of an eye opener, a book by two renowned writers: Robert T. Kiyosaki and Sharon L. Lechter-"Rich Dad, Poor Dad - What the rich teach their kids about money that the poor and middle class do not". The insights I got from the book set me thinking of how I could solve the problem of inadequate financial security for myself and my entire community. It has taken a long time for me to realize that I need to look from within, we need to look from within..... and that is how my story begins of the impact I made by initiating a community-based financial and economic literacy program with my peers on the University of Ghana campus.

ABOUT OUR PROGRAM

On the 29th of September 2002, twenty (20) young university students in their first and second years who bought my vision of taking our financial future into their own hands appended their signatures to a document making them members of **The Executive Investment Club (EIC)**. The primary purpose of EIC (borrowed from National Association of Investors Corporation -NAIC) was, and still is to "invest the assets of the club solely in stocks, bonds, treasury bills and other securities for the education and benefit of its members".

In line with the program's goal of empowering members to understand the rudiments of investing, an education committee was tasked with preparing educational schedules for our monthly programs. These programs featured analysts from investment banks who led discussions on relevant topics in investment and financial markets. These were attempts to enable us rationally and scientifically evaluate investment options based on fact and statistics, not just based on speculation, whims and emotions. We subsequently set up a small library of business journals and financial literature for members to access to continually update them on investment.

In a bid to nurture the culture of regular investment, the club required each member to make regular monthly investment subscriptions of ₵10,000 (\$1.08). As part of the empowerment process and central to it, the club adopted a buddy system where members were put into peer groups each to conduct research together and later report findings to the group. Central to the knowledge acquisition process, decisions about what investments to buy or sell were made democratically by members at meetings.

OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

I will evaluate our performance with regards to our stated objectives as enshrined in our club constitution:

1. Education

With regards to Education our efforts have paid-off. The rationale of our education programs was first, to teach that regarding financial success, it is not so much how much you earn; it is how much you keep. And secondly, the motive was to show all members that one could lose all his/her money, but not the financial education the member wields. This means that if we learn the timeless principles of investing and wealth creation, we can always make more money, with or without the club. It was refreshing to hear students of history and biology

debate and use terms like P/E ratio, earnings, stock index, and market capitalization during our brainstorming market review sessions. Education has been the bedrock of EIC-not just making money. Like Benjamin Franklin we believe that “*An investment in Education pays the best interest*”. Compared to 4 years ago when I knew nothing about financial markets, I am now the most preferred by colleagues and have been able to earn a stockbroker’s certificate from The Ghana Stock Exchange (GSE) whilst even in my third year. Personally, I have addressed a kaleidoscope of audiences ranging from youth groups, religious bodies, business school students, nurses, and other organized groups. After blazing the trail, I could readily count about 25 fledgling investment clubs on my university campus at the time I completed my studies last May 2005.

2. Be involved in Learn-by-doing Investment

As an integral aspect of the learn-by-doing investment, we organized an industrial tour of the Ghana Stock Exchange to witness on-going floor trading. Words cannot capture the impression this adventure made on our hearts and minds as we saw for the first time how our decisions translated into reality on the floor of the Exchange. It is amazing how much some of us have learnt about law, banking, finance and investment over the last few years- things that are essential to life but no one teaches the ‘lay man’ in school. Also, some members have had the opportunity to attend the Annual General Meetings of some of the companies in which we have invested. Whilst my investment club has educated us on investing and economics, an ambient environment has been created where we have nurtured and developed indispensable personal qualities like risk-taking, initiative taking, self-confidence, networking, opportunity seeking and entrepreneurship.

3. Building an Investment culture

Indeed, members of the program have not only become ardent and adept investors but have also personally tutored others in their communities as well as physically taking them to stock brokerage firms to start their personal savings plans. As Founder & President, I have been elated and enthused about this, the most exhilarating part being that members have imbibed the investment culture to the extent of building their personal life long portfolios/savings plans. I believe that this program is playing an integral role in redeeming my community from financial insecurity because, for each of these fruits (members of EIC) is an inherent tree which will bear other fruits, which will also grow into trees and still bear more fruits... until we have a whole forest.

4. Simultaneously educate each other and have fun

To break the monotony of procedures as well as ensure continued interest in the program, we sometimes served doughnuts and drinks at some of our monthly meetings. These were monies got from special contributions into our club maintenance account as well as fines for lateness and defaults on monthly payments to the club. At other times, some members teased each other. The fun components of our meetings made members not even realize that a learning process was on going.

MEASURING OUR IMPACT

After our first deposit collection of \$140 (¢1m) in September 2002, we placed a unit value in the club at ¢500 over which the ¢1m was divided. The unit value acts as an index, which tracks the financial performance of our investments. At the end of our first financial year, a unit value in the club was ¢753.35, representing an annual appreciation of **50.67%**. Compared to our first financial year -September 2003 when the value of the club stood at **\$1,454** our assets surged by 253.21% to almost **\$5,000** as at the end of 2nd financial year. Due to the power of compounding, our unit value appreciated by **115.03%** to close our second financial year at **¢1620** per unit, representing an appreciation of 224% since inception of EIC. Comparative analysis show that our appreciation of **115.03%** in our second year had outpaced that of the pound (**11.04%**), US dollar (**3.5%**), Euro (**9.85%**) and Government’s medium term debt instrument, (**GGILBS 49.98%** since club inception). For the second time in a row, our fund outperformed foreign currencies. We also outpaced the inflation rate (12.6%) and even outperformed Ghana’s first mutual fund –EPACK (105.34%) during our 2nd year.

Total profits from our investments in our second year compared to the previous soared by over 500% with over 70% of gains coming from our stocks and funds portfolio. I considered this as a landmark achievement from

students with demanding academic schedules who knew little about Investments. However, I will be quick to point out that investment per se is not a rosy venture because since the beginning of last year, we have been making losses on some of our investments. As fig. 1 & 2 below indicates, our value declined by **-13%** to a portfolio value of **\$4,622** as at our 3rd financial year. Even with this, we still did beat the stock market return of **-30%**. Yet we have kept on because like Robert Kiyosaki argues “*Money is a form of power. But what is more important is financial education. Money comes and money goes, but if you have the education about how money works, you gain power over it and can begin building wealth.*”

Comparative Analysis

Investment	Sept. 2003	Sept.2004	Sept.2005
US dollar	6.96%	3.50%	0.40%
Euro	26.87%	9.80%	-32.70%
EIC unit value	50.67%	115.03%	-16.70%
Epack	95.20%	105.34%	-2.09%
GSE Index	101.68%	141.31%	-30.20%
GGILBS	32.30%	17.60%	19.90%

Fig. 1

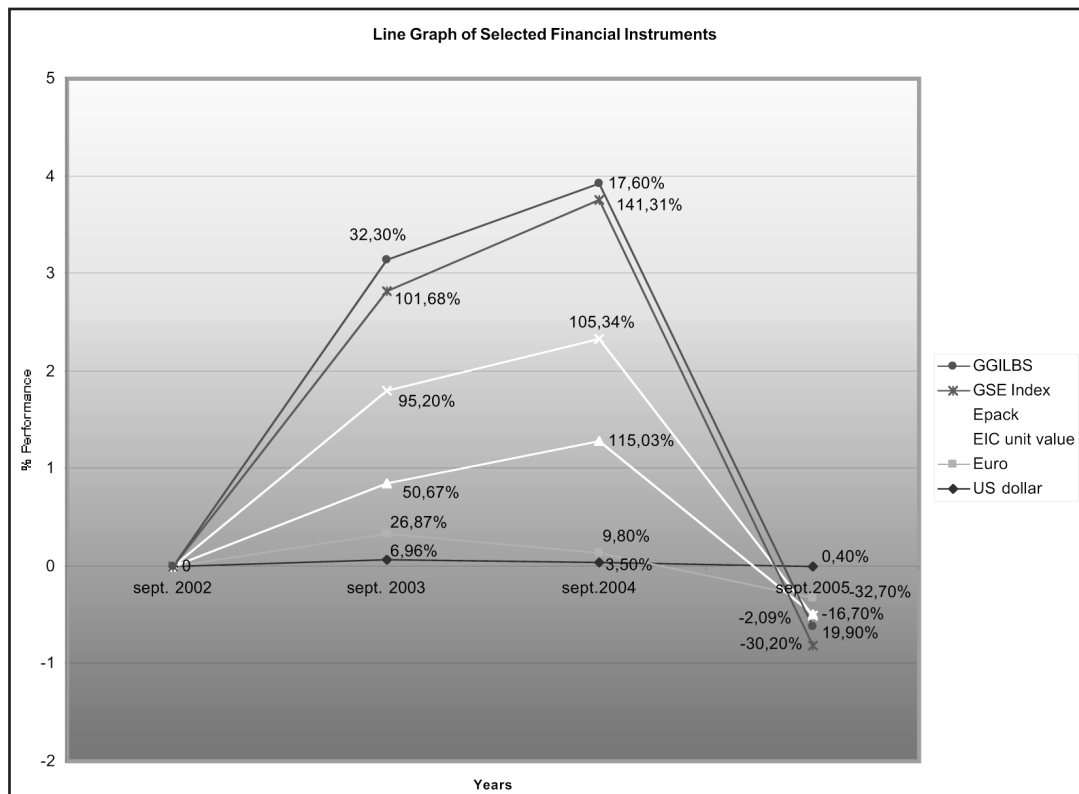


Fig. 2

The mission and vision of EIC, is to imbue into people from all walks of life, an investment culture- It's never too late. Many individuals will make up many communities, many towns, many cities, many countries.....and then all of mankind. Sounds daunting but it can be real.

INNOVATIVE FEATURES OF OUR PROGRAM

The phenomenon of pooling together funds for mutual gain is not new in Ghana. Many local communities still run an informal indigenous savings scheme or simply 'susu' in Ghanaian parlance. Practiced mainly among women, 'susu' involves people agreeing to pay regular financial contributions to a collector who typically moves around households and gets a 'cut' for collecting and keeping the monies. A major feature of the 'susu' is that they are consumer-oriented- thus monies are lumped together and each participating individual gets his/her turn to receive the monies collected over a period. This demonstrates that such savings mechanisms have already existed. In its report on "Progress Against Poverty" (1998) the UNDP report that showed that the 'susu' scheme exists in other forms in countries like Guinea, Senegal, Burkina Faso and Benin. What I have done here with others through my investment program represents a massive transformation and improvement of an indigenous practice in local communities in Ghana and the rest of Africa. Thus there are several innovative features of our investment club which makes it superior to other traditional investment programs and permit me to elaborate further.

First, unlike the 'susu' where monies collected are kept with people ceding control to the collector, things are different with my investment club. Our club is designed for medium to long-term wealth creation and educates individuals on the art of investing. Emanating from the above point is that by educating people on investment, we help to educate the Ghanaian populace as a whole. This is important because the issue of financial security has traditionally being perceived as the domain of the wealthy and finance experts. With the lessons my members are receiving from the program, they can always educate others and form clubs wherever they find themselves.

Another salient feature is the fun aspect. The traditional savings schemes have been purely economic/finance based. The fun component of my investment club has fostered more social cohesion and makes one to imbibe lessons in a manner that makes learning effortless.

I strongly believe that the concepts and approach of an investment club have an enormous potential for institutionalizing grassroots financial literacy and harnessing informal sector financial savings for development in many communities in Africa. This is because, by refining a concept communities are already used to, we rather enhance their capacity to empower themselves and solve their own problems. The Vice President of the World Bank Institute, Frannie Leautier (2004), writes that, "...the enhancement of indigenous capacity is a key to the empowerment of local communities and their effective participation in the development process. People are better able to adopt new ideas when they can be seen in the context of existing practices and ways of doing". The above even support the observation by Benjamin Mkapa (2004), President of Tanzania who argues that, "when building on indigenous knowledge, ownership does not even arise as an issue". He believes, "studying, understanding and building on the knowledge of communities will substantially reduce the risk of failures of the development approach..."

IMPROVING OUR IMPACT

Whilst our program has made significant impact on the lives of the members, its impact could even be higher if it is scaled up to cover a lot of people. We have already realised this, and hence have started other programs aimed at scaling up the concept to reach a wider population. An example is Ghana Investors League (GIL) which has been established by the leaders of existing investment clubs with my good self as Chairman. Serving as internal change agents, we have come together as a strong voice of advocacy for the program "to establish clubs among churches, market women, religious groups, schools, colleges and the traditionally excluded groups. Our vision is "to build a nation of educated investors". As a credible umbrella body, we have also instituted mechanisms to protect the integrity of our member clubs and as well as reduce their vulnerability from exploitation and scams. So far our modest efforts have resulted in about 50 investment clubs within the umbrella body.

Another program that GIL is jointly implementing with an Investment Bank is a Schools and Colleges' Investment Competition Program (SCICP). With a total of 35 investment clubs (15 from high schools and 20 from the tertiary sector), SCICP involves giving these students an imaginary cash to invest in the stock market. The Clubs selected in each category will then compete for the best prize in stock selection and investment management. Special awards (of \$1000 as 1st prize; \$800 as 2nd prize; \$500 as 3rd prize) will be given to 3 top

schools/institutions in each category whose investment clubs make the highest return on their portfolio on yearly basis.

Apart from GIL, my club (EIC) has also signed an MOU with another Investment Bank to launch a student-based Mutual Fund known as Campus Mutual Fund (CMF). CMF is focused mainly on students in all the thirty-six tertiary institutions in my country. I led my club members to draft the business plan and assisted in finalizing the legal documentation with Investment Lawyers. The license to launch and operate this fund is yet to be granted by the Securities & Exchange Commission. Two members from EIC including myself will sit on the five-member Board.

Whilst the formation of GIL and other investment spreads have helped to improve the impact of the program, there are still some gaps that could be filled in order to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the program.

It will be misleading to assert that any poor economy that succeeds in boosting savings levels by creating a thousand investment clubs will turnaround in a year or two. Apart from the fact that, results will be achieved in the medium to long-term even on the individual level, many economies seem ill prepared to derive these benefits. Thus, many economies in their present form suffer from growth-impeding structural deficiencies (see for instance Heston and Summers 1991; Mensah 2004; Mankiw 1997).

One might even ask whether there exist institutional capacities for these kinds of investments in many LDC's. This question is valid because apart from South Africa with a well developed capital market, others like The Gambia, Zambia and Swaziland have teething capital markets, few equity listings or even no trading platforms like a Stock Exchange (ibid). Thus, some crucial steps are necessary.

Macroeconomic stability is required since to guarantee predictability and encourage savings. This should be anchored by appropriate regulatory and legal systems to protect and deepen investor confidence in financial markets. Also, governments and municipal authorities should use the financial market to raise bonds to finance development projects. As privatization has become mainstream, divestiture of state corporations must be done through share flotations on the stock exchange.

Yet, I remain convinced that the benefits of mobilizing these "hidden savings" can be obtained by these economies because the required structural and policy reforms to enhance their situation are available from other countries' experience, less costly and within their behest unlike FDI's which tend to be unreliable.

The evidence in support of promoting domestic savings has been well researched and documented by 2 prominent economists, Sara Zervos and Ross Levin. Their study over the period 1976 and 1993 on 47 economies showed that, mobilizing domestic savings is essential for capital formation and capacity expansion without which a country's growth cannot be sustained. This was even after adjusting for factors like education, political stability, and initial level of income. The experience of some South American and Asian countries suggest that domestic savings is key to avoiding financial crises and total collapse of the growth process.

HOW OTHER YOUTH CAN REPLICATE OUR PROGRAM

From my experience in running this program, I will suggest three (3) tripod fundamental pillars any club should possess to have its bases covered:

- **Mission/Vision oriented:** To run an investment club, one has to begin with the end in mind. Leaders have to ensure that each potential member understands and shares the vision before joining the group and also that the vision/mission is re-cast regularly during meetings.
- **Principle-Centered:** Principles are timeless truths and fundamental laws governing the existence of everything in this world. Though I have shared a lot of personal experience regarding how I steered the affairs of my club, it is important to assert that principles are not practices. What is important is learning the underlying principle in each situation and adapting it for one's own context. A principle we adopted from NAIC was to invest regularly as well as for the long term.
- **Knowledge-Based:** Because money is quite an emotional subject, it is important investment decisions in the group be based on studies and research conducted by members. That way one can prevent the venture from becoming like gambling. This makes the monthly education program for your club a MUST.

Apart from the above pillars, I will also enumerate some guidelines that other youth should be mindful of in replicating our methodology:

Selecting members

In selecting members to start this program, it is imperative that one finds a group of people who are like-minded. From my experience, I see the greatest challenge to be getting everybody to do his/her part of the research in time for every month's meeting. Moreover, since people naturally get excited about making money, paradigm shifting is necessary for quick-money-minded individuals to understand that this venture is for the long haul.

Getting word around

Send a word to prospective members. In my case, I visited each of the potential members and found it as one good way of getting word around easily. After I had talked to two or three friends who also talked to two or three other friends, I got an overloaded list very quickly.

Partnership Agreement/Constitution

Since any investment should be one of those that succeed, it is important that a partnership agreement be adopted, signed and documented. Commitment on paper is vital for present comfort and future reference.

Name

The club should choose a name that befits the group; one that inspires and embodies what the group corporately envisions.

Modus Operandi

The group may adopt guidelines by detailing its day-to-day operations, which may be reviewed after six months of actual experience in handling the club.

Management

Depending on the adopted modus operandi, respective officers must be elected. For EIC, we later on modified our management style into 4 committees that had each member belonging to one. That way, we were able to tap everybody's input for running the club.

Membership Responsibility

The election of officers, it should be emphasized, is in no way an act of shifting the burden of 'running' the investment club on some 'experts'. Thus discuss the responsibility of each member to the club. During the first few months especially, members must be prepared to spend 3-4 hours a month on where to find information and how to search and interpret findings.

Monthly deposits

It is important that the matter of monthly capital contributions be discussed and a motion passed. While it is not a must, it has been found to be a good practice for everyone to make the same deposit in the club for about the first year. After that, some members may wish to vary their deposits and some members may wish to withdraw a part of their funds. It is a good thing to agree that no withdrawals can be made within the first year or two of membership. In the case of my club, it did provide a solid foundation for the club's take off.

Selecting a Broker

A stockbroker will execute buy/sell orders on behalf of the club. Though some members already might know such investment banks, going through the process puts everyone else on an equal footing and at peace. For my club, we also maintained a finance team kept accurate details of all financial transactions.

Domination

It is important that nobody is made to feel an insignificant part of the club. Very soon, that member may count his participation as unimportant and become withdrawn-and sometimes they are right because business goes on as usual. To prevent this from cropping up, it is strongly suggested in some circles that no individual should be

allowed to own more than 30% of the club's assets. Since knowledge is power, it is important that those who talk 'too much' be brought to moderation and other tiny voices encouraged to speak their minds too.

Leadership

Strong leadership is important. John Maxwell will tell you- 'Everything rises and falls with leadership'. No matter what kinds of tendencies are displayed by the membership of a club, the leadership is ultimately responsible for keeping it afloat.

CONCLUSION

Based on my belief that even the poor could save, I initiated EIC among my peers in my community. This program does not only mobilize funds (as is the case of other traditional savings mechanisms) but more so, it educates people on the art of investing and empowers them on wealth creation. Despite the fact that the program started with a group of poor university students, the club has made significant achievements. The success story of my investment club shows that with good savings and investment plans, even people earning low incomes could do some savings and investments for their future. What is needed therefore is the need to educate people about these community-based literacy programs and scaling them up to the national level. Such a move will pay, as this will go a long way to institutionalize grassroots financial literacy and mobilize the large informal sector financial savings to catalyze development instead of solely depending on foreign funds. Apart from this, it will enable communities and nations build a financially self supporting future.

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Third Prize

“Putting Young People Together”, an Italo-Slovene Interregional Project
and the involvement of young generations in solving community conflicts

Nicola Limodio



*Third prize winner Nicola Limodio makes his point
May 29, 2006, Tokyo, Japan*

ABSTRACT

This paper is focused on how young people can develop Projects contributing to the solution of tensions between conflicting communities. Its inspiration comes out of a still ongoing Project that my friends, my College and I have created and developed, with the clear aim of smoothing out the historic and perpetuated conflicts existing between the Slovene and Italian communities, on the sensitive cross-border area between Italy and Slovenia in the Region Venezia-Giulia. The nature of this conflict has remote historic origins and the last fifty years have seen enormous atrocities on both sides. It seemed to me unbelievable that the tension level was still so high among people, especially young people, in spite of the work of prestigious international organizations promoting cooperation, such as the United Nations and the World Bank. The structure of this paper analyses the development of our Interregional-Project, sparked from my personal experience and described with a factual background. Then it proceeds including its concrete process of organization, integrated with its origins and its progressive implementation. This project was based on bottom-up strategies, working on the most receptive elements of a community, capable of making the difference: young people. It focused its methodological development on the individual involvement instrument, described by using examples of our real experiences.

By "Putting Young People Together" and spreading consciousness and awareness that conflicts can be surmounted, we aimed to spark a virtuous-circle, able to dismantle a conflict lasting from more than two centuries. A section deals specifically with the construction of the proper instruments of action, presenting quite characteristically the structure of the different parts of our Project and its progressive implementation. This paper proposes an alternative way of structuring Projects, by strengthening the links with the addressees. The measurement of the results has been difficult, however its environmental impact has been great and throughout the paper I tried to communicate the enthusiasm generated from our genuine and, sometimes, ingenuous work. It would be extremely gratifying, if this Project could be successfully replicated in order to solve other conflicts existing in other difficult areas. Our community would achieve its ambitious aim of making the difference, starting from minor situations. In order to suggest how to recreate a success, the last part of the paper deals with the structural and methodological improvements and suggestions on what should be maintained and what should be adapted according to the different scenarios.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 A short Historic background

The cross-border area between Italy and Slovenia presents a very high level of tension under the social and political aspect. This existing latent conflict becomes particularly considerable and sensitive when, it is taken into account that this area represents the melting-pot of two of the main European ethnic communities: the Latin and the Slavic ones.

During the Fascist time, the region Venezia-Giulia, that geographically encompasses both the current Italian and Slovene region, saw one of the most brutal aspects of the Mussolini's dictatorship. The existence of a Slavic ethnic community was denied by the regime and a tremendous policy of repression was activated through the action of both the "black-shirted squads" and the military forces. This fierce and oppressive policy was carried over through a series of extraordinary powerful measures, attacking the Slovene community by all means: hurting the Slovene body, by adopting tortures and persecutions, and the cultural and social Slovene heart, through measures such as the ban on teaching the Slovene language, the progressive dismantling of the Slavic scholastic system and the "Forced Italianization Process".⁽⁴¹⁾

This series of strong initiatives harmed seriously the already unstable relationships between the Italian and Slovene community. The end of the war did not help to solve this hard problems: in 1945 the Venezia-Giulia was almost entirely occupied by the Red Army, except Trieste, that on the 2/05/1945 welcomed the entrance of the New-zelander troops.

(41) With this term, it is generally meant the translation of all names, surnames and cities from the Slovene original word to a new Italianized version

Thus this area, exasperated by the historic conflict and the fascist actions, became once again a point of tension: a Cold War Issue. The radicalization of the conflict was extremely rapid. The Yugoslavs had won the war, whereas the Italians came out of the war as disastrous losers and oppressors of an entire population. In addition, the Yugoslavs were on the Communist Moscow-centric side⁽⁴²⁾, whereas the Italians⁽⁴³⁾ were included into the Western World.

The hard tension endured for a long time by a population over the other, exploded at the end of the Second World War. In fact, from the end of 1945 onward the same level of atrocities and crimes were committed on the other side: the old Fascist supporters and even anti-fascist political activists were persecuted, altogether with civil servants, business men and even innocent children. The name evoking this period is "Fojbe"⁽⁴⁵⁾, because "Fascists are scared when they hear the word Fojbe"⁽⁴⁴⁾, this was the sad announcement of a Slovene newspaper, that as early as 1944 already reported the very next series of criminal actions.

The solution that the Powers took for this Cold War issue was to divide the Venezia-Giulia into two territories: giving back the city of Trieste to Italy and more than 70% of the region to the new Yugoslavian Republic. This meant not just a new further split between the communities, a geographic one at this time, but also the disregard of the noble principle of self-determination, and thus an enormous unbalance between Slovene living now in Italy and Italians living now in Yugoslavia. This was mainly caused by the mingling of the population over this Region. It did not exist a neat border line between the Italian and the Slovene part, this represented one of the main obstacles in finding an acceptable solution for the division of this region.

1.2 Personal Involvement, reasons and reactions

In 2003 I participated to the selections for a two-year full scholarship program at the United World College of the Adriatic, one of the ten United World Colleges existing over the five continents. After having passed all the required selection processes, I was awarded with a full scholarship and by the end of August 2003 I started my new experience in this fantastic reality.

The College is located in the Italian Region of Venezia-Giulia; the small village is called Duino, 5 kilometres far from Trieste and 2 from the Italo-Slovene border. Duino is a small historic village in the north-east of Italy, inhabited both by Italian and Slovene-speaking people. Traces of the fruitful intermingling of these cultural roots are to be found in the faces of the people, in their dialects, their architect, their food, their popular traditions. Only two kilometres distant from the College ran one of the most divisive frontiers in Europe, the border with the former Yugoslavia. This area had already been devastated by two world wars and was the scene of recent conflict which had led to the creation of the Republic of Slovenia after the break-up of the former Federal Republic. Thus the ideals of international living and cooperation which are the basis of the philosophy of the United World Colleges could not have found a better home for their realisation.

When I arrived there for the first time, I had never heard or read much about the existence of tensions between the Italian and Slovene communities. Week by week, as I started living in Trieste and participating to the College activity program, especially the social service and charity work ones, I begun to realize the sad evidence of this situation. One of the first occasions, that allowed me to realize what the grim reality was, happened on a dull November day in which I was doing my Social Service activity in a rest home, together with my College friends. Our Activity was called "Band Service" and consisted in organizing a kind of party with music and sketches either in rest homes or centres for handicapped people. During that activity my sole personal aim was to offer either a song, a chat, a smile or a different afternoon to the suffering inhabitants of those structures.

On that day, I learnt what changed profoundly my way of looking at the world, waking up my deepest feelings. My friends and I were giving our "show" as usually and as usually getting the enthusiastic attention from the

(42) Though in 1948 the Yugo-Soviet split determined a fundamental shift in the alliance systems, during the period 1945-1947 the "Red Alliance" looked inexorably permanent.

(43) Thank both to the Yalta decisions and to a discussed election, that saw in 1948 the Christian Democratic Coalition led by Alcide De Gasperi winning over the Communists, consequently accepting a pro-American approach. Even though the results of the election were strongly influenced both by the Church and the American propaganda.

(44) Fojbe are particular regional Karstic caves, that over this period were filled with the bodies of tortured and then murdered people

(45) From the newspaper "Partizanski Dnevnik", 18 December 1944.

audience. During a pause, I started to chat with the "old guys", noticing that not all of them spoke Italian as their mother-tongue. By chatting with an old and cute lady, Jasna, I asked her about the rest home, whether there were Slovene as well as Italians. Her reply left me speechless: "This is a public rest home for Slovene people living in Italy. We all are not Italians and our culture is not yours". First, I got impressed by the rough argument she spoke out, I completely ignored the nature of that division among "rest home for Italians" and "rest home for Slovene".

At the very beginning it almost seemed to me bizarre that there were rest homes for different ethnic communities living in a same country, I thought it was one of the usual and funny Italian initiatives. Then, after having spent some time studying and attempting to understand the grim reality of the problem, thanks to precious history books and some good friends, I understood the sensitivity and sadness of that measure. Nevertheless I was sure that those measures were necessary just for old people, who lived and suffered from the ethnic conflict explosion long ago. By contrast, I was making a mistake once again. Indeed the tensions between the two young people communities were as strong, unless even stronger and I chanced more than once to read on the regional newspapers about violent clashes between Italian and Slovene teen-agers or to live some situations that made my blood run cold⁽⁴⁶⁾. It may be enough to reflect on the issue of Gorizia, a city on the border line between Italy and Slovenia, considered to be the "Italian Berlin", because during the Cold War, it was divided by half between Italy and Slovenia with the construction of a wall and divided till the 01/05/2005. Nevertheless, despite the opening of the frontier posts, due to the joining of Slovenia to the European Union, and the reiterated appeals of the President of the Italian Republic, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, and the President of the Slovene Republic, Janez Drnovsek; the reunification process of the last Cold War "hot spot" seems to be going to fail sensationally.⁽⁴⁷⁾

It seemed to me unbelievable that in spite of the last sixty years of increasing international cooperation and socio-economic integration, under the coordination of prestigious institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank and many other equally important ones; two communities could still present such undesirable and difficult reality.

1.3 Action is the key to make the real difference

My reaction to the existing situation made me reflect over the United World College mission statement, that from that moment onward became for me an essential source of inspiration: "Through international education, experience and community service, United World Colleges enable young people to become responsible citizens, politically and environmentally aware, and committed to the ideals of peace and justice, understanding and cooperation, and the implementation of these ideals through action and personal example⁽⁴⁸⁾. I felt to belong to such a profound and descriptive statement and, furthermore, I was so lucky to belong to a community based on the principles of peace, cooperation and international understanding; I could not waste that opportunity to make "the real difference", I had to share my ideals with my friends and from my College to help the spread of these ideals in the surrounding Regions, so unpredictably needy. I understood the urgent need for peace and at the same time I realised that it was essential to offer a tangible evidence of international understanding and tolerance, and that such noble principles can be concretely applied in the everyday life. As a responsible world citizen I felt the moral and personal responsibility to take action to make the real difference.

Chapter Two

"Putting Young People Together"

My idea of doing "something concrete" to spread the ideals of peace, tolerance and understanding in Venezia-Giulia was fortunately a project that my College had already planned to organise. Thus when I proposed to do something to alleviate this problem to the Headmaster, teachers and my friends, it did not sound unusual. Nevertheless my passionate approach stimulated the realization of a series of initiatives. The process of implementation of these abstract ideas was long and required intense hard-work.

(46) For more information, please refer to <http://www.osservatoriobalceni.org/article/articleview/5240/1/51/>

(47) For more information on this topic, please see also <http://www.osservatoriobalceni.org/article/articleview/5290/1/50>

(48) For more information, please refer to the website www.uwc.org

First, it was essential to involve in this project as many people as possible, starting from the College as a base and then, step by step, enlarging progressively this "community". I found fundamental help in some of my friends, that agreed with me on the urgent need to "do something", so we all worked enthusiastically in order to set up what was needed to realize this process, and to find the proper ways via which reaching our long-term aim. During the working time, despite my initial spark to the project, I did my best in order to stimulate and "drag" as many people as possible, because I believe in the long term team-work benefits, rather than the excessively personalized approaches.

Secondly, it was fundamental for the project creation and implementation to involve the College educational and administrative bodies, in order to get either the "institutional equipment", necessary to escalate the project to a broader area, and also to get expert pieces of advise on how to set up and then realize such an ambitious project.

2.1 Shaping the Project and creating the Instruments

The United World College experience includes, together with an accurate academic program, the student participation to a series of extra-academic initiatives, such as the sport and aesthetic activities and the social and charity service. By discussing with the newly created team-group, made up of students, teachers and administrative staff, we defined a series of social services that, through some accurate modifications, could have been shaped to become integral parts of our project. For example, the presentations, that College students used to give in local primary and secondary school about general issues, was modified. After some team-work activity, we defined the new areas of interest and guidelines to the realization of activities, the new Social Service originated from this project was titled "Multicultural presentations", with the aim of offering a multicultural experience to students of local primary and secondary schools, through a range of activities aimed at fighting prejudice and racism. This represented the first effective approach: to spread consciousness about this delicate topic among young people in order to create a bottom-up implementing process.

On the same level, we redefined another "international awareness instrument" and projects of cooperation, through the Amnesty International group present into

the College. By collaborating on this initiative, we utilised the important Amnesty International aims, joined to those of raising awareness of the importance of promoting tolerance, cooperation and understanding in the regional area. This was applied through a series of important initiatives, such as writing campaigns, sport events and the organization of conferences and events outside the College.

However it was not enough, there was a real need to enlarge the presence in the area and to think of new and more effective measures. One of the innovations applied in our Project has been the organization of a series of "Conflict Transformation Sessions", aiming at offering conflict transformation skills to students and young people from the surrounding community applying peer education techniques. We College students were organic part of the activity, in order to facilitate workshops and conflict transformation sessions with Italian and Slovene students from minority communities. In addition to students, some teachers worked with us during the development of the activity.

In addition, thanks to the "institutional links" we had built up, we were allowed to work with "Mondo 2000", the United World College of the Adriatic Voluntary Work Association, which aims to include young people from the area in the voluntary work done by the College. Thus we had got as well as a "working body", made up of students and teachers, an institutional instrument, capable of portraying our hard-work during the formal events, such as conferences, regional assemblies and other events.

Thank to our work with the association, with a new theoretical elaboration and the definition of new methodological approaches, through this Association, College students and secondary school students from Monfalcone, Trieste (many of them belonging to the Slovene minority) and the closest Slovene towns, meet and work together to promote values such as solidarity and understanding. Mondo 2000 promotes the values and importance of volunteer work. We try to merge social service and other activities as much as possible, be they sport, drama, video, choir, dance, arts etc. in order to make social service as relevant, interesting and appealing as possible.

In addition to this gigantic initiative, the last fundamental step to our "extended project" has been the creation of the "Young Builders of Peace", a movement initiated by College students which has received strong support from local students, as well as associations and public institutions in the area. Its aim is to raise awareness about conflicts both in the region and in the world, and to illustrate the everyday actions we can all make to encourage peace. Young Builders of Peace organized a Peace March in October 2005, which was attended by approximately 750 students from 20 different schools, either Italian and Slovene; it intends to organize other peace groups, conferences and workshops in the future. Regional associations participate in the movement by providing students with support in the organization of presentations and workshops.

2.2 What we have accomplished and how we have measured the results

2.2.1 Accomplishments: resources, linking, perpetuation, recognition

Throughout my two-year participation to the organization and the implementation of this Project⁽⁴⁹⁾, we have conveyed a great amount of time, energy and enthusiasm in every aspect of this work. Among the aims that we accomplished there were the followings:

Resource finding, fund-rising and free offer of our Project

The realization of this project implied its being an entirely free activity, without any cost for the participants. This meant that we, College students, teachers and Project organizers, had to find the resources to create "physically" the project and to organize its schedule. In order to do this, we created a special commission aiming at fund-rising initiatives, such as dinners, street-shops and parties. Furthermore, we looked for sponsorships among regional banks&companies, associations, foundations and public agents. At the end, our fund-rising campaign managed to guarantee the necessary resources for the running of the project and its secure prosecution for the minimum of a three-year time.

Linking together Associations - National and Regional Recognition

Through the Association "Mondo 2000", we worked toward the realization of a network between the Associations, Institutions and People participating to the Project. The network creation idea was born together with the Project idea; its main aims are to guarantee the perpetuation of this project over the years, to promote collaboration among the agents keen on this theme and to "make numbers" showing the interests that this Project had risen. In so doing, we would be recognised from the institutions, in order to gain attention and resources, but also to offer a sustainable and repeatable model of "conflict resolution" starting from young people.

2.2.2 The Social Experiment, results and enrichment

The results of a "Social Experiment" are not as easily accountable as those of a scientific one. It is quite tough to measure the results and give figures of "how much" we, as a team-group, have contributed⁽⁵⁰⁾ to the improvements of the relationships between the Italian and the Slovene community in the region Venezia-Giulia. Nevertheless, referring to the concrete results accomplished and the different projects that we have implemented; there are some extremely favourable events, highlighting the good quality and energy input of our Project.

In fact, one of the examples are "Conflict Transformation Sessions", that in the very beginning of its activation revealed clearly the tensions existing between the Italian and the Slovene young people; especially when the discussion keystone moved toward areas like the nature of the existing conflicts, the possible solutions or the creation of "guidelines for intervention". Through the six-month course organized by the "Project people", we assisted those young world citizens to smooth out progressively their tensions, to seek for the "constructive engaging solution" instead of the "frontal battle experience". This period was an absolutely enriching time for all of us involved in this project: we College students learn to apply theoretical concepts and the "laboratory-young-world-citizens" learn to outgo their differences, to trust each other and not to judge according to the nationality or other differences.

(49) For mor Then I had to leave Duino, because now I am undertaking the undergraduate courses in Economics in Pisa (Italy). However I often visit the College and help organizing the logistic aspects through Internet.

(50) And how much we are still contributing, because these projects are still in progress.

They played together "shoulder to shoulder", they had fun together "heart to heart" and they worked together "brain to brain". For example, during one of the Amnesty International Sport events organized by our group, we encouraged them to create a single international football team; funny enough, we even showed them that collaboration pays back, as they scored third out of sixteen teams, and beyond that they really mingled as one homogeneous group, that represented one of the highest apexes of our entire project.

In addition, together with the Association "Mondo 2000", the College and other participants to another Inter-regional Project promoted by the Region Venezia-Giulia, Italian and Slovene young people have worked toward the creation of a website, as instrument of communication and exchange of ideas: <http://nordadriatic.gimnazija-koper.si/modules/news/> .

As an aspirant and young economist, I would state that the benefits of this Project cannot be clearly shown in the short run: the results will start emerging when there will be concrete perception of the consciousness that past mistakes must not be repeated in the future and that a better world can be possible; by contrast, however, the intellectual, physical and financial start-up fixed costs have been mostly linked to the initial time.

2.3 Why I consider this Project to be innovative

Our Project started its life through a systematic horizontal development, of course there existed a central coordinating unit, composed by both students and teachers, however the freedom of proposal and elaboration was one of the most positive feature on which we shaped the Project. What I considered to be an innovative part of our Project was the concreteness of its approach, a long time was spent on the theoretical elaboration and the guideline creation; but the "core" of the Project was the creation of real and tangible initiatives, aiming at generating "real impact" and communicating our enthusiasm and will of working. In addition, we tried to develop the Project on the Personal Upbringing approach, creating initiatives based on a "face to face" confrontation, such as small group workshops, integrated by large session conferences; rather than focusing on the sole conference holding that might not have provoked the same subjective perception of personal involvement. Furthermore, during the debating sessions, long time was spent even on those topics often disregarded by the media or considered to be too sensitive or even politically-incorrect, in so doing participants felt the approach to be less institutional and more personal; this allowed a broad and high level of participation, attention and exchange, that gave an original and innovative added value to our Project. Last, but not least, this Project was constructed on a bottom-up strategy, starting from who can make the difference: people; aiming at a broad involvement of public institutions and private subjects, as the inspiring results of the Project continue their stable growth. Not only did it start from people, but it embraced the most sensitive, receptive and hopeful part of the society: young people. In so doing we have started "to plant the seed of a peaceful, tolerant and respectful world generation of tomorrow".

2.4 Possible improvements: bettering the impacts and expanding the skills

Without any doubts we have never thought that our Project was an absolutely perfect machine, ready to create just an endless series of successes. Throughout the development of the Project that I lived, there have been natural ups and downs, and we have sometimes realised the improvements that might have benefited the final results. Unfortunately we lacked some useful professional instruments, for example the sociological and psychological skills. In order to improve our impacts and make the Project more efficient and straightforward, the presence of a psychologist and a sociologist would have substantially helped us during the definition of our strategy and the treatment of each case, given our personal approach to the Project indeed. Another important improvement that, in the long run at least, might be seriously considered is the possibility to enlarge the scale of this "social experiment" by broadening the involved areas and, thus, extending the age and number range of participation. Under the social aspect, it would offer new stimuli to the cultural exchange and the debating enrichment, whereas under the political aspect, it would attract perceptive Institutionals and strengthen the collaboration among people and institutions.

Chapter Three

Repeating the Project, what to be maintained and what to be adapted

One of the most fascinating aspect of this Project is its broad applicability, because, unfortunately, in the world there are many areas presenting very similar situations. Thus the "cloning" of our Project and its repetition may represent a real opportunity to act concretely, in an attempt to spread consciousness about the possibility of solving such conflictive experiences through the social and cultural exchange between conflicting communities.

Nevertheless, though I personally believe that the Project has worked quite well in our contest, in order to be applied in a different atmosphere, it would require some aspects to be entirely maintained and some others to undertake some radical changes, according to the specific scenario:

What to be maintained...

1. The creation of a strong Project under the supervision and coordination of an internationally recognised and prestigious institution, either present regionally, such as the United World College of the Adriatic, or internationally, such as the United Nations or the World Bank, or even prestigious Non-Governmental-Organizations.
2. The fundamental involvement of young people in the organizing process: providing them with theoretical and practical instruments to work effectively. This implies also the process of responsibility passed to the young organizers, supplying them with trust, esteem and respect in order to create conditions for a real freedom of proposal and elaboration.
3. The creation of a "Project Group", involving both young people, families, workers and experts; which aims at structuring both the theoretical objectives, through specifically set-up meetings, and the "plan of action" through which grouping and organizing the very peculiar initiatives.
4. The multicultural approach, by highlighting not just the specific issue, but also adopting a comparative and analytical grid of case studies. This also means spreading awareness and consciousness about the possibility of surmounting conflicts and that "from weapons can sprout flowers".
5. The massive involvement of young people from that area, with which applying the activities we used, such as the Conflict Transformation Sessions, the Amnesty International events, the small-grouped workshop debates and by adding to the other activities we applied, others specifically designed for that peculiar situation.
6. The creation of a network including all of the participants to the Project, both students, teachers, people, schools, association and institutions; aiming at the creation of a strong and united "Project Body", capable of attracting attention and showing the concreteness of these Projects.

What to be adapted...

1. The nature of the games, presentations and discussion themes, in accordance with the relevance, interest and sensitivity about of the regional scenarios. This implies that during the "plan of action", topics will be properly designed, analysed and discussed among the Project organizers.
2. The inclusion among the Project organizers of skilled experts, such as psychologist and sociologist, in order to develop a completely adherent and fitting strategy to the actual problems.
3. The collaboration with the Public Institutions: the reinforcement of these types of link may secure top-down assistance, during the "lag-time" requiring the activation of the bottom-up processes.
4. The shape of the Project, that has to be elastic, receptive and willing to react to the environmental stimuli; replying to these inputs with a valid and effective series of specific initiatives.

Word Count

3978

Finalist

Let's revive our rural regions
Document translated from French to English.
Original title: *Faisons revivre nos campagnes*

Mansour Hamza



*Finalist Mansour Hamza presents his essay to the juries
May 28, Tokyo, Japan*

It is a big shock today to see the living conditions of the rural population in underdeveloped countries. At a time when extraordinary intellectual, scientific and technological progress enable man to deal effectively with the principal blights to his well-being, these populations are confronted head-on with misery, ignorance and illness. It can be said with only slight exaggeration that in poor countries the rural environment still lives in middle-age conditions.

Countless engaged politicians have been unable to change matters. In the depths of despair, communities that still can hazard their futures, setting up en masse in the big urban centres or trying sometimes, at the cost of their lives, to join the 'eldorado' that the developed countries hold out to them. Worse, the executives whose skills are essential to breaking the infernal circle balk the countryside, preferring to cram into the towns.

All these factors make our rural regions places devoid of any economic and cultural dynamism. To break free of the chains of underdevelopment it is, however, necessary that the rural environment regains its full place in the economic and social life of our countries. Sometimes the simplest of initiatives can lay the foundations of an important change in living conditions and a commitment to development.

My ambition is to join forces with the youths of my village with a view to running a certain number of strategic activities, which will serve as examples and a springboard to communities, opening the way to a marked economic and social dynamism. Our strategy is centred on essential themes: the reduction in the burden of household tasks for women, the modernization of production, the development of trade and the attractiveness of rural life. After a brief analysis of the socioeconomic situation of the target village, I will present the objectives and principle actions envisaged around these different themes.

I. Analysis of the socioeconomic situation of the target village

Dirga is my village. Like many of Niger's villages, it is lacking in most basic social services. There are no health workers, no access to drinking water and not even a single shop worthy of the name; only a primary school of 3 classes (one of which that for years now has been unfinished) serves as a reminder of the administration's presence in this spot which remains ignorant of all the facilities that the modern world offers.

Life in Dirga is strongly dependent on nature's whims. The productive activities remain principally agriculture and the small-scale livestock farming carried out by everyone in the village. Each family disposes of its field and principally cultivates millet for its own consumption. It should be noted that agricultural activity is still practised in a very rudimentary fashion. The men spend the three months of the rainy season under the sun turning the earth with a hilaire. The effort needed is so great and the result so meagre that the youths who migrate seasonally during the dry season, increasingly hesitate to come back once winter returns. Much land, therefore, remains poorly worked or completely unexploited.

Irrigated agriculture also remains little used. The women often tend to a small garden where they produce courgettes, okra and other useful ingredients for sauces; but this activity remains restricted to home consumption. Thus the dry season is experienced as a dead season where all the able-bodied set off for the urban centres.

The situation for small livestock is scarcely better. The fowls are let loose to roam where they want and finding the eggs is akin to playing a game of hide and seek. This activity, even if it generates a small revenue in sales, remains rudimentary and not at all organized.

To summarize, given the rudimentary nature of the production activities, the surpluses are rare, the revenues meagre and the alimentary needs of the populations are not guaranteed.

II. General strategy: Provoking an internal response

In view of the above situation, it is capital before starting out on anything to work at stimulating a profound awareness in the village. This is in no way a case of approaching people with ready-made ideas but rather aimed at provoking reflection based on the resources the village has at its disposal and the possibilities to exploit them in an efficient way without waiting for any sort of aid from the outside.

To do this, it is essential to benefit from discussion groups which take place after the evening meal where the inhabitants of Dirga have the habit of meeting up in groups to discuss the events which have punctuated their day. These moments constitute to some extent their own particular type of media. In launching debates on well-targeted problems, reflection can be brought to bear on the possibilities of action that the immediate environment offers. What new crops can I add to my subsistence crops and can they be sold easily on the neighbouring market? How can I develop an irrigation system for my garden from marshland? What if I were to try animal traction? What new technical progress can I apply to my environment? These questions must replace the obsessive question turning endlessly in the head of the inhabitants: How can I make my way to the city?

To set the foundations of this reflection, it is first necessary to bring together a core group of youths who are sensitive to the questions that face the village and to the achievements of rural communities throughout the world. The members of the group thus trained through mutual enrichment will then join other discussion groups held in the village to touch on other well-targeted subjects with them. It is not a case of engaging in interminable reflections on communal mega projects whose implementation is dependent on outside aid. On the contrary, it is an internal response that is sought. The aims of this project are to awaken the spirit of initiative and encourage the development of private activities, which will have an impact on the whole village. To succeed it is necessary to prove that change is possible, that the local potential can be a source of substantial revenues to the same extent as the urban environment; it is necessary to provide the example and encourage others to react. It is in this sense that we will work towards fulfilling certain strategic activities in partnership with well-targeted village groups with an interest in the proposed affair. In the following sections, we will see these different activities and the objectives that are assigned to them.

III. Part 1: Saving women time

It is a tautology to point to the difficult living conditions of rural women. Nevertheless the repetition is useful because it helps to highlight the simple acts that can efficiently contribute to an improvement.

One of the hardest tasks for the women of Dirga is providing water for the household. They are up at the crack of dawn and have to undertake frequent comings and goings to the other side of the village with a bucket of water on their head. This operation is repeated several times a day.

In order to facilitate the women's task, the notables of the village have proposed the construction of a new well on the opposite side of the village. This suggestion coincided with a project to create a gum tree plantation that I had devised in 2002. The plantation also needed a well for irrigation. In concert with the village notables, we managed to make the positioning of the well coincide with that of the plantation and, thus the construction of the well was carried out entirely on the budget dedicated to the plantation. The houses situated on the other side of the old well now have a water supply at their door and the women save a precious amount of time. In addition, the well enables the gardens that have sprung up in the vicinity to benefit from irrigation.

Another task that costs the women a lot of time and great difficulty is transforming cereal grains into flour. The grinding of the millet takes up at least three hours of the women's time per day. This time could be used for many other things if they had a grain mill at their disposal.

The investment necessary for installing a grain mill is relatively acceptable especially if it is envisaged from the aspect of a commercial activity engaging several partners. The approach at this level is to bring together a certain number of partners from within the village and to organise a profitable activity. The big obstacle to the survival of this activity will doubtless be the lack of liquidity in the rural environment. The women will hesitate to part with the little amount of money of which they dispose for a task that they could accomplish themselves. To resolve this problem a payment in kind could be envisaged. The clients recuperate the flour at the exit of the mill and can leave the bran produced in return for the provision of the service, which will then be sold on the neighbouring market. This activity will contribute to the diversification of sources of revenue through the creation of stable jobs but above all free the women to engage in more efficient occupations.

The more time the women have at their disposal, the more they will be able to exercise activities which generate income for themselves and the more the economic life of the village will flourish.

IV. Part 2: Reorganising production

As we have seen above, agriculture is the activity par excellence in Dirga. However, it is carried out in a basic fashion and still remains a subsistence activity. No noteworthy progress could be obtained without profoundly reorganizing this sector.

The plantation project mentioned in the previous section is already a way of interesting the inhabitants of the village in silviculture and therefore in the diversification of production. The difficulty is that the investment necessary only becomes profitable after five years. That is why I initiated the project without waiting for associates. Around a hundred plants (gum and fruit trees) have thus been ordered for inhabitants who have been able through this to carry out a new activity, namely, the production of plants. The project has begun rather hesitantly owing to a lack of good coordination. Nevertheless, I am planning a restructuring of the activity through the division of the capital into shares. This will enable the youths interested to acquire shares in the activity through, for example, ensuring the irrigation of the plantation or the planting. I envisage the planting of a thousand trees each year during the rainy season. These plants will be ordered from the youths of the village. This will represent a supplementary source of revenue for them.

But, the principle strategy here concords with that envisaged for the implementation of the grain mill. With a certain number of associates, I envisage creating an SME whose principle activity will be the renting out of “modern” agricultural materials. The farmers have neither the means nor the access to the credit necessary to be able to invest in efficient material. In providing them with ploughs, carts, traction animals, irrigation material and later tractors, our SME will provide the foundations of a major development in agricultural techniques.

But, how can the farmers be encouraged to use this material that is not only completely new to them but for which they have to pay if they want to hire?

In the preceding section we mentioned the problem of solvability in rural surroundings. The solution to this obstacle remains the multiplication of the means and the modes of payment. By offering farmers the possibility of paying in kind (a percentage of the harvest for example), hiring becomes possible for everyone. In addition, the SME will carry out an advisory activity for the farmers. They will thus be able to benefit from help in the use of the material, an update on current agricultural practices and a guide to the resources available from the government and other sector participants.

A point that the SME will focus on particularly in its advisory activity is the setting up of agricultural exploitations of large size. The family fields transferred from father to son are divided up year by year in the division of the family inheritance. Today they constitute just little parcels of land. With the new material, the work and the effort needed will be at least halved. The exploitation in an efficient manner of large areas will therefore become possible. The farmers must be encouraged to become associates through the merging of their fields. This would enable them, through the sharing of the cost, to have an easier access to hired material and consequently a more significant production.

V. Part 3: Developing trade

One of the expected effects, and not the least, of the projects presented above is the development of trade within the village and the surrounding markets. The women already profit from the little spare time they have to make woven objects or calabasses that they then go to sell on the nearest weekly market. With more time at their disposal, these activities will arouse renewed interest and spark off a great deal of creativity. Moreover, the agricultural surpluses that will be created through generalisation of traction agriculture or of irrigation will certainly improve on the amount of exchange.

To sustain and encourage such tendencies, I envisage the creation of a microcredit structure. The latter will function in a similar fashion as the tontine agreements developed by the women on a small scale. The principle is simple. The women gather together and decide on a monthly contribution that each must pay. Each month one of them is nominated to benefit from the totality of the sum brought together. My ambition here is to supervise the implementation of an organized structure, which would extend this practice to the whole village, women and

men included. This structure would be managed like real bank. Each beneficiary would have to present a coherent commercial activity and, have to pay back a part of his profits to the structure.

If it is well run, this activity which is entirely managed by the members of the structure could provoke a massive adhesion from the inhabitants and even the surrounding villages. Nevertheless, training in modern management techniques are necessary to ensure the success of this enterprise even though the population is already familiar with the functioning of the tontines. My management training will enable me to perform this task.

The structure will also have the task of encouraging the pooling of independent commercial activities. Thus the populations will familiarize themselves with the development of economic activities through partnerships.

VI. Part 4: Revitalizing sociocultural activities

A large undertaking of this project consists in developing the attractiveness of rural life. In order for all the activities that we have envisaged up until now to truly yield their fruit, the inhabitants must rediscover their appetite to excel, outclass other villages and thus motivate their desire to stay. The best way to succeed is to favour the proliferation of sociocultural activities. To best illustrate the lack of vitality that our rural areas suffer from I have rewritten below some verses of a poem that was inspired after one of my visits to Dirga when I was still at school:

Far from the affluence of the large towns,
Under the joint assault
Of hunger and exodus
Little by little my village falls asleep
Gone the jovial evenings

Far the convivial words.
Leaving only these old men
Hanging around
In their gloomy huts
And these young girls
Still retained
By marital bonds.

These observations whilst personal measure the phenomenon: the rural areas are being emptied of their able bodies and are increasingly losing their sociocultural vitality.

To stimulate sociocultural activity, the traditional events of the past must be revived whilst also promoting their enrichment. To this way of thinking, I intend to mobilise the youths of the village to revive the traditional fighting contests as well as the artistic competitions within the village and between neighbouring villages. This is all the more rewarding in the rural environment as cultural activity is not experienced as a spectacle where people pay to watch professionals; on the contrary, everyone joins in enthusiastically and the celebration is all the better because it is also a manifestation of collective solidarity as well as joyful and loyal competition.

The awakening of consciences is much more marked if its seeds are sown from the youngest age. With young friends, I envisage organizing educational games, which will aim to develop the children's general culture and the will to make the village progress. This will mean supervising them in such a way that they learn to spot the least potential which may make the village a choice supplier for the markets of the region.

Our rural areas are being emptied and are increasingly losing their place in the economic as well as sociocultural life of our countries. The project presented here aims to provoke an internal response from my village. If it succeeds, we could extend it to neighbouring villages. It is based on an efficient mobilization of local resources,

whether they be human or material. It can, therefore, be simply reproduced in any region whatsoever. The partners are the youths and the inhabitants who join forces to implement private initiatives likely to profit a whole village, leading to a development in the means of production and trade. My role consists above all in encouraging these groupings, to provide them with the management skills resulting from my training, and also to provide an example by being a partner.

In emphasising private initiatives through groupings, the objective is not only the sharing of costs to provide the inhabitants with greater production capacity, but also to promote the rigour and creativity that private enterprise brings with it. It is in no way a case of imposing an activity financed from the outside which would stop as soon as the funds dry up. Far from it. The structures put in place will on the contrary develop progressively and become more profitable to the extent that the participants become aware of the opportunities that they open up for them.

Finalist

Lights for human development for Pamplona's youth community

Document translated from Spanish to English.

Original title: Luces para el desarrollo humano de los jovenes de la comunidad de Pamplona

Flor de Maria Callali Pimentel



*Finalist Flor de Maria Callali Pimentel during the Final Jury
May 28, Tokyo, Japan*

Sol lucet omnibus! The sun shines on everyone! This Latin phrase is perhaps part of the leitmotiv that gave impetus to the student project entitled “The youth of Pamplona: protagonists of change”, the aim of which was to empower and develop the youth of my community, which found itself in a critical situation of social anomie. The project was born out of a modest idea I had, which blossomed within the confines of my Faculty of Law at Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos (UNMSM) (The Main National University of Saint Mark) in Lima, Peru. That Latin phrase with which I began made me think initially that part of the problems of my community - Pamplona Baja, hidden away and forgotten in the suburbs of Lima, in the district of San Juan de Miraflores (SJM) - could be solved by using as a source of good, creative ideas the young people of Pamplona which we always imbue with a better future for ourselves and our families. For this, I believe that the sun shines on everyone with the same light whether it is on a modest farm in Costa Rica or the built-up streets of Buenos Aires. I remember the words of Paulo Coelho when he said that if a person had a clear view of their objective throughout their life, the entire universe would conspire to ensure that they reached this objective. I have always had an interest in taking part in the development of my community; of always being part of the solution and not just unflinchingly contemplating the problems that faced it. Like the philosopher, John Dewey, I see citizens as social agents of change within a “Creative Democracy”, i.e. that to give them the solution to the problem of our surroundings you have to be aware of our role as protagonists within society, as agents of change and assuming democracy as a way of life. The sun of hope was, at that time, the engine that drove the energy of the young, who assumed, with maturity, the reins of their own destiny. We are aware of the criticism that is encountered in a sizeable section of the Peruvian population. According to the figures from the Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas e Informática (National Institute of Statistics and IT) (INEI), 54% of Peruvian families are experiencing economic poverty. As the famous Peruvian historian, Pablo Macera, states, this poverty is the Gordian knot that poses such problems for the development of the people, and that leads to some outbreaks of violence. As has also been seen in the recent final report from the Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación Nacional (The Commission of Truth and National Reconciliation) (CVR), terrorist violence, over a twenty year period (1980-2000), was able to expand rapidly in the poorest communities in the country. According to the philosopher and President of the historic CVR, Salomón Lerner Febres, the terrorist action has become more accentuated in various areas of the capital and, with great destructive force, in the outlying districts of Lima. San Juan de Miraflores (SJM) was perhaps the district hardest hit by the terrorist madness. The sociologist, Julio Cotler, says that terrorism has found the most vulnerable sections to be a most fertile breeding ground. Nevertheless, the inhabitants of Pamplona Baja always demonstrate that they have confidence in the work carried out by the forces of law and order for the pacification of the country. This community’s residents have managed to set up a system of crime prevention, which involves the efforts of the Policía Nacional del Perú (National Peruvian Police) (PNP) and the good will of all residents in the face of the terrorist threat.

In spite of the good omens of Professor Samuel Huntington who demonstrates that the so-called “democratising wave” meant that, in Latin America, democratic governments were taking root, which could put a brake on terrorist violence, there are, for example in Peru, complex problems of poverty, which we will not be able to resolve in the near future. This is the task facing us as students, as Professor Mario Bunge states; we have to use scientific research to find a solution to our society’s problems.

Well then, the former terrorist violence generated, in one section of the population, an explosion of behaviour streaked with social anomie. This type of behaviour leads to social paroxysm and is most evident in the vertiginous increase in the number of gangs roaming around, similar to the fearsome Central American “maras”. Year after year, hundreds of young people were added to the long list of those marauding the streets of Lima. They are young people with no real expectations of a decent life; chained to the violence of the past, with insufficient education and the economic poverty that besets their homes, they decide to take to the streets, according to the sociologist Aníbal Quijano, in search of social recognition. This recognition is obtained through delinquent behaviour, a determinant element of which is extreme poverty and unrestricted violence. In the recent Electoral Forum “Prioridades para Lima Sur” (The Priorities for the South of Lima), it was reported that the population of San Juan de Miraflores (SJM) is the largest in south Lima, with a total of 364,748 inhabitants. The statistics from this Forum also showed that over 40% of the population of SJM were aged between 18 and 35, i.e. a significant amount of young people. It is these people who need, as a matter of urgency, area of participation that will enable them to access the employment opportunities and, thus, improve their quality of life. Statistics from INEI also provide us other important data: that the unemployment rate in SJM is at 10%. We consider that this statistical data is very worrying for our community. We also know that, according to the information from the Policía Nacional del Perú (PNP), there are larger numbers of gangs of youths in the poorest areas of the community of Pamplona. In Pamplona Baja, for example, there is a total of three gangs with a significant number of members that, daily, commit all kinds of crimes, ranging from attacks on people to attacks against public and private property.

This desolate outlook motivated your servant and a group of law students to set up a social project that targets the inclusion into the democratic system of the expectations and proposals of the youth of Pamplona. As secretary of the organisation of the Centro Federado de Derecho (Federated Centre of Law) of the UNMSM, and as a member of the community of Pamplona Baja, I suggested to the board of the afore-mentioned student body the possibility of carrying out a social project that would allow us to have more real contact with the young population of Pamplona. To persuade them of the merits of my project, I reminded my friends on the university board that the illustrious Luis Alberto, from San Marco, had said around fifty years ago that the university was not an island cut off from the problems of its society. This, based on the principle of the social extension of university work, convinced a majority of the board to approve my proposal, and so was born the project entitled “The youth of Pamplona: protagonists of change”. We decided to form working groups immediately, to look at our plan of action. As secretary of the organisation, I succeeded in contacting an NGO, with a recognised mission, which allowed me to strengthen the links with the young people of my community thanks to very vital information from government institutions dedicated to social services. The Council of SJM informed us that 40% of its population had no drinking water supply, 41% had no drainage and 20% no electricity. These moving statistics gave me the motivation to speed up the mechanisms of dialogue between our working group and the young people of Pamplona, especially with those who had fallen into the clutches of the underworld and the gangs. For this reason, the Club de Madres de Pamplona Baja (Mothers’ Club of Lower Pamplona) allowed us to use its small hall, which at the time served as a communal dining canteen, where we could discuss our project, the final objective of which was a frank and sincere coming-together of our working group and the various young people of the district. Thanks to the information from the committee of the Club de Madres, we were able to reach the conclusion that the majority of young gang-members had lunch within the confines of the aforementioned club. According to the 2000 National Survey of the Social and Economic District Infrastructure, in the SJM district, there was a total of 250 communal canteens that provided meals for 15,000 beneficiaries on a daily basis. Of these, over half were in the community of Pamplona. We should remember that the task of providing social assistance to the city’s poorest communities is taken over by both the State and multilateral finance organisations. Since 1997, there has been a great deal of commitment to meet the needs of the poor, thanks to the Second Generation of Structural Reform, which was compiled and efficiently directed by economists of world standing. This short digression gives us cause to mention the fact that we, as university students and part of our society’s “think tank” are under an obligation to use our energies and our ideas for the good and wellbeing of the poorest sections of our society. Then, we knew that we had a perfect opportunity for dialogue with the lads who were part of the dangerous gangs. We used the hall of the Club de Madres. We then decided to compile the informative material we would use to initiate chats with these young people. The information materials were made up of three-fold leaflets and separate sheets with figures, real-life people, caricatures and colours to make the information accessible to its target audience. These materials, very plain in format, would allow us to ensure that the information would be received sympathetically, i.e., to paraphrase Habermas, that for a “communicative action” to take place, the contents of these materials would have to have a direct connection to the environment of the would-be interlocutors in such a way that the information is valid to both sets of players in the communicative process. The lads recognised this new knowledge, which would be acquired through the informative materials and the chats with the working group, as valid and sustainable knowledge of everyday life, as bolstering their expectations of a free life, and as full of democracy. Using these leaflets and print-outs, we succeeded in disseminating, in a straightforward way, information about with civil rights, such as the right to vote and the right to privacy and property. We also tackled themes such as the State and its main institutions. We discussed how to create a micro-company, paying taxes, and other topics related to the promotion of self-employment. Penal law was an obvious subject. The aim was to make the young people aware of the importance of knowledge, and the exercising of their main rights in society. This would ensure that they felt part of a Legal State capable of recognising their potential. Professor Norberto Bobbio is very clear when he states that the capacity for democratic participation of each citizen greatly depends on the free and transparent spaces that are opened up to disengage the innate capacities favouring the defence of the democratic system, such as dialogue and tolerance. We also took on board Douglass North’s idea that we had to transmit to the lads the legal information that would have a real bearing on their lives. This would add much more weight to government instructions and would consolidate even further the Social and Democratic Status of Law. The “institutionalisation” that North proposes is evidenced in our country by a process of on-going political maturity. This process guarantees development and economic growth from the influx of private investment in the different sectors of the national economy whether in the primary, manufacturing or service sectors. With the rules of the game clear, it is evident that, from the modest youth of Pamplona to the most recognised businessman in the country, everyone

assumed ownership of the entire democratic dialogue processes that, in the end, would facilitate decision-making by a consensus of the various wills and desires for the good of the country's further development.

I must now declare that, for the first time, the young people showed themselves reluctant to chat with the working groups. Some of the lads from Pamplona, when they came to lunch, decided to withdraw, hoping that no-one would start chatting to them. However, by means of a continuous and intense dialogue, we succeeded, despite all the gangs' leaders, in persuading them to listen to some of our chats about self-esteem, family planning and crimes against sexual freedom. Our project continued at a slow, firm pace. Thanks to the persuasive communication I kept up with the leaders of the main gangs such as "the babies", "the north band" and "the assassins", we were able to set up a sort of beachhead within the territory of these "underground" groups. Koki, for example, is one of the ex-leaders of the now extinct "north band", for over a year now he has abandoned the streets and is now working with us as a volunteer in the most deprived areas of Pamplona. Koki had a very hard childhood; his mother and father died when he was eight, and the street became his "raison d'être". He was addicted to drugs, alcohol and sex. On his nineteenth birthday he was locked up in Lurigancho prison for aggravated robbery. On his release, he felt rejected by society because he was an ex-convict and, therefore, did not waste a second in returning to a life of crime. According to what he told us, he became a symbol for all his friends since his stay in prison granted him certain "respect". For him, the "north band" was his only real family. The interesting thing about Koki was discovering, during the course of several chats we had during 2004, his hidden passion for song. He was fascinated by the idea of signing one day in a vast hall, and, why not, in a stadium filled with thousands of people, just like one of his favourite singers, the great José Feliciano. In the employment activity and artistic expression workshop, thanks to the teaching of some music students from my alma mater, Koki could learn to play the guitar and, then, begin to study song. Just like Koki, other lads such as Johnny, Pedro, Raúl, Juan Carlos, Jimmy and many more started to develop their intelligence and skills. The college was full of former failures and delinquents. However, in our small workshop, we can report that the dynamism and profitability of the so-called multiple intelligences are not alien to young people with limited economic resources.

We must stress that our work took place from the start of 2004 to the end of 2005 and, furthermore, this university work was an excellent sight for those living near the place, to such an extent that the lads from the workshop were able to get temporary jobs as a result of this valiant work, in bakeries, gardens and craftsmen's workshops. We succeeded in persuading some neighbours who ran interesting micro-businesses by giving temporary jobs to those lads who took part in the democratic and social experience of our project. We consider that it was a very difficult project to realise, especially because of the initial costs in terms of the informative material. Thanks to the supporting activities and the funds raised, such as the "polladas" and "anticuchadas", we succeeded in gathering together enough money to cover our initial expenses. In addition, after the Centro Federado de Derecho of the UNMSM had set up the partnerships necessary for students from other faculties to take part in our project, the objective was to ensure that the sum of our forces achieved the desired project results. We must also thank the unselfish assistance from the people of Pamplona who showed themselves to be very receptive to the work carried out by the volunteers taking part in the project: "The youth of Pamplona: protagonists of change". The sincere help afforded by an NGO enabled us to access a significant amount of information without which we would not have been able to succeed in our project. It is also certain that not all the gangs in Pamplona have disappeared. Perhaps, our modest result is to have played a part in the disbanding of the self-styled "north band" gang. However, we believe that the work has to continue. The dialogue and work with the boys in the area cannot stop. We also believe that the way to solve the problem of youth violence is to generate in the young, as Karl Popper would say, the feeling of being immersed in an "open society" where our greatest enemies must be delinquency and economic poverty. Young people will always have dreams; we hardly ever lose hope. For this, the role of the State must be as a guide to shore up democratic practices, and to grant young people more areas of political and business participation. This work must be achieved with the support of civil society, and, in particular, with the help of private enterprise, which, as stated by Professor Hayek, is the conductor of general wellbeing. The current figures from the Town Council of San Juan de Miraflores (SJM) reveal that it is the micro-businesses and small businesses, the leaders of the Peruvian economy, that are the ones giving the most opportunities for progress and improvement of the quality of life to the great majority of young people in Pamplona. Finally, I can address the concerns of the World Bank when they ask me what I have done to solve the problems of my community. I reply with a simple statement: I have tried, with the help of my companions, to escape from our university cloister, to bring the light of wisdom to shine even on the cobbled, winding paths of the youth of Pamplona so that the sun shines on everyone!

Finalist

The Missing Link: Social Entrepreneurs as the Private-Nonprofit Bridge.

Geoffrey See



*Finalist Geoffrey See explains his points during the Final Jury
May 28, Tokyo, Japan*

ABSTRACT

Business as usual is not the solution to development challenges. Rather, I propose an unusual business-nonprofit mix of capabilities as an answer. In Section 1, I argue that the nonprofit and private sectors frequently possess overlapping aims and complementary core capabilities. These allow them to provide integrated solutions that move beyond the philanthropic or transactional stage of cross-sector interactions. However, the different incentives and approaches driving each sector create a culture clash between them. This roadblock to cooperation must be overcome with a ‘bridge’ - a neutral external agent.

In Section 2 and 3, I draw from my experience in setting up ArtIntern, a project dedicated to helping youths become arts entrepreneurs, to advocate the suitability of social entrepreneurs to the role of ‘bridges’. To create extraordinary value, the social entrepreneur must restrict his or her functions to his or her core competency in three regions of innovation: identifying new needs, crafting new solutions and implementing them with new combinations of resources. The first two regions of innovation tap into the localized knowledge that social entrepreneurs possess. The third is achieved through a capability sourcing strategy that taps the core competencies of the private and nonprofit sectors. Thus, the sectors are bridged as part of a strategy adding high value to development outcomes.

In Section 4, I emphasize how this framework is particularly relevant to youths, as it taps their primary strengths and compensates for their core weaknesses. I explain how youth activists are likely to possess an embarrassment of localized knowledge that gives them an innovative edge. I also elaborate how the capability sourcing strategy helps them overcome their lack of experience-derived skills, which gives me optimism towards the role which youths can play in the future of development.

Introduction – Social Enterprise as an Accidental Journey

In 2003, I worked with several high-schoolmates on a project to help talented youths achieve their dreams of becoming professional artists. My team’s solution was to create a market channel linking young artists to buyers, largely through an arts exhibition. This helped youths find employment as arts entrepreneurs, convincing them that an arts career was a viable option.

It was an unusual community venture as it involved stakeholders from the private, nonprofit and government sectors. Although my team was initially daunted by the complexity of balancing the different aims of different sectors, we eventually saw this as an opportunity to bridge the ‘divide’ between the sectors. Our resource handicaps also forced us to maximize outcomes by focusing on our core capabilities, while sourcing complementary core capabilities from the private and nonprofit sectors. We called our project, experiment and exhibition ArtIntern.

I hope to share my belief in integrated solutions to development issues involving both private and nonprofit sectors, and how we achieved this as social entrepreneurs in ArtIntern.

Section 1 – Tri-sector Collaboration Key to Development Success

Ernest Zedillo, former President of Mexico, claimed that “business as usual as a strategy will not do the trick” in reversing development gaps⁽⁵¹⁾. Throwing more funds at development goals eventually leads to diminishing returns. More important is the need for new ideas to maximize returns on existing resources, which is why I suggest an integrated approach. Although governments, nonprofits and corporations rely on different incentives and processes, their aims are largely overlapping as they all create value for their communities. Even where motives differ, they can still be complementary. This view was reinforced through my work with the different sectors in ArtIntern.

The necessity of the integrated approach is driven by the complementary core competencies that are often found in different sectors. While core capabilities are possessed by organizations, they can be aggregated to give each

(51) Goldman Sachs Global Markets Institute (2006) “The Top Ten Risks to the Global Economy: A Dialogue of Critical Perspectives Conference Proceedings Fall 2005”

sector broadly defined core capabilities stemming from the incentives and processes driving the sector. For example, Foroohar (2005) reported in Newsweek that Shell Foundation was asked to support an Indian nonprofit that thought it had a proven business model for providing electricity to rural villages. However, Shell found that none of the projects were financially viable. Donor contributions had cushioned the nonprofit from business considerations. Clearly, the core competencies of that nonprofit did not lie in operating such ventures, a task better left to the private sector with its strong incentives to properly allocate resources. Differing core capabilities make it an imperative for sectors to collaborate and create positive development outcomes for their communities.

Nonprofit Sector as Facilitator

The core capability of this sector is its ability to access localized information to understand community conditions and needs. Most non-governmental organizations are localized, and even where they are not, they still benefit strongly from close interactions and goodwill with the local community. These provide them with ground-up information useful for two separate but mutually reinforcing purposes: (1) it is the basis for identifying real social needs to be served and (2) it provides an accurate picture of operating in the community's environment. Such information can add significant value to the government or private sector's provision of goods and service to the community. Community needs and wants evolve over time and governments can fail to notice and satisfy these changes. Corporations might also be unaware of whether its products will be well received, or how it can deliver its offerings to the community. These examples underscore the impact which NGOs can have by leveraging its informational base. In addition, the warm ties that NGOs often share with the community can create new markets by easing the acceptability of corporate offerings.

Private Sector as Provider

Harvard Business School Professor James Austin (2001, 1) outlined three stages of collaborations between the private and nonprofit sectors. The first two stages in the continuum are the philanthropic and transactional stages. In the philanthropic stage, the private sector is a source of funds. While desirable, such collaboration does not tap into the core capabilities of corporations, hence it fails to unlock the key benefits of partnerships. The next stage, the transactional stage, is where

“...there is a significant two-way value exchange. The organizations' core capabilities begin to be deployed and the partnership is more important to each other's mission and strategies.”

Significant number of corporations and nonprofits have entered this stage and seen their relationship defined by an increasing overlap in mission and values. However, it is the integrative stage that enhances significantly the value provided to the community by nonprofits and the private sector. In this stage, there is

“...deep strategy mesh, strategy synchronization and values compatibility. Types and levels of institutional resources used multiply. Core competencies are not only deployed, but combined to create unique and high value combinations.”

It was through this stage that ArtIntern improved its offerings to society, by mixing and matching the core competencies of the sectors it straddled. Broadly, large corporations, with their deep resources, technical know-how and established managerial capabilities are frequently better positioned to deliver high quality goods and services in a financially sustainable manner - provided market signals are clear and consistent. Furthermore, profit outcomes of corporate involvement are often more easily measured than social outcomes, and hence allow the sector to be more transparent and efficient. It is important that any long-term collaboration must be profitable for private sector partners; this allows the private sector to tap its core institutional motivations to prevent the partnership from being relegated to the periphery of the corporation's goals, with only low value institutional resources dedicated to it.

Multinational corporations are often unable to access poor communities because they lack information of opportunities, or knowledge of unique demand conditions that will make serving the poor profitable (Prahalad 2004). Thus, NGOs, with their local knowledge and contacts, can act as a facilitator to dramatically reduce the costs of accessing these markets.

Government as Enabler

The governments' role depends largely on the degree to which they provide goods and services in their respective communities. However, in most countries, their control over key infrastructure such as healthcare and education providers, and their ability to legislate, allows them to set a positive framework for both for-profit and non-profit sectors to engage development issues. Thus, the government must be engaged in most countries.

Development has to deploy the core capabilities of these sectors if it is to be successful. As former Asian Development Bank President, Tadao Chino (1999), argued

"... fighting poverty is a long-term battle. It requires concerted efforts by all parties, including private sector, civil society, non-government organizations, governments and international community like bilateral and multilateral institutions. In this battle, we are all partners. Every one of us has its own strong points and weaknesses."

Such collaboration is about deploying the best people and best practices of each sector.

Although I have laid out the general competencies of each sector, it is possible that some NGOs might excel at delivering services or that some corporations might have close interaction with local communities. Ultimately, it is at the organization level that the best capabilities are sourced from.

Section 2 – Social Entrepreneur Can Bridge Sectors

Cross-sector Relations - A Cycle of Mutual Suspicion

This simple concept would seem intuitive and yet it has only reluctantly emerged. This is because mutual suspicion characterizes each sector's perception of its counterparts. Nonprofits often perceive corporations as being 'greedy' and 'destructive' in their quest for profits. John Browne, chief executive of BP spoke of "the climate of distrust surrounding...big business," and the fear that "such concentrated power is unconstrained" (Lodge 2002). Such fear is unwarranted and nonprofits must lose their distrust of the profit motive that drives the private sector in order to pursue successful collaborations.

While NGOs might profess acceptance of the profit motive in their corporate partners, their differences in approach and habits subconsciously lead to disagreements. An incident that occurred with ArtIntern underscored this entrenched distaste of profits among nonprofits. A NGO initially agreed to help us market the arts exhibition for free and accepted that the youth participants, as entrepreneurs, would retain profits from the sale of their works. However, when the exhibition exceeded expectations, it wanted the proceeds to be donated as it was adamant that the youths participated out of their love for art, and not to make profits. It did not understand that the goals were not mutually exclusive. Soaltee Group of Nepal, which explores how partnerships can be most effective in the delivery of services to the poor, cites conflicting attitudes to profit as the biggest challenge to success (Foroohar 2005).

Because of such divergent perspectives, a 'bridge' across sectors is necessary to make collaborations work. The United Nations Development Program recognizes this necessity and through its Growing Sustainable Business initiative⁽⁵²⁾, it recruits a 'broker' to act as an intermediary between different sectors. Asian NGO leaders at the Asian Development Bank's NGO-Private Sector Partnerships Forum (2005a) recognized the need for a 'bridge', preferably someone cross-trained in the language and culture of both sectors. In their second meeting (2005b), they identified the need for a 'matchmaker' to identify cross-sector collaborative opportunities. My experience convinces me that the agent most suitable for this role comes from the ground-up initiative of a 'social entrepreneur'. We need to examine the role this agent must play and in doing so, define the core competencies of 'social entrepreneurs'.

Capability Sourcing - Tapping Best People and Best Practices Everywhere

The bridge or social entrepreneur is the missing link between nonprofit and private sectors. He or she is responsible for developing a capability sourcing strategy. This strategy sources the core competencies of different organizations and combines them as bespoke solutions to development challenges. The social entrepreneur must be sector-neutral if he or she is to be able to appreciate the core capabilities of both sectors.

(52) Growing Sustainable Business initiative facilitates business-led enterprise solutions to poverty in advancement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). (Source: <http://www.undp.org/business/gsb/> accessed 12 March 2006)

In addition to being sector neutral, this agent is essential due to the increasingly complex relationships arising out of increasing integration between sectors. An experienced social entrepreneur can unlock the full potential of joint ventures by providing systematic management of partners. Furthermore, as an external agent, he or she will not be beholden to particular organizations, and will retain flexibility to source the right capabilities from the right organizations according to the needs of individual development projects.

Social entrepreneurs also reduce the problem of an overpopulated nonprofit sector. John Studzinski (Economist 2003), co-head of HSBC's investment bank and an active philanthropist said “there are about 40 homelessness projects in London; only eight are any good.” From my experience with the sector, I agree that excessive nonprofit projects have resulted in unnecessary duplication and lack of economies of scale. Although there are no mergers and acquisitions market for nonprofits, social entrepreneurs can reduce the severity of this problem. As mobile agents, they source capabilities from different nonprofits, housing their specialized skills and experience under one roof, as if they were a single entity.

The capability sourcing strategy proposed is not a variation on normal collaborations. Reduced transaction costs, brought about by information sharing through technology, allow social entrepreneurs to focus on a narrow set of core competencies while sourcing all other capabilities from elsewhere. Furthermore, Lachmann (1956) argued: “We are living in a world of unexpected change; hence capital combinations . . . will be ever changing”. Similarly, ever-changing development challenges require an agent to actively reform capability combinations. The next section will detail how through experimenting in ArtIntern, I learnt what comprises the core of social entrepreneurship, and elaborate how strategic sourcing between sectors can be implemented.

Section 3 – A Framework for Bridging

The Social Entrepreneur – Driving and Riding the Waves of Change

Schumpeter (1975) coined the term ‘creative destruction’ in defining ‘entrepreneurship’, thus outlining the entrepreneur’s innovative capabilities and emphasizing the role of entrepreneurs in driving change. Israel Kirzner (1973) defined alertness as a key attribute of entrepreneurs: in the profit sector, they react to profit opportunities by creating better value. A social entrepreneur parallels this alertness, except that he or she reacts to social opportunities and is driven by social concern. Hayek (1937) and Kirzner (1973) viewed entrepreneurs more as nimble agents responding to change, and thus viewed the entrepreneurial core competency as the ability to acquire and use information to react to changes.

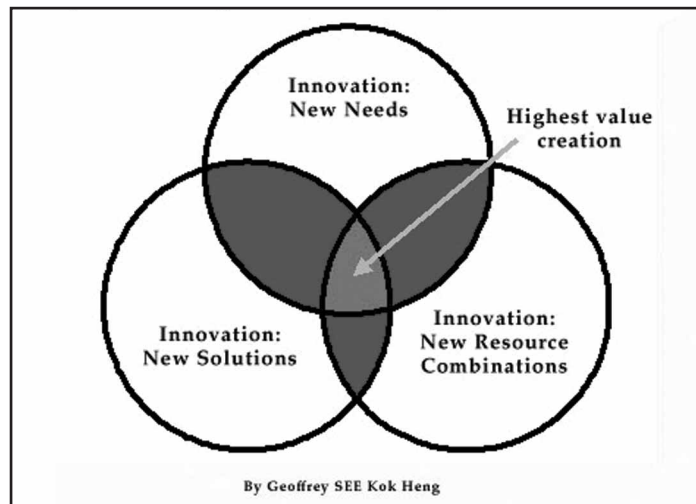
While their motivations differ, social entrepreneurs share the same core competencies as their for-profit cousins. Knight (1921) observed that entrepreneurial judgment is costly to trade. Even though innovation and discovery of social needs are also accomplished by the private sector and nonprofits, the social entrepreneur is differentiated by having specialized strengths in these areas. It is by focusing on these strengths, and combining them with those of the private and nonprofit sectors through sourcing strategies, that the social entrepreneur can improve development outcomes. NGO Ashoka claims⁽⁵³⁾ : “Social entrepreneurs are not content just to give a fish or teach how to fish. They will not rest until they have revolutionized the fishing industry.”

Core Social Entrepreneurial Capabilities - Three Regions of Innovation

The ArtIntern steering committee, which I headed, was comprised of high school students. In discovering and pursuing our cause, we actively created value for our community as social entrepreneurs through new ideas. These ideas can be grouped into three broad regions of innovation (Fig 1.1), which comprise the core competency of social entrepreneurs. Social entrepreneurs must focus on their core innovative capabilities, and source for capabilities elsewhere to implement their solutions. Thus, this framework allows social entrepreneurs to bridge sectors in a way that unlocks the full potential of cross-sector partnerships.

(53) http://www.ashoka.org/fellows/social_entrepreneur.cfm accessed 27 March 2006)

Fig. 1.1 Three Regions of Social Entrepreneurial Innovation



Innovation 1: New Need

ArtIntern sought to create interest in a professional arts career. What motivated us to embark on this mission was the observed disconnect between the professed desire of many talented friends to become artists, and the outcome of a lack of professional artists. There were barriers preventing them from pursuing their choice professions infringing upon what Amartya Sen (2000) called the “substantive freedoms he or she enjoys to lead the kind of life he or she has reasons to value.” We embarked on social entrepreneurship in deriving our first innovation: discovering a new community need to serve.

Forming such insights into community needs is often contingent on the access to localized knowledge, rather than some superior sense of creativity. Many of my team members were either artists or had close ties with the domestic arts community while I was personally involved in my school’s photographic society. This close interaction with the domestic arts scene contributed to our discovery.

Such innovation is necessary as social needs are constantly evolving. The dimensions of poverty, inequality, education or hunger are frequently altered by changes in infrastructural support, policy implementation, legislative action or economic development. Similarly, *ArtIntern* was a product of the changing needs of my society, as greater prosperity encouraged my peers to challenge the boundaries of their *substantive un-freedoms*. Development aims had shifted in my country from simply finding employment to finding desirable employment, and this change required discovery by social entrepreneurs. I believe that the ground-up approach of social entrepreneurs is most appropriate for this innovation challenge because it is through constant interaction and observations of the community that localized knowledge is obtained. Hence, external agents imposed by multilateral agencies or NGOs may not share the same innovative capacity until suitably immersed in the community.

Innovation 2: New Solution

Through discussing the issue with artists and our proximity to the arts scene, we pinpointed the problem as having both real and perceived aspects. Part of the inability to fulfill this desire stemmed not from the lack of talent or markets for the arts, but arose from the perception that artists ‘starve’. Many of our peers who enjoy the arts and considered being professional artists believed that there was no market for the arts in the country. This is especially significant in my community because the culture supposedly places a heavy premium on tangible material achievements at the expense of incorporeal beauty or the ideas that art seeks to explore. Hence, students felt pressured to pursue jobs that would command a financial premium, such as in banking or finance.

However, my team members also noted conflicting observations of how their families and friends would willingly spend money on acquiring art or visiting arts museums when on vacation abroad. Through aggregating these

dispersed information, we concluded that arts had market potential in our community and that perception was a core barrier to entry. However, we also noted that a real barrier to entry for artists existed in the absence of organized market channels for selling art. In fact, we noted that high school students did not have even one regular avenue to publicize and sell their work!

We identified the cause of the problem through piecing together anecdotal information we were privy to from our close association with the arts community. This allowed us to formulate our second social entrepreneurial innovation in delivering a new solution. We decided that *ArtIntern* can tackle both real and perceived barriers by developing a market channel to help these students sell their works. We connected artists to buyers, thus giving students publicity and a market channel, allowing them to earn an income and overcome their perception that an artist had to starve for his passion. Our principal outreach effort was an arts exhibition which showcased students' works, generated buyer interest and helped us maintained sales momentum over the year.

Innovation 3: New Resource Combination

As *ArtIntern* was a student-led project, we knew that our enthusiasm was no substitute for the experience and knowledge that we lacked in many areas, whether it was in designing the gallery area or marketing the exhibition. This realization encouraged us to source for partners who possessed complementary core competencies. Through our macro-perspective of *ArtIntern's* objective, we were well-positioned to select and manage capabilities. Although this was achieved through selecting and managing partners, the distinction was important as flexibility gains from strategic sourcing were realized only when partners were chosen for their capabilities, not out of convenience or familiarity.

In integrating our partners' capabilities into *ArtIntern's* ecosystem, we found it useful, where possible, to structure incentives similar to those used in their primary operations even though our event was for a good cause. This allowed them to regard their collaboration with us a core responsibility and not as part of a corporate social responsibility effort peripheral to their organization's purpose. For example, we selected a marketing company to liaise with customers and handle sales. In turn, they received commissions on their sales.

A key challenge facing nonprofits' whose activities generate revenues is the potential for the profit motive to drive out the social motive. If we had managed sales, we could be tempted to push sales to raise commissions at the expense of marketing the event to raise the profile of our students' works. When the two aims conflict, it would have been harder for us to make the appropriate trade-offs were the functions internalized. Thus, the capability sourcing approach helped us step back from the emotional burden of owning capabilities and allowed us to carefully evaluate our responsibilities and objectives.

Other activities outsourced included publicity, which we assigned to a nonprofit specializing in marketing youth events due to its strong networks with schools and other organizations. Transport of artworks and the catering of food for guests were obtained from companies as philanthropic transactions. The technical task of designing and setting up the arts gallery was assigned to an artist experienced in gallery work and who had strong networks with professional arts galleries. Thus, our committee largely played a managerial and coordination role, by deciding who to recruit, and how their individual outcomes contributed to the overall objective. As the project proceeded, we also continued monitoring the performance of partners to ensure accountability and continually consulted them to ensure that our perspectives and interests were aligned. In pursuing a social goal, I believe in aiming for the smallest possible team and the minimal set of tasks to counter the urge to bring more capabilities under the roof by unnecessary and costly expansion. Through sourcing and combining different core capabilities from different sectors, we achieved another social entrepreneurial innovation: implementing the idea through new combinations of resources.

Section 4: Social Entrepreneurship Highly Relevant to Youths

In pursuing our goal to help youths become professional artists, the *ArtIntern* committee functioned as social entrepreneurs and focused on our core competency in innovation. Focusing on our core and sourcing for capabilities elsewhere helped us create a more flexible net entity, as any new changes can be readily met by assembling a fresh set of capabilities. Equally important is how our capability sourcing strategy allowed us to

bridge the arbitrary divide between private and nonprofit sectors by bringing their best capabilities together to serve a social goal. Although the unique process was a valuable learning experience, the long-term impact of *ArtIntern* still remained to be seen. Feedback from artist-participants was positive, with many indicating that they felt more inclined to consider a career as an artist. However, the long-term success must be judged by the numbers who actually become professional artists.

I strongly believe that this social entrepreneurial approach should be adopted by youths in tackling the development issues that excite them as it perfectly matches their strengths and weaknesses. The core competencies of social entrepreneurs are likely to be found in youths. The spark that leads youths to tackle development issues often arise from their exposure to the impact of such issues on their community, such as how *ArtIntern* was initiated by our interaction with the affected arts community. As such, youths often possess localized knowledge leading to their first innovation in defining the social need. Access to this information will also allow them to innovate in creating new solutions.

The third innovation is also highly relevant to youths as a capability sourcing strategy greatly compensates for their inherent weaknesses. While the energy and enthusiasm that youths bring to handling development challenges are admirable, it is no substitute for the technical skills built on experience and institutional memory. However, this should not be a barrier to their desire to make positive change as they can adopt the sourcing approach to combine the core capabilities of both private and nonprofit sectors. Their open minds, bereft of the instinctive biasness that accompany years of work experience in either sector, also allow them to select competencies in a value-neutral way, benefiting development aims with the strengths of both sectors.

I believe that the ground-up approach which I recommended will provide youths with a framework to engage their society effectively. It will help them have greater impact on the development challenge, through building on their key strengths and compensating for their weaknesses. English intellectual Cyril Connolly once called youth a “period of missed opportunities”. I cannot disagree more.

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Finalist

Challenge the Prejudice

Ankai Xu



Finalist Ankai Xu presents her essay

May 28, Tokio, Japan

ABSTRACT

Though women's status has been tremendously improved in China today, discrimination and violence against women remain a prevalent phenomenon. The repressive Chinese culture that inhibits women from appealing rights stands as an obstacle in the effective addressing of the problems. Hence the first task in raising women's status is to create a community culture that freely talks about inhibited issues.

In the beginning of the essay I present three gender-based problems as domestic violence, unsafe abortion and social discrimination to accent the extensiveness and severity of the problems facing women today. An examination through the underlying reasons reveals that the ideology positioning women in inferiority, as well as the cultural taboos that prevents women from speaking up, are intangible instruments of oppression. Hence I conclude that actions should be taken to raise social awareness of the cultural constraints and finally to wipe out the boundaries imposed on women.

In the second part I recalled my experience organizing a campus campaign--"V-Day at Fudan" that aims at raising awareness about women's issues. Despite numerous set-backs and challenges we managed to make the first student-initiated V-Day campaign in China. We adopted the US-based play *The Vagina Monologues* (TVM) as an instrument to encourage reflection over women's identity. By integrating personal experience and China's distinct situations, the localized version of TVM was able to address unique problem of China. A series of conferences and seminars on topics including gender identity, domestic violence, girls' education and female sexuality were also organized under the theme of "what does it mean to be a woman in China". White Ribbon Campaign and donations to rural women NGO were also included as part of the campaign.

The last part of the essay discusses measure to maintain the long-term effect of the campaign. We built up a gender studies association to absorb new members and to maintain force for V-Day organization every year. The influence on participants, audience and the public made the V-Day impact reach far beyond the university scale. Though limited in resource, the success of our campaign inspired a lot of similar women's activities. We originated a model that could be, and actually is replicated by other student bodies. As a final word, the prejudice against woman can be gradually changed with continuous effort to implant an open, equal and tolerant culture into the Chinese society.

Challenge the Prejudice ⁽⁵⁴⁾

Ideas and Actions in Raising Gender Awareness in China

I. The Invisible Constraints

Today, a fair number of people have already acknowledged that a lot of assumptions and beliefs in the Chinese culture are intangible instruments of oppression and manipulation of women, both in terms of the mind and the body. One most well-known example is feet-binding that was widely practiced by Chinese women a century ago. This horribly twisted view of so called aesthetics forced most women at the time to bind their feet within three to five inches long. There were also Chinese women went through rituals degrading one's womanhood like female genital mutilation (FGM), which sadly is still being practiced today at some parts of the world.

True, the physical sufferings imposed on women have been greatly eliminated in the recent century, but women today are still faced with violence, dangers and psychological pains -- A young female in China died of violence between acquaintances but her family encountered great difficulties in seeking justice.⁽⁵⁵⁾ Another girl caught having sex with boyfriend in university lived in shame and despises for years until finally committed suicide. Victim of rapes lived with trauma but never dare to say a word to anyone, fearing to be judged... even though gender equality is reflected in law and employment rates, invisible boundaries are still restricting women from pursuing their full identity.

(54) Thanks to Cecile Cavoizy, Eva Lei and Wu Juan for their tremendous help in the composition of this essay. The V-Day at Fudan campaign cannot be true without the joint effort of all the participants

(55) Huang Jing, a young female dead on Feb. 24, 2004 in a date rape gained national attention, on whether violence between acquaintances are defined as rape.

As follows I would like to present examples as domestic violence, unsafe abortion and social discrimination in an attempt to emphasize the significance of the problems facing women today and to explore the underlying reasons.

Domestic Violence

A recent World Health Organization (WHO) study on domestic violence⁽⁵⁶⁾ reveals that intimate partner violence is the most common form of violence in women's lives - much more so than assault or rape by strangers or acquaintances. In 48 population-based surveys from around the world,⁽⁵⁷⁾ 10-69 percent of women reported being physically assaulted by an intimate male partner at some point in their lives.

One major difficulty in fighting domestic violence is the hardness to identify the scale and depth of it. Also in the WHO study, at least 20% of women reporting physical violence in the study had never told anyone before being interviewed. Domestic violence has been treated as a family issue, not a public issue or an issue of women's rights and dignity, and as a result, many cases have gone unreported.

In China, many women accept violence as a normal part of their life. One survey found violence in 35 percent of marriages, yet only five percent of women said their marriages were unhappy. As a result, victims are reluctant to report incidents of domestic violence, and government administrative bodies at various levels have failed to intervene actively.

Unsafe Abortion

Unsafe abortion remains a significant cause of maternal morbidity and mortality in many developing countries. The World Health Organization's Estimates⁽⁵⁸⁾ indicate that 19 million unsafe abortions take place each year. An estimated 68,000 women die as a consequence of unsafe abortion worldwide.

The problem is especially serious for adolescents: 10 young girls take an abortion every minute in the world. In China, one-third of abortions take place on girls between 18 to 20 years old, and the ratio is climbing at 10% every year. Young girls who resort to abortion put their health and life at risk: researches show that girls below 15 years old bears 25 times risk for death than those above 25 years when going through abortion.

To effectively eliminate unsafe abortion, the prevention of unplanned pregnancies should be the first priority, followed by improving the quality of abortion services. However, in China as well as many other developing countries, education on sex and contraception are highly limited. Adolescent boys and girls learn about sexuality from pornographies instead of formal education, many exercise sex with little knowledge for self-protection.

Prejudice and Discrimination

The United Nations defines discrimination against women as "...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."⁽⁵⁹⁾

Today most women are endowed with electoral rights and political representation, among other political rights. Discrimination based on economic reasons is gradually reduced by policy measures. For example, government set up insurance for female pregnancy and childbearing to reduce female unemployment in labor market. The most difficult part of eliminating discrimination, in my opinion, lies in the social and cultural level, where public prejudice are not easily altered overnight.

A typical Chinese couple features a husband with a higher educational background, a higher income, and a higher political ranking. Hence families and the society at large expect girls to take less education and spend less effort in career, which is intangible limitation for women's accomplishment. Moreover, in rural areas women are regarded as private property of husbands, female child in a family receives less attention and is more likely to be deprived of education, since she will become the property of others sooner or later.

(56) The Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence, 2005, World Health Organization

(57) *World Development Report: Investing in Health*. 1993. World Bank. New York, Oxford University Press

(58) Global and regional estimates of the incidence of unsafe abortion and associated mortality, World Health Organization, 2000

(59) The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), United Nations, 1979

As a conclusion of this part, I contend that social problems as domestic violence, abortion and discrimination against women are deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture. Although women have gained independence in many ways, the ideology that women are inferior to men and should be in subordinate positions in the household and society at large persists. The fact that gender issues and sexual relationship are taboos in public discourse keeps violence and sufferings in silence. Therefore, raise awareness about women's issues plays an urgent role in the effective enforcement of policy and legal measures.

II. The V-Day Initiative

In March 2003 when my peers and I at Fudan University in Shanghai decided to organize a campus campaign to raise awareness about women's issues, the first task we faced was how to refer to the planned events. "Women's Week," a common term for such events would conjure expectations of lectures on beauty tips and flower arranging rather than what we were envisioning: an in-depth exploration of what it means to be a woman in China today.

"V-Day", the international group founded by the playwright Eve Ensler to stop violence against women and girls, came as an inspiration. V-Day was born in 1998 as an outgrowth of Eve Ensler's Obie-Award winning play, "The Vagina Monologues" when hundreds of women told her their stories of rape, incest, domestic battery and genital mutilation. Today, V-Day is a non-profit organization endeavoring to stop violence against women and girls.

What is V-Day at Fudan?

V-Day at Fudan was created to raise awareness about women's issues among Fudan University students and the young women in Shanghai at large. It was designed as a two-week-long campaign featuring a series of lectures and workshops on topics including gender identity, domestic violence, girls' education and female sexuality, as well as the stage-production of *The Vagina Monologues* by Eve Ensler. Due to the outbreak of SARS, the campaign was rescheduled to May 2004.

V-Day at Fudan 2004 turned out to be first V-Day campaign organized by a group of Chinese university students. The activities provided students with opportunities to learn about women-related issues and to engage in in-depth discussions with other students.

Our objectives:

- Raise awareness amongst the students about concepts such as gender identity and sexual discrimination.
- Initiate discussion on women-related issues.
- Help students better access information on women-related issues.
- Gain understanding on the situation of young women in Shanghai today.

Our project:

- Organize seminars on women-related issues, and produce "The Vagina Monologues," by Eve Ensler.
- Encourage students to ask questions, express their thoughts, and engage in in-depth discussion:
- After each event, arrange a questions & answers session and a discussion;
- Throughout the campaign, place an anonymous letterbox where students can comment and ask questions on the activities.
- Distribute leaflets and documents on campus, with facts on women in China and in the world, and where to get help in Shanghai when in need.
- Write a report summing up the campaign's progress and impact on the student community. The report will include a summary of each seminar and a review of feedbacks received from Fudan students.

Overcoming Obstacles

In February 2004 right before our planned V-Day campaign, the commercial performance of “The Vagina Monologues” (TVM) in Shanghai and Beijing was banned the last minute by local authority. We gave considerations to the potential risks of staging TVM at a sensitive time. Our worries and limitations were many: securing a sponsor, getting permissions from school authorities, calling for performers when gender study was just forming at Fudan, finding suitable scholars for the V-Day campaign’s conferences and seminars, so on and so forth.

But for all the opposition encountered, we found an equal, if not greater, amount of support. We were overwhelmed by extremely positive responses and encouragement from local and international women-related NGOs. Individuals from public and private associations offered encouragement, advice, and good-luck wishes. Their belief in our work helped us get through tough times and affirmed the worthiness of our cause.

The four core members of the V-Day organization team, one French girl, one senior student in Sociology department, one Macau girl studying English Literature and me, an Economics student then sophomore, coordinated together in the organization. We shared responsibilities and each take part of the work as internal coordination, publicity, conference organization and external relationships. The diverse composition of us made communication harder but also brought in creative ideas and meaningful sharing.

A post placed on the campus Internet bulletin board system provoked an encouraging response from the student body - more than twenty undergrads, not all of whom were female, got in touch with us to express interest and offer assistance. A former student and now a teacher at Fudan came forward with a proposal to make a documentary film about the process of organizing V-Day. Different in background, the most valuable thing in this group was a genuine desire to explore and share women’s awareness with more people.

For financial resources, we sent out proposals to potential NGOs and companies. A NGO which was a condom distributor devoted in promoting safe sex and AIDS awareness offered to cover our expense. An agreement was made in which we would promote the NGO’s brand of products and the activities expenses would be reimbursed afterward. We also received financial support from individuals.

“The Vagina Monologues” and its Localization

Though composed of an international body, everyone involved in the V-Day campaign at Fudan was committed to staging a performance geared toward a non-native English speaker audience. Since the goal of this TVM performance was to promote higher awareness on the Chinese audience of female issues, it was important to localize the language in order to bring forth our message.

Translating the monologues was no easy task. The frequent use of anatomical terms and slang expressions makes finding Chinese equivalents daunting. The original play was mostly based on women’s experience in US and bears distinct characteristic of American culture. Revisions should be made to adapt to the Chinese context where women’s expression on sexuality is repressive and econ-social difference made women’s problems unique.

Our play took place in a meeting room with stage at a flat level, so that actress walked among the audience and asked about their experiences as part of the performance. The play started with a list of reasons why saying the word “vagina” was important, that the journey to liberate women from fear, shame and violation started by speaking up the unspeakable. The tone of humor and ridicule in the original version was replaced with a tone of urgency to speak up.

Some of the pieces in the script were generated from American background, making it impossible for literal translation. For example “The Little Choochi Snorcher That Could” portraits how lesbian sexual experience led a black girl to explore her sexuality and walk out of shame. Descriptions of the 1970s America scenes and the various vagina names seemed weird for Chinese audience. We replaced the background with an urban Chinese context in which a young woman’s negative image of vagina and homosexuality was gradually replaced with acceptance and appreciation under the influence of same-sex love. The piece, renamed as “Salvation of My Vagina”, was based on real experience of an actress.

Another piece, “My Angry Vagina” was mainly complaints on different sizes of sanitary napkins and medical examinations that all comes from middle class women’s experience. Upon reading a report about the harsh and physically demanding lives many rural women in China lead, and how those women have fallen uteruses, some to the extent that they protrude from the vagina, we did not hesitate to include the part into the monologue. The shocking fact of Chinese women made us feel that they are much more urgent to be addressed.

We wanted to vindicate the rights for vaginas and our female existence, to be acknowledged and be respected. By adding something that was indigenous in the Chinese society, we use the play to inspire our own activities. In fact, the play becomes fully meaningful in a Chinese context when we add our own experiences.

Bu Wei, a famous professor and feminist in China who watched the Fudan play commented later, “I was really impressed by what these young students were able to do... Originally, I wanted to perform TVM in China in order to mobilize young people to take part in activism against violence against women. After seeing how the Shanghai students had put up the play I realized that young people are way ahead and don’t need to be mobilized by anyone else.”

Conferences and Seminars

As part of the V-Day campaign, we organized conferences and seminars as supplement to promote open discussion and recognition about women’s issues. Fudan University professors, official delegates, NGO representatives and hotline employees were invited to give lectures on a certain topic.

1. Domestic Violence

Taking place within the confidentiality of one’s home, domestic violence is especially hard to tackle as it is often regarded as a private matter and is deliberately concealed from outside observers. Victims – generally women – and close relatives or friends are often at a loss as to how to deal with the situation.

The seminar delivered by the head of China’s Anti-Domestic Violence Website presented an overview of the situation in China and paid special attention to ways of helping victims of domestic violence.

2. Female Health

The lack of education in schools causes many people ignorant of knowledge on sexuality and female health. University students, many of whom are practicing sex but lack knowledge as married couples, are one of the most dangerous groups for unsafe sexuality and the resulting health hazards.

A doctor specialized in female health was invited to provide students with knowledge in sexual hygiene, contraception, abortion, etc. Female and male students were both welcomed to join in the lecture.

3. Girl’s Schooling

In Ningxia Province in China, a 13 year-old girl yearns after an education her family cannot afford. She vents her distress in a letter addressed to her mother, who in turn hands it over to a French journalist passing through... here begins the story of Ma Yan. The journalist published Ma Yan’s diary (2002), which was soon translated into five languages and became a bestseller in France, Italy, Belgium and Japan.

Behind Ma Yan’s fairy tale are the harsh reality of rural areas and the fate of young girls who are the first to be sacrificed when difficulties arise. The journalist was invited to deliver a speech on the situation of Girl’s education in rural China today.

4. Gender Identity and Feminism

Does our gender really affect who we grow up to be? Are there certain characteristics that define sex? What exactly is feminism – women power or gender equality?

During this lecture, two university professors provided the tools to unveiling the common misunderstandings surrounding women’s issues, and recognizing the main concepts and arguments involved.

5. Being a Young Woman in Shanghai Today

Educated, promised to a successful career, how do young Shanghai women envision making use of their growing economic and individual freedom? This seminar encouraged women students to share their views on what choices to make in a relationship, on marriage and family planning, on the female body and female sexuality, etc.

The seminar took the form of a workshop: discussion and debate be conducted in a relatively intimate atmosphere, with a group of around 20 students freely addressing issues that affect them directly.

The White Ribbon Campaign

White ribbon is a symbol with which a man swears to stop using violence against women. Originated in Canada, the White Ribbon campaign has a special meaning in China where white is the color of death.

We borrowed this idea and made it in an innovative way. We invited boy students to put their fingerprint on a white banner to claim that “this pair of hands would never beat women”. The activity was very simple, but it is leave impressive message that makes men think about the movement.

Donation to NGO

Taking place in Shanghai, our movement is more or less limited to the issues of metropolitan women, but our concerns reached rural and inner areas of China. By collecting donations on the performance and lecture venues, we raised funds for a NGO named “Rural Women” that helps Chinese rural women, poverty-stricken women in particular, to improve conditions for their production, life, health and education.

The words of an organizer precisely captures the true meaning of the campaign, “V-Day at Fudan taught me how to live beyond my life. My innocent desire to do something meaningful transformed into an explosive force when I met extraordinary partners of conspiracy. Together we mobilized a group of women replete with enthusiasm and talent and created something magical –at least to us—V-Day at Fudan... I am eternally proud of us. We overcame numerous set-backs and challenges and helped one another to grow. Because of the pain of labor, the birth of V-Day campaign became so precious and rendered us a more mature view of life and the world.”

III. The Lasting Impact

V-Day was a two-week campaign that to us seemed evanescent, but the impact it created lasts much longer. The activities influenced participants who would in turn have impact on their friends and relatives. One participant described her V-Day experience as “when you, at last, end the struggle against the inner phantom, break the apparently formidable door, step out of the small, dark room, and see a patch of blue sky.” The “door” is already opened. The V-Day campaign was organized again the next year. In order to secure a continuous V-Day organization body, we registered a student’s association for gender studies. New members were absorbed to maintain a strong force that makes a difference.

With the graduation of former participants, the influences of V-Day are brought to new places. They become journalists, NGO volunteers, government officers or go abroad further pursuing study, the impact of V-Day at Fudan spread to larger people. A girl who later became a magazine journalist wrote a report of women’s movement in China that aroused heated response. Another girl found her occupation in a women’s program in the national TV Station. A US-born Singapore girl told us that the campaign helped her to overcome timidity and she would organize the campaign herself after going back... Or the impact of V-Day is more than that superficial: the woman who has been provoked and inspired would bear confidence of their womanhood for whole life.

Many of the audience were also greatly influenced. One boy told us after the performance that he “had never before thought of the harm and difficulties women encounter because of the atrocities they experience on their bodies.” The play moved him into tears. Another girl post her feelings on campus intranet, “For the first time I am proud of being a woman, for the first time I linked my body, my sexuality with my whole being. I had never before imagined my vagina as this positive and radiant.” Boys and girls influenced by the play would be an enormous power to stop violence and discrimination in their future life.

Our attempt received media coverage from CNN, South China Morning Post and many local newspapers, which helped to expand our ideas and voices. We made video record of our performance and shared it with people, so that the influence of our work is beyond the capacity of a small meeting room. The actresses were also invited to play part of TVM on the international conference on *Chinese Women’s Organizations and Activism in the Twentieth Century*, which stirred heated discussions. With the efforts we were able to maximize our influence on the participants, audience, newspaper readers and video tape watchers, who still keep radiating the impact towards their friends.

The V-Day at Fudan campaign marks the beginning of an outbreak of women's activities in China. One week after the Fudan campaign, another TVM performance was staged at East China Normal University in Shanghai. In 2005 a performance called "She; Monologues" inspired by TVM was produced on Peking University. Not long after Fudan 2005 TVM performance, a production of the Vagina Monologues was displayed in Zhejiang University in Hangzhou. On the International Women's Day, a group of young girls performed the Vagina Monologues in the southeast Guangxi province. Most of them dropouts who returned school under girls schooling project, they created a piece of monologue called 'I want to go to school'.

A Final Word

This essay begins with the observation that the problems concerning women in the contemporary society are ideological in nature. Hence I propose that a campaign to raise awareness about women's issues plays equally important effect as policy or legal measures. Recalling our V-Day at Fudan campaign, I regard it as an effective and replicable module to raise the issues of gender and sexuality to the youth and to welcome a culture that is open, tolerant and free of prejudice.

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Finalist

Victory at the heart of a tomato

Document translated from Spanish to English.

Original title: Una victoria con corazon de tomate

Jose Alejandro Arceo Contreras



*Finalist Jose Alejandro Arceo Contreras makes a presentation of his essay
May 28, Tokyo, Japan*

SUMMARY

The main purpose of the essay entitled *Victory at the heart of a tomato* is to give an account of a successful project that was designed, implemented and assessed by a sociology student. This project consisted of the creation of a cooperative business growing organic tomatoes in Sinaloa, Mexico.

The project, centred on the La Victoria organic farm, contributed notably to providing solutions for the environmental problem of water contamination in Los Mochis, Sinaloa, which, in the future, will allow the cultivation of tomatoes as a viable activity.

However, this was not a business project - its main objective was to achieve assimilation into the community of Central American immigrants in Mexico, because, in Mexico, there are also immigrants who, as in the case of Sinaloa, work hard in the fields, but are not always recognised.

Consequently, the philosophy was that the assimilation of the immigrants is an economic process, because work is the best way in which the native population can assimilate with the immigrants. However, that is not the whole story, since obtaining economic advantages must be accompanied by community work, capable of resolving environmental problems.

Methodologically speaking, the essay's author carried out a preliminary census to find out how many Central American immigrants were working in a leading tomato-growing farm. Then, knowing what was to be the subject of the study, he convinced 50 people to sign up for the project; the process of convincing them involved three stages: identifying the interests of the members of the group, positioning the factors that prevented these interests from being realised and convincing them that, if they strove to realise those aspirations that were part of the project, other higher aspirations would also materialise.

We can pick out one or two of the more significant project conclusions: 1) that we can change the public image of Central Americans in Sinaloa, since they are now more assimilated than prior to the project, and 2) that organic tomatoes, grown hydroponically and irrigated with rainwater, will, in the future, be an alternative to the sparse, pure underground water.

VICTORY AT THE HEART OF A TOMATO

“Anyone who has seen hope, never forgets it”

Octavio Paz

PREFACE

Mexico is not a special country, its size and the bioceanic⁽⁶⁰⁾ coastline, which is the result of its geographic location, alone, when mixed with the economy, converts migration – without doubt one of the most intricate social phenomena of the Twenty-first Century – into a huge paradox. We shall see why below.

Mexico is a major exporter of migrants. Suffice to say that between 400,000 and 515,000 Mexicans move to the North every year⁽⁶¹⁾, with the legitimate hope of finding, in the United States, the stable, well-paid jobs that their own country cannot provide.

However, Mexico’s problem of migration does not end with persons of Mexican nationality. There is also a significant flow of people from Central America – and, to a lesser extent, from South America and the Caribbean – some of the diverse nationalities, who all have the same aim as the displaced Mexicans: to cross the “Cortina de la Tortilla” (= The Tortilla Curtain).⁽⁶²⁾

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Whether or not they are Mexicans, it is evident that not all the people intending to cross Mexico’s northern frontier succeed in reaching their objective, and that for those opting to cross illegally –who outnumber those with migration documents – there are no definite figures to provide evidence of the net balance of success and failure⁽⁶³⁾. Nevertheless, more than definite numbers, many of the people detained by the American Frontier Patrol and returned to Mexico, do not have enough money to return to their places of origin, so that the only avenues open to them are either appealing to human charity (in Tijuana, Ciudad Juárez and other frontier cities there are temporary refuges for migrants, which are run by the Catholic Church and non-religious philanthropic associations), or, perhaps, the possibility of finding employment and then earn enough money to make the return journey.

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On Mexico’s Pacific coast lies the state of Sinaloa⁽⁶⁴⁾: from several analytic perspectives it is an interesting place. In terms of politics and the law, the population of Sinaloa has, for several years, become accustomed to living alongside organised crime, in particular drugs trafficking, which has become, according to the concept used by the Italian lawyer Luigi Ferrajoli, a *savage power*⁽⁶⁵⁾ that can compete on equal terms with the powers formally established in the classic divisions of Montesquieu: Executive, Legislative and Judicial. Its success is thanks to the abundant economic and armament resources of the drugs traffickers, who no doubt “offer Hobson’s choice” – they bribe or murder judges, mayors, police chiefs, parliamentarians, etc.

(60) Mexico stretches from the Pacific to the Gulf of Mexico, an arm of the Atlantic.

(61) One interesting piece of information states that this rate of immigration will remain more or less constant until 2030. Information taken from: P. Huntington, Samuel, 2004, p. 16.

(62) Colloquial name given by the Mexican novelist and historian Carlos Fuentes to the extensive frontier between Mexico and the United States, which, in round numbers, is 3,200 kilometres long (similar to the distance between Paris and Moscow).

(63) Huntington (Op. cit., p. 14) says that, in the past decade alone, the Border Patrol made 12.9 million arrests. It is considered that, in this decade, the migratory flow will stay constant, or even increase, and will then mushroom to the huge frustration of its most unfortunate participants. However, even when you take into account the harshness of the Migratory Law current in the United States since 1997, which imposes the penalty of imprisonment on emigrants returning with illegal intent to cross the frontier, according to the calculations of the Binational Commission between Mexico and the United States, 105,000 emigrants per year succeed in crossing.

(64) One federal government plus the governments of 31 states, 2,435 municipal boroughs and the Federal District basically constitute the political and administrative organisation of Mexican territory.

(65) Ferrajoli, Luigi, 2001.

Drug trafficking, however, has also given rise to a rich popular culture that has created the contemporary myth of Jesús Malverde.⁽⁶⁶⁾ In addition, the stories of “celebrated” drug traffickers can be heard in a great many musical stories called corridos (very popular in Mexico) and some authors, such as the Mexican Élmer Mendoza (*Janis Joplin’s Lover*) and the Spaniard Arturo Pérez-Reverte (*The Queen of the South*), have contributed, in their purple prose, to the aggrandisement of the drug culture.

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Drug trafficking is not, however, the only economic activity in Sinaloa. There is also a booming agriculture sector that grows a lot of tomatoes⁽⁶⁷⁾; so much so that, in the 2005-2006 Autumn-Winter period, 25,768 tonnes will be harvested⁽⁶⁸⁾, the vast majority of which will be exported, as in previous years, to the North American market.

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Of the six farming districts into which the state of Sinaloa is divided, I took the opportunity of living, from January 2000, in one of the larger ones, Los Mochis, which is also the name of a friendly city located in the municipality of Ahome. I arrived as an eager student who was going to put into practice the vast array of theoretical knowledge acquired in the lecture halls of my university.

I then started to study for a Degree in Sociology, which in due course ended satisfactorily. I had a lot of curricular materials, but my favourite was the Development of Social projects, because I knew that its content would afford me a lot of very valuable opportunities: 1) to identify clearly the problems of the community that had received me into its bosom; 2) to go and find viable solutions, and 3) to evaluate precisely the results obtained.

In the agricultural district of Los Mochis, now as then, there are a large number of workers who have come to Sinaloa from other places, especially from the states of South Mexico, who, by definition are the poorest and most backward people in the country. Notwithstanding this, Mexico is a paradox that generates emigrants and receives immigrants, with a large number of people from Central America now living in the fields of Sinaloa, finding it impossible to reach the United States and needing to find a job to survive. Sinaloa is not a frontier state in the true sense of the term, like the neighbouring Sonora, a state that shares a border with the United States.

Due to my inexperience, I had problems in creating a project capable of embracing the over 7,000 hectares that, at that time, were used to grow tomatoes in the area; as soon as I set out my plan of action, I had to reduce it to deal with the existing problems at a tomato farm called La Esmeralda. This was a place of high agricultural productivity, thanks to the workers from South Mexico and also the many Guatemalans, Hondurans and Salvadorians who were working there on piece-work –being paid according to the number of tomatoes that they collected–with no employment contract, no social security and using an unfinished psychiatric hospital as “living quarters”.

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18 years ago, the Government of Sinaloa started the construction of a psychiatric hospital for the state. It was to be in the Los Mochis area, but, due to constant budget cuts, the work was never completed, so that eight years ago the extensive land and the building were transferred to the Asociación Agrícola Mochiteca (Mochis Agricultural Association), who used them for accommodation for the foreign workers of its members, including La Esmeralda.

As in the novel *Essay on blindness*, the workers of La Esmeralda, when they saw them for the first time, had to live in a double, involuntary, legal and cultural seclusion, in a an unused mental hospital. Why?

(66) Considered to be the “patron saint” of drug traffickers, Malverde holds his “court” in Culiacán, the capital of Sinaloa. According to various witnesses, visitors see flowers and candles – as in other religious buildings – as well as golden coins and large weapons, such as AK-47 rifles, known in Mexican slang as goat’s horns.

(67) Known in Mexico as jitomate: a word that derives from xitomatl, which is in turn a word from náhuatl, the language spoken by the ancient Aztecs. It was in Mexico, for certain, that the tomato was grown for the first time. Later, during the 16th and 17th Centuries, the tomato, like many other products native to pre-Columbus America was brought to Europe by the Spanish conquistadores, thus beginning the internationalisation of the vegetable that has a fine name in Italy: *pomodoro* (golden apple) or *love apple*.

(68) www.agronet.com.mx/estadistica/avance.shtm

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Legally, Central Americans in Mexico are very vulnerable vis-à-vis the local migration authorities, who are corrupt and brutal in comparison to their colleagues in the United States. The people flooding in from Central America, although denied the American Dream, nonetheless enjoy working in one of the many mills in North America; but these industries require documents, and so they opt for agriculture, where no papers are required. Mexico's National Institute for Migration⁽⁶⁹⁾ is aware of the problem, but declines to intervene, unless a foreign worker risks leaving either his work area during the day or, at night, the Casa Blanca – as the unfinished mental home is known in the area, because of the colour of its perimeter wall.

Cultural problems became a consequence of the legal problems: since they were unable to move because of the danger of arrest, followed by deportation, the harvesters of La Esmeralda did not leave the city of Los Mochis to go anywhere. This naturally led to a problem of assimilation into the community, since the Mochis community did not fully accept the Central Americans (despite the communal benefit of their work) and the Central Americans, pejoratively known as “suckers”, did not accept assimilation either, because of their migratory status.

I gave myself the ambitious task of ensuring that the community and immigrants were mutually assimilated.

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How does one concretise assimilation? Unlike what happens, for example, in Europe, the Central American immigrants do not use different languages or worship different religions. Like the Mexicans, they speak Spanish and most of them are Catholic. What, then? I had the idea of setting up a cooperative growing organic tomatoes, in which the partners would be some workers from La Esmeralda, whom we could persuade to join my project, all convinced that work was the best way to assimilate the foreign and local communities. The project also had the advantage of tackling an environmental problem in Los Mochis: water contamination.

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For many years, the agricultural businesses of Sinaloa used DDT (dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane) to combat the pests that had affected their crops. It was thought that it was a harmless insecticide, until Rachel Carson demonstrated that the opposite was true in her revolutionary book *Silent Spring*– the precursor, in the due course of time, of the environmental movement. It is clear that none of this had an immediate effect on the Third World, whereas the intensive use of DDT continued in Sinaloa for some 12 to 13 years, when its damaging effects began to appear and it was replaced by HCCPD and other less aggressive insecticides.

Unfortunately, several years of using huge quantities of DDT meant that the water table was contaminated, with water filtering through the roots of the tomato plant; on other occasions, the contaminants entered the rivers directly.

So, the little clean water that could be used for agriculture in the district of Los Mochis was monopolised by the owners of the tomato plantations. My project was in danger of being frustrated and of having to use contaminated water, so that the tomatoes harvested by the cooperative could not be exported to the United States (one of the main aims of the project). This was due to the strict North American regulations to combat “bioterrorism”, a concept that dated from the introduction of meat, fruit and vegetables that “were trying to murder their consumers”, given that there were very high concentrations of various pesticides in these products.

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The wine-growing solution of hydroponics that, as we know, is a cultivation technique based on not using earth, and which provides a good yield when used with rainwater, which, in the end, we adopted as a “form of irrigation from the sky”.

Our hydroponic growing, moreover, was justified because it was installed in the Casa Blanca, which had an extensive surface area of approximately 10 uncultivated hectares. We were able to use the Casa Blanca because, amongst other reasons the commodatum agreement was renewed in favour of the nascent cooperative: La

(69) www.inm.gob.mx

Victoria. The reasons why the new deal was in our favour came directly from the owners of La Esmeralda, who gave us their support on two conditions: not to grow tomatoes in quantities that were competitive and, at the same time, to experiment with new ways of growing, irrigation and marketing.

On the other hand, La Esmeralda did not lose any workers, since anyone becoming part of La Victoria, would do so at its own free rate, above all during the period between the first of September and the middle of November when most of the harvest took place. In the remaining months of the year, they returned to their states of origin, whereas the Central Americans did not – for fear that they would be prevented from re-entering the country across Mexico’s southern border – in most cases, because they had illegally crossed the Rio Suchiate⁽⁷⁰⁾ - and that there was still the danger of their being mutilated or murdered by the members of the Mara Salvatrucha⁽⁷¹⁾

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However, the native residents of Los Mochis eyed the Central Americans with some distrust, since they thought that they housed many Mara members, with whom some scaremongers in the press had lumbered with a huge (although exaggerated) number of mob killings, followed by “satanic and cannibalistic rituals”.

And, although it is true that, of the 50 people who decided to accompany me in the La Victoria project, one eighth were ex-Mara, the final truth is that they were looking to forge a better future in Central America, despite their coloured tattoos – the unmistakable marks of the Mara – which were like scars on their hearts.

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We founded La Victoria with capital from two sources: 50% from the National Fund for Supporting Solidarity Businesses⁽⁷²⁾ and the remainder from contributions from our own partners, whom we had to persuade to transform their savings into productive capital. In this way, we collected 50,000 Mexican pesos⁽⁷³⁾, enough to buy the basics: 200 bat-type plastic receptacles, 30 centimetres deep and 2 metres wide. To these were added the seeds and the first water, bought directly from a purification company, to be replaced by rainwater. The first seeds were a generous gift from the Universidad Autónoma de Chapingo (Chapingo Independent University), well-known in Mexico, mainly because of its agronomic science teaching.

With another part of our seed capital, we purchased the chemical nutrients with which we had to feed the tomato plants, whose roots could obtain nothing from the soil, for the simple reason that this is totally lacking in hydroponic agriculture. In the case of tomato plants, for every 100 litres of water, we had to add 118 grams of calcium nitrate, 49 grams of magnesium sulphate and 29 grams of mono-potassium phosphate.

In the autumn of 2002, we harvested our first crop, consisting of 800 cases of tomatoes free of pesticides and other toxic chemical agents.

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The entire first crop was marketed in Los Mochis, a city that, for the first time, doffed their sombreros before the residents of the former Casa Blanca, not only because of the quality of their produce, but also for their unusual capacity for self organisation, and they turned their backs on the stereotypical and prejudicial images they had of them.

The La Victoria project was not conceived as an entrepreneurial vision. In the beginning, I was not motivated by the desire to earn money, even less in a company that would be owned by all its workers. In reality, my goal was, as I have said before, to construct solid assimilation factors between the community and those who, through necessity, had left their homes and families, and who, little by little, were leaving behind the stigma of the Mara Salvatrucha and, even if I have not referred to it directly, drug trafficking, since, I believe, that for the Central Americans who had had enough of agriculture there was no way out other than offering themselves as mules to transport the drugs produced in Sinaloa.

(70) Marks the frontier between Mexico and Guatemala.

(71) The name for a dangerous and vast gang of youths, most of whose members are Central American lads excluded from employment and education. The Mara Salvatrucha is an international phenomenon, with its members, the mareros, in Central America, Mexico and certain parts of the United States. Rafael Ramírez Heredia has written on this topic in his splendid book *La Mara*.

(72) www.fonaes.gob.mx

(73) Then, approximately equivalent to 5,000 American dollars.

Two main innovations were introduced in La Victoria.

The first consisted of convincing and organising the Central American workers. For this, I used *sociological intervention*, a methodology used by the French sociologist Alan Touraine to analyse various social movements, and with his directive principles “I killed – as they say in Mexico– two birds with one stone”. I carried out an investigation into the Central American immigrants in Sinaloa at the same time as convincing them to improve the community situation in order to improve their own.

Using an accounting principle, I identified the basic interests of the workers at La Esmeralda, which may be summarised in two words: *individual progress*. As I concluded at the time, to progress individually I looked at the young age of the workers⁽⁷⁴⁾ ; they did not have any family commitments – indeed, on the contrary, the break-up of their families was a crucial factor in their determination to emigrate north.

Next, I had to define the point of conflict, which would place obstacles in the way of individual progression, and, if we take all the cases together, show the harvesters that it was the politics of their countries that had achieved pacification by exchanging the principles used the decade for the setting-up of an exclusive economic system concentrating on wealth. “My fathers emigrated to avoid being killed by the guerrillas or the paramilitaries, and I emigrated so that I wasn’t murdered at the hands of the Government”, declared, laconically, a young Salvadorian who was interviewed.

Thirdly came the most complicated issue: to convince the Central Americans about what they were looking for, and that they were defending the social realisation of the basic and higher values, or, in other words, their yearning for individual progress was a response to the irrational Governments of their countries, and the fact (promising) of triumph outside would mean that, in their countries of origin, and in much more, awareness was being raised to try to end the economic-governmental irrationality that rages throughout most of the world.

I then applied myself to *selling* the idea that individual progress could be achieved by founding a business that had no bosses, where all profits would be shared by everyone involved. If my plan succeeded, the Los Mochis community would be better accepting of the Central Americans, all of which would lead to greater social cohesion.

The other innovative aspect of the La Victoria project was seeing the certification of our organic production.

In 2002 we obtained 800 boxes, by 2003 there were 1,200, and it had become almost impossible to market them all in Los Mochis, taking into account the huge amount of tomatoes that there was in the district. So, we agreed to start selling our products in other places, but the lack of certification as organic growers prevented us from doing so. This was a huge limitation for which, fortunately, we found a solution in the Mexico City, concretely in The Green Corner shop, specialising in organic produce, which also had some connected restaurants. As the certification businesses⁽⁷⁵⁾ wanted around 50,000 pesos for awarding the seal of organic products, and this could take up to 36 months. The Green Corner decided to do this free of charge for us over a much shorter period of time, under one condition that they were the sole marketers of the product in the Mexican capital. From that point on, our partners in the capital transformed themselves into a successful certificate-issuing body, since every day brought more worries⁽⁷⁶⁾ and, for them, their offer to their clients had mushroomed.

(74) According to the data from a short census, carried out in La Esmeralda among 1,000 workers 600 of whom were Central American, of whom a majority of the 400 were men and women whose ages ranged from 18 to 24.

(75) Who, in reality, are the intermediaries between grower and marketer. Certifying organic status should be the State’s responsibility, but the private and deregulated growers have taken charge of this in the private sector, which is not always an advantage for a sector that, although continuing to grow, has not yet fulfilled all its potential.

(76) Coming from, above all, farmers of land that is in transition, who allow it to be treated with synthetic fertilisers and, above all, with pesticides.

CONCLUSIONS

In 2004, we achieved a record 1,400 cases of tomatoes, a figure that was equalled in 2005. If the upwards trend continues, the original investors could, by 2006, recover the full amount of their investment and, after then, we would be in profit.

For this to happen, the former Casa Blanca, now the La Victoria Organic Farm, would have to be rent-free, a commodatum, and be transformed into a community property. The final word is with the Sinaloa Government, the current owners, who, in recent negotiations, have given indications that when the current commodatum agreement expires in 2009, they will definitively transfer the land and everything on it.

Another confirmed success is exportation, finally, to the United States, thanks to a native of Sinaloa, who is now based in San Diego, California, and who wants to buy part of the 2006 harvest, a harvest, which, we hope, will increase to around 1,500 or 1,600 cases. It is difficult to penetrate the North American market, but the outcomes are well worth the trouble. We need to apply for various permits and comply with regulations that do not exist in México, and hope to do all this successfully and on time.

And, without any doubt, the most significant result has been that we have demonstrated to everyone that the native Mochis and the Central Americans can be mutually assimilated. Nowadays, all that remains of the “suckers” is a distant memory. The successful experiment of La Victoria that Central Americans who work there can walk into the centre of Los Mochis with their heads held high. Certainly, from time to time the migration authorities formally attend the farm to arrest those whose migratory situation in Mexico is irregular. However, things have changed to such a point that every day, it is Sinaloa voices that demand that the federal Government grant work permits to all those who are non-Mexican nationals and work in the fields of Sinaloa, including those from others states. It is only a question of time before this occurs.

One curious thing: the other growers do not view us with mistrust. Now, they congratulate us on our success – for all the production and marketing – and ask us for advice about what possible organic production.⁽⁷⁷⁾

The former Casa Blanca, on the other hand, has had its main building modified so that it can offer better living conditions, both for the workers of La Victoria and those who do not work there, since, when the property became community-owned, it never closed its doors on people looking for work, whether they were Mexican or not.

Finally, there remains a valuable lesson for the rest of the world, especially those countries with large immigrant populations: assimilation, the possibility of living together inclusive of one’s differences, not forcing immigrants to learn the state language, much less prohibiting them from using religious symbols and dress (as France is doing with young Muslim girls who cannot wear the veil in public schools). The best assimilation comes with work, and work can also bring concrete benefits to communities; benefits that are not always economic.

To young immigrants or the descendants of immigrants, who are faced with problems of exclusion and unemployment, I say that they can benefit from the experiment of La Victoria, knowing that, more than profit and economic success, it is assimilation that must be seen as an exchange of cultures and ideas between the native populations. To reproduce what we did in Sinaloa, my main recommendation would be to tackle the environmental problems facing everyone, since communities are very sensitive in the face of environmental damage, and this can be tackled with innovative solutions, resulting in a positive exchange in the hearts of the most xenophobic of men.

(77) Which would give future viability to the growing of tomatoes, considering that there will be less pure water in the world in the years to come.

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