

# The CRS Justice Lens Case Studies:

REFLECTIONS ON JUSTICE, SOLIDARITY AND PEACEBUILDING IN CRS PROGRAMMING



**EDITORS:**

Jaco Cilliers

Robin Gulick

**AUTHORS:**

Europe Regional Office – Melinda Burrell

South Africa Regional Office – Daniel Deng

East Africa Regional Office – Paul Rutayisire, Freddy Mutimura

South Asia – Robin Gulick, Patricia Gokhale

Southeast Asia/Pacific Regional Office – Myla Leguro

Latin America/Carribbean Regional Office – Rick Jones

Headquarters – Claire Mc Guigan

**CONTRIBUTORS:**

Sanda Ricktman, Greg Auberry, Ian MacNairn, Ratna Khare, Lotika Massey, Eda Detros, Mark Pierce, Pat Johns, Nora Navos

**“BLESSED ARE THE  
PEACEMAKERS  
FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED  
CHILDREN OF GOD”  
*(Matt 5:9)***

**I**n the Christian tradition, the impetus for building a culture of peace flows from the mandate to respect the human dignity of all people and the belief in the love God has for us all. Similarly, in Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and many other faith traditions, building peace is a fundamental tenet.

At CRS, our engagement in justice and peacebuilding as an integral element of our programming results from a deep reflection on the values that give us our purpose and the beliefs that underlie our mission. In a reflective process that began in the early 1990's, we found that when we did not look at our fundamental values, our programming actions were devoid of true purpose. We were undertaking activities without looking at the basic injustices that continued to characterize many societal and personal relationships.

Consequently, in 1996 we adopted the “Justice Lens” as a framework to integrate our beliefs and values more consciously into our programming. We now apply a justice perspective to all that we support and do. We know seeking justice and peace is a necessary element of integral human development.

Learning from our experience helps us improve the quality of our response in programming. This compendium of experience is meant to stimulate reflection and hopefully better ways to undertake our mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Hackett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ken Hackett



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# INTRODUCTION

In the late 1990s, CRS staff embarked on a journey to discover how the agency could expand the scope of programming in order to address injustices as well as deliver aid to the poor and marginalized. CRS had always been extremely effective in poverty reduction and emergency relief work. However, as conflicts began to devastate communities throughout the regions in which CRS worked, the agency felt it was important to examine the way its development programming could better address the root causes of injustice fueling many of these conflicts. The agency decided to look at all of their programming from a justice perspective and consequently adopted the “Justice Lens.”

In March 2001, representatives from each region came to Baltimore to speak on each of the case studies and share experiences applying the justice lens to programming. Throughout the workshop, lessons identified in the cases were explored and recommendations for the agency were proposed. Four overarching suggestions, reflecting the lessons learned and needs identified, were highlighted.

- **Clarity of Strategy:** CRS must articulate a clear vision for how to connect local and systemic change processes.
- **Implementation of a Process Framework for Change:** CRS must shift from a project-driven mindset to a just-change and process-oriented framework for strategic action.
- **An Understanding that Transformation Happens through Relationships:** CRS must act on the recognition that our capacity to effect structural change is enhanced through working in relationship with others who share our vision and commitment.
- **A Holistic Approach to Action:** As expressed in Catholic Social Teaching, CRS should incorporate solidarity, peace and justice components into programming design.

Other recommendations revolved around advocacy, staffing and resource allocation. In order to address the structural causes of injustice, CRS should develop an agency-wide strategy and empower staff to use and adapt it to their specific contexts and challenges. The agency must consider justice principles when making decisions on funding future justice and peacebuilding programming.

A commitment to address these recommendations will assist the agency in becoming more fully engaged in pursuing its vision of working for peace and justice, alleviating poverty and encouraging solidarity between communities in the U.S. and overseas.

*Most of the cases included in this volume were written between 1997 and 1999. CRS felt it was important to capture these studies and share them within the agency and beyond. Many of the lessons are as relevant today as they were then. The cases have not been updated but are included here in their original form.*



# E U R O P E

## Supporting the Reintegration of Minority-Group Returnees into War-Torn Communities

### BACKGROUND/HISTORICAL CONTEXT

After nearly four years of war, the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement ended fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Bi-H). The devastating war destroyed communities throughout Bi-H physically, socially, economically and morally. Two ethnically defined entities were established in the Dayton Agreement as the constituent parts of Bi-H: the Bosnian Federation and the Republika Srpska. While these two entities are coming together in some ways, reconciliation remains a long and difficult process.

CRS has been active in the country since 1993, when it provided food, clothing and other emergency assistance to the besieged citizens of Sarajevo. By 1996, CRS joined international efforts to support war rehabilitation, democracy and development in Bi-H under the terms of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Since then CRS/Bi-H has undertaken activities in both entities to support the return to productive peaceful lives for the citizens of Bi-H.

CRS projects work to restore multiethnic communities on a sustainable basis, and to alleviate suffering among extremely vulnerable individuals. CRS/Bi-H works equally with Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats and minority groups such as the Roma and reached an estimated 60,000 beneficiaries in 2000. As the country moves away from emergency relief and toward development, CRS/Bi-H is helping to build local capacity to address social problems as international attention and funding decrease.

## JUSTICE ISSUE ADDRESSED

In implementing these projects, CRS/Bi-H attempts to promote right relationships in severely conflicted communities. Reuniting communities into a healthy whole requires investment not only in housing and infrastructure but also in building the skills and will of people who remain. The process of providing assistance therefore is as important as the projects themselves, and CRS/Bi-H has been careful to develop a methodology for project development and implementation which encourages right relationships.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

For the past several years, CRS/Bi-H has used the decision-making mechanism of multiethnic community working groups which bring together municipal officials and NGO representatives, displaced population leaders and heads of households in order to make joint decisions about community priorities. Groups typically have 6-8 participants, meet every two weeks, are intended to be task-focused and are chaired by a CRS/Bi-H staff person.

Almost immediately, this mechanism allows CRS/Bi-H to be relevant and effective in the local context by implementing projects which have been influenced by the community. Longer term, this participatory methodology creates habits for continued, respectful, productive cooperation between the various ethnicities, professions and social groups which comprise the community.

## PROCESS

The working group methodology has been developed over several years. From its earliest emergency relief efforts in the country, CRS has sought to work with local partners. As the Dayton Peace process progressed into late 1995,

CRS/Bi-H saw a greatly expanded role for itself, helping to rebuild and reintegrate communities, and initiated the procedural mechanism of local working groups. By 1996, CRS/Bi-H was using the working group model to implement reconstruction projects and food distribution, and within a year, several principles guided this work:

- Local capacity and ownership had to be built through programming that explicitly uses a transparent and representative methodology;
- All local actors, including the ethnic majority, had to be given a voice in the process of minority return;
- A process of inclusion was emphasized as a necessary precondition for reconciliation.

The working group played a key role in helping to decide on which program sectors to focus. Options included economic revitalization, shelter and infrastructure repair, small-scale community development grants, family liaison services for people considering return and microfinance credit options. The purpose was to aid the community as a whole in order to lessen tensions between returnee and resident communities. Overall, CRS/Bi-H was able to make a commitment to the entire community rather than to individual projects and thereby generate a higher level of interethnic activity. This approach continued into 2001.

The justice nature of this methodology has been developed in an intuitive, rather than explicit, process. In part this is because it was developed in Bi-H before the Justice Lens was promoted worldwide by CRS. Perhaps more significant is the fact that, having lived through a civil war, CRS/Bi-H staff was already acutely aware of justice issues as permeating both their work and their lives. In many ways, the Justice Lens has given CRS/Bi-H staff both language for thoughts they already had, as well as legitimacy for the respectful,



participatory and transparent methodologies which they instinctively pursued.

This methodology has been informally assessed over its lifetime. Despite the lack of a formal evaluation with all working groups and other community members, in the last half of 2000 a series of evaluative workshops was held with relevant CRS staff. Results of this process are included in the “Implications for Future Programming” section.

## CHALLENGES

While offering benefits of inclusion, community dialogue and local political legitimacy, the working group methodology has also encountered many challenges in its development and implementation. Overall, there is still a lack of equality and mutual respect between communities.

### Cooperation

One of the major challenges has always been cooperation between local actors, bitterly divided in this post civil war setting. In some areas, people of the different ethnicities are reluctant to be in the same room together, let alone discuss ways to prioritize community needs. This is due not only to specific war experiences of participants, but also to a general lack of information. Anti-return propaganda is rampant and makes potential returnees, as well as receiving communities, reluctant to cooperate. Therefore, much coaching and coaxing is required to get people to see the benefits of interethnic cooperation.

Another axis of mistrust is between government and citizen groups. Most government officials initially are dismissive of, or threatened by, NGOs. Similarly, NGOs often treat government officials with equal suspicion, seeing them as politicians out for their own gain or the advantage of their party. Thus, the lack of constructive links between governmental

and non-governmental sectors is a hurdle in the working group process. CRS/Bi-H addresses this by modeling respect for both sectors and by providing a cooperative forum in which mutual respect can grow.

### Local Ownership

Another challenge is to create a sense of ownership of the process amongst CRS local partners. The communist legacy, combined with cynicism bred of civil war and ongoing corruption, is a tricky foundation upon which to build ideals of democratic and accountable participation in community life.

In some situations, donor requirements force consideration of a certain sector of activities or a certain type of beneficiaries. The donor, and therefore CRS as its implementing partner, shapes a large portion of the conversation about priorities, lessening, though not excluding, the voice of community representatives.

Staving off the possibility of corruption is the flip side of the problem of creating a sense of ownership. Working group members are tasked not only with developing project ideas but also with creating lists of beneficiaries to participate in these projects. They also are called upon to suggest contractors and suppliers to implement parts of projects. Working group members sometimes fill beneficiary lists with family and friends; worse, some have been accused of accepting money to put names on the lists. Mutual accountability is key to project success.

While CRS/Bi-H checks all beneficiaries to ensure they meet the criteria of any given project, it also seeks to create a climate of fairness and honesty amongst working groups. Mostly this is done by trying to ensure transparency of decision-making by involving all working group members and inviting others into working group proceedings as observers. The more public

the proceedings, the greater the community confidence is in the process and the fewer the opportunities for nepotism or corruption.

### **Representation of the Wider Community**

Representation is another area where the divide between municipality members and NGOs can become difficult. In some cases, working groups tend to involve more municipality members than NGOs or Displaced Population representatives. In part heavy municipal participation is necessary because it provides CRS with the needed political mandate and facilitates approval of projects and procedures. However, this composition leads to an imbalance within the community. A challenge for CRS/Bi-H is to include these under-represented groups so that compromises emerging from the working groups are not seen by minority groups as favoring the majority group.

### **Community Working Skills**

For many working group members, this is the first time they have been called upon to identify and prioritize needs of an entire community. Many therefore lack the listening, representing and negotiating skills required to work effectively in groups such as these. Each working group meeting can, and should, be taken as an opportunity to model efficient and accountable group process. As the group matures, more responsibility can be passed to them. For example, bidding and tender procedures, which previously were managed tightly by CRS, can be shifted, with proper supervision, to working group members. CRS, therefore, should put more emphasis on training working group members in these skills as well as modeling good group work practices.

### **CRS Staff Facilitation Skills**

It is difficult to oversee the work of groups such as these – with diverse and sometimes antagonistic partners performing tasks for which many have not been trained. This role requires diplomacy, sensitivity, leadership and organization. With the rapid expansion of CRS programming, however, not enough attention has been given to the CRS staff chairing working groups. In many cases, staff have not been provided with facilitation skills or mentoring for this portion of their responsibilities. This should be addressed through facilitation training for CRS staff as well as other reference material such as written guides for carrying out this function.

### **ACHIEVEMENTS**

Again, the most significant successes of this methodology lie in reforming community relationships into those which enable concerned, competent individuals to work together to shape the future.

### **Cooperation**

Building the ability to identify and address community needs in a constructive, communal manner is a major goal of the working group process. However, this goal is difficult to measure. Evidence of success is therefore more anecdotal than quantitative.

One of the best examples of success comes from the local community of Vares, whose prewar population was mainly Croat. During the war, the few Serbs left and fighting began between Croats and Bosniaks. Massacres occurred on both sides, and by the end of the war the area was largely Bosniak but with a significant Croat population, especially in surrounding villages. CRS/Bi-H began working in Vares in 1996 when election results were

not yet implemented and the Office of the High Representative prohibited work in the region. At the time, the Bosniak and Croat mayors refused to talk to each other, let alone sit in the same room.

CRS/Bi-H followed its relatively new methodology and established a multiethnic community working group. Initially the group included the two mayors, a local Catholic priest and a number of hard liners. During the first few meetings, members listed their grievances and refused to listen to one another. However, the hard liners then removed themselves and more relevant people were nominated. The mayors remained on, having developed a more cordial working relationship.

Vares working group meetings became less contentious, although difficult issues recur. Recently, there was strong disagreement over whether or not to integrate a Croatian and Bosnian high school. The two schools shared space but not curriculum, and all members of the working group urged CRS to work with both schools lest the children of one ethnicity be sidelined in an attempt to punish the parents and administration for their pursuit of this policy of exclusion. This growing cooperation stemming from a working group is most dramatic in Vares but has been repeated many times around the country.

Another example of great cooperation resulting from the working group process was a “summit” held in the summer of 2000. Established working groups in three different municipalities spanning the two ethnic entities decided to hold a joint meeting to discuss common return issues, and to explore areas of cooperation. Two such meetings were held, allowing members of different groups to establish or strengthen relationships with their counterparts in different municipalities. This cooperation does much to facilitate the return of families across ethnic lines.

## **Effectiveness**

CRS uses the working group methodology to acquire the local knowledge needed to make projects sustainable and effective. By contrast, many other organizations have few conversations with local leaders and prefer to develop projects through an internal process. CRS working group members are consulted frequently on project ideas and beneficiary lists. Living in the community, working group members know the everyday details of town life and therefore are able to help gauge a potential beneficiary’s true interest in returning much more accurately than CRS would be able to on its own.

## **Capacity Building**

By modeling transparent, accountable and representative methodology, CRS is able to demonstrate a problem-solving approach to the communities in which it works. It adheres to standards of professionalism – from involving many parts of the community in project development to conducting open and well-documented financial processes, from preparing and circulating minutes of meetings to resolving disputes between working group members. These procedures become models for municipal and NGO representatives alike and shape the way they conduct future projects of their own.

## **Ownership**

One of the best testaments to the effectiveness of this mechanism is when a community describes “its” projects rather than “those of CRS.” The working group summit was an example. After the first few sessions, which were facilitated by CRS, the working groups decided they wanted to continue the process on their own without involving CRS. With ever dwindling international funds, local initiatives to sustain activity become increasingly important. The

working group mechanism is one way in which CRS/Bi-H leaves a legacy of community activism and self-reliance.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### Key Insights

The working group methodology is extremely effective in providing the space for reconciliation at the personal as well as community level. Jointly developing and implementing projects for the benefit of a whole community is a powerful way to build teamwork amongst rival factions, be they ethnic or professional. It is also an effective teaching tool, allowing CRS to demonstrate transparent, representative, accountable and inclusive processes which communities can use to their advantage in the future. Members have been carefully chosen, however, to balance ethnic perspectives as well as to provide professional expertise and guidance for CRS programming concerns.

However, this methodology also requires a donor willing and able to invest in an entire community and its development, rather than solely in individual projects. Donors are not always willing to allow the implementing partner such procedural space. The time constraint poses problems for working group development. In the case of Vares, working group members were able to go through a long process of airing their grievances before moving to a cooperative relationship. Additionally, one year mandates can interrupt in early stages what should be a long-term conversation about community priorities and how to address them first with international funds and increasingly with local resources.

### Implications for Policy Making and Future Programming

A benefit of this methodology is its wide

applicability. The current CRS/Bi-H Parent-School Partnership methodology uses similar principles of participation and inclusiveness. It has taken the further step of providing specific training for new Parent-School council members in needs assessment, proposal development and conflict resolution. CRS would benefit from considering other sectors or regions in which this community involvement mechanism could be applied.

Above all, this process is time consuming and labor intensive. It takes time to assess potential members and explain the mechanism to them. It takes time to train both CRS staff as well as chosen local partners in the skills needed for truly effective group work. It takes time to build trust and respect in a collection of individuals who usually have more reasons for suspicion than cooperation. It takes time to accurately and inclusively assess a community's needs and to address them. For this reason, this mechanism is not suited to emergency work or any project requiring rapid response to changing ground conditions. Preparatory work can be done, however, on improving interethnic and intersectoral communication.

A permutation of the working group methodology is being developed now in response to the "spontaneous returns" which became a regular feature of the political landscape in 2000. In cases where groups of people suddenly arrive at their prewar location to ready the remains of their old houses for reconstruction or to begin vegetable gardens as a means of subsistence, CRS/Bi-H cannot take months to get a working group functioning to advise on priorities and possible solutions. Rather, a series of quick decisions must be made about how best to meet the needs of the returnees.

In these situations, CRS/Bi-H has been convening a "distance working group" of municipal and NGO/Displaced Person

leaders. A form of shuttle diplomacy is used, often bringing mayors or municipal leaders to a return site for the first time. CRS staff then form a physical link between different persons, even though regular working group meetings are not convened. As the project progresses and trust builds amongst parties, communication can become less formal. At this point, it is possible that three or four local leaders be canvassed by telephone about project possibilities and decisions. In this way, a faster response is generated, while still retaining some of the local mandate and local knowledge which create stronger projects. “Spontaneous return” is likely to continue in spring and summer of 2001, so CRS will look for other ways to achieve the benefits of the working group methodology while reducing the preparation time necessary.

Spurred by the need to reevaluate the working group mechanism in the light of changing political conditions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, CRS/Bi-H recently held a series of internal meetings to analyze strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of this mechanism. The findings were as follows:

- Membership in working groups should not be regarded as fixed. Rather, it should be explained up front that it is an open and flexible mechanism open to all who can help the process. Participation can and should change over the course of projects.
- For “old style” working groups, where CRS/Bi-H has the luxury of time in which to develop strong groups, a training or workshop could be held with each to help them identify and develop skills for potential spin-off possibilities such as working-group summits.
- For “new style” working groups, where deadlines and political issues prevent us from forming traditional working groups, the focus should be on building the skills of the CRS/Bi-H staff member facilitating the process so that he or she can model good community development process. The goal of political legitimacy is met as long as the municipality is represented/involved.
- CRS/Bi-H should provide clear, written criteria about beneficiary selection to the working group at the start of the process, and should make clear to the working group its own benefit in assisting with informal project monitoring.
- CRS chairpersons should maintain a high level of professionalism to model for the community. This includes keeping minutes, developing and sharing an agenda in advance, informing working group members in advance, etc.
- Working groups should be considered for wider and more explicit peacebuilding strategies. Because they include community leaders, they are an important audience for peace and reconciliation activities.
- The CRS chairperson must be aware that he or she is representing all of CRS/Bi-H, not just a particular sector or project. This affects how information is gathered from staff before a meeting and passed back to staff following a meeting, etc.
- Diplomatic/facilitation skills should be a top priority in selecting who is to chair a working group. CRS/Bi-H should provide training to supplement these skills.
- A workshop with current working group chairpersons should be held to exchange practical information about how they prepare for meetings, gather information and report back to

colleagues, what skills they need training in, etc.

- Written guidelines should be developed about working group formation, activities, etc. as well as expectations of working-group chairpersons.

## CONCLUSION

In order to promote right relationships, particularly in a post-conflict setting such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, a carefully developed process is a valuable tool. Convening diverse community representatives in democratic consultation and decision-making procedures allows CRS to model possibilities for continued cooperation once it leaves the area. Careful selection and training of those representatives, as well as of CRS staff involved in the project, is crucial to the depth and breadth of impact the project will have.



# LATIN AMERICA/ CARIBBEAN

## **Conflict Transformation in the Justice and Peace Commissions: A Case Study on Moving toward Structural Change**

### INTRODUCTION

Through justice programming in Nicaragua, CRS and the local Catholic Justice and Peace Commissions (referred to as CJP or Peace Commissions) have worked together to create concrete changes in people's lives, empowering people and improving the relationships between civil society organizations and state institutions. From 1997–2000, the Peace Commissions broadened their mission to “build sustainable peace in a deeply divided, impoverished society by engaging in a process of social transformation based on Catholic Social Teaching.” They developed this mission in part as a response to the challenge of dealing with particular violent conflicts but also to address the deeper economic and political factors which have maintained structural injustice in Nicaragua. This case study will present how the Peace Commissions have gone about realizing this mission, the challenges they have faced and the valuable lessons that have been learned in the process. Rather than pick one particular justice issue, the study attempts to examine how the Peace Commissions have evolved in response to the fundamental challenge of treating particular conflicts, while also addressing the structural causes of injustice.

Given the diversity of conflicts in the country, the Peace Commissions may deal with issues ranging from serious human rights violations to common crimes such as cattle rustling.



## BACKGROUND/HISTORICAL CONTEXT

On July 16, 1996, Ana Rivas was severely beaten by a group of armed men near her home in the rural community Ojo de Agua in Nueva Segovia. Mrs. Rivas identified two of her assailants. Eventually she was found, taken to a nearby hospital, and after two days, released. Upon her release, she was arrested by the local police chief at the request of one of the persons she identified as her assailant.

Between 1988 and 1997, this kind of violence had become endemic to rural Nicaragua. While the post-war peace process had achieved a substantial measure of progress, international support for conflict was removed, national leaders enjoyed a certain degree of legitimacy, and two elections and reforms for universal suffrage had occurred, the population in Northern and Central Nicaragua continued to suffer from violence and human rights abuses. Despite the demobilization of ex-combatants from 1990–1997, the presence of rearmed groups continued to be one source of violence and insecurity. In these areas, three types of rearmed groups had been identified. Those acting for political or ideological reasons; those pressing for compliance with the 1990 peace accords; and those sinking into criminality and banditry.

Frequently, local authorities also used violence or abused their authority for personal vendettas. In Mrs. Rivas' case, the police chief arrested her. He had been seeking revenge on one of Mrs. Rivas' sons with whom he had been in a fight two months prior. She was picked up and held for 24 hours until her son took her place in jail. He then spent ten days in jail for disorderly conduct.

Mrs. Rivas was unable to afford a lawyer for her son or herself. A single mother, Mrs. Rivas supported six children between the ages of 8 and 22, selling

fruits and vegetables in the surrounding countryside. Her husband had left her years before, and like many rural women, she lacked formal education. Only her brothers inherited her family's land. Mrs. Rivas' family situation reflects the markedly polarized social structure in which the majority of the population has unsatisfied basic needs. In 1996 in Nicaragua, the poorest 10% received less than 1.5% of the national income while the wealthiest ten percent received nearly 40%. Nicaragua is also the second most food insecure country in the Western Hemisphere and fourteenth in the world. For poor rural families, unstable property laws, titling procedures and deficient land registry continue to undermine the ability to meet basic needs. This situation of poverty underlies human rights abuses and individual conflict and is one of the principal causes of violence.

The challenge for resolving this situation was to link the resolution of local conflicts with their underlying causes. By 1997, middle-range actors—NGO, churches and grassroots peace commissions—had begun to respond to this challenge by increasing the acceptance of non-violent settlement of conflicts and by working to promote respect for human rights. Among the organizations responding to this challenge were the Catholic Church diocesan Justice and Peace Commissions, CRS' main counterpart for their civil society and human rights program. In July 1997, CRS was invited by the Bishops and donor USAID to begin working with the Peace Commissions in four dioceses covering over 50 municipalities.

The initial two-year project "Consolidation of Peace and Human Rights" focused on promoting and protecting human rights and conflict resolution at the community level. The Peace Commissions addressed two principal issues:

- Filing complaints and claims related to human rights violations;



- Dealing with the widespread use of violence to resolve differences.

Understanding the work of the Peace Commissions must also mean taking into account the effect of the October 1998 Hurricane Mitch. The hurricane devastated Nicaragua, revealing its social, economic and environmental vulnerability. During the crisis stage of the disaster, the Peace Commissions used their organizational network and capacity to rescue victims, organize IDP shelters, distribute material and food aid and coordinate with other organizations, local authorities and the civil defense force to ensure the responsible and transparent use of the assistance. With the support of CRS, the Peace Commissions were saving lives, rebuilding livelihoods and strengthening civil society. These actions had three effects: 1) an increase in the credibility of the Peace Commissions in the eyes of the population; 2) an increase in membership and strengthening of the Peace Commissions network; and 3) direct interaction with local authorities other than the police and the military.

The experience of taking action in response to Hurricane Mitch and the planning process begun after the internal evaluation resulted in the development of a new project: “Building Capacity for Citizen Advocacy and Protection of Human Rights.” The new project that was developed maintained the objective of the protection and exercise of human rights, with an emphasis on the administration of justice, and added building citizen capacity for advocacy and participation in local decision making to deal with issues of injustice and fostering right relationships.

### THE JUSTICE ISSUE ADDRESSED

Individual acts of violence, crime and institutional violence like those described in the case of Mrs. Rivas were widely perceived

as the most effective means to solve differences. State institutions lacked the capacity to address rearmend groups or redress grievances. Frequently they were involved in violating human rights. These failures of political institutions led to their lack of credibility. Poor persons like Mrs. Rivas had very little recourse to the administration of justice for resolving direct violence, much less for resolving the fundamental issues underlying human rights abuse and the issues that contributed to poverty. These same institutional failures contributed to the continuing use of violence as a means to settle disputes. The social fabric of trust broke down as the state and individuals lost credibility.

In these overwhelming conditions of poverty, failing political institutions and widespread use of violence, CRS programming began to look at how to address the structures which contribute to violence and abuse and the continuing powerlessness of individuals with regard to state institutions. The Peace Commissions wanted to address the “issue” of justice within this conceptual framework or structure.

### DESCRIPTION OF STRATEGY, ACTIVITIES AND PROCESS

The strategy pursued by CRS/Nicaragua was to develop a structure capable of dealing with specific conflicts and structural issues by building local capacities and changing the relations of power. This was done by focusing on specific conflicts and building on the experience and concrete results gained in resolving them to address the deeper root causes of injustice. The following is a description of that process.

In August 1997, an initial participatory diagnostic was conducted to look at the problems faced by the Peace Commissions. The justice focus pushed CRS and the Peace Commissions to deepen their analysis of the problems

they confronted and broaden their scope of work. During the first three months, the project focused on organizing leaders at the municipal and community level to work with the Peace Commissions. Meanwhile CRS worked with the coordinators, defining how the current mediation activities and human rights verification could better address the root causes of the problems faced by communities.

In order to address the attitudes and behaviors of participants and the general population, CRS staff employed two strategies: 1) conversations and workshops with counterpart staff on attitude and behavior; and 2) development of training materials which addressed specific attitudes and behaviors in need of change that were identified by counterpart staff.

CRS staff began by collecting observations from promoters and counterpart staff on prevailing attitudes through conversations, monitoring visits to counterparts and in monthly counterpart meetings. It was determined that there were two specific, prevailing attitudes: Intolerance and narrowly defined interests. Since the basic concept of human rights was generally accepted and was a main activity of counterparts, CRS emphasized the universality of human rights and the need to be “inclusive” in meetings, workshops and visits with counterpart staff. CRS staff assisted counterparts in defining who could participate in the Peace Commissions. In the end it was defined as anyone willing to work for the defense of human rights on a “non-partisan” basis. This process took place over the first eight months of the project.

In January 1998, the first training on Mediation and Dialogue was held. CRS, in conjunction with a national consultant, designed the training, which focused on the principle of establishing dialogue and the techniques for mediation at the community level. The principle of establishing dialogue influenced the

Peace Commission of Esteli to reevaluate how they were dealing with their work on human rights verification. Illegal and arbitrary detentions had become standard practice by the police but rather than just denounce police violations, the training inspired the Peace Commission to engage the police in a forum on Citizen Security and the Protection of Individual Rights.

This event established an important space for dialogue, and relationships and power relations were changed. The success of the forum in Esteli later became a model for other regions working to develop agreements and establish permanent dialogue with state institutions.

The internal evaluation conducted between May and June 1998, marked a major turning point in the direction of the Justice and Peace Commissions. Although the project design did not include a formal mid-term evaluation, counterparts and CRS staff agreed that some systematic reflection on the progress of the Peace Commissions was essential. The evaluation was conceived as a participatory process, to gather information from project beneficiaries, promoters and staff on the strengths and weaknesses of the project and to provoke a deeper reflection on how to address the deeper structural issues of injustice.

The internal evaluation systematized the experience of promoters and analyzed underlying social, political and economic problems. What emerged from this reflection process was that the Peace Commission promoters had built up an important credibility in the eyes of the communities and local authorities and that promoters could use their new legitimacy to be more proactive in dealing with the underlying causes of violent conflict. The level of credibility gained was attributed to the non-partisan ethic of the promoters in favor of human rights and the effective response to local conflicts.

The reflection on the root causes of conflict and the concepts of Justice in Catholic Social Teaching (CST) led the Peace Commissions to develop a mission statement and define four program areas each with its own objectives. The mission was defined as “build sustainable peace in a deeply divided, impoverished society by engaging in social transformation based on Catholic Social Teaching.” Four areas of work were determined – Promotion, Human Rights Defense, Organization and Conflict Resolution, each of which had its own specific objective. In the area of “Promotion,” the Peace Commission defined its objective as fostering conscious action for transformation toward a culture of peace. In the area of “Human Rights Defense,” in addition to the verification of human rights violations and denouncements, the Peace Commissions decided to work to foster the respect of social and economic rights and to advocate to influence laws, policies and the administration of justice. In the area of “Organization,” the Peace Commissions decided to focus on relationship-building between state institutions and civil society organizations. With regard to “Conflict Resolution,” the objective was changed from solely providing mediation services to fostering social transformation toward a culture of non-violence.

The initial training material on human rights was directed toward the general sense of fear and the use of violence. Initial materials began with a reflection on human rights. In the context of local problems, participants in workshops were invited to become members of the Peace Commissions and to begin working in their community to identify human rights violations, file complaints and continue learning more about defending human rights.

The justice concepts reflected in training materials ranged from biblical quotes to

explicit references to commutative, distributive and social justice. They were key to a deepening awareness of underlying structural injustice and changing attitudes toward social transformation. (It is important to note, however, that the language of transformation was not explicitly used because it was associated with the revolutionary rhetoric of the Sandinistas and was rejected by a large part of the rural population.) Training in mediation techniques gradually gave way to discussing the structural elements of violence and conflict which later led to looking at community self-help and advocacy as techniques for addressing issues of social injustice and building right relationships.

From the beginning of the work of the Peace Commissions, the promotion and protection of human rights has been at the forefront of their activities. Through the course of the projects with CRS, there has been a qualitative leap in the conception of what human rights verification is and how it has permeated the work of the Peace Commissions. As expressed by one of the Peace Commissions lawyers, “Just three years ago, we verified human rights and looked for the villains with a vengeful attitude and under a concept of the penal code. Whenever an individual official acted, whether or not in representation of the institution, we sought to blame the institution. What we have learned is that high quality human rights verification is first and foremost a search for the truth.”

Between October 1998 and February 2001, the Peace Commissions have participated in five workshops on verification of human rights. Through the workshops, the Peace Commissions began developing a catalogue of procedures for verifying human rights violations and establishing the truth regarding a particular case. Establishing the truth is quantitatively and qualitatively different than seeking the evidence to punish a criminal. Cases were no longer “assumed” by promoters

but they began to “accompany” victims and officials in the search for the truth. They began to seek institutional patterns and responsibilities as well as individual ones. This has allowed the Peace Commissions to begin to identify the failures in political institutions and seek to improve how they work.

This process was also affected by the new contact that Peace Commissions were undertaking with municipal authorities and other local community members due to Hurricane Mitch. This new aspect of their work accelerated the coordination and dialogue processes that had recently been initiated. The effects of the disaster thrust the Peace Commissions into the role of ensuring transparency and beginning to assist affected communities in defining unmet needs and prioritizing actions within a development and rehabilitation context, adding to their initial role as human rights promoters and defenders.

A larger advocacy process also took place at the municipal level. In June 2000, the Peace Commissions trained promoters from 10 municipalities in the Washington Office on Latin America advocacy methodology and initiated advocacy campaigns. The forums were designed to foster the relationship between citizens and candidates to change the way in which decisions, policies and municipal investments are made. The Peace Commissions are now using the social/development agendas they developed with local communities as the foundation for the campaigns. By November 2001, one of the campaigns in the municipality of Quilali had already reached fruition. In this case, the Peace Commissions were successful in passing a municipal ordinance to protect natural resources.

The Peace Commissions set out three indicators after the success of the campaign in Quilali:

- Achieving concrete, measurable change;

- Empowerment of the Peace Commissions and community members;
- A change in the relations of power between citizens and municipal authorities.

The Peace Commissions consider that they have been successful on all three fronts, and its promoters identified the following elements as critical to their success:

- Organizing and involving the affected communities from the problem definition to the proposal of the solution;
- The credibility of the Peace Commissions in the eyes of the community and local authorities based on how they have mediated in other situations and acted in a nonpartisan way for the common good.

## MAJOR CHALLENGES

In the context described above, the overall challenge for the Peace Commissions was to create a more peaceful society by addressing particular local conflicts and structural injustices that continually affected people’s lives. It was clear that the level of polarization in communities was so high that local people were accustomed to resolving problems through violence. The Peace Commissions had to face both their own internal organizational challenges as well as the ingrained attitudes of fear and distrust on the part of local communities. This section attempts to outline the challenges faced by the Peace Commissions as well as the communities in carrying out the project.

The Peace Commissions faced a series of basic internal challenges in addressing structural problems faced by communities. At the outset, it was clear there was a lack of long-term vision and mission on the part of the Peace Commissions to work toward structural change. This was compounded by weak organizational structures and a lack of internal policies

to enable them to work in a coordinated manner on bigger structural issues. The Peace Commissions also had very centralized decision-making processes, as well as weak internal communication structures between promoters and legal advisors. Systematic planning and evaluation procedures were not in place, and there were few opportunities for ongoing reflection on the project's process. The capacity to assimilate and transmit information and training to the population was also highly variable, depending on individual promoter capacity. Apart from these challenging internal factors, the Peace Commissions also found their human rights work hindered by a lack of access to information as well as a lack of their own information system to track activities and results. This was compounded by their own lack of technical capacity with regard to practices of human rights verification and conflict resolution.

The Peace Commissions also confronted various factors with regard to the attitudes of local communities. Fear and narrowly defined self-interest were prevailing attitudes at the outset. Fear of reprisal by authorities and private persons (mostly rearmed groups) also hindered progress, as did the perception that violence was generally acceptable in rural areas as the most effective means for solving problems. Apart from this culture of fear within communities, the promoters themselves also found their definition of their own identity could hinder progress. Other attitudes also came into play, particularly with regard to their views of other religious sects, and state authorities (police, military). It was found that most promoters considered the other individuals as "illegitimate." This frequently led to adversarial relations with state institutions. The state, lacking legitimate authority, was viewed as both paternalistic and authoritarian. Clearly there was a need for greater reflection on concepts, values and ethics to achieve changes in attitudes

for peacebuilding, reliance on non-violence practices, impartiality and tolerance.

## MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTCOMES

The quantitative results of the work of the Peace Commission project based on quarterly reports include the following:

- The project has organized and trained 844 promoters in 46 municipalities.
- The project has processed a total of 6,264 cases.
- Over 110,000 people have participated in human rights and conflict transformation training.
- The Peace Commissions achieved signed agreements with the judiciary to formally recognize mediations conducted by their promoters.
- The Peace Commissions also coordinated and participated in emergency rescue and relief efforts, particularly taking responsibility for food and material distribution.

Overall, participants in the case study consistently said they feel empowered. Three factors have been identified as contributing to this sense of empowerment: the concrete activities carried out by Peace Commissions; the intense training processes implemented; and the level of credibility gained by the promoters and other Peace Commission staff through their work.

Through a process of appreciative inquiry, promoters consistently referred to the most important experience as being able to do something concrete for the good of the community. Specific references include obtaining the release of illegally detained persons, conducting a successful mediation in local conflicts, participating in a successful advocacy campaign and leading the community to develop a community project.



The second factor contributing to the sense of empowerment has been the consistent training, reflection and action. Biblical reflection and emphasis on rights and responsibilities at the level of individuals, communities and municipalities have been important in providing the skills and building capacities to carry out mediations, advocacy campaigns and community-development projects. Most of the promoters surveyed in the study felt that they had changed their attitudes and were more open and more tolerant as a result of the training.

The perception of less polarization at the municipal level gave promoters growing credibility and social recognition by the population and authorities regarding the work of the Peace Commissions. This has been attributed to the non-partisan nature of the work, the services provided in human rights and mediation and the work done during the emergency response after Hurricane Mitch. The diminishing polarization is being directly attributed to the presence of the Peace Commissions in the communities, and particularly, the non-partisan and ethical behavior of promoters.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### Organizational Structure

Organizational structure, which provides support and credibility to individuals, is critical to success in relationship building and advancement on specific issues. This is a confirmation of the idea that you need to have mid-level actors who have access to higher-level decision makers and grassroots leaders to be effective in making change. The organizational structure of having promoters at the community and municipal level linked to lawyers and social promoters at the diocesan level has been useful in accessing authorities, providing credibility and support.

### Training with Principles and Focus on Structural Issues

Fear and narrowly defined self-interest were important elements of the negative attitudes which people held. Concerted effort on specific attitudes and working to build legitimate relations based on the law and understanding has been critical to moving this project forward. The introduction of key justice concepts—commutative justice, distributive justice and social justice—linked to solving local problems have also been key to addressing the underlying issues of social justice and transformation.

The timing of introducing justice concepts in training is also important to how they may be received. Given the highly polarized situation, CRS did not raise underlying causes of justice issues until it had established relationships and legitimacy with counterparts. In this case, with such a deeply divided society, on-the-ground preparation with individuals, meetings and building confidence and trust were as important as the techniques used to discuss the justice themes.

Human rights and mediation work has provided legitimacy and important training for social transformation to the Peace Commissions. The human rights training and verification has given the Peace Commissions credibility in the eyes of the local authorities. At the community level, mediation has shown that problems can be resolved without violence and that some persons can act beyond their own self-interest. The work in community development and advocacy has reinforced concepts of working for the common good as part of one's own interest.

Implementing organizations must balance supporting the resolution of immediate conflicts with building relationships, changing institutions and creating a vision for the future. Using immediate and felt needs to organize people is effective.

The process of reflection is critical and must be based on concrete action. Until people engage in concrete steps for change, discussion will remain merely at the conceptual level. As they engage in solving problems, self-esteem rises, identification with the project rises and these positive results encourage the project participants to look at the deeper issues.

### **Implications for Policy Making and Future Programming**

This case study demonstrates how CRS can successfully work toward structural change, involving communities in the struggle for social justice and transformation, through community organization and local-level advocacy activities. By focusing on local conflicts and actions that were short-term and achievable, the Peace Commissions have achieved high levels of community participation and mobilization, concrete changes in local policies and practices and better relations between civil society and state actors. The success of this project has been an extremely important learning process for CRS/Nicaragua and has much to offer the agency in its own debate about civil society and justice programming. In particular, the advent of Hurricane Mitch and the development of a new emergency response approach led to increased citizen participation, advocacy and work around issues such as transparency and accountability. It showed CRS that thorough community organization and training around human rights and civil society themes are invaluable activities, given that community networks can effectively move into other areas, advocating successfully around reconstruction, rehabilitation and long-term development needs.

Another important implication for programming in the future is that CRS must seek to address structural causes of injustice by ensuring the development of

relationships and by engaging with the police, judiciary, military and municipal authorities during project-design efforts. Emphasis on promoting dialogue and negotiation have resulted in building right relations and changing the current balance of power, both of which have laid the foundation for structural change. Attention to methodology—whether mediation, advocacy or human rights verification—was important in achieving these positive outcomes, but it is also important not to lose sight of how these results have affected the individual attitudes and the overall process of addressing the root causes of conflict. The program has demonstrated that it is not sufficient to only work with the victims of human rights abuses but that there is also need to work with the other actors in the conflict.

Perhaps the most significant implication that CRS as an agency must recognize, and which is highlighted by the work of the Peace Commission in Nicaragua, is that the process itself has been the most important aspect of the project. As expressed earlier on, essential activities, which were carried out with the counterparts, included reflection and planning, the implementation of long-term training plans and the systematic reevaluation of project progress with the beneficiaries. Other project activities included the promotion of negotiation and dialogue processes among local actors and the implementation of training events at various levels. This way CRS did not predetermine the specific issues to work on, rather the Peace Commissions and communities were prepared to analyze and select local problems on which action would be taken. This long-term preparation process resulted in the creation and strengthening of relationships and the consolidation of an active support network for change. CRS, as an agency, may have given less time and support to such processes in the past, preferring to be more results-focused. However, this

organizational process has been key to empowering local people to work for social justice and change and has led to the many positive results witnessed by this project.





# Southeast Asia

## The Mindanao Peace & Reconciliation Program

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Mindanao, the southern-most island grouping of the Philippine archipelago, is home to 12 million Christians, 4 million Muslims and 2 million indigenous people. It is a region boasting not only the rich cultural diversity of the three populations but also bountiful natural resources. Despite this abundance, Mindanao has suffered the scars of a long history of conflict and struggle.

The violence between the diverse cultural and religious groups stems from colonial and post-colonial policies that led to deep-seated biases and prejudices among the people. The Mindanao conflict can be traced to the beginning of the 16th century with the coming of the first colonizers and continues today.

Statistics portray a grim picture. Since the 1970s, an estimated 120,000 people have lost their lives in this protracted conflict. Over 1.5 million people have been displaced, millions of dollars worth of infrastructure have been destroyed and numerous opportunities for development have withered away. The displacement of people continues to be a reality for many areas of Mindanao as high levels of tension, mistrust and animosity remain a festering reality between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and Muslim rebels in pursuit of their independence.

Structural injustices continue to contribute substantially to the civil unrest and sense of insecurity felt by many communities in Mindanao. Mindanaons feel they have been left out of political processes; that educational opportunities and health facilities are highly inadequate; that job possibilities are extremely limited; and that the impoverished masses are growing at an ever-increasing rate. Indeed, poverty is the norm. Unjust social structures are far from being dismantled, and the struggle for justice and peace is immensely compounded by these factors. Past efforts have failed to address the structural causes and even the psychological dimensions of the conflict.

During the 1970s, President Ferdinand Marcos initiated talks with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in Tripoli, Libya to end and settle the armed conflict in Mindanao. The result of the negotiations was the signing of the Tripoli Agreement on December 23, 1976. This Agreement affirmed the sovereignty of the government against the MNLF autonomy in 13 out of 23 provinces in Mindanao. However, the MNLF felt that, over time, Marcos betrayed the agreement, and the MNLF resumed its armed resistance.

After the overthrow of Marcos in 1986, President Corazon Aquino attempted to address the conflict in Mindanao. Her government pushed for provision favoring autonomy for Muslim Mindanao in the process of drafting the new constitution. It did not, however, directly follow the Tripoli Agreement. Therefore, Muslim rebel groups did not recognize legitimacy of this political process and continued to demand the full implementation of the Tripoli Agreement. Despite sincere attempts of the Aquino government, the armed conflict in Mindanao persisted.

In 1993, President Fidel Ramos resurrected the peace talks. His administration believed that peace was absolutely vital to

attain the goals of national development and social transformation. A body called the National Unification Commission was tasked to formulate and recommend a viable peace process leading to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace. On June 23, 1996, a Peace Accord was signed between the government and the MNLF. Thus, a real possibility for the beginning of communal harmony and full human development in many parts of the island was born.

Relative peace followed the Peace Agreement of 1996. As the Peace Agreement with the MNLF was being brokered, the Ramos government opened the doors for negotiations with the second largest rebel group – the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, which was waging an armed struggle to attain self-determination of the Bangsamoro people.

The political developments were underway when the Estrada government took over from Ramos. However, it was clear from the start that he did not have a clear agenda for peace in Mindanao except to follow-on what had been started. Unfortunately, a series of violent events in the year 2000 prompted President Estrada to declare an all-out war against the Moro rebels. The MILF, in turn, declared a jihad against the government.

The ascension of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's presidential leadership through the second Filipino peaceful revolution has renewed the hope in continuing peaceful negotiations with the MILF. Moreover, Mindanaons look forward to the process of structural and societal transformation she promised during her inauguration.

## JUSTICE ISSUES ADDRESSED

The establishment of the Peace & Reconciliation Program is a concrete expression of solidarity by CRS/

Philippines with the historical developments that happened in Mindanao in 1996. It was clear that the peace initiative has created a window of opportunity to promote peace and reconciliation among the Muslim, Christian and indigenous communities in Mindanao. The program was designed to support community-based peacebuilding initiatives in recognition of the vast resource available within Mindanao civil society.

Internally, the strong motivation for integrating and concretizing principles of justice and peacebuilding in the program was specifically guided by the strong articulation of the CRS/Philippines 1997-2000 Strategic Program Plan. Under the SPP, the country program articulated four operating principles to serve as the foundation for all its activities. The Peace & Reconciliation Program, as with the other program areas operative under the country, emphasizes the promotion of human dignity, the solidarity of human family, subsidiarity in decision-making and the preferential option for the poor. The evolution of the Peace & Reconciliation Program was inspired by CRS/Philippines' experiences in responding to the tensions in Mindanao and promoting reconciliation between Muslims, Christians and indigenous people.

The primary strategy of the program when it was established was supporting community-based reconciliation projects. The target communities are in post-conflict areas where there is a mixed community of Muslims, Christians and indigenous people. The program envisioned achieving three main objectives:

- Building capacities among CRS and partner organizations to monitor and implement peace and reconciliation projects;
- Improving Muslim-Christian-Lumad relations by establishing community-based projects;

- Building capacity among Muslim, Christian and other religious leaders to engage in interreligious dialogue.

The Peace & Reconciliation Program, with its goal of achieving just, peaceful, empowered and sustainable communities through post-conflict areas in Mindanao, lends itself to the appropriation of the CRS/Philippines' core operating principles.

The program recognizes that the Mindanao conflict needs to be addressed both on the relationship and the structural levels to be able to effectively promote peace and reconciliation among Muslims, Christians and the indigenous people. The program believes that the political peace process needs to be supported with initiatives that would establish trust and right relations among the three populations because armed conflict and violence has brought about enormous distrust among them. Program initiatives aim to provide ways for people to enter once again into dialogue, to begin to trust one another so they may engage in developing the island of Mindanao.

The program also believes that promoting genuine reconciliation among the three groups of people needs to be based not only on healing the wounds of the past but more importantly in addressing the structural injustices to bring about fairness and equality in control and access to resources. Peacebuilding processes should work toward addressing the marginalization of Muslim and Lumad communities.

Values in Mindanao have suffered from the violence of the conflict. The tension has bred proliferation of the culture of violence, thereby failing to respect and uphold the dignity of persons. Prejudices and biases have perpetuated ethno-centrism among the three groups of people so that interactions are dominated by exploitation, isolation and division.

The Peace & Reconciliation Program aims to promote the culture of peace vis -à-vis the prevailing culture of violence. Culture of peace values promote, recognize and uphold the dignity and equality of all persons – be they Muslims, Christians or Lumads. Culture of peace as a way of life is evolving and growing. It is a continuous process resulting from constant practice and interaction, the fruit of which is understanding, tolerance, mutual acceptance and solidarity among individuals, families, schools, church, government, NGOs and different cultural communities. It is a process where different cultural members of a community and a nation grow in participation, dialogue and cooperation. It is a reality where human and social possibilities of working together toward a common goal can be pursued despite cultural and religious differences.

In the National Unification Commission (NUC) consultations, the civil society identified poor governance, injustice and abuse and control of political power by a few as some of the major causes of armed conflicts in the country. In Mindanao, strategic economic, political and social structures are concentrated among a few powerful Christians.

The Peace & Reconciliation Program recognizes that capacity building is an important strategy in enhancing people's capacities to participate and eventually decide their own development. The capacity-building process integrates strong community-organizing components to support and enhance grassroots structures that would consolidate and sustain people's participation in peace and development work. One of the concrete capacity-building efforts of the program is the need to develop further and more deeply the capabilities and mechanisms by which people can address and seek to resolve conflict peacefully within their own communities.

The complexity of the conflict in Mindanao is characterized by unjust structures in the society that perpetuate structural, physical and socio-cultural violence. Peacebuilding efforts as envisioned by the program shall support the transformation of structures that would nurture peace, justice and harmony.

The Peace & Reconciliation Program views itself as a bridge builder among the different groups in the region working for peace. The strategy of building networks not only at the grassroots level but also the middle and top levels is aimed at facilitating a movement that can eventually transform structures.

### **PROGRAM STRUCTURES THAT PROMOTE A CULTURE OF PEACE AND JUSTICE**

Four strategic components have evolved as priority areas for peace and reconciliation programming: 1) capacity building; 2) peace education; 3) community-based solidarity projects; and 4) interreligious dialogue. The second component was originally part of the strategy for community-based solidarity projects but has developed as a strong niche of the program owing to the expressed need of the partners/communities as well as developments in partnerships and linkages.

#### **Capacity Building**

The first program component supports capacity building (organizational development/institutional strengthening) of the program's working partners with the corresponding objective of increasing self-reliance and improving empowerment of partner organizations and the communities whom they serve. Activities in this program area are geared toward: 1) strengthening capacity of partners to execute peace and development projects effectively; 2) increasing skills in

project design, management and resource generation; and 3) strengthening linkages for emergency and relief rehabilitation operations.

The training, capacity-building and technical assistance provided to partners resulted in the installation/strengthening of financial management systems, enhancement of institutional and project development mechanisms, improvement in participatory management and tapping of other resources.

Also, the formation of the AGONG Peace Network is a positive support in empowering partners and eventually sustaining initiatives. The network has evolved into a forum lobbying and mobilizing around regional peace initiatives. Clearly, it is evident that capacity-building efforts of the program have resulted in establishing a strong network with well-defined goals and direction.

### **Peace Education**

The second program component promotes peace education with its corresponding objective of increasing conscientization and mobilization of individuals and communities toward building a genuine Culture of Peace between Muslims, Lumads and Christians. Activities in this program area are envisioned to: 1) increase trust, acceptance and tolerance; 2) promote conflict resolution and peacebuilding skills; 3) improve respect for human rights, gender equality and the environment; and 4) reduce prejudices and biases.

The CRS Peace & Reconciliation Program gained considerable experience in the field of peace education. Program initiatives have helped in mainstreaming the Culture of Peace paradigm in Mindanao. The process in this particular component recognizes that the promotion of the culture of peace needs to be done

at top, middle and grassroots levels to work toward social transformation.

The basic guide for these workshops was the Culture of Peace Manual developed in collaboration with other agencies. Through the manual, and by utilizing various experiences gained from conducting the workshops, the program was able to develop modules on other specific topics such as community mediation, peer mediation and conflict resolution.

Attempting to share the experience in peace education on a regional level, the program organized the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute in July 2000. The two-week institute had more than 100 participants from seven countries throughout Asia. This institute was highly successful not only in the transfer of skills but also in the cross-fertilization of ideas, analysis and lessons from the conflict settings represented.

### **Community-Based Solidarity Projects**

The third program component promotes community-based solidarity projects with a concomitant objective of improving socio-economic conditions of the participants in the communities being served by the project. Activities in this area are envisioned to: 1) increase food production capacities; 2) improve health conditions; and 3) increase household income. Each of these activities is contingent upon ongoing community peacebuilding activities.

Community-based projects have been encouraged by CRS for its partners in post-conflict communities in order to reinforce the importance of the mutual linkage between peacebuilding endeavors and development initiatives. These projects encompass a dual function. On one hand, they help to ground the prior work of peace education by giving concrete signs of solidarity within divisive

communities. The symbolic component of the projects strengthens personal and communal relationships and promotes social harmony, coexistence and mutual tolerance. On the other hand, these community-based projects also address basic socio-economic needs within communities. They respond to such critical needs as increased household income, increased food production and better health conditions.

### **Interreligious Dialogue**

The fourth component focuses on supporting venues that gather Muslim, Christian and other religious leaders. For the past three years, the program has provided both financial and technical support to the Bishops-Ulama Dialogue Forum. These quarterly dialogue forums provide a venue for religious leaders to meet and discuss their perspectives on the burning issues in Mindanao. This symbolic initiative has inspired respective faith communities in engaging in their own dialogue activities.

Under this component, the program was able to support local dialogue initiatives in some of the critical areas in Mindanao. The program desires to pursue and assist grassroots efforts to institutionalize interreligious dialogue as an innovative and workable way of building trust, understanding and harmony among Muslims and Christians.

## **MAJOR CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

### **CRS/Philippines History in the Philippines**

CRS/Philippines has been operating in the country for over 50 years and has been known mostly as a relief organization. The difficult challenge for the program was how to promote the vision of

CRS/Philippines as an agent facilitating peace, alleviating poverty and promoting justice through socio-economic development programs. The program put forward honest criticism of the concerns for the past activities which focused exclusively on charity and the concerns for empowerment and sustainability.

Open dialogue and transparency on the motivations of CRS in establishing the program greatly helped in building trust and credibility among the target partners.

### **Partnership Building**

One of the critical challenges in building partnerships in peace and reconciliation is the image of CRS as a Catholic organization. The program initially encountered suspicions and mistrust, especially with Muslim communities because of their fear of assimilation and conversion into the Christian faith. Some of the community-based projects integrated confidence-building measures to build trust of people in the partnership with CRS. Peace & Reconciliation Program staff conduct regular visits to communities and partners to create venues for dialogue, understanding and discovery. The presence established in the communities has helped in strengthening the foundation of CRS as a credible institution in promoting peace and justice.

Another challenge in partnership building has been the limitation in diversity of partners for the program. Although there was a clear attempt to include more Muslim and indigenous NGOs or partners, this is still a challenge. The program clearly built upon past relationships with church-based organizations. There was difficulty in expanding to non-traditional partners because of weak linkages with these groups when the program started. One of the clear gains in this area was the partnership forged with the Bishops-Ulama Forum. CRS benefits from this



linkage not only in the programming aspect but more importantly in establishing connections with key Muslim religious leaders. Since its inception, CRS was provided an opportunity to build relationships with them and has seen that Ulama League of the Philippines (Muslim convenor of the Forum) has helped built credibility of CRS in some Muslim communities.

### **Operating as a Pilot Program**

In its three years of implementation, the program was able to support diverse and multi-tiered initiatives fostering working partnerships not only with grassroots communities but also the middle and top levels of leadership. Catering to the demands for technical support and involvement in these various activities has facilitated the establishment of the niche of CRS in peace and reconciliation work in Mindanao. Through such initiatives, the program was also able to gain enriching experiences that has helped in the process of refining and consolidating program strategies and processes.

The challenge for the program at this point is how to focus and synthesize such learnings. As demands for outside needs took much of the time and energies of the operation, little time was left for strengthening program management systems such as documentation, monitoring and evaluation.

One of the prevailing gaps in programming is the lack of diversity in the Peace & Reconciliation Program staff. It is seen as a crucial gap since diversity would ensure that there is representation of perspective in programming.

### **Working Context (Both as a Challenge and Opportunity)**

The program built upon the opportunity provided by the peace accord between the government and MNLF. At that time, the spirits of people were high for peacebuilding initiatives, providing a fairly rich ground for starting a pilot program.

However, the government now has downplayed existing peace efforts. The military option that was taken as policy has made the realities in Mindanao more ambiguous. This uncertainty has been attributed to the crises in leadership propelled by an unclear vision and the lack of an agenda for peace. The challenge for the program amidst such realities is to focus more on mobilizing action toward defining visions for leadership and governance, enhancing the role of other stakeholders in the peace process (especially the grassroots), helping to address common interests on jobs/justice/food and supporting peace advocacy.

### **LESSONS LEARNED**

- Recognize that credibility and trust are essential ingredients of an effective peace and justice program.
- Build linkages to facilitate solidarity and sustainability of projects.
- Realize that one cannot build peace and reconciliation at the expense of justice.
- Consider power dynamics within each group, not only among groups.
- Build an analysis of the conflict respecting the perspective of each of the affected groups.
- Highlight, identify and celebrate periods in history where there have been good interactions among conflicting groups.
- Recognize that dialogue of action (through common projects) is a potent tool for facilitating reconciliation.

- Create a venue for dialogue and interaction through joint workshops and trainings facilitate appreciation and understanding among groups.
  - Create a venue and processes for both individual and community healing.
  - Work in conflict or post-conflict communities involves sustaining hope.
  - Ensure processes are culturally sensitive.
  - Ensure processes in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation that would enhance, support and reinforce local ownership.
  - Ensure open dialogue and interaction; these are effective means of confidence and trust-building, especially among non-traditional partners.
  - Ensure that work in the relationship level evolves toward work in the systemic level.
- Defining criteria for program strategies, recognizing dynamics of power imbalance between/among target groups.

## **IMPLICATION FOR POLICY MAKING AND FUTURE PROGRAMMING**

Success in programs could be enhanced by:

- Assessing the presence of CRS in a particular context.
- Evaluating the relevance of peace and justice as a deliberate focus or strategy integrated in other program areas.
- Looking into the timing of establishing a peace and justice program.
- Recognizing long-term sustainable peacebuilding is a multi-generational effort. It must be seen as a process as well as outcome-oriented.
- Developing and adapting models to measure impact of peacebuilding efforts.
- Ensuring staff and partnership diversity.
- Recognizing that for post-conflict communities, development can take-off from the fruits laid down by peace and reconciliation work.
- Recognizing that multi-level approach can enhance effective peace and justice networking.





# EAST AFRICA

## Study of the Peacebuilding among Rwandan Youth Project

### BACKGROUND

In 1994, just after the genocide and war, the Rwandan people, despite their wounds, devoted themselves to moral and physical rehabilitation. As a first step, the newly appointed government sworn in on July 17, 1994, along with international partners (UN agencies and NGOs), proceeded with the reinstallation of two million refugees and displaced people. Most of the refugees had been displaced during the conflict. However, some were finally returning home after being away for forty years.

Physical rehabilitation, however, was not enough. The social fabric, torn by hatred, war and genocide, needed to be mended. The Rwandan people needed to reconcile with themselves and with their past by opting for social justice and reconciliation.

### CRS INVOLVEMENT IN RWANDA

CRS had been present in Rwanda throughout the emergency. Presently, CRS is involved in the rehabilitation process supporting the reconciliation of Rwanda's people.

Beginning in 1995, CRS Rwanda staged a series of workshops on conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms. At first, these workshops targeted a mixed Rwandan public made up of politicians, soldiers and representatives of religious denominations and civil society. Since 1997, CRS' involvement in issues of social justice and reconciliation among Rwandans has widened significantly, becoming more systematic and specialized. To date, CRS/Rwanda has five ongoing projects, including the "Peacebuilding among Rwandan Youth" project which will serve as the primary focus of this case study. Apart from UN agencies, no other international NGO has invested as much as CRS in peacebuilding in Rwanda.

## THE JUSTICE ISSUES ADDRESSED

The project “Peacebuilding among Rwandan Youth” addresses the structural injustices which hinder the search for permanent peace in the country. Youth between 13 and 25 years of age constitute a large part of the Rwandan society and account for approximately 50% of the population. However, only a small number of youth have access to education and the modern employment sector.

Because they account for the largest number of young people, the fate of the rural non-school youth is particularly alarming. Like their parents, they live in total poverty and ignorance. They are jobless and do not have any revenue as the farming sector crisis can neither satisfy their basic needs nor provide any income. As a result, they face many risks including alcohol addiction, drugs, diseases (particularly AIDS), violence and exodus to urban centers where living conditions are not easier. In the wake of genocide and war, many youth are now orphans, heads of households and without shelter. The country has nearly 150,000 orphan heads of households.

The recent history of Rwanda saw the youth being particularly manipulated for political reasons. They were involved in the recurring violence and devastating events that shook the country. During the Rwandan genocide, some of the youth became killers and others became victims. Being jobless and unable to provide for themselves, the youth can be a major source of potential conflict if they are left out of the reconciliation and social development process.

Addressing the challenges that the Rwandan youth face is a large task; many intermediary phases must be completed before concrete results can be achieved. Today the project is in its first phase, which consists of the development of public awareness among the most

underprivileged youth, political and administrative decision-makers and religious leaders. The project first focused on the Roman Catholic Church, since its moral and social influence is significant within the Rwandan society.

This task cannot be properly implemented unless it is based on fundamental principles drawn from the history of Rwanda and other nations. Some of those principles are:

- The respect of human dignity;
- Equality and respect of basic rights;
- Sense of common property and interdependence;
- Solidarity with vulnerable people;
- Peaceful management of conflicts.

## PROJECT/ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

The project entitled “Peacebuilding among Rwandan Youth” was financed by the U.S. State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (BPRM) for a 3-year period starting September 1998.

The idea of working for reconciliation among youth as a priority came from CRS partners. After the genocide and massacres of 1994, the dioceses of Byumba and Kabgayi initiated gatherings to sensitize youth on the tragedy that befell Rwanda, its causes, its consequences and the means of preventing its recurrence, as well as the role of the youth in the reconciliation process.

CRS/Rwanda financed some of the gatherings, which attempted to associate the teachings and debates with community work and solidarity gestures toward the most poor. When BPRM funding became available, CRS/Rwanda and the partners (four dioceses, the Ministry of Youth and the National Council of Youth) developed those ideas and devised a vast and diversified program.

The Justice Lens was applied in the project in several ways. In its development, the problem of youth marginalization was identified and analyzed from a justice perspective. Decision-makers and partners concerned were involved in the project's development. During its implementation, a participatory approach is favored and all local resources are mobilized and/or strengthened.

The project targets approximately 26,000 beneficiaries of Butare, Byumba, Kabgayi and Kigali dioceses involving both schooled and non-schooled youth. The main activities consist of the organization of solidarity camps, training of trainers, sensitization through social and cultural animation and sensitization material development. Activities also included the development of didactic material to be used by secondary school teachers in the domain of reconciliation, conferences at the National University of Rwanda, the promotion and support to Local Initiatives for Peace (LIP) and the provision of support to local structures for youth training and supervision.

The implementation of the project is done in close collaboration with state organs, other religious denominations and NGOs involved in similar programs in the region. CRS assists diocesan coordination teams by providing assistance in material or human resources and by ensuring the fulfillment of donor commitments.

## PROCESS

A structure called the "Inter-Diocesan Coordination Committee" (IDCC) was also created. It includes representatives of the four dioceses, a representative of the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture and representatives of CRS. Its role is to boost the process of planning, monitoring and evaluation within various coordination teams. This is a consultative structure, which holds meetings every six

months to assess the progress of activities and their orientations.

To reinforce institutional capacities of partners, equipment including a computer, motorcycle and various office items were provided, and one center for youth per prefecture was rehabilitated and equipped with audio-visual equipment. These centers serve as meeting places, training and entertainment facilities not only for the youth but also for the neighboring population.

This project targets youth in 30 secondary schools per diocese and at the National University of Rwanda in Butare. Its aim is to sensitize these youth on values of social justice, tolerance and peaceful resolution of conflicts through round table discussions facilitated by teaching personnel previously trained in the topics and through sports and cultural events staged around those ideals.

For didactic material, a curriculum was developed for the teaching staff. Drawing and eloquence contests were organized in all secondary schools on the themes of peace, justice and reconciliation. Such occasions served as public events and as sensitization on the local and national level through extensive media coverage.

Sensitization and supervision of non-schooled youth are mainly done through solidarity camps and Local Initiatives for Peace (LIP). Solidarity camps bring together approximately 200 girls and boys representing their peers from independent groups and associations as well as religious groups from all denominations.

To improve the formula of solidarity camps for the non-schooled youth, Kabgayi diocese organized three solidarity camps during the first years of the project. The experiment focused on the selection of camp sites, the involvement of local administrative and religious leaders, the outlining of the roundtable discussions program and the selection of trainers,

etc. The other dioceses drew from Kabgayi's experience and the didactic material developed by the coordination team. During the second year of the project, Butare organized one camp whereas Kigali and Byumba each organized two camps.

A camp lasts for one month during which participants discuss different points in relation to causes of the split between Rwandans, the ways and means to face the consequences of the genocide, the role of the youth in the reconciliation process, the creation of associations and the development and management of income-generating projects. Trainers selected by the project coordinators at the diocesan level conducted debates during the evening entertainment sessions. This activity brings together the youth in camp, camp leaders and project coordination members. During the camp, the youth are involved in activities of public interest such as the production of construction materials for schools or reforestation. These projects benefit the most poor of the region.

The site where the camp is held is selected on the basis of several criteria. One of those criteria consists of the identification of a social problem which needs an urgent and priority solution such as insecurity, famine, the existence of vulnerable groups and the lack of basic infrastructure.

The official opening and closing ceremonies of the camps are always opportunities to sensitize the public of the region hosting the camp. Such events last an average of four hours and involve all ages. Administrators, political and religious leaders talk about peace, tolerance and reconciliation.

Varied materials for sensitization, information and teaching were progressively developed by each diocese:

- Sensitization materials consisting of T-shirts, posters, banners, etc. with carefully selected messages and images;

- Collections of songs, poems and drawings;
- Video cassettes about solidarity camps or personal stories from youth on inward changes;
- A curriculum for grassroots-level animators;
- A curriculum for staff in the secondary schools.

In Butare and Kabgayi dioceses, youth who attended solidarity camps and proved active within income-generating associations were awarded small loans of \$600 from the funds provided by the project to finance solidarity initiatives (LIP).

In their stories, youth testify about the changes that occurred within themselves due to the participation in the camp. Talks with external visitors and the official assessment, which focused on the quality of the teachings, the methodology, the acquired knowledge and its impact, illustrate those changes. Youth were pleased that they were able to express themselves. In addition, they condemned ignorance, laziness, clichés and biases. They reiterated their commitment to associate with other youth and work to develop solidarity links and together overcome poverty.

A process to train commune/parish animators is already under way. These are youth who are influential in their community and who will promote mobilization among their peers on issues of social justice, reconciliation and solidarity.

## MAJOR CHALLENGES

- This project was the first of its kind to be implemented in the field. Despite the achievements, some impact remains limited given the extent of needs. Some of the achievements, however, are sizeable (increased awareness of local authorities on youth problems, awareness of targeted youth on their key role in the

reconstruction of the country, the institutional collaboration in the implementation of the projects objectives, etc.)

- This project implies a long-term commitment and a permanent effort to achieve satisfactory and concrete results. However, the temptation to remain superficial and to give way to avoid difficult tasks prevails. It might be necessary to devise a new monitoring strategy and new supervision mechanisms to ensure that the acquired knowledge is applied to the beneficiaries' daily lives.
- Poverty and ignorance are common features among the non-schooled youth in particular. Therefore, we cannot reasonably talk of peace if we cannot concretely address and suggest ways to overcome those challenges. This is the reason to stress concrete solidarity initiatives such as income-generating activities. In the context of this project, those activities fall in the Local Initiatives for Peace.
- The Rwandan youth presently live in a very unfavorable situation as a consequence of the history of their country, yet many of them do not even have the courage to denounce it. These include orphans, those whose parents are in prison, those who lived in exile for a very long time and those who cannot attend school due to lack of means. Unfortunately, the means to address these challenges are still lacking.
- The project partner faces new working requirements which exceed the usual planning and monitoring schemes. This requires an increase in human, material and financial resources.
- Hindrances within the judicial system results in tension between genocide survivors and genocide suspects. Hopes now lie with the Gacaca jurisdictions inspired by the tradition of resolving conflicts through a dialogue conducted

by elders of the community. Though the bill has been passed, the launching of these jurisdictions is delayed by details still lacking on some points.

- The persistence of the ideology, political behavior and practices which led to genocide remain and contribute to insecurity and the involvement of Rwanda in regional conflicts.
- War and insecurity in the Great Lakes region are a threat to the reconstruction and reconciliation processes.

## MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTCOMES

- The structures set up favor the participation in the project of various actors including government, religious denominations and associations. This is measured through the regular and frequent attendance in planning, monitoring and assessment meetings.
- The support of local public administration to project activities such as the transport of youth and the provision of equipment.
- The attendance of high-ranking officials such as the Prime Minister, Ministers, Members of Parliament, the Executive Secretary to the National Commission for Unity and Reconciliation, Bishops, Preachers and Prefects. This is a sign of improving government-church relations that had been characterized by mistrust and mutual accusations in regard to the 1994 genocide.
- Extension of activities to all denominations. As an illustration, 30% of participants in the three solidarity test camps of Kabgayi belonged to denominations other than the Roman Catholic Church.
- The issue of the youth is no longer ignored; it is now on the agenda of debates at the national level. Government

bodies, local and international NGOs, and UN agencies are getting more involved in the issue.

- The youth are growing confident and optimistic now that they have caught the attention of decision-makers.
- The media coverage of events. Each event organize in the context of the project on the level of the prefecture – such as the training of camp leaders, school coordinators, solidarity camps and contests within schools – was covered by the national radio and television broadcast reports and press releases.
- The development of various sensitization and teaching materials, including any songs, speeches, poems, plays and curricula which may be useful to other actors in the peacebuilding sector.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### Key Insights

The Rwandan youth have received little attention from the political class. Following tradition, the youth were denied access to debates and consultations in the decision-making process which was reserved for the elderly. As a result, decisions were taken on behalf of the youth or the youth were left out. The youth reacted with a wait-and-see policy and adopted a fatalistic attitude. Being a majority among the Rwandan population, the youth must assume a leadership role, be involved in the decision-making process and search for a solution to the problems of the country, including the search for a lasting peace and reconciliation of the Rwandan people.

### Implications for Policy Making and Future Programming

The young people are characterized by physical energy, creative capacity and

commitment. Targeting the youth in the peacebuilding programs enables them to be more aware of their role and to use their potential for the benefit of the community.

If, on the other hand, the youth do not participate in the management of the community, expecting to receive everything from elders who can only give out just a small amount, the result will be a large number of marginalized people and social conflicts of an unforeseen magnitude. Targeting the youth, analyzing existing and potential conflicts and developing solutions which involve the main stakeholders is the best way to prevent future conflicts.

The CRS/Rwanda office established the Justice and Peace department as a separate department. This situation results from the needs that CRS/Rwanda identified in the Rwandan society after the 1994 genocide, including the need for physical reconstruction and the healing of social relations that had been affected by the tragedy. The Justice Lens enabled the CRS/Rwanda Justice and Peace department to implement its program based on the fundamental principles of Catholic Social Teaching. These values gave an orientation to discussions on the development of different projects within the Justice and Peace department and the exchange of ideas during workshops on conflict resolution, non-violence and good governance. The reason for emphasizing them is that the crisis created by the Rwandan genocide is a moral crisis as well: All values that are the basis of society were denied by the massive killings.

The fact that the main partner of CRS/Rwanda's Justice and Peace program is the Rwandan Catholic Church is an advantage because the Church shares the same vision. This favors efficiency in integrating the Justice Lens in reconciliation initiatives targeting various categories of people. In addition, the Rwandan Catholic Church had to face crucial

self-critique, since the content of its teachings had been denied by the tragedy. Proposing a peacebuilding program based on Catholic Social Teaching was a contribution to efforts of internal renewal of the Church that is investing its efforts in reconciliation among Rwandans.

The CRS/Rwanda Justice and Peace department also collaborates with non-Catholic partners. The guiding principles of its program were proposed to those partners in a spirit of openness and mutual respect. This approach has resulted in very enriching initiatives.









# Southern Africa

## **The Challenge of Partnership in CRS Food Security Programs in Zambia, Malawi and Madagascar**

### **BACKGROUND**

As its contribution to the agency-wide Justice Lens case study initiative, the Southern Africa Regional Office (SARO) chose to address “Partnership” as a specific justice issue. SARO determined that its “innovative project or activity” would take the form of a case study on partnership involving three country programs in the Southern African region: Madagascar, Malawi and Zambia.

The aim of this activity was to contribute to agency-wide learning on partnership by facilitating a process that examines and compares the partnership experiences of food security programs in Madagascar, Malawi and Zambia. The exercise was carried out over a two-year period from February 1999 – February 2001. This chapter overviews the major findings of the country programs during that 24-month process of reflection and analysis.

## WHY DID SARO CHOOSE PARTNERSHIP FOR ITS CASE STUDY?

As CRS' Partnership Quality Statement explains, "all of CRS' programs are based upon operational relationships with local partners which capitalize on our complementary capacities to achieve the optimum benefit for poor and marginalized people." Through its commitment to the principle of subsidiarity, CRS believes that responsibility for decision-making and implementation should be assigned as close as possible to the people whom the decisions will affect. Through its commitment to strengthening local capacities, CRS is committed to a complete and mutually-agreed-upon process of organizational development with local partners. These beliefs in subsidiarity and in capacity building frame CRS' operational approach of working with local partners, while the essential principles of Catholic Social Teaching, such as respect for human dignity and peoples' ownership of the development process, animate and nuance this spirit of "accompaniment."

In operational terms, the spirit of accompaniment is characterized by a close mutual and complementary relationship. This relationship is necessarily flexible in both its institutional and personal forms. Accompaniment, as a process of partnership-building and management, is a key ingredient of program quality. The fundamental premise is that healthy partnerships not only produce quality programs, but fuel broader societal transformations, which characterize CRS' ultimate vision of justice and development. SARO has therefore chosen partnership as the subject for its contribution to agency-wide learning because of its centrality to development, program quality and the broader pursuit of justice.

## WHAT IS THE SARO CASE STUDY TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

CRS' Partnership Quality Statement describes an ideal to which operational relationships between CRS field programs and local partners should strive. It is, however, not enough to simply accept the ideal expressed in the quality statement. The path toward actualizing this ideal is fraught with both challenges and opportunities. These challenges require partners to be attentive to issues that threaten their relationship; to be poised to respond in innovative ways when partnerships are threatened; and to do so without abandoning the broader objectives of program quality and agency growth.

While preventive maintenance and conflict resolution remain important elements to maintaining healthy partnerships, exceptional partnerships witness stakeholders going beyond the problem-solving approach by exploring opportunities to expand possibilities within their partnerships. Only through innovation can new forms of cooperation be achieved. Therefore, partners should remain equally attentive to opportunities to propel their partnership to new heights. This case study hoped to demonstrate ways in which creative thought can improve the quality of partnerships and the programs that they produce and sustain.

Nonetheless, certain breakthroughs may not be possible within the broader constraints of culture, policies, procedures and norms that form the parameters of what is acceptable in a given partnership. Some breakthroughs may necessitate drastic alterations in the operational context before they can be realized.

Healthy partner relations, in this context of often competing demands, require that partners be skilled and versatile managers in both relational and programmatic terms. Success in managing operational relationships, program quality

and program growth is determined by individual personalities, individual and organizational experience, the operating environment and the access to appropriate resources. Deficiencies in any one of these categories can undermine a country program's potential for pursuing quality programming and building right relationships.

The SARO case study consists of sustained reflection and analysis by CRS staff and partners in Madagascar, Malawi and Zambia. The case study exists for two distinct purposes:

- To improve operational relationships in Madagascar, Malawi and Zambia toward greater health and program quality;
- To contribute to a broader process of reflection, discussion and learning among CRS country programs and implementing partners with regard to justice by availing lessons learned during the process of accompaniment in Madagascar, Malawi and Zambia.

## PROJECT/ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

The SARO case study examines partnership experiences amongst three CRS country programs, namely CRS/Madagascar, CRS/Malawi and CRS/Zambia. The three programs are programmatically focused on Food Security. The programs, however, differ in age, program value, number and type of partners, as well as numerous other distinctions.

## PROCESS

The primary focus of the case study was reflection and analysis within each of these three countries of their partnership dynamics. The regional responsibility in the case study was to support the process of reflection in each of the three countries. As a first step, SARO provided the country programs with seven open-ended questions

to be used as a guide by the country programs for selecting three to five key issues that would be each country's focal points for reflection, discussion and analysis during the case-study experience. After choosing the key issues, a third-party facilitator was hired to accompany them through the process of reflection and to help develop systems and tools for participatory analysis of the partnership issues selected.

The process culminated in a partnership workshop that brought together the three participating country programs for several days of joint reflection on their experiences during the case study. Each country program presented a synopsis of its experience to the wider group, with the other country programs noting potential learning areas. These areas were explored in more depth through a series of facilitated sessions. The workshop then generated a list of suggestions, recommendations and guidelines for better partnership management.

## CASE STUDY PARTICIPANTS

CRS' programmatic presence in diverse countries throughout the world creates a broad spectrum of partnership configurations and programmatic contexts. Of these, CRS' most intensive investment lies in the area of Food Security, for which USAID Title II commodities and funds are the overwhelming resource and local Church agencies are the dominant implementing partners (this is true regionally for the countries of Madagascar and Malawi). CRS/Zambia has not accessed Title II resources at this point in time but retains Food Security as its programmatic focus.

Each of these three countries have had different partnership experiences to feed into the overall agency reflection. In Madagascar, the relationships with partners went through several phases. At first CRS/MG worked primarily with Church partners. Eventually, due to several

developments, including new USAID reporting requirements, CRS/MG decided to create a local NGO, NAMENA to manage the Title II projects; the board was made up of Church leaders and those close to the Church. CRS Title II personnel staffed the organization. NAMENA was responsible for program logistics from 1990 to 1994, when CRS decided to end the relationship because of its unpopularity (the Church was not happy that it put another layer between them and CRS) and poor results. In 1994, implementation was again turned over to diocesan counterparts.

Relationships with partners, however, have again become strained for several reasons, including the paperwork required by CRS audit recommendations, a perceived lack of trust on the part of CRS and top-down decision-making. Additionally, the sheer size, momentum and reporting requirements of USAID project activities make it difficult to address capacity-building issues in a profound manner with Title II partners. Nevertheless, CRS/MG is trying to improve relationships and has provided more intensive management training and restructured its staff in such a way as to increase communication with, and responsiveness to, partners.

In Malawi, CRS had to take a different approach to partnership when their counterpart, the Catholic Development Commission (CADECOM) requested that a memorandum of understanding be signed between CADECOM and CRS prior to the implementation of a new Development Activities Proposal (DAP). This was a new step for a CRS country program. To begin the process, CADECOM presented a draft Terms of Reference (TOR) to CRS with which CRS did not completely agree. After a long period of miscommunication and misunderstanding, they sought the services of an outside facilitator to help develop the TOR or an alternative output. Issues revolved

around the roles of partners in regard to implementation, capacity-building and CRS management. The facilitator helped both groups work through their differences, and nearly a year after it was proposed, a MOU, without the TOR, was finally approved by the Malawian Bishops and CRS.

In Zambia, CRS was just beginning to set up operations and was able to benefit from what had happened in Malawi. They approached the new programming slowly and in partnership with the national Zambian Catholic Commission for Development (CCD). CRS believed that emphasizing partnership at this time would build better, longer-lasting relationships with each targeted diocese and the national CCD.

A partnership workshop was held in April 1999, so that CRS, the national CCD and the targeted dioceses could together establish partnership principles/guidelines, roles/responsibilities and mechanisms for working together.

This workshop was successful in building up trust between CRS and its Zambian Church partners. Subsequent quarterly partnership meetings in the capital have further developed that partnership.

CRS received official permission from the Zambian Episcopal Conference to establish an office in Lusaka in May 1999. An official MOU modeled after Malawi has also been signed with the Zambian Church. CRS has emphasized partnership development over rapid programming, and believes that this approach will lead to more sustainable development programming for Zambia in the long run.

The history of partnership within the three countries, briefly highlighted here, helps to define the reality in which the reflective justice case study process occurred.

## JUSTICE ISSUES ADDRESSED

### KEY TARGET AREAS IN JUSTICE

In order to help focus the case study, the regional team, as stated earlier, formulated seven open-ended questions intended to represent overarching themes under which the major justice issues surrounding partnership could be summarized. Each country program participating in the case study was asked to use these questions for guidance in choosing three or more key issues, in consultation with partners, that would define and frame their reflection process. The seven open-ended questions follow:

- What partnership issues emerge from the distribution of accountability and power within CRS' operational relationship with local partners?
- To what degree do human qualities such as trust, mutual respect, honesty, openness and communication impact on partnerships?
- What partnership issues relate to the fact that CRS is an American NGO working in-country with indigenous partners against the specific historical backdrop in each country and to specific north/south relations in the host country?
- What partnership dynamics emerge from CRS' strategy of working closely with partners to build capacity and to improve program quality while adhering to the principal of subsidiarity?
- What are the partnership implications to CRS operating under the jurisdiction of the Catholic Church, both in the United States and in the host country?
- What partnership issues relate to the interplay between respective cultures and ideologies of CRS and its local partners, whether those cultures are rooted in the history of the country, institutions or individuals?

- What partnership issues emerge from conditionalities placed upon both CRS and its local partners due to CRS' role as a conduit for U.S. Government funds?

Using these questions for guidance, participating country programs consulted with their partners and identified the following issues to focus on during their in-country reflection processes:

Madagascar: Responsibility for decision-making, equitability, institutional development;

Malawi: Issues of human qualities, subsidiarity, USG conditionalities, partnership issues emerging from CRS according preferential status to one partner in a country with several potential partners;

Zambia: issues of human qualities, subsidiarity, implication of working under the jurisdiction of the Catholic Church, different cultures/ideologies and operational approaches.

Each country program tried to focus principally on the aforementioned issues; however, these issues were hard to separate in actual practice. Country programs therefore tended to view them in a broader context.

### MAJOR CHALLENGES

A major challenge for the SARO team was the issue of ownership. The case study did not automatically resonate with country programs.

As time went on, however, the SARO team endeavored to promote a sense of ownership amongst participating country programs, participants' initial discomfort was dispelled and a genuine enthusiasm was born. This was accomplished as participants engaged in regular meetings on partnership, where reflection and dialogue began to ground the concept of partnership in the day-to-day concerns of the programs.

Now that the case study is complete, CRS country programs and partners unanimously agree that their participation in the case study has added value to their work. The added work demands of the case study have been more than compensated for by the resultant improvements in communication, program development and strategic planning. All three country programs have committed to continuing their reflections on partnership outside of the case-study framework.

### MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTCOMES

The SARO justice case study has been a rich exercise that helped CRS country programs situate partnership issues as a central component of their operational relationship, both with regard to program quality but also with regard to the right relationships which fuel broader societal transformations. Key aspects of the experience are included in the following presentation on “lessons learned” regarding partnership. CRS country programs have acknowledged that maintaining healthy partnerships is an ongoing challenge that needs to be built in as a specific line item in future annual budgeting exercises. This will ensure that partnership maintenance will receive the appropriate attention that it deserves, especially as it relates to issues of justice.

### LESSONS LEARNED

The SARO Partnership/Justice Case Study workshop was convened in February 2001 in Harare for the participating country programs to draw conclusions about what they learned regarding partnership and justice. At this meeting, partnership guidelines/policy recommendations were produced from small group sessions. These recommendations included:

- As much as possible, healthy partnerships should be institutionalized through policies, systems, norms and organizational structures that create an enabling environment for healthy partnership management and mitigate against the adverse affects of staff turnover or inappropriate personal behavior.
- CRS should screen job and promotion candidates for cultural sensitivity, respect, flexibility, willingness to listen and learn and negotiation skills. These are particularly relevant to positions with responsibility for managing operational relationships with partners.
- When planning staff transfers, CRS should consider the possible impact on partnership, providing ample warning to partners and allowing for adequate staff overlap (2-4 weeks).
- Accountability and quality are non-negotiable at all levels, including funding partner, implementing partner and community.
- CRS should consider devising tools to analyze appropriate distribution of power within partnerships, taking into account issues of capacity, subsidiarity and accountability. Once CRS and partners have determined roles and responsibilities in this manner, they could devise an empowerment plan to gradually transfer decision-making power and influence toward greater balance. This is based in the belief that as a partner’s capacity is increased, responsibilities and decision-making authority should also be increased.
- Partnership reflections should be budgeted for, planned and implemented as a priority within each country program.
- Continuous dialogue on program/project implementation must be maintained.



- Partners should create a written agreement clarifying expectations, values, philosophy, objectives and geo-focus so as to establish the partnership framework and to ensure compatibility.

## HOW DOES THE JUSTICE LENS RELATE TO THE SARO CASE STUDY?

The case studies undertaken by CRS regional offices were meant to contribute to a wider agency-wide reflection on the application of the justice lens to programming. The SARO case study therefore brought its final workshop to closure with sessions organized to decipher the role the justice lens had played in the experiences of the three country programs. Participants were broken into small groups in order to discuss the following questions: What is the justice lens for you? What does justice look like in action? What contributions did the “justice lens” make to your partnerships? What was frustrating or problematic for you in applying the justice lens to your partnerships? This concluding section of the case study summarizes the discussion prompted by these questions and introduces some ideas from the SARO team based on their case-study experience.

The discussions at the workshop produced three overarching conclusions. First, there were differing degrees of comprehension regarding the justice lens among CRS staff who participated in the workshop. Some seemed to understand it quite well, although with differing interpretations of its functional relevance to CRS’ work, while others remained unsure as to what it signifies. Second, knowledge of the justice lens amongst partners participating in the workshop was virtually non-existent. Third, both CRS staff and partners agree that despite a generally vague understanding of the justice lens, justice was given central consideration throughout the case study as an integral aspect of partnership.

Therefore it can be said that the case study affirmed that the justice lens was being applied to programming, albeit in an indirect manner.

The degree of comprehension of the justice lens by CRS staff persons seemed to hinge on their degree of exposure to the concept and on how the justice lens related to their personal dispositions. With regard to exposure, it was clear that CRS staff with longer histories with CRS had greater exposure to the justice lens and therefore greater opportunity to internalize its basic tenets. This is understandable for obvious reasons. Newer staff had rarely, if ever, encountered the justice lens as a concept, much less had an opportunity to reflect on its significance to CRS programming. This would seem to show that participating country programs were not maintaining in-country systems to ensure continued familiarity with, and discussion around, the justice lens.

Proper analysis of this situation would likely show its roots to be manifold. The issue of ownership, however, certainly features among these reasons why country programs participating in the case study had yet to “institutionalize” the justice lens. From the perspective of case study participants, the justice lens was conceived at the HQ level – albeit using participatory methodology intended to engage other levels within the agency – and was then left to percolate downwards toward country programs and partners. As proximity decreased from this perceived point of origin, so too did the clarity of the justice lens as a conceptual tool. This partly explains why many of the participants in the case study had a vague understanding of the justice lens.

Even at more central levels of the agency, difficult questions over the meaning, relevance and utility of the justice lens inevitably surfaced as the agency experienced initial challenges of organizational change. On a positive note, this environment



of debate has deepened the agency's appreciation of the significance, difficulties and nuances of concepts like justice, peace and reconciliation. It represents an intense period of coming to terms with who we are as an agency of justice within a global system of unjust relationships. At the same time, the lack of consensus on the justice lens has made it difficult for it to be institutionalized as a clearly understood conceptual tool to be used in all areas of programming and management. From the SARO case-study experience, it seems there has been a tendency to neglect the justice lens after the initial justice reflections. The true value of the justice lens therefore should be understood by the dynamic process of reflection and dialogue it triggered and not necessarily by the way it was embraced at all levels of the agency.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS ON JUSTICE

The lively discussions at the case study workshop confirmed the monumental significance of adopting a justice lens. As agents of justice, it is important that we understand how the systems, structures, behaviors and attitudes that form the human world either promote or curtail the promotion of societal and environmental justice. This is why the justice lens represents such a significant evolution for CRS in the way we interpret the development challenge. In effect, it is forcing CRS to render its actions and programming more consistent with its core identity.

This fact notwithstanding, the justice lens is by its very nature unsettling and contentious. Individuals' understanding of justice may differ according to experience and culture. Just as the world seen by two people wearing the justice lens may appear dissimilar, so, too, may actions differ, which their respective perceptions require. This difference of perception through the justice lens can lead to disagreements, which are rendered all the

more powerful by people's passionate defense of their conceptions of justice. The challenge ahead is for the diverse cultures, experiences and perspectives within CRS to coalesce around a vision of justice that is coherent enough to constitute organizational culture yet inclusive enough to ensure functional value built on broad-based support.

While everyone may not agree on the role of the justice lens, it was clear during the SARO case study that justice is at the heart of our operational relationships due to its integral relationship with the concept of partnership. The agency can be certain that staff and partners who participated in the SARO justice case study will engage with enthusiasm in the maturation of our development programming.



# South Asia

## How CRS Programming Responds to Gender Concerns in India

In the Bhagrai Hamlet, CRS staff, their partners and the villagers of Churgaon have designed and implemented a highly successful watershed project and, consequently, have become agricultural ambassadors in the region. In response to numerous requests, members of the Churgaon watershed committee, the primary decision-making body for the project, must travel to neighboring villages to talk about their success, share their experiences and explain the positive outcomes of the watershed initiative.

Farmers in Churgaon are producing more crops than before, women spend less time collecting water and firewood, and children are more healthy and in school. Soil erosion has decreased, and the surrounding forests are being replanted with young trees. Fish ponds provide increased revenue for the village, and a savings group provides small loans to jump-start new businesses. Liquor consumption has dropped and brewing liquor no longer occurs in the village.

In addition to these outcomes, a stronger sense of unity within the village has resulted from the participation of both men and women in the watershed committee. This new found unity between men and women and among all the villagers was evident recently during a meeting between the villagers and CRS staff.

The villagers were discussing the activities men and women undertook in the village and the division of labor that exists. Women were speaking about the chores they had to complete before the men even woke up in the morning – pounding rice, collecting water, cleaning the house and sweeping. Men, they said, don't wake up until the women have to sweep around them, finally disturbing their sleep. This comment elicited a round of laughter from both men and women in the group.

The villagers said the openness of this exchange would not have been possible before the watershed project began. As CRS looks at programming through a Justice Lens, it is evident that this project has resulted in right relationships being established among the villagers in Churgaon. A first step has been taken to transform society's unjust structures; in this case a step has been taken to address gender inequality, which exists in the village and throughout India.

### THE JUSTICE ISSUE TO BE EXAMINED

For the Justice Case Study initiative, CRS/India wanted to look at how gender concerns were being addressed in their programming, by their partners and among CRS staff. This study primarily examines gender as it relates to agriculture and women's empowerment but also explores how CRS addresses these roles through both an active consideration of the Justice Lens, on the one hand, and a justice approach which to them seems intuitive, on the other.

The watershed project in Churgaon was developed with justice issues in mind but not necessarily due to a conscious application of the Justice Lens. One of the main focuses of the case study and challenges uncovered was how CRS/India should institutionalize an active, conscious application of the Justice Lens to overseas

programming. How will CRS staff know they are actively applying the Justice Lens? If staff just continue to do work as they always have done, since justice has always been a central focus of CRS activities, is this really an application of the Justice Lens?

These and other challenges as well as lessons learned will be discussed by focusing on two projects, The Bhagrai Watershed Project and the Health and Women's Empowerment Project in Bachhrawan.

### THE BHAGRAI WATERSHED PROJECT

The watershed project in Bhagrai was designed to conserve and improve natural resources through watershed management and to develop a community organization to care for the interventions beyond the funding period. The strategies planned included:

- In situ soil moisture conservation;
- Optimum utilization of surface water;
- Soil erosion control and ground water recharge through farm bunds;
- Regeneration of vegetative coverage through social forestry;
- Forest protection.

A watershed committee was established to ensure the smooth implementation of project strategies and the maintenance of interventions beyond project funding. According to the villagers, it is this group that led to the increased unity within Churgaon mentioned earlier in the study.

The watershed committee consisted of ten members of the community, three of whom were women. Though a conscious application of the Justice Lens did not occur, justice concerns were taken into consideration during the design of the project. According to the project description, it was envisioned that the watershed committee would be responsible for natural resource management in the community

and would instill habits of sharing and conflict resolution through its work. The committee also would be responsible for strengthening user groups, which were intended to encourage the sharing of community-based assets created by the project, and self-help groups, which were intended to encourage thrift and self-finance among women and the landless. The project was also designed to ensure that women made up 30% of the watershed committee, in order to address gender concerns.

## WHY SHOULD CRS STAFF FOCUS ON GENDER?

### Programming

Though it was an agricultural project, CRS wanted to be sure to focus on gender for several reasons. Within the village, it was noticed that there existed gender inequality in agricultural projects, inequality in relationships between men and women, gender discrimination within the home which had negative effects on the children, a need for the empowerment of women, high liquor consumption and domestic violence.

CRS staff also understood that women spent most of their time collecting firewood and water and that a watershed project would help make these things more available near the home. They also understood women must be included on the watershed committee. Because their work is closely tied to the environment, it is essential that women participate effectively in the decision-making process with regard to the development of the area.

For the reasons just mentioned, CRS wanted to be sure to focus on gender. However, this was not the only justice issue addressed by the watershed project. The overall justice concerns for the project included holistic development of the

community through the encouragement of the people to be self-sufficient and self-reliant and to make their own decisions about their lives and the rejuvenation of the fragile environment by reducing over-exploitation of the natural resources.

Furthermore, the watershed approach promotes unity and collective action by the poor. Before a watershed project is approved, there is a pre-watershed period where the community demonstrates its ability for collective action, either through savings and credit group formation or through activities that require participation of the entire community. Only then is approval given for a full-scale watershed development project.

Prior to the implementation of the watershed approach, there was no need for the community to demonstrate collective action. In the old approach, which focused on cluster groups, there was very little participatory planning. Instead, it was mostly the partner's ideas that were followed. The partner chose the participants and could be biased. The social and economic fit was never discussed and the cluster group was not technically supported. Though many of the decisions CRS staff made were based on an intuitive concern for social justice, staff said that in this case the Justice Lens did help them think about making the transition from the cluster approach to this watershed approach, and from top-down decision making to an approach based on subsidiarity.

### Partners

Some of the CRS counterparts are not as informed about gender issues as some of the CRS staff, and there is an underlying acceptance of gender disparities as natural and socially acceptable. This often results in lukewarm efforts to change the status quo. Therefore, the lead must come from

CRS staff to initiate change if change is required after analyzing programming through the Justice Lens. CRS has highly qualified staff members in program executive positions; these staff members have been exposed to gender and equity concerns as part of their professional training. Many still have a long way to go in examining their own biases and influences in regard to gender, but this is a continuous process for anyone committed to gender responsive programming. On average, CRS staff are better informed than most partners, primarily because they have had formal education in social development; they also approach the projects with a higher level of motivation to confront gender concerns.

In contrast, some the Counterparts (CPs) we talked with did not feel the urgency of changing the status quo. Partners may be interested in undertaking programs for women as long as these do not call for any structural changes within the community. Some partners are even reluctant to bring about any change in the way they perceive the role of other partners. A change in thinking would require priests to think of sisters as true partners in the development process. Challenging these views is a delicate issue and CRS staff must exercise a great deal of sensitivity and skill in order to do so. However, they must try, and this issue should continue to be discussed openly and addressed in further detail.

When CRS staff talked with the partners working in Churgaon about gender issues in the village, the partners seemed quite comfortable with the division of labor as it existed and became defensive after the suggestion was made that women may be burdened with an unequal share of the labor. It seemed very difficult for the CPs, in this case, to grapple with gender as a justice issue and seemed much more comfortable talking about other justice concerns such as site

selection, poverty reduction and the equitable distribution of the project's benefits. However, if justice is everyone's concern, can we choose to see only a few aspects of it while ignoring others? How can the Justice Lens help the CPs look more holistically at justice rather than looking only at the justice concerns they are used to and comfortable addressing?

Though they understand the Justice Lens and Catholic Social Teaching, partners need additional skills to manage the challenging situations which may arise in their work. For instance, because they work in a hostile environment where forces are constantly watching and waiting for opportunities to single people and organizations out for blame, our partners in India are further reluctant to engage in activities that call for structural change. The CRS/India Gender Strategy is being put in place for the purpose of providing staff and partners opportunities to help internalize gender concerns and gain the necessary skills to confront these challenges. The response of partners to workshops which have taken place elsewhere in India have been positive and can serve as a good foundation for this learning.

## LESSONS LEARNED

As CRS staff looked at the Churgaon watershed project from a justice perspective, several lessons emerged. Among the lessons were those relating specifically to the watershed project and approach. Some of these included:

- CRS should be sure to make use of the local knowledge in agriculture, forestry and education. This itself is a justice issue and can be evaluated through the Justice Lens. We need to encourage local communities to take charge of their own development needs.

- It may be counterproductive for the role of women to change rapidly; change will require a lot of investment in capacity-building within the community.
- Because communities are bound by tradition, CRS should work in incremental stages and begin by working with individuals. If one person is able to break with cultural norms for the good, CRS could support him or her as a resource person and foundation for change.
- CRS should work to build the capacity of Agricultural Extension Workers so they are better equipped to discuss gender issues with the community.
- Women can and should be encouraged to educate each other.
- Training is now given primarily by those from the outside. If it is given by those in the community, however, it is adopted much faster.
- CRS is helping to develop local resources as other villages are coming to the CRS site and adopting the practices they see.
- The process of dialogue between men and women has given way to better understanding of gender roles. CRS programs have built in mechanisms for group interaction – though this interaction does not come about immediately. Over time, however, the projects help women become more assertive, as reflected in their speaking in front of men during joint meetings. As they become more assertive, interaction develops and understanding follows slowly.

## IMPACT ON FUTURE PROGRAMMING

Looking at the watershed project has shown that CRS should use community resources more effectively – expanding on initiatives to address gender quality which begin in the village itself. Generally, CRS should concentrate more fully on gender. CRS staff involved in this project are primarily focusing on the

watershed approach but now must focus more intently on what the village will look like if the women are empowered. By looking through the Justice Lens and being equipped with the tools to do so, CRS could see this future more clearly.

## Health and Women's Empowerment

A second example further illustrates the benefits of focusing on women. Working with Grameen Vikas Sansthan (Society for Rural Development), Bachhrawan, Raebareilly as part of the Safe Motherhood and Child Survival (SMCS) program, CRS worked with women in Gudiyagadi by promoting their empowerment through self-help groups and by assisting in the training of Village Health Workers. CRS' goal is to form active women's groups through organization assistance, awareness-building and skills-training.

The current health program in Utter Pradesh, which began in 1996 as part of the SMCS initiative, operates in villages where Title II food commodities act as an incentive for the women to participate in CRS activities. The basic components of the program include growth monitoring, home visits, health education and maintenance of health information systems. The children and pregnant mother's weight is monitored every month during monthly food distribution. Village Health Workers (VHWs) will visit the homes of pregnant women, women who have recently delivered a baby or mal-nourished children whose weight has suddenly dropped. Also, health education sessions are conducted for mothers on basic health topics like complementary feeding, diarrhea management, the importance of iodine, etc. All of these interventions are documented by the VHWs.

Many of the VHWs are women and working in such a capacity has been their first exposure to working outside the home. In fact, for many of the women in



the village, they were not even allowed to leave their homes alone prior to this program's implementation. Women in the community did not even recognize each other.

When VHWs first started working in the villages, they were not welcomed in the homes, doors were shut in their faces, men insisted on being present when children were weighed and damaging rumors followed them everywhere they went. Even men who were working as Village Health Supervisors would have their bicycle tires punctured when they were out working and supporting women in this role. They were never asked about their agenda or motivations. This led to apprehension in the community, which eventually led to aggressive behavior, such as puncturing tires.

Women kept up with the visits, however, and Village Health Supervisors talked to the men of the village. Villagers saw how the health of the children and mothers who did participate could be improved and monitored. Eventually, therefore, the women were accepted by the mothers-in-law, the men saw that the best interests of the children were motivating the women and the women were allowed to do their work. Though it was hard to win over husbands and other family members, the increased self-respect and self-satisfaction were worth their persistence. One of the VHWs graduated to become a Village Health Supervisor and is now also pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree through a distance learning program. She is recently married but continues to live at her maternal home so she can carry on her work. Her husband supports her, takes her to his home on the weekends and brings her back to the village during the week. The woman felt very satisfied with her work and proud she was serving her community in this way. VHWs serve as examples for women in the rest of the community and eventually women begin participating in the development process in other ways.

Women participate in the SMCS program not only by being Village Health Workers but also by taking part in the women's empowerment group. This project has been maintained by CRS since the time the group's ties with another organization ended. CRS is now also trying to increase the women's participation in the development process beyond the limits of the self-help group. One of the women's projects was to plant trees for the government forest department. For this work they were paid 33 rupees a day. Because this was such a small amount, they went to the government, and as one voice, demanded a more just wage. An obvious positive outcome of the group is that reforestation takes place. More importantly for the women, however, is that they plant the trees together and work as a group. They are able to have time to be together and talk. When a decision must be made, they do so as a group; through this collective decision-making they feel stronger. Recently, the group was awarded a 200,000 rupee grant in the form of a revolving fund from the local administration. Though the reforestation project has just ended, this will replace it as an avenue for income generation. One of the positive outcomes of the group was that the women transitioned from simply talking about money to talking about other issues that were really of most concern to them, such as their families, caring for their children and water purification.

Also, now that the women are also earning wages, they feel the men cannot force them to do anything. And, the men say they are happy that the women are becoming so empowered and aware. They see the increased development of their community and understand where it originates. The atmosphere between men and women has improved, and there is less fighting in the community. The men are looking after the children while the women are in meetings and the older women are congratulating the young



women for all they are doing.

Like Churgaon, the men and women in this village are at ease talking about these issues in front of each other. During a recent discussion among about 30 men and women in the village (mostly women), one man said that the “women are the owners of the house and the men are the servants.” The women were asked if this were true, and one retorted, “Yes, the men better respect us. We are doing all the work.” Though working on gender issues in these communities will continue to be challenging for CRS staff, it must be highlighted how far they have come. As mentioned earlier, it was not long ago that women in this village did not even recognize each other. Now they participate together as Village Health Workers or in self-empowerment groups and gain some levels of respect from their husbands along the way.

### **IMPACT ON AND IMPLICATION FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING AND POLICY DECISIONS**

As was the case with their colleagues working on the watershed project, CRS personnel in Lucknow are not always consciously applying the Justice Lens to their programming. However, even though they are not always using terms like “stewardship,” “subsidiarity” and “common good,” their efforts have always been to help the community and they have always had a justice focus in doing so. They have just not attached these labels to their work. Is it necessary, however, to do so in order for CRS as an agency to talk in one voice? Or is it more important to do the work and use any Justice Lens one may find helpful? CRS staff in Lucknow are beginning to lean toward the first option and have had numerous workshops recently on gender and justice issues and the Justice Lens in particular.

They believe that utilizing the Justice

Lens, as articulated by CRS in the Justice Lens document, will help them to examine their programs more closely and enable them to view the community and their interventions, such as the project just described, from the justice perspective. They also believe it will help them reexamine their targeting criteria. However, they realize they are at the initial stages in doing so and are not exactly clear on how to answer “yes” to whether or not they are applying the Justice Lens.

A first step they are taking involves establishing work plans for their programs and activities. For instance, in the case of the work they are doing with Grameen Vikas Sansthan, they wanted to integrate Justice into their work and think about their programming proactively using the Justice Lens. Doing so, they decided to bring about positive changes in their thinking and attitudes about gender, make efforts to discourage discrimination and form groups to help the community, at the local level, focus on justice. They want to aid in women’s empowerment by increasing women’s participation in the development process, through assistance in organization, awareness building and skills training.

This example is useful to include in the case study because it illustrates how CRS is grappling again with consciously applying the Justice Lens, on the one hand, or simply intuitively working for Justice, on the other. It also suggests – through the development of work plans – a relevant, conscious tool for thinking proactively about the Justice Lens at the beginning stages of a project and for thinking about how to address gender concerns in programming.

The CP of this area has been actively engaged in the two justice workshops conducted by CRS. However, incorporating justice issues has been more intuitively determined rather than consciously derived from the application of the

Justice Lens. The core principles that are addressed by all programs are “subsidiarity” and “common good.” These are values that are internalized by almost all CRS staff by virtue of the background from which many of them come to the agency. They do not see these as programming principles but as a commitment to the poor and disadvantaged.

At the management level, the application of the Justice Lens in programming is consciously reflected in the discussions on targeting who participates in the program and in which site the program is located. CRS staff are actively engaged in these discussions and programs have registered a positive shift in this direction. CRS staff have had to grapple with the challenge of sensitizing partners and building their capacity for the greater common good.

## CONCLUSION

The projects examined in this report have illustrated innovative approaches to empowerment which have had remarkable effects on the women’s lives. If not for these projects, some women, who were used to covering their faces and so isolated they did not even know their neighbors, would not have made the progress they have made to date. They would never have been able to attend college and graduate as some of them have. Likewise, the wife of a marginal tribal farmer would never have been able to learn about watershed development treatments and their impact on the environment if she had not been engaged in the whole process from the beginning. She may never have been able to take on the leadership role that the watershed committee gave her the opportunity to take on.

However, these results don’t suggest that work here is complete. On the contrary, work is just beginning and these examples illustrate why it is important to capture the momentum and build on it. CRS has

to continue to work on gender and justice issues within their offices among their staff. Only then will they be able to take the leadership role in the field necessary to challenge the existing attitudes regarding gender. The skills they acquire through training will help CRS staff as they work with partners in the field. Though new sensitivities will uncover more challenges.

There are several steps CRS must take to confront these and several concerns and questions CRS must raise. These questions include:

- How can the Justice Lens strategy build on the intuitive sense of equity that already exists within the minds of many CRS staff?
- How can CRS incorporate these concerns more fully within its field-level management so that it is perceived as an organization living by the principles it preaches?
- Should CRS look for ways to bring about programming changes through the application of the Justice Lens or should we look to build an agency that creates an ambiance where justice and equity are not strategy requirements but the very lifeblood of the organization? Can we do both?

As a learning organization in partnership with other organizations and the community, we need to address continuously these concerns and questions. In doing so, we can ensure that we are consciously addressing justice issues in our work, and in this case bringing needed change into communities marked by gender inequality and discrimination.



# Headquarters

## Global Solidarity in Central America after Hurricane Mitch

### BACKGROUND / HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In October 1998, Hurricane Mitch devastated Central America and revealed the general vulnerability of the population. To respond to the situation produced by Mitch, CRS developed a strategy that focused on Saving Lives, Sustaining Livelihoods and Rebuilding Civil Society. This was effectively the first emergency response strategy with a strong civil society component built in, and it resulted in many changes and challenges for the agency, many of which are ongoing. This case study focuses on the civil society element of the Mitch strategy. Ultimately, the strategy seeks to help Central Americans rebuild a more just and less vulnerable society. A true agency-wide effort, the response has been implemented by CRS country program offices in Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador and by the Church Outreach, Policy and Strategic Issues, Latin America and Caribbean Regional Offices, Communications and Advertising, Fundraising and Finance departments at CRS headquarters. The strategy is based on the hypothesis that if there were not a strong civil society component, the first two objectives of the strategy, saving lives and sustaining livelihoods, would have only short-term effects.

## STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY

As in many other developing countries' crisis situations, a Consultative Group (CG) was organized to assist the Central American government's response to the situation. This particular CG includes the Central American governments, major donor countries and the International Financial Institutions. The Group first met in December 1998, two months after the disaster, to examine affected countries' reconstruction and rehabilitation proposals to respond to the situation. As each Central American government prepared reconstruction plans to present in the December 1998 CG meeting, national civil society organizations prepared proposals and lobbied with limited success to participate in the development of national level plans and participate with their governments in the CG meeting. In this initial December meeting, the donor countries and the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) set the parameters for the development of the national plans. They also began discussion of the proposal for civil society participation in both the development of each country plan and the mechanism for civil society participation for the monitoring of the country plans. The donor countries and IFIs saw the Central American reconstruction process as a unique opportunity for civil society to participate in the different stages of the decision-making process for drawing up the plans and for monitoring their implementation.

In the second CG meeting held in May 1999 in Stockholm, Sweden, the five major donor countries (Germany, Canada, Spain, United States and Sweden – the Group of Five) agreed as part of their support for reconstruction in Central America to begin a consultative process. The goal of the process is to establish or reinforce national mechanisms that would provide for effective civil society participation and monitoring of the

reconstructive process in each of the four Central American countries. The principles agreed to at the Consultative Group meeting, now known as the Stockholm principles are as follows:

- Reduce the social and ecological vulnerability of the region as the overriding goal;
- Reconstruct and transform Central America on the basis of an integrated approach of transparency and good governance;
- Consolidate democracy and good governance, reinforcing the process of decentralization of government functions and powers, with active participation of civil society;
- Promote respect for human rights as a permanent objective. The promotion of equality between women and men, the rights of children, of ethnic groups and other minorities should be given special attention;
- Coordinate donor efforts, guided by priorities set by the recipient countries;
- Intensify efforts to reduce the external debt burden of the countries of the region.

Because two of the affected Central American countries, Honduras and Nicaragua, are eligible for debt reduction under the HIPC (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries) initiative, debt reduction and the development of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) for these two countries became an integral part of the reconstruction process in the region. After the May 1999 Consultative Group meeting in Stockholm on the reconstruction of Central America, the World Bank/IMF held their annual meeting in September 1999 and unveiled a joint World Bank-IMF initiative linking debt relief to poverty reduction objectives (HIPC II).

In order to qualify for debt relief under HIPC II, governments are required to write Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers

with input from civil society, outlining how funds freed up by debt relief will be spent on poverty reduction. This signaled a new approach to economic policymaking, with a new emphasis on poverty reduction and on open, participatory process for decision-making. The PRSP process is currently underway in both Honduras and Nicaragua and is now an integral part of the post-Mitch reconstruction process and a key opportunity for the promotion of civil society participation.

Despite their acceptance of the conditions outlined in the Stockholm agreements and the new World Bank/IMF initiative, the Central American governments have been resistant to changing business as usual. With international assistance beginning to flow, governments have, in some cases, returned to centralized decision making and corrupt practices. However, due to continuous and effective pressure from the donor community and civil society, it is clear that some new spaces have been created for negotiation and dialogue between governmental and non-governmental actors and that donor nations and the international financial institutions have an important amount of leverage with national governments. This leverage is particularly keen in Honduras and Nicaragua, countries that are both dependent on international assistance because of their inefficient economies and their massive foreign debt. If the donors and IFIs play a consistent and focused role in pursuing the goals laid out in Stockholm, then they will have the leverage to insist on compliance from the Central American governments. This requires that civil society and international organizations like CRS maintain and develop relations with these institutions, to monitor the decision-making process regarding reconstruction and setting the stage for ongoing civil society monitoring of government planning and implementation.

## **STRENGTHENING GLOBAL SOLIDARITY**

In response to Hurricane Mitch, many individuals, groups and dioceses in the United States offered a huge outpouring of material and financial support to the Central American affected countries. Generally speaking, CRS accepts cash contributions in the time of major emergencies but does not accept in-kind or material donations. However, the magnitude of the Hurricane Mitch disaster in a geographic location so close to the United States resulted in large numbers of people desiring to contribute not just money but also material goods or their own time and service to the humanitarian response. CRS decided that it would accept those in-kind donations that it could appropriately program to save lives and sustain livelihoods. The result was the donation of everything from blankets and flashlights to satellite phones, electrical equipment and even bridges. CRS also accepted paid and volunteer help for particular skill areas needed, including medical services and engineering. More than a dozen U.S. dioceses turned to CRS as an agency of the Catholic Church through which to make in-kind contributions in response to the disaster.

One of the most interesting responses, and the focus for the global solidarity part of this case study, was from the bishops of the dioceses of Texas and Oklahoma. These bishops decided that they did not want to limit their efforts to an emergency response. They began to connect with their brother bishops in Honduras and decided to work to form a longer-term solidarity partnership with the Honduran people and church. This case study focuses on this particular global solidarity relationship, given that Honduras was the only Mitch-affected country where a concerted long-term global solidarity strategy was formulated. In November 1998, the Texas/Oklahoma

(TX/OK) bishops requested the assistance of CRS in facilitating the relationship with their Honduran counterparts. Initial meetings with the bishops and discussions with the Honduran church led to the following strategy mission statement endorsed by the TX/OK bishops in October 1999:

The Dioceses of Texas/Region X and Catholic Relief Services seeks a long-term reciprocal relationship built on the call to Conversion, Communion and Solidarity. This is enriched by:

- Expressing our commitment to the Honduran Church and its people by supporting their efforts toward the integral development of the human person, family and community;
- Expressing our support through public promotion of issues leading to the changes in the structures that create and maintain poverty;
- Expressing our solidarity in times of crisis through humanitarian support;
- Responding as a Church, mutually recognizing and drawing inspiration from our brothers and sisters as one community;
- Deepening our faith as Catholics living, working and worshipping in the Church of the Americas.

As can be seen from the Mission Statement, the Texas/Oklahoma bishops committed themselves to increasing cooperation with their sister churches in Honduras in order to address problems of justice and to encourage solidarity between Honduras and Texas/Oklahoma. The bishops of Honduras endorsed this outreach from their brother bishops. The mid-term result has been the pairing of 17 dioceses in Texas and Oklahoma with the 7 dioceses in Honduras in partnerships for awareness building, action and spiritual sharing between the peoples of the dioceses.

## THE JUSTICE ISSUE ADDRESSED

The Hurricane Mitch emergency revealed the stark poverty in the region and the structural problems<sup>1</sup> that are the principle causes of the continued vulnerability of the poor. As part of its commitment to promote justice, CRS/LACRO is committed to address the structural causes of poverty and vulnerability in the region. In this particular case, the sudden influx of international aid meant that the most crucial justice issue was that the poor had a say with regard to the use of resources and that the reconstruction was “poverty focused.” The question of participation became key and CRS/LACRO identified the goal of strengthening civil society participation in the reconstruction and poverty reduction process at a local, national and international level as key to ensuring an equitable use of resources and of bringing about long-term change in the region. Civil society activities prioritized in this long-term process include monitoring governments and donors, ensuring transparency and accountability with regard to reconstruction funding, proposing new areas and focuses for reconstruction and advocating for more poverty-focused programming. This insistence on the role of civil society participation follows on the Central American Bishops Post Mitch statement on international support, “don’t come and rebuild the same poverty that was destroyed.”

Promoting civil society participation in monitoring the post-Mitch reconstruction process and in economic decision making was prioritized in the region by CRS and other PVOs. However, there are major limitations which Central American civil society groups are facing and which are being addressed by this strategy, namely:

- The lack of an articulated structure which would allow civil society access to information and which would allow their participation in and monitoring of the decision-making process with



regard to reconstruction and poverty reduction plans;

- The lack of consolidated civil society coalitions;
- The limited representation of grassroots organizations and interests in national level civil society coalitions;
- The limited mechanisms for engagement between civil society organizations and national governments;
- The lack of experience in advocacy and knowledge of advocacy targets;
- The lack of ability to propose viable alternatives to government/donor policies and programs.

CRS was also faced with the challenge of linking up local and national level processes with work on the international level and within the U.S., given that international actors including the U.S. government have a key role in addressing the structural causes of poverty within the region. For this reason, both country programs and headquarters departments would have to play a complementary role in the struggle for social transformation and justice in the region.

Even before the Mitch response, CRS had made a commitment to building greater links between U.S. Catholics and its overseas programming as a response to the 1997 U.S. Bishops' call for global solidarity. For CRS' work in Central and South America, this responsibility to engage the U.S. Church more directly in our work was given greater import with the Apostolic Exhortation "Ecclesia in America." With this background, and our own justice lens framework, the CRS agency-wide response to Hurricane Mitch was developed with the overarching goal of building "right relationships" within the region and between Central America and the United States.

## DESCRIPTION OF STRATEGY AND ACTIVITIES

### Strengthening Civil Society

A primary focus of this strategy has been to strengthen civil society in Central America to respond to the challenges of participating in the national reconstruction and poverty-reduction plans. This is being done through strengthening the capacity of non-governmental organizations, civic and church groups to take ownership of the reconstruction process, to form linkages with local government at national and municipal levels and through advocating for changes in policies that affect the poor of Central America. A key part of this strategy is to strengthen the capacity of grassroots organizations to participate in decision making, negotiate with state actors and propose concrete changes on the local level. It is clear that any follow-up to Stockholm or the HIPC/PRSP initiative must incorporate the grassroots and other local organizations to foster social transformation and maintain the legitimacy of national level coalitions.

Given the role of donor governments and the IFIs in driving the reconstruction and poverty-reduction process, this strategy recognizes that international support is key to achieving transformation in Central America. For this reason, the strategy includes a role for the Policy and Strategic Issues (PSI) division and Church Outreach in developing complementary activities within the U.S. to support civil society participation in both the Consultative Group process and with regard to the development of poverty reduction plans in Honduras and Nicaragua. Church Outreach has undertaken activities that include a focus on educating U.S. dioceses about poverty and injustice in Central America and promoting diocese-to-diocese relationships with countries in the region. These relationships



are encouraged to provide material support for reconstruction and rehabilitation activities and also to increase awareness and advocacy in the U.S. for other issues prioritized by the Church and civil society organizations, such as debt relief, poverty reduction and migration.

Each country program has developed a portfolio of projects aimed at saving lives or sustaining livelihoods but which also aim to increase the capacity of civil society to participate in the decision-making process. Each country program has defined a national implementation plan for civil society strengthening and identified specific partner organizations that they are currently supporting. Activities implemented by each country program differ due to the country context and the nature of civil society in the affected countries. The following is a summary of the current activities that are underway in country programs overseas, within the U.S., and with regard to global solidarity programming.

## COUNTRY PROGRAMS

### Nicaragua

- Support to the “Civil Coordinating Body for Emergencies and Reconstruction” (CCER). This national network, which has over 300 member organizations, is heavily involved in the advocacy around the implementation of the Stockholm principles in the Nicaragua reconstruction process. The network monitors the reconstruction process and is participating in the development of the PRSP in Nicaragua. CRS is supporting these activities within the network, especially with regard to involving more grassroots organizations in the national movement and with regard to the formulation of the poverty reduction strategy paper.

- Support to the “Network for Local Democracy and Development” (RDL). This grassroots network is focusing on developing the capacity of communities to participate in the formation of local development plans, which includes training on issues such as needs assessments, strategic planning for advocacy, negotiation and monitoring of municipal budgets.

### Honduras

- Support to Caritas Honduras in an umbrella project with three dioceses in the country, which focuses on developing the capacity of communities to participate in the formation of local development plans, including training around advocacy and negotiation techniques and a focus on education and mobilization around the issue of external debt.
- The national-level project with Caritas Honduras is also complemented by direct support to the Diocese of Trujillo in its work to develop the capacity of communities for advocacy, negotiation and the formation of local development plans in conjunction with their municipalities. It also has a strong focus on community education and mobilization on the debt issue.

### Guatemala

- Support to the “Participatory Association,” which is working in targeted Mitch-affected municipalities to foster citizen participation in municipal policy making. The association gathers information about municipal activities and policies that are then broadcast on special local radio programs. They also promote local roundtables and dialogue between municipal authorities and communities.
- Support to land tenure programming of three CRS/Guatemala partners who are working in Mitch-affected areas. Activities include community organization,

training on agrarian reform issues and land titling procedures, as well as legal assistance during the measuring and titling process and coordination with government agencies in charge of agrarian reform in the country.

- Support to the “Guillermo Torriello Foundation,” CRS supports this national level NGO in its advocacy work around land tenure policies in the country. This foundation also coordinates with local level CRS partners, who are working on the issue of land tenure (those within and outside of Mitch-affected areas).<sup>2</sup>

### **El Salvador**

- Support for the National Civil Society Forum for organizing its response and improving its capacity to participate in the national reconstruction plan.
- Support for setting up a Social Control Mechanism to monitor reconstruction planning and spending.
- Support to national and local level Caritas offices, community organizations and national forums to strengthen advocacy capacity. Work will focus on issues such as migration,<sup>3</sup> citizen participation in local development and budget monitoring.
- Support to national and local level Caritas offices and community organizations in strengthening capacity for conflict transformation activities.
- Establishment of linkages between local communities and parishes and the El Salvador community in the United States for awareness raising and for establishing a common agenda to address problems.

In all cases, coordination with other programming has been prioritized. In the case of CRS/Guatemala, land tenure and citizen participation programming will continue to be included in planning and implementation of future projects. This is especially relevant with regard to the next Development Activity Proposal

(DAP) which will be strengthened by the inclusion of these two elements, the integration of which has largely been made possible by this strategy. In Nicaragua, current programming with the Diocesan Justice and Peace Commissions is supporting and being linked to new activities with both the CCER and the RDL. This is mostly in terms of mutual capacity building and exchanges dealing with local development planning and advocacy. In Honduras, civil society programming grew up in areas already heavily targeted by CRS/Honduras’ reconstruction activities. CRS/El Salvador is also prioritizing activities to promote civil society integration across other programming sectors.

### **Activities Within the U.S. and Church Outreach**

The Policy and Strategic Issues Department (PSI) began its work after Hurricane Mitch by advocating for U.S. Government assistance to the affected countries. This focus rapidly changed to promoting the inclusion of civil society in the Consultative Group process, which then grew to include advocating for genuine civil society participation in the process of formulating the PRSP in Honduras and Nicaragua. Currently PSI is part of a coordination group in the U.S. (along with the Washington Office on Latin America and Oxfam) which follows the activities of the international community with regard to the reconstruction of HIPC II. This coordination group has taken a lead role in advocating with the U.S. government, the World Bank, the IMF and the IDB on issues related to the two processes mentioned above.

At the end of the year 2000, the current advocacy focus was to promote the inclusion of the proposals of Central America civil society at the next Consultative Group meeting in Madrid

in March 2001.<sup>4</sup> CRS is also urging the World Bank and the IMF to support authentic civil society participation in policy design and implementation in Nicaragua and Honduras by improving mechanisms to educate government officials about the merits of citizen participation in the PRSP process.

Specific activities undertaken include monitoring the IFIs and the U.S. government with regard to post-Mitch reconstruction funding, the application of the Stockholm principles and the formulation of the PRSP. PSI has taken a lead role in information sharing with the field and has undertaken direct advocacy activities in Washington. In order to facilitate this process of direct advocacy, PSI has prepared position papers on Mitch reconstruction and PRSP and outlined the internal decision making process for advocacy activities in order to make CRS' reaction time as rapid as possible. Relevant actors in HQ and within the LACRO team have recently approved these position papers and the internal decision-making process proposal.

PSI and Church Outreach also worked together to prepare a special package for Diocesan Directors on the two-year anniversary after Mitch. The package contains an update of CRS reconstruction activities, including a heavy civil society/policy focus.

### **Strengthening Global Solidarity**

Various activities have taken place within the diocese-to-diocese partnership strategy framework. CRS has facilitated several visits from dioceses in Texas and Oklahoma to their Honduran-paired dioceses. Special collections have been taken up in many Texas dioceses. Funds have been sent directly to Honduran dioceses or through CRS to fund reconstruction projects. After these initial activities had been carried out, CRS organized an assessment to gather information about

the vision and expectations of the Texas/Oklahoma diocese, as well as their counterparts in Honduras. This led to the drafting of a CRS action plan and management strategy for the partnership initiative. The strategy is based on many of the findings from that assessment and draws heavily on the commitments set out in the October 1999 meeting of the Texas/Oklahoma bishops when the partnership initiative was formally endorsed. During this October meeting, it was agreed that CRS would act as a facilitator for this partnership between the seven Honduran and seventeen U.S. dioceses<sup>5</sup> and that it would continue formally through January 1, 2002.<sup>6</sup>

Responding to the request to act as facilitator in this process, CRS has developed a three-stage program designed to encourage cooperation between the dioceses of Texas and Oklahoma and the dioceses of Honduras in addressing problems of justice and encouraging solidarity. The goal is to bring staff from Texas, Oklahoma and Honduran dioceses together and help guide them through the process of beginning a dialogue on programs of mutual cooperation and assistance. Activities planned and coordinated by CRS to this end include:

- International visits for diocesan staff to explore and experience for themselves the physical realities of their partner dioceses;
- Workshops facilitated by CRS while on these international visits to guide diocesan staff in dialogue with staff members of their partner dioceses;
- CRS facilitated meetings between bishops of Texas and Oklahoma and bishops of Honduras;
- CRS facilitated meetings between Texas/Oklahoma and Honduran partnership coordinators (diocesan staff appointed by each bishop to help coordinate efforts in each diocese);

- Workshops given by CRS in each of the dioceses in Texas, Oklahoma and Honduras to stimulate broad diocesan participation in the dialogue between partnered dioceses.

To share in the responsibility of coordinating all these activities at the diocesan level, CRS is working with dioceses to establish “Solidarity Committees” or “Equipos Diocesanos de Enlace,” as they are being called in Honduras. The primary duty of these committees or working groups will be to ensure a continued dialogue both within their own dioceses and among partner dioceses throughout the three-stage partnership process facilitated by CRS and beyond. As such, these communities will be responsible for the internal review, revision and approval of any and all proposed activities raised during the three-stage process. Once the committees have had an opportunity to review partner dioceses, they will have the responsibility of communicating their findings to their bishop for revision and/or approval. The committees will be responsible to inform their partner diocese of the status of the proposed activities and to implement those that partner dioceses can agree on. CRS will be active in facilitating this dialogue through the three-stage program. After completion of the program, it is expected that partner dioceses will be able to engage one another on issues of mutual interest indefinitely.

CRS is aware of the opportunity such a partnership brings for promoting consciousness raising and advocacy activities based on broad social issues affecting partners in both countries, such as the issues of migration and debt relief. To this end, CRS is asking dioceses to establish advocacy and awareness-raising action plans both in Texas/Oklahoma and Honduras. Major themes of focus for these advocacy working groups could include:

- Creating and expanding civil society capacities to gain access to decision-making information that affects the national legislative process;
- Encouraging citizen participation through community organizing;
- Strengthening the institutional capacities of church social pastoral partners;
- Addressing the problem of international migration.

Perhaps more important than the opportunities for joint advocacy and action between partners created during this initiative are opportunities for exchanges of knowledge and learning experiences. One key experience the churches in Texas and Oklahoma may want to learn more about comes from the Diocese of Trujillo. The Church in Trujillo has been instrumental in facilitating the process of community empowerment since the tragedy of Hurricane Mitch through the creation of local development committees, or CODELS. The process of community empowerment in Trujillo as a channel for fostering right relationships is relevant not only to Honduras, but could be helpful also in informing the political process of the marginalized and destitute populations of Texas and Oklahoma.

Finally, CRS recognizes the potential to organize activities around the theme of migration through this initiative. Migration, particularly, is an important issue to both Texas and Honduras, given that Texas is probably the main entry point for Honduran migrants and is also the location of one of the nation’s largest detention centers for undocumented immigrants. In this light, CRS will encourage discussions to help solve problems associated with missing/disappeared migrants and undocumented detained illegal immigrants in Texas and Oklahoma. There is also some potential with regard to corporate responsibility activities. Particular interest has been

expressed in monitoring human rights abuses associated with international industries, such as the textile industry.

## PROCESS

### Strengthening Civil Society

The Civil Society strategy was developed in August 1999 when Civil Society and Human Rights Program Managers from Central American countries met to plan a regional civil society response for CRS. At this stage, the two Consultative Group meetings had already occurred and the Stockholm principles were in place. National civil society coalitions existed in each country and were beginning to function, though in a fledgling manner, in most cases struggling to install coordination mechanisms, formulate their own policies and make their voices heard. In most cases, the national coalitions were also limited to experienced national level NGOs and were not truly representative of larger sectors of the population. With this context in mind, CRS program managers focused their strategy on promoting civil society participation with a view to upholding the Stockholm principles throughout the reconstruction process which would lead to the promotion of real transformation in Central America. The strategy laid down a framework for country programs, whereby new projects would focus on advocacy processes around development, reconstruction or poverty reduction, and whereby CRS would strive to target grassroots organizations and facilitate local – national – international linkages in the advocacy process.

The regional strategy was approved at the end of 1999; and during the year 2000, country programs started to formulate their national implementation plans (a national strategy document which responded to the regional strategy) and sub-projects

which laid out the work that would be done with individual counterparts.

In June 2000, the Central America country programs met for a midterm evaluation of CRS' response to Hurricane Mitch. Several agency Mitch meetings had already taken place, and it was decided that the main midterm meeting should focus on justice issues, specifically looking at our Civil Society-Mitch strategy, our advocacy and policy work and the new global solidarity relationships that were in the making. The mid-term meeting results have been compiled into a special evaluation report and are the main inputs for this case study.

## MAJOR CHALLENGES

### Strengthening Civil Society

The regional Civil Society strategy, which aims to implement a coherent justice-focused response in line with emergency and rehabilitation activities, is the first experience of its kind for the agency. Many challenges have arisen during the implementation of the strategy, not least the difficulties in developing complementary programming activities in each country that follow the common lines of action established in 1999. The process of identifying national and local partners and formulating projects has been a long process, given the different contexts in each country.

In particular with regard to our work to ensure implementation of the Stockholm principles, country programs and their partners have found it challenging, given that these principles appear less important now than during the first year after the hurricane. In some cases, donor assistance that was promised has not arrived, so immediate advocacy and monitoring of reconstruction assistance has not been possible. However, this has led to CRS



and partners taking the view that we must look at issues related to development policy and economic decision making in general (not just in relation to reconstruction funding) in order to tackle long-term poverty reduction in the region.

As CRS has prioritized linking grassroots organizations into advocacy processes, it has quickly become clear that linking local community advocacy to the national level advocacy efforts currently taking place is a huge challenge. However, CRS believes that real citizen participation in the formal political system should include all levels of society. For this work to be successful, CRS needs to develop a methodology for systematic, high-quality advocacy capacity building at the local level.

In many cases, CRS partners involved in national-level advocacy efforts have been civil society coalitions in which the Church has had little or no representation. The Church is more inclined to be involved in local-level advocacy and capacity-building work with communities, and as such, it continues to be an effective partner for CRS. CRS is challenged with finding more ways to work with the Church at a national level, identifying and pursuing together our shared advocacy priorities.

This strategy relied upon a very close coordination between PSI and country programs to advance the international advocacy agenda. This was a fairly new experience for LACRO, although the parallel creation and implementation of a regional migration strategy did bolster the process. The level of communication and coordination required was challenging for all involved and it took some time for field-HQ relationships to be consolidated. It was also difficult for PSI to respond to a rapidly-changing policy environment with regard to Mitch reconstruction and the PRSP, given that internal approval procedures for direct advocacy work were not in place. In the end, particular

policy positions and approval procedures were put in place to overcome this difficulty and give PSI the ability to respond in a flexible and agile manner.

### **Strengthening Global Solidarity**

We are continually challenged with defining the concept of global solidarity such that there is a common understanding within CRS as to its meaning in terms of our work overseas and in the United States. We also continue to work at translating our understanding of global solidarity into mutually beneficial working relationships between U.S. and Central American dioceses. We have to ensure that we move beyond the traditional donor-recipient relationship. We sense there is still much to be done for all parties involved to reach their full potential in addressing issues of injustice inherent in the poverty of Central America.

We hope to further incorporate civil society and advocacy themes into the current global solidarity linkages, and thus to involve Church Outreach in the integration of civil society and policy issues into all programming areas. From this perspective, the Texas-Oklahoma-Honduras partnership initiative provides a unique opportunity to educate dioceses in the U.S. as to their role in contributing or helping to alleviate the problems affecting the developing world. Once dioceses have been through the three-stage dialogue process with their partner dioceses, it is expected they will have a better understanding of the international, national and local factors contributing to the problem of global poverty. It is also expected that dioceses will come to understand the role advocacy and awareness raising can play in these issues, and that CRS will be prepared with an avenue by which people can put their desire to help into action. To address structural problems of poverty, this means encouraging interested dioceses

to engage in awareness-raising and advocacy that could affect the political process at the local, national and international level. For CRS, this means we must continue to confront the question of how to engage the “person in the pew” in this process.

## MAJOR ACHEIVEMENTS AND OUTCOMES

### Strengthening Civil Society

The following major achievements and outcomes were identified at the mid-term Mitch evaluation meeting that took place in June 2000 in Honduras:

- One of the major achievements with regard to the formulation and implementation of this regional strategy is that it has led country programs to begin working on entirely new programming, which includes advocacy around reconstruction, poverty reduction and sustainable development as its central concern. This has led to CRS programs dealing with key structural issues that complement development programming.
- Through our participation in the follow-up process to Stockholm commitments, CRS has increased its involvement with national civil society coalitions and other international agencies working toward the same goals. The increased level of coordination has raised CRS’ profile in the region and in the U.S. as a supporter of civil society and advocacy activities.
- As part of the regional civil society strategy, each country program has increased efforts to include local communities in the decision-making processes. Building the capacity of local communities for advocacy has become a priority for all country programs involved, leading to innovative new program development.

- CRS is also becoming involved in more advanced work to build the capacity of communities to monitor the use of funds by municipalities. Carrying out social audits has been identified as key in the reconstruction and long-term development processes in Central America. As a result, CRS has included this as a focus for new programming.

### Strengthening Global Solidarity

- Church Outreach has found that U.S. dioceses want to and can be more engaged in CRS field activities. The level of solidarity that came from U.S. dioceses was unprecedented. To date, 36 dioceses have become involved in support for activities as a result of Hurricane Mitch, with an overwhelming response from dioceses in Texas and the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Most notably, the Texas bishops have issued a newsletter with some stories on what they have done with their partners in Honduras, and they planned a meeting on the partnership that took place in February 2001.
- The Texas/Oklahoma – Honduras initiative promotes true reciprocity by fostering shared learning opportunities and dialogue between the Honduran and North American dioceses around common themes of justice and development as well as pastoral care and spiritual growth.
- The Texas/Oklahoma – Honduras initiative gives us an unprecedented opportunity to bring the bishops and dioceses of such a large region of the United States together in support of CRS’ work. This partnership is viewed as more than just a specific country program initiative. It gives us a way to educate the Texas/Oklahoma dioceses about global justice issues and to increase awareness about CRS in the region. The initiative builds greater awareness of and commitment to an international justice



agenda, and it has the potential to generate greater support from other U.S. dioceses for civil society and justice related programming in Honduras and throughout the region in the future.

- Church Outreach and CRS/HQ worked together to create a joint project proposal for the Texas/Oklahoma-Honduras initiative. This is the first example in the agency of a overseas operations-domestic outreach project, with activities in both the country and the United States, managed with a common goal, objectives and results framework.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### Key Insights

Most of the following are issues that are valid for the agency as a whole. The Civil Society-Mitch strategy has changed the way we look at justice programming in LACRO and has led to several important realizations which are described below. The most important consensus is that CRS, as a development organization, cannot distance its development programming from working on development policy, which clearly must include looking at national economic policy formulated by international financial institutions and therefore recognize that our justice and civil society work must link up the local and national level activities to the international agenda. Global solidarity partnerships could be key to supporting this process in the United States.

Another key issue which all those involved in the strategy have noted, is that such a strategy has led us to unprecedented levels of interdependence between country programs and Headquarters departments. Internal CRS coordination is more important than ever.

### Strengthening Civil Society

- The integration of civil society is necessary in all areas of programming (not just emergency programming) to address structural causes in the long term. For real integration to be achieved, it must be included as a key issue from the beginning and should be written into all programming areas, all proposals and all budgets. CRS has committed a very small portion of our Mitch budget to full integration of civil society work and is a long way from fully integrating programs in the region. However, CRS does recognize that CRS has to prioritize the Civil Society transformational aspect of “traditional” programming areas because the structure of injustice and related vulnerability will not be changed without this long-term focus.
- Taking on new activities such as advocacy at a national and international level is labor-intensive and requires extensive networking that CRS many times is not used to doing. Program managers are required to take on many non-traditional activities that are not always “projectized,” such as more relationship-building with organizations. These activities should be recognized as a valid part of program managers’ activities and supported within the country program. This also means that one CSHR program manager will not be able to handle alone these new tasks along with project development and management. This means that staffing issues need to be reevaluated, including looking at job descriptions and prioritizing knowledge and experience in recruitment procedures. Program managers also need to be aware of the high level of interaction needed with PSI, given that international and U.S.-based advocacy should be highly field-driven.
- Advocacy needs differ significantly between the United States and country programs. For certain advocacy

components, it would appear that Headquarters departments have more independence and freedom than country programs. However, CRS does need to act as a unified agency and our international and U.S.-level advocacy must be driven by priorities that are identified by our southern partners.

- Agency reaction times are slowed down by a lack of internal CRS protocol for approving advocacy initiatives. Policy frameworks and approval procedures must be developed early to ensure an agile response. However, more in-depth research and consultation is needed later to ensure policy positions reflect changing contexts and new initiatives.
- CRS must make the link between local and national advocacy processes by bringing communities and local-level actors into direct negotiations and advocacy at higher levels. As this is a long process, CRS needs to be committed not just to a particular project but to the process as well. CRS should, however, maintain a focus at the grassroots level. CRS also needs to make the effort to link local projects to national and international processes as there is enormous potential for impact if CRS transfers local experiences for use in high-level advocacy.

### Strengthening Global Solidarity

- There are many U.S. Dioceses that are already involved or interested in international issues. However, further engagement of U.S. dioceses has sometimes been limited due to the lack of opportunities to participate. Church Outreach must continually look for new ways to support the diocesan staff and congregations to help them respond to international interests. Although the tradition has been to encourage dioceses to engage in fundraising, CRS needs to convince dioceses that their involvement is crucial over the long term and that it goes

beyond fundraising. For CRS, this requires changing relationships with U.S. dioceses, becoming more flexible and entering into new levels of collaboration, negotiation and capacity-building.

- Hurricane Mitch has provided opportunities for connecting our domestic constituency to overseas programs in more direct ways, learning what relationship-building requires of CRS and beginning to define what the demands and benefits are for dioceses in the U. S. and Central America. As we have facilitated these new types of connections, we have found the need to build the capacity within CRS, and within our partner organizations, to understand the context of the relationship, to educate stakeholders, and to identify goals, objectives and a common agenda.
- Global solidarity relationships take time. Helping dioceses in the United States to build relationships with dioceses overseas is a long-term process for both parties, and for CRS. Sometimes the visions and goals in a relationship are not the same. The best partnerships will have a high level of reciprocity. Counterparts/dioceses in Central America need committees as much as dioceses in the U.S. that can put the time and attention required to these initiatives.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY MAKING AND FUTURE PROGRAMMING**

### **Implications for Policy Making**

PSI led the development of the original advocacy strategy following Hurricane Mitch. The initial advocacy which took place in the U.S. centered around U.S. Government funding to Central America. This work proved a prime motivator for later work and also initiated contacts with U.S. based NGOs, which have now led to much deeper collaboration at multiple levels far beyond the Mitch initiative. PSI's later work centered on participation in the Consultative Group was unprecedented. The strengths and weaknesses of this engagement are now being used as a model for similar international forums outside of Central America and will have long-term policy implications.

The Mitch-Civil Society strategy has also had wider policy implications, with regard to PSI, given that it has involved both debt and migration components. These key themes have been effectively interwoven as opportunities have arisen. It is clear that some of the important impetus in the U.S. came about due to work done around the overall Mitch strategy.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING**

### **Strengthening Civil Society**

Through the Hurricane Mitch response, CRS has made a commitment to addressing issues of vulnerability and structural poverty in Central America. The CRS commitment to structural change carries its own set of implications for the region – new programming, new partners, new approaches and new working relationships within CRS and with international partners.

More specifically, CRS is focusing on new issues: debt, land tenure, democratization and transparency at the community and municipal level, and economic policy and decision-making at the international, national and municipal levels. This may change the type of assistance CRS provides to communities and the approaches we employ.

Because of the CRS commitment to focus on vulnerability and structural poverty issues, the development of effective models for the integration of civil society and policy efforts with ongoing programming should be a major goal for the region in the future. From the planning stages of programming, CRS should prioritize integration and focus strategically on the “transformational” aspects of regular programming. All program staff will have to include a focus on civil society, advocacy and policy work in their activities if the agency wants to fulfill its commitment to structural change.

As such, CRS staff and partners will have to be open to change and will have to work together using innovative programming models. Advocacy and other relationship-building or networking activities should be supported as a valued and significant part of the CSHR program manager's job description. The internal training and sensitization process that will lead to such changes is already underway. Country programs will need more input and support from HQ departments in this process, particularly from the Program Quality and Support Department, PSI, and Church Outreach. Country programs and HQ departments will also have to develop stronger coordinating mechanisms.

### **Strengthening Global Solidarity**

The unprecedented response from the U.S. during Hurricane Mitch came at a time when internal momentum within

CRS was growing to engage people in the United States, particularly Catholics, more directly in the work of CRS. Church Outreach programs continued to expand their reach, and new initiatives were encouraged, including diocese-to-diocese partner relationships. As an agency, CRS will continue to define how global solidarity relationships can contribute to the promotion of justice for the poor and vulnerable – before, during and following emergencies – and to define what the roles and responsibilities are for all stakeholders involved.

CRS will have to continue to work toward greater mutuality in facilitating diocesan partnerships in solidarity. Education and involvement, discussion and planning, exchange and spiritual solidarity take time, and goals and vision may not always be shared from the beginning. To achieve greater mutuality, Church Outreach will have to coordinate and plan more explicitly with the field, and continue to advance global solidarity education among U.S. dioceses. Country programs may also consider creating staff positions or facilitate the creation of committees in local dioceses to manage global solidarity relationships in the country programs.

In addition, the Texas/Oklahoma-Honduras initiative offers a unique opportunity to document, systematize and ascertain best programming practices that could help in incorporating global solidarity as a core competency and as an overarching component in CRS country program projects.

## HEADQUARTERS–FOOTNOTES

- 1 Structural problems in the four countries include unequal distribution of land/other economic resources and social and political structures that cause the exclusion of the majority of the population from services and opportunities..*
- 2 It is worth noting that the different activities undertaken in Guatemala result from the particular post-Mitch context in the country. Given that the Hurricane damage was significantly less than in Honduras and Nicaragua, the issue of “national” reconstruction did not arise. Similarly Guatemala’s external debt is not enough of a problem for the country to qualify under the HIPC initiative. For this reason, neither national reconstruction plans nor poverty reduction plans were part of the national Guatemalan agenda. However, it is clear that continued poverty and vulnerability in the country are due to structural issues such as land distribution, an issue that was highlighted in the Consultative Group meetings. Given this context, CRS/Guatemala focused its civil society – Mitch funding on complementing reconstruction and rehabilitation activities with work on the land-tenure issue. As mentioned above, funding is also being used to support municipal level work to promote citizen participation in the general discussion making processes. This is a key issue for all countries in the region at this point and is an important addition to CRS/Guatemala’s programming.*
- 3 There will also be activities developed around the theme of remittances.*
- 4 The CG meeting was initially scheduled for January 2001 but was cancelled due to the earthquake emergency in El Salvador.*
- 5 The Diocese of Laredo has been included in this partnership initiative.*
- 6 While the formal commitment of the region is through January 2002, some bishops have stated that their intention is to build a longer partnership in their dioceses.*







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